

## International Women's Club Eindhoven won prize in 'Rabobank Clubkas Campagne'

Rabobank Eindhoven-Veldhoven held its first ever Clubkas (kitty) Campaign in 2017. This is in support of associations and foundations in Eindhoven, Veldhoven and Wintelre who play a key role in contributing to the local area's vitality and quality of life.



The campaign aims to award them with a financial boost based on supporting votes cast by the community. All members of Rabobank Eindhoven-Veldhoven can participate, as a voter or as a campaigner. At the end of the campaign, a grand total of 18,110 votes were cast, and €125,000 worth of Rabobank funds found its way back to the community, towards nearly 200 associations and foundations who campaigned.

One very happy and proud association that received funding was the International Women's Club Eindhoven (IWCE). We interviewed Sharda Weistra (President), Simona Arpaia (Vice President) and Clare Smears (Treasurer) of IWCE to tell us more.



Receiving the cheque from Rabobank Clubkas Campagne

IWCE was first started by Margaret van Mourik (from USA) in 1967/1968, as a "How do you do club". She invited international ladies to her home for coffee and piano concerts. To many, living abroad seems like a great privilege. However, not many can fully comprehend the challenges that relocation brings, especially with integrating into a new environment. As a social club, IWCE helps women (returning Dutch women included) find new friends who share these similar challenges, participate in special interest groups and most importantly, feel at home. Today, IWCE is led by Sharda, Simona and Clare and five other Board Members, with 170 members representing 45 nationalities, all speaking English as the common language.



Simona Arpaia (Vice President) and Sharda Weistra (President)

These ladies are volunteers themselves at IWCE. They have experienced relocations, occasionally reflecting on the fantastic aspects and the less inspiring facets of relocation. Their role at IWCE is to ensure activities are well organized, and keep the community thriving. There are standard activities (monthly general meetings, annual charity drives, etc.) and weekly special interest groups (choir, film, gourmet, Dutch conversation, etc.). Sharda and Simona emphasized that these activities and groups allow members to mix together, sharing their different backgrounds but similar interests, so that everybody feels included. The next big event of the club, also open to the general public, will be a cosy Winter Market planned for the 16th of November, where selected vendors (members or not) can sell their wares.

When asked about the mission of IWCE, Sharda says, “The club’s mission is reflected in our motto: ‘Women for Women, Stronger Together’. We are a group of women who support one another in good times and bad, we learn from each other and we hope to provide a home away from home. A successful relocation is when everyone is happy and feels at home. Ultimately this will also be beneficial for the companies employing expats.” The achievements of IWCE can only be told by the members with their personal quotes below.

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*“How lucky I was to find the IWCE! It brings me so many enjoyable moments, cultural exchanges, the choir, and other interesting groups with ladies from all over the world.”*

—Benhong Mei, China

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*“When I moved to Eindhoven in 2011, I joined the Club. I was grateful to be welcomed so warmly and to meet so many interesting women from all over the world.”*

—Linda Gebhard, USA

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When the Clubkas Campaign approached them to sign up, they jumped right in! Clare shares, “.. being involved in this campaign was an excellent opportunity – not only to receive a welcome donation for the club – but also so that that IWCE starts to be more visible to the wider local and international community.” Simona spoke excitedly about how the promotional activities spread through their social media and newsletter, “We are just so proud .. our members really helped us spread the word ... they liked it when we won!” And the efforts did pay off. On 17 May 2017, all awardees were invited to a celebration evening at Natlab where they not only received their funds, but also discovered what other local associations are doing. IWCE received €186,36 and they will use it to celebrate the club’s rich heritage at its **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala**, with their members, in April 2018. IWCE is absolutely delighted to receive the sponsorship from the Rabobank Clubkas Campaign and highly recommends participation to other clubs and sees partnerships with the community vital for the future.



Dreams for the future? IWCE wants to keep growing, and who knows, maybe one day a similar club for men expats will be set up!

To find out more about IWCE, please visit: <http://www.iwce.nl/> We conclude this inspiring story by wishing them every success in many more 50 years to come.

