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The Maine Commission for Women

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Inform

Published by The Maine Commission for Women

Editor: Marion A. Higgins

FROM THE CHAIR

A few days ago, in the midst of a rare burst of "clean out the files" energy, I came across an interesting paper called "Maine Commission for Women: Historical Perspective". The document covered events occurring in 1975 and 76, the time when the legislature was in the process of legitimizing the Commission as the only state agency specifically charged with advocating for women and girls. Our name was changed from the "Governor's Advisory Council on Women" to "The Maine Commission for Women", with an accompanying allocation of \$2500 to support the first year's programming.

At the bottom of the page there was a list of goals for 1976. The word "survival" came first, followed by "improving women's access to jobs, obtaining greater representation of women in policy-making positions, and increasing women's knowledge about their rights".

The word "survival" came first.

That list of goals was made fifteen years ago. Now it is 1990. We *have* survived, and we will continue. But there are bigger questions facing the Commission, well beyond the basic parameters of survival. For example, what about those other goals from the 70's - access to jobs, representation in policy-making positions, and knowledge about rights? How do we measure progress in areas where the job is never done? And what about new challenges - challenges like the threat to reproductive choice, and women entering the labor force in record-setting numbers, too often without either appropriate skills or adequate child care.

Our commitment is to make 1989-90 the year of accountability.

The Maine Commission for Women is charged by our government to represent the best interests of the women and girls of our state - young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, rural and urban, north and south. You are our constituency, and you have every right to hold us accountable for achieving results that improve the quality of your lives.

Our constituency consists of all the women and girls of our state.

With that in mind, the executive committee met last summer to take a hard look at where we were as an organization, and to define the strategic issues facing us in the years to come. We reviewed our mission statement, adapting it to more clearly reflect the fact that our constituency consists of *all* the women and girls of our state; we explored the implications of our mission, specifically in terms of what we *can* and *cannot* do in program areas; we took a hard look at the events, people and politics around us that pose both challenges and opportunities; and, finally, we used the information and insights we had gained to help us identify the following five key strategic issues/needs facing the Commission:

1. Increase Commission's visibility.
2. Be more sensitive to the broad base of our constituency.
3. As commissioners, spend less time on internal operations, and devote more energy to setting policy, both short and long-term.

4. Develop a more cohesive focus in program planning (i.e. more depth, rather than trying to do everything).
5. Explore and obtain sources of external funding.

The executive committee presented these five strategic issues at its September meeting. By vote of the full Commission, we adopted them as a guide for our

year's work. At every monthly meeting since then we have looked at policy development and action items in relation to if and how they help us address our strategic issues. Our commitment is to make 1989-90 the year of accountability - accountability judged by progress in moving closer toward meeting the long-term needs of our organization. The Commission is determined to not only survive, but flourish. Our constituency - the women and girls of Maine - should expect no less.

- Betsy Levenson, Chair
Maine Commission for Women

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REGIONAL COMMISSION REPORTS

The signals
of the century
proclaim the
things that
are to be - - -
The rise of
woman
to her
... place ...
The coming of
a nobler
... race ...

*Angela Morgan
1874-1957*

NORTHERN REGION

The Northern Regional Commission for Women (NRCW) held its first official annual meeting on Wednesday, November 15, 1989, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. In spite of the bad weather, nearly all the members of the NRCW attended. Remarks from the MCW Chair, Betsy Levenson, were read by the Regional Chair. Unfortunately, due to the heavy fog, which cancelled their flights, neither Betsy nor Leslie Anderson, the MCW Executive Director, were able to attend as planned.

The NRCW is already looking forward to National Women's History Month (NWHM) in March 1990. Time was set aside at the annual meeting to exchange ideas on how to increase student participation in the essay and drawing contest in Aroostook County. The NRCW would like to send a letter to schools offering support in such areas as publicity and community displays.

As an adjunct to the Maine Commission for Women, we look forward to a strong emphasis on continuing to encourage more participation in NWHM in all sectors of the community in 1990. This type of activity increases our visibility and this visibility alone translates into empowerment for women in Aroostook County.

SOUTHERN REGION

The Southern Regional Commission for Women (SCRW) took on its first big project and experienced its first big success this summer with our Pro-Choice Flag Day Rally, held June 14 in Monument Square, Portland.

Joined in the effort by several other groups and calling ourselves the Maine Coalition for Choice, the Rally attracted several hundred people and substantial media attention despite unseasonably chilly weather.

Ten speakers from all walks of life aided in getting across our message, that support for Choice really is the mainstream position in Maine. Regional commissioners found the experience tremendously energizing. We look forward to more successful projects this fall.

Our most pressing current project is a membership drive. We've got a number of openings and seek enthusiastic new members who can bring as many diverse experiences and viewpoints to our Regional Commission as possible.

Interested applicants should contact Helen Leddy at 797-3462 (H), or Cindy Arn at 775-6371 (W), or 799-1643 (H). We're also in the process of forming subcommittees to work on additional special projects and areas of interest.

EASTERN REGION

The Eastern Regional Commission for Women (ERCW) has been active in several areas which are of great concern for women in Central Maine. Committees have been formed to address the interests expressed by those who have attended several public forums held by the ERCW.

The Pro-Choice Committee, which includes ERCW members as well as non-commission members, held a pro-choice rally on November 10 in West Market Square in Bangor. Since then, those on the Committee have officially formed the Bangor Steering Committee for Maine NARAL (The National Abortion Rights Action League). NARAL's first official function will be to sponsor an event in Bangor on Roe vs. Wade Day, January 22.

The culmination of a fact-finding project started last winter by the ERCW has resulted in the Bangor Rape Response Services (RRS). The ERCW researched the various possibilities for financial and emotional support which would be available to start this project. As the result of a forum, a board of directors was set up to guide the crisis center. In July the RRS officially opened its telephone hotline with a great show of community support. Two advocate training sessions for those who operate the hotline have already been held, and the RRS will begin its first support group for rape victims in January. The ERCW's first project is now completely independent, fully operational, and well on its way to a successful future.

The Women in Poverty Committee will be addressing several areas of concern this coming year: The need for access to quality prenatal/obstetrical care; the sometimes inadequate treatment received by poor women at various agencies; and reproductive choice issues.

The ERCW and the Business and Professional Women (BPW) have begun work on the annual window displays for Women's History Month. This year's theme will be "Celebrating Choices", consistent with the theme developed by the Maine Commission for Women.

The ERCW starts the final decade of this century with several new members, two of whom are Native Americans and one, a veteran of WWII. While we cannot clearly see what the year will bring us, we do see that life with ERCW will be fulfilling, and that, hopefully, the lot of women in our society will be improved by the time the 21st Century arrives.

MAILING LIST UPDATE
See last page for details.

**Women and Employment
Conference**

Saturday, October 27, 1990

Sonesta Hotel, Portland

MCW contact: Ellen Golden 289-3417

CELEBRATING

"CELEBRATING CHOICES" Women's History Month – 1990

This year the Maine Commission for Women (MCW) and the Department of Educational and Cultural Services (DECS) will sponsor its 6th annual Women's History Month Essay Contest in March, 1990. This year's theme, "Celebrating Choices", will provide students an opportunity to reflect on the choices available to women, past and present, and how these choices may have influenced the contributions women have made to society. As in the past, winners will be presented with awards by Governor John McKernan at the Blaine House.

A special feature this year will be the Teacher Curriculum Development Project for teachers who submit lesson plans designed to carry out Women's History Month projects in their classrooms. It is our hope that teachers will share ideas and promote a general awareness of women's roles in all disciplines. School projects and team teaching are encouraged in order to make WHM a special event in each school.

If you are a teacher or know any teachers who would be interested in participating in any Women's History Month activities we would like to hear from you. Please call us at the Maine Commission for Women office at 289-3417 for additional information or to obtain a project packet.

CHOICE ACTIVITIES

On Sunday, November 12, 1989, Maine hosted the first rally of a day-long, nationwide effort to "Mobilize for Women's Lives". The sunrise candlelight rally was held at the Unitarian Church in Kennebunk. More than 1,500 people attended the 6:30 a.m. rally on the brisk, late fall day. Faye Wattleton, President of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, was the featured speaker. Other speakers included Kate Michelman of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Polly Bergen from the Hollywood Women's Political Committee, and Sharon Schuster from the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

On January 22, 1990, the Maine Choice Coalition sponsored a lobby day at the State house to celebrate the 17th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision on abortion, Roe vs. Wade. Despite inclement weather, the day was a success. There was overwhelming support by legislators, as many joined the "Honor Roll" by signing a "Declaration of Choice" pledge.

The Coalition continues to meet and plan activities around reproductive health and choice issues. If you are interested in participating in any activities or would like information on the Coalition, please call Family Planning in Augusta at 622-7524, or the Maine Civil Liberties Union in Portland at 774-5444.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE INTERNS FOR THE COMMISSION

The Maine Commission for Women (MCW) has engaged the help of two Bowdoin students to conduct research and write fact sheets on employment issues for women. The interns, Carol Mallory and Ellen Freedman, will be working on the MCW project as part of an independent study for the Bowdoin Women's Studies Program. Both Ellen, who is majoring in East Asian History, and Carol, who is majoring in Government, are minoring in Women's Studies.

The MCW will use the information gleaned from this project to provide comparative data to constituents and policymakers on issues affecting women, work, and family, and as a resource for the Oct. 27, 1990, conference on Women and Employment.

The Commission is pleased to have the opportunity to work with Bowdoin College students. We hope to be able to work with students from other Maine Colleges in the future. If anyone is interested in an internship, please call the Commission office at 289-3417.

STUDENT INTERN SEARCH

The Maine Commission for Women (MCW) has started an intern project involving students. We're looking for individuals with a strong commitment to women's issues and an interest in state government who will help us research state statistics on several subjects.

The MCW needs help in researching and writing constituent fact sheets on employment issues affecting women. Topics will include: family medical leave; comparative incomes between males and females; benefit packages; family income issues; pay equity; overall labor force growth; child care; and labor force trends. Another area of research will be reproductive freedom.

This is an excellent opportunity for a student to design an independent study or receive credit through a college course. If you would like additional information on intern requirements or the project, please call Debbie at the Commission office at 289-3417.



CHOICES

CELEBRATING

Bulletin

LEGAL RIGHTS FACT SHEETS

10 fact sheets on
Women's Rights, Women's Responsibilities
to be distributed
Spring 1990

Would you like to make a difference?
Apply to be appointed to a
STATE BOARD OR COMMISSION
call the MCW office for information
289-3417

Maine Comm
ANNUAL
Friday, N
Se
A

Third Annual Progress Awards
given to individuals or programs
which made significant
contributions to the economic and
social well-being of Maine women
and their families.

Presented March 16, 1990

Women's

The MCW Staff and Commissioners
wish each of you
A WONDERFUL 1990

G CHOICES

Board

MOBILIZE FOR WOMEN'S LIVES
Candlelight Pro-Choice Rally
Sunday, November 12, 1989
Kennebunk
An Incredible Experience
and a
Great Success

MAILING LIST UPDATE
See last page for details.

on for Women
MEETING
n 16, 1990
r Inn
sta

HOUSING HOTLINE
1-800-458-8821
The Maine Human Rights Commission
will answer questions or handle
complaints on fair housing laws.

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ory Month

**Women and Employment
Conference**
Saturday, October 27, 1990
Sonesta Hotel, Portland
MCW contact: Ellen Golden 289-3417



EVENTS CALENDAR 1990

Unless otherwise noted, all contact numbers given are in Maine, area code 207.

- March 4-10 National Association of American University Women Blue Ribbon campaign for teen pregnancy awareness. Contact: Lucy Stinson 443-3954.
- March 9 International Women's Day Dinner, University of Southern Maine Campus Center, 7:00 p.m., Portland.
- March 9 Women's History Month Celebration, University of Southern Maine, Portland, 5:30 p.m. Keynote speaker: Lucy Lippard, free-lance journalist, art critic, and political activist. Reception to follow.
- Spring 1990 Women's Studies Program, University of Southern Maine. Introduction to Women's Studies, Women and Work, Comparative Feminist Theories, Anthropology of Sex and Gender, Women in Art, Earlier Women Writers, European Women's History, Gender & Science in 20th C. America, Gender and Crime. 780-4289.
- March 14 Maine Women's Lobby Raffle Drawing. Write to: MWL, P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347.
- March 16 Maine Commission for Women. Third Annual Meeting and Dinner. Senator Inn, Augusta 289-3417.
- March 29 Population Resource Center. Conference on "Demographic Change and Public Policy: Challenges for the 21st Century", Sheraton Washington Hotel, Washington, D.C., 9:00-4:30. 202-546-5030.
- March 31-Apr. 2 N.E. Regional NOW Conference. Sonesta Hotel, Portland, ME. For more information call Me. NOW 865-3869.
- Feb. 14 National League of Women Voters. Celebrating its 70th Anniversary.
- April 7 University of Rhode Island Women's Studies Program 14th Annual New England Women's Studies Association Conference. "Women Creating the New Decade" 792-5150.
- April 28 Maine Women's Studies Conference "Challenge and Change: Women in the 1990's". Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME 04011. Contact: Martha May, Director, Women's Studies Program 725-3000.
- June 26-30 "Holding Up Half the Sky" Sino-American Conference on Women's Issues. Beijing, People's Republic of China (602) 272-3438.



WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH – 1989

The Maine Commission for Women sponsored its fifth annual Women's History Month Essay and Drawing Competition in March, 1989. Winners were selected from among those drawings (K-3) and essays (4-12) which best expressed the theme: women who have taken risks and broken barriers to improve life for others. Twelve student winners were chosen from among more than 700 entries.

The winning students, their families and teachers were welcomed to the Blaine House by members of the Maine Commission for Women, the State Board of Education, and the 114th Maine Legislature. Governor John McKernan presented awards to students. Each student received a picture taken with the Governor. Governor McKernan, in congratulating the awardees, emphasized the importance of all teachers and students to recognize the contributions of women to our society. Eve Bither, Commissioner of the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, and Carol Wishcamper, Chair of the State Board of Education, were also on hand to recognize the students' achievements.

The winners in the drawing competition for kindergarten through third grades were: First, Daniel Caiazzo, Portland; Second, Amanda D'Alessio, Brunswick; and Third, Jessica Osborne, Sanford.

Essay winners in grades 4-6 were: First, Jennifer Greenwood, Portland; Second, Bridgette Bartlett, Winthrop; Third, Katie Bursk, Portland.

Seventh and eighth grade essay winners included: First, Curtis Stauffer, Yarmouth; Second, Noel Leavitt, Sherman Station; Third, Tatum Kendrick, Hollis.

High School winners were: First, Angela Milardo, Hollis; Second, Laura Knorr, Limestone; Third, Andrew Doyle, Old Orchard Beach.



NOTICE

The MCW is updating its mailing list. If you want to continue receiving the newsletter, please return your address label, with any changes, to the MCW office by

March 1, 1990.

ANNUAL MEETING 1989

The second Annual Meeting of the Maine Commission for Women (MCW) took place on June 16. We had an attendance of over 80 people despite many last-minute cancellations due to the lengthy legislative session. The purpose of the meeting was to review the year's activities and accomplishments and to present the MCW Progress Awards to those who have made significant contributions, either as individuals or programs to the economic and social well-being of Maine women and their families.

The four awards presented this year went to: Gloria Leach for her work in community service for pregnant and parenting teens; Gilda Nardone for guiding the development of the statewide Displaced Homemakers Program; John Fitzsimmons, Maine Department of Labor and Rollin Ives, Maine Department of Human Services, for their leadership in developing the A.S.P.I.R.E. (Additional Support for People in Retraining and Education Program); and the Portland YWCA for its work in coordinating the Twin Careers Options Workshop Program for teens and professional women.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Maine author, Tabitha King. She has published four books, *Small World*, *Caretakers*, *The Trap*, and *Pearl*. The theme of her address, "Family Inside Out", focused on an exploration of how her experiences as a writer in Maine have influenced the way her book characters reveal the role of women in society. She spoke of the importance of the concepts of place and family in her work as well as the importance of returning to a neighborly society where individuals can rely on one another.

To further carry out the theme of Maine women writers, the MCW, with the help of the Maine State Library, displayed books by past Maine women writers. Our future Maine writers were represented as well with a notebook featuring the Women's History Month Student Essay winners and a colorful display of drawings from the K-3 category.

The 1990 MCW third Annual Dinner and Meeting will be held on Friday, March 16th, at the Senator Inn.

Would you like to make a difference?
Apply to be appointed to a
STATE BOARD OR
COMMISSION
call the MCW office for
information
289-3417

MAINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN ANNUAL MEETING March 16, 1990 Senator Inn, Augusta

5:30 - 6:15 Social Hour - Cash Bar Available
6:15 - 7:30 Dinner
7:30 - 9:00 Reports of activities of the Maine Commission for Women and presentation of 1989 Progress Awards

Cost: \$15.00 per person

_____ Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ people.

_____ I will not be able to attend the dinner but will attend the program at 7:30.
(No charge)

_____ I need child care: (Available through advance notification no later than March 9.)

_____ I will not be able to attend but enclosed is a donation to the Maine Commission for Women of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Reservations must be made no later than March 7, 1990. Please send to MCW, State House Station #93, Augusta, ME 04333.

MCW FORMS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The initial meeting of the newly formed Business and Professional and Legislative Advisory Committees was held prior to the Maine Commission for Women (MCW) regular monthly meeting on January 19, 1990. The purpose of organizing this group is to establish open and ongoing communication between the MCW, women in business and state legislators.

The objective of the meeting was to provide information on the MCW mandate and 1989-90 agenda to the 35 advisory committee members. The groups will serve as a resource on issues pertaining to MCW business, and advise the Commission in the planning of activities and events.

Committee chairs of the MCW gave an overview of the Commission's activities for this year. Diane Deering, Legislative Chair, furnished details on the upcoming legislative review of the Family Medical

Leave Law, which was enacted by the 113th Legislature in 1988. The Labor Committee will conduct a hearing on February 5th to review provisions governing family medical leave requirements.

Marion Higgins, Editor of the MCW newsletter, *Inform*, told advisors of its importance in communicating with our constituents on MCW activities. The *Inform* serves as a vehicle with which to report on MCW issues such as those affecting women, work and family.

Anne Heimann, Vice Chair of the Commission, explained the function of the three Regional Commissions centered in the Portland, Bangor, and Presque Isle areas. Each Regional Commission acts as a branch of the MCW to advocate on issues of concern to the women and girls in their own region of the state.

(continued on page 8)



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March 1990 - Women's History Month

(continued from page 7)

The Education Co-Chair, Jo Karr, described the MCW annual activity revolving around Women's History Month in March. She announced the addition of the Teacher Curriculum Development Project to the sixth annual essay/drawing contest for school age children.

Patti Bourgoin, immediate past Chair of the MCW, announced that nominations for our annual Progress Awards are being solicited. Winners will receive their awards at our annual meeting which will be held at the Senator Inn on Friday, March 16th.

The committee members ended the meeting by gathering in small groups to brainstorm various ideas for the MCW sponsored conference on employment issues for women. This conference will be held at the Sonesta Hotel in Portland on October 27th. The one-day conference will follow the New England Commission for Women Regional Conference on October 25-26, which will be hosted by the MCW.

The MCW state Commissioners appreciate the effort shown by members of the advisory groups in taking the time to come and show interest in the work being done by the MCW. It is believed that this exchange of ideas will be truly beneficial to the women of this state in promoting the MCW focus on work and family issues.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY

Angela Aloupis, Bangor Real Estate
Elizabeth Andrews, The Baby Bag
Karen Brown-Mohr, Boise-Cascade
Beth Dobson, Law firm of Verrill & Dana
Margaret Duncan, Cook Florist, Inc.
Lynn Goldfarb, Central Maine Power
Catherine Greenleaf, Hannaford Brothers
Ann Hibbard, People's Heritage Bank
Jane Honeck, Accounting firm of Honeck & O'Toole
Margaret Johnson, Law office of Margaret Johnson
Betsy Kelly, L.L. Bean
Linda Lee, Linda Lee Advertising
Peggy McGehee, Law firm of Perkins, Thompson, Hinckley & Keddy
Donna Mundy, UNUM, Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Judy Scribner, Ad-Media
Jane Sheehan, Office of Child Welfare Services
Vendean Vafiades, Law firm of Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer & Nelson
Nancy Walker, Walker's Independent Employment Contractor, Inc.

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY

Sen. Nancy R. Clark
Sen. Pamela L. Cahill
Sen. Joseph C. Brannigan
Sen. Paul N. Gauvreau
Sen. Muriel D. Holloway
Rep. Dan A. Gwadosky
Rep. Mary C. Webster
Rep. Carol M. Allen
Rep. Wendy L. Ault

Rep. Margaret P. Clark
Rep. Judy Foss
Rep. Peter Hastings
Rep. Marge L. Kilkelly
Rep. Susan J. Pines
Rep. Gary W. Reed
Rep. George A. Townsend
Rep. Priscilla Attean

MAINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
STATE HOUSE STATION 93
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333
PHONE 289-3417

A **RENEWED** effort to UPDATE our mailing list! If you wish to remain on the mailing list, please return the above label (or copy) with any necessary changes, to the MCW address above by **March 1, 1990.**