
Women's Commission for Oakland County

Progress Report

Presented to the Oakland County
Board of Commissioners General
Government Committee
Monday November 30 2009

Women's Commission for Oakland County 2009 Progress Report

Since January of 2008, the Women's Commission for Oakland County has been charged with assessing the needs and status of women in Oakland County and reporting those findings to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Testimony collected in our first Public Forum, held in May of 2008, has driven a busy and productive year for all four subcommittees: Economic Autonomy, chaired by Cheryl Fried; Health & Wellness, chaired by Dr. Jessica Jenkins; Leadership, chaired by Laurie Renchik; and Women against Violence, chaired by Wanda Lohmeier. Our intent this year was to hold fewer general meetings, allowing the smaller groups to develop events and activities inspired by last year's testimony. Moving forward, we will return to monthly meetings, held on a Thursday to be determined at our organizational meeting.

Following an organizational meeting in January, officers were elected on February 25, 2009: Joni Hubred-Golden, Chair; Laurie Renchik, Vice-Chair; Denise Alexander, Vice-Chair; Becky Clark, Recording Secretary; Ann Erickson-Gault, Corresponding Secretary; and Carolyn Baelen, Parliamentarian. In addition, Teri Donaldson was appointed to serve as Publicity & Fundraising chairperson. The Executive Committee has focused on fund-raising via grant applications, being researched by Women's Commissioner Donaldson, and creating a set of policies and procedures that establish uniform standards for activities and events conducted under the auspices of the Women's Commission. In 2010, a final draft will be presented for approval and a review of by-laws will be undertaken. In addition, an orientation retreat is being planned, with assistance from members of the Women Officials' Network.

The Women's Commission has hosted speakers on a variety of topics, including women's health, mental health parity and domestic violence. We have been pleased to welcome guests who have spoken during the public comment portion of our meetings about their activities and organizations. These connections broaden awareness of the Women's Commission and our mission in the community.

Articles about Women's Commission events and activities have appeared in *Observer & Eccentric* newspapers, the *Oakland County Legal News*, *The Oakland Press* and *Detroit News*, as well as Web sites for a variety of organizations. The Executive Committee has discussed forming a speakers' bureau consisting of a few members who will be trained to speak to community groups about the group's mission and activities.

On behalf of the Women's Commission, thank you for the opportunity to serve in 2009. As you will see from our committee reports, we have had a very productive year, and we look forward to accomplishing even more in 2010.

Joni Hubred-Golden
Chair
Women's Commission for Oakland County

Economic Autonomy Committee – Progress Report

Committee Members

The Economic Autonomy Committee consists of Women's Commission members: Cheryl Fried (chair), Joscelyn Andrews, Kristine Zrinyi, Pat Thomas and members at large Debbie Macon (representing the Women Officials' Network) and Kristen Bros.

Mission

- Ensure Oakland County women have access to information on economic issues that affect their everyday lives.
- Educate women about the ways they can become more economically independent and stable.
- Empower women to take control of their economic lives.

Activities

- Attended Michigan Women's Commission meeting.
- Attended Pay Equity day at Capitol.
- Met with representatives of the Accounting Aid Society to discuss a partnership.
- Met with representatives of the Census bureau to discuss partnership possibilities.

Accomplishments

- Had 2-1-1 logo and link added to the general Oakland County government website. In the first three quarters of 2009 (Jan-Sep), 2-1-1 received 30,218 calls from Oakland County residents for information and referrals. Of those calls, 76% or 22,965 were made by women. The top six referral requests were related to: food pantries, rent/mortgage assistance, utility payment assistance, community clinics, job search/placement, and tax preparation/Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Helped publicize a Financial Planning Clinic hosted by the Certified Financial Planners Board. The clinic was in Southfield on September 19th. The purpose was to target consumers who could benefit from financial planning and education and may not be working with a financial planner. Certified Financial Planners were available for one-on-one consulting and there was no products being marketed and soliciting was not allowed. The free Clinic provided hundreds of Oakland County residents the opportunity to discuss pressing financial questions and see how financial planning can help.
- Helped plan the conference and obtained door prizes for "Rising to the Challenge" women's conference. The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau and the Michigan Women's Commission and was held on October 23rd. The conference was targeted to low-income women with young children and provided resources to prepare women for successfully dealing with the current economic climate. Attendees learned what educational/training opportunities are available, what careers will thrive in the future, how to improve one's current financial situation and what services are available to assist them and their family.
- Just began partnership with the Accounting Aid Society (AAS) to help them make their goal of increasing tax services in Oakland County by 10% in 2010. AAS is the largest provider of free income tax preparation services in Michigan. The committee plans to assist in recruiting volunteer tax preparers and supervisors and raise the awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The IRS estimates that in 2007 (most recent data) that \$16 million of EITC went unclaimed in Oakland County. In 2008, Accounting Aid Society's free tax sites returned \$1.8 million to low and moderate-income households in Oakland County, of which \$1.2 million was received in households where the filer was a woman.

Short Term Goals

- The Economic Autonomy Committee will continue partnership with the Accounting Aid Society.
- In light of the poor economic conditions in Michigan and specifically southeast Michigan the committee will pursue partnerships and be involved in projects in which the greatest impact can be made for the most women.

Long Term Goals

- Conduct a Best Workplaces for Women study in Oakland County.

Health and Wellness Committee – Progress Report 2009

Introduction

The Health and Wellness Committee of the Oakland County Women's Commission consists of five Commissioners: Chairperson, Dr. Jessica Jenkins, Secretary, Vice-Chairperson, Ms. Carolyn Belaen, Ms. Carla Schwartz, Ms. Cristina Broomfield and Ms. Marcia Griffin. In order to increase our community impact and productivity, the Health and Wellness Committee recruited members of the community to serve as members at large:

- Ms. Malkia Maisha Newman – Community Educator, Community Network Services
- Ms. Jacqueline Castine – Community Education Specialist, Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority

Additionally, the Health and Wellness Committee was pleased to collaborate with both Ms. Helaine Zack, Oakland County Commissioner and Beaumont Hospital Employee and Dr. Judith Kovach, Executive Director of the Michigan Psychological Association and Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Michigan Partners for Parity (MPP).

Accomplishments and Future Goals

The Health and Wellness Committee selected a dual focus of mental health parity and women's physical health issues. Accomplishments to date and future goals are listed below.

Mental Health Parity

- In conjunction with the parity resolution supported in 2008 by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the parity presentation given to the Women's Commission, Oakland County has changed employee benefits to provide mental health parity.
- Oakland County's support of parity will be presented, by Helaine Zack, to Michigan legislators to influence parity legislation in Michigan.
- Provided Women's Commission members and committee members with informational brochures (provided by MPP) to promote knowledge and awareness of the mental health parity crisis in the State of Michigan.
- Received support from the Women's Commission to add the Oakland County Women's Commission to the list of organizations supporting MPP.
- **Future:** Continue to support efforts toward mental health parity legislation in Michigan

Women's Physical Health Issues

- Sponsored a table at the Oakland County Employee health and Wellness Fair
 - Disseminated resources related to women's health issues
 - Informed attendees of the mission and purpose of the Women's Commission
 - Provided a visual display with information about the Women's Commission
- Organized a special topic presentation given by Grace SanAugustin, RN of the Ministrelli Women's Heart Center at Beaumont Hospital and Gail Evo, Director of Integrative Medicine at Beaumont Hospital to the entire Women's Commission.
- Researched low cost and/or free programs available to address women's health issues
 - Communicated with the Oakland County Health Department and other elected County officials
 - Reviewed medical database sights for available resources
- **Future:**
 - At least yearly participation in a local health fair
 - Partner with Oakland County Website administrators to provide a comprehensive list of links for easy access to low or no cost women's health services and screenings
 - Develop a plan to market /promote awareness of the availability of the aforementioned women's health resources
 - Develop a plan to keep the health information current

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Oakland County as members of the Women's Commission. We look forward to continued service in 2010.

Jessica Jenkins, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Health and Wellness Committee

Leadership Committee – Progress Report 2009

Introduction: Committee members: Chair: Laurie Renchik, Vice-Chair/Secretary: Chris Walden Hughes, Denise Alexander, Nichol Atkins, Teri Donaldson, Ann Erickson-Gault, Joni Hubred-Golden, Terry Margolis

Leadership Committee outreach consisted of organizing and co-hosting a major event in April with support of various other leadership events by attendance of committee members throughout the year at three externally sponsored events. In addition we finalized a plan for 2010 to create a comprehensive study that provides statistics regarding the gender of publicly elected officials, with the objective of assisting women at the grass roots level to move from leadership positions to elected office.

Partnerships: Women Officials Network, The White House Project, Certified Financial Planning Board

Additional Outcomes: As a direct result of the White House Project Presentation

- One attendee ran for political office: Johanna Allen won the August primary in a Rochester Hills race and lost in the general election.
- Women's Commissioner Joni Hubred-Golden was invited to join the Michigan Cabinet.

Summary of Organized Event

1. White House Project Presentation by Michigan Director Shannon Garrett

The Leadership Committee with special mention of Women's Commissioners Joni Hubred-Golden, Terry Margolis, and Teri Donaldson collaborated with the Macomb County Women's Commission to organize and host speaker Shannon Garrett on April 29, 2009. The event was held in Varner Recital Hall on Oakland University's campus. Ms. Garrett explained the mission of The White House Project, which offers a Debate Boot Camp, Go Lead training, and Michigan Go Run, a three-day workshop for women. She spoke at length about the unique challenges women face in the political arena.

Summary of Participation in related Events

1. Young Women Strong Leaders Mentor Day Teri Donaldson and Joni Hubred-Golden participated in Young Women Strong Leaders Mentor Day at Wayne State University on March 27, 2009. Joni Hubred-Golden facilitated the business panel discussion.
2. WON sponsored Wonder Woman Fundraising Event Denise Alexander, Women's Commissioner and Women Officials Network Board Member, supported the annual fundraising event on April 30, 2009 at The Reserve on Eton St. Funds raised will be used for initiatives in developing leadership skills for women.
3. CFP Board of Standards Free Financial Planning Clinic Laurie Renchik, CFP® participated as a volunteer planner for the event. The free Clinic provided hundreds of Oakland County residents with the opportunity to discuss pressing financial questions and experience firsthand how financial planning can help.

Women against Violence Committee – Progress Report

Members:

Commissioner Wanda Lohmeier – Chair	Commissioner Sunsaria Baldwin
Commissioner Rebecca Clark – Vice Chair	Commissioner Sandra Hanna
Zenell Brown, Member at Large – Secretary	Commissioner Sandy Adams

The committee began by analyzing the activities of the previous year, the speakers at the Commission's May 2008 Open Forum and continuing the Southfield Pilot Project started in the summer of 2008 with Senator Jacobs.

In April, the Women against Violence subcommittee, Senator Gilda Jacob, Mayor Brenda Lawrence of Southfield, the Public Service Committee of the Oakland County Bar Association, the Southfield Community Foundation Women's Fund, and Haven launched the Pilot Poster Project in Southfield. Over sixty community leaders came together to support the effort in educating the public in the patterns of domestic violence. This project was funded at a cost of Five Thousand Dollars with donations from the Southfield Community Foundation Women's Fund, the Michigan Credit Union and other concerned citizens. No county funding was requested.

On October 7th, a Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to the Women against Violence and their partners for their effort in the prevention and treatment of Domestic Violence from the Oakland County Coordinating Council against Domestic Violence. It is the plan of this Committee to take this project to another community in the year 2010 after reviewing its success in the Southfield area.

On June 3rd, the subcommittee facilitated an open meeting as a result of reviewing the Open Forum of 2008. The speakers were Dr. Patricia Armstrong, founder and Director of Interface, a family enrichment center, Dr. Joseph Thomson, Jr, Chief of Police for City of Southfield; Camilla Roberts, Director of the Counseling Program for Haven; Zenell Brown, Assistant Friend of the Court in Wayne County; Dave Taylor, Chairman of the Friend of the Court Advisory Committee; Renee Beeker, Founder and President of the National Family Court Watch Program; Alice Benbow, LPC BS teacher and counselor; Commissioner Jim Runstead of the Oakland County Board of Commissioner, Women Commissioner Rebecca Clark; and three private citizens, Kayla, Tanya, and Julie. This program was taped and funded by the members of WAV committee to use as a teaching and problem solving aid in the commitment to eliminate domestic violence. It is the plan of this committee to develop a Professional at large Advisory Board to counsel the committee on projects for the year and support the committee within their respective professional appointments. The Board shall consist of seven members. Each member shall represent one of the following: Law Enforcement, Psychologist, Attorney, Judge, Friend of the Court, member of the State Legislature and an Oakland County Board of Commissioner. Each member will serve a one year term, will meet twice a year, and be an Oakland County resident.

The mission of the Women against Violence subcommittee is to promote education, investigation, and enforcement of the laws to the end of Domestic Violence and Abuse.