

Montgomery County Commission for Women Annual Report



Fiscal Year 2012
July 2011 – June 2012

Montgomery County Commission for Women

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July 2011 – June 2012

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Nick Martinez

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Leticia Mederos

Jennifer Cryor Baldwin

Colleen Kelly

Jaclyn Lichter Vincent

Staff

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Cover Photo: 2012 Montgomery County Women’s History Quilt, created by fiber artist Anne Sanderoff-Walker

President's Message

Chandra Walker Holloway, Esq.

During Fiscal Year 2012, the Montgomery County Commission for Women (“MCCFW”) worked to reorganize and celebrate the work of the Commission for the past 40 years. In a climate of serious County budget cuts, we started the year with the triumph of learning that, while included in the newly established Community Engagement Cluster, the MCCFW would maintain its autonomy of remaining an independent advisory board that reports to the County Executive and County Council. Although the office was maintained, we faced new challenges, including adjusting to the elimination of all staff positions except the Executive Director and relocating to a new office location while still trying to meet the needs of women and children.

Facing these challenges, the Commissioners reaffirmed our commitment to fulfill our advocacy role of identifying areas of laws and policies that impact women and girls disparately and advocating for remedies to these inequities. We also reaffirmed our commitment to continue providing meaningful programming to the community.

In January 2012, the Commission hosted the 32nd annual Women’s Legislative Briefing—the largest annual gathering in the State to address the impact of legislation on women. It was a tremendously successful event with more than 600 attendees. One of the highlights of this event included an informative Congressional Panel discussion moderated by Catherine Leggett, Esquire, which addressed women’s issues in the U.S. Congress. Panel members included Senator Benjamin Cardin, Congressman Christopher Van Hollen, Congresswoman Donna Edwards and Congressman John Sarbanes.

In addition, our program planning Committee began working with the Montgomery County Bar Association, Montgomery County Women’s Bar Association and the Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable this year to provide bi-lingual divorce workshops for the community. These workshops have been well attended and are meeting a vast need in the community.

For forty years, the Commission for Women has advocated policies that improve the lives of women and families. As part of that advocacy, the Commission has researched and issued reports on critical issues affecting women such as poverty, immigration, employment, pay equity, and relationship violence.

In July 2012, the Commission celebrated those 40 years of serving the community with a 40th Anniversary Celebration where ten women were added to the Commission’s Women’s History Archives. We were delighted to have former Congresswoman and Ambassador Connie Morella deliver the keynote address at this event and to unveil the new Women’s History Quilt, created by fiber artist Anne Sanderoff-Walker.

As we look forward to the 2013 Fiscal year, the Commission is excited to be able to expand our programming and re-implement counseling services. The County Executive and County Council appropriated \$140,000 to the Commission’s office to provide counseling services. The new program will not re-establish the Commission’s former Counseling Center, but rather will be a

new, innovative (and much smaller) means of providing counseling to a diverse client base. We look forward to sharing more details about this program in the near future.

The Commission's continued success is made possible because of the zeal, diligence, and commitment of the 15 commissioners appointed to serve on the board. It is rewarding to work with such talented and enthusiastic individuals committed to serving our community. It is my pleasure to present the fine work of this board as contained in the Commission's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2012.

Report of the Executive Director Judith Vaughan-Prather

Introduction:

In 1972, the Montgomery County Council passed a law establishing the Montgomery County Commission for Women. That law charges the Commission with the responsibility of advising the County Executive, the County Council, the public, and the agencies of the county, state and federal governments on the issues of concern to women. It is one of over 200 such boards across the country. This past year marks the 40th anniversary of the Commission.

The law provides that there will be 15 commissioners, county residents who are each appointed to three-year terms and serve without compensation. Nine of the commissioners must be endorsed by organizations concerned with women's issues and six must serve independently. The Commission meets in full once per month, and commissioners meet in committees in the interim to work on its projects and initiatives. On the average, it is estimated that commissioners contribute about four hours each week working on behalf of Montgomery County's women and girls.

The Commission was created to advance women's equal and full participation in the benefits, responsibilities and opportunities of society. In achieving its mission, the Commission examines laws, policies, practices and procedures, identifies disparities that impact women and advocates remedies for those disparities. Over its 40-year history, the Commission has undertaken successful and effective initiatives on issues such as educational equity, family equity in the courts, sexual harassment in the workplace, pay equity, workplace flexibility, violence in relationships including teens, immigrant women, domestic workers' rights, single mothers and poverty and much more.

From 1976 until 2011, the Commission for Women also sponsored counseling services, support groups and classes for women experiencing serious life transitions at home and/or at work. The Counseling and Career Center was abolished effective June 30, 2012 due to budget constraints, and Fiscal 2012 has been the first year in 35 when the Commission did not offer a counseling center to the women of this community. However, many residents of the county continued to call seeking services, especially with regard to separation and divorce. In the course of this year, the office responded to over 450 requests for assistance.

For FY 2012 the staff appropriated to the Commission for Women consisted of the Executive Director and an Americorps Intern assigned to the office for one year. Previously an office of the county government, the Commission's office has now been incorporated into the Community Engagement Cluster (CEC), along with the County's five Regional Government Centers and the Office of Community Partnerships. The Commission's office physically moved to the 3rd floor of the Rockville Library, where it shares a suite with the Office of Human Rights, the executive staff of the Office of Community Partnerships and the CEC's Business Management Team (BMT) – four employees who provide “back office functions” to the seven directors whose offices have been incorporated into the CEC. The Commission's Executive Director has been asked to provide on-site supervision for those four employees, in addition to providing staff support and direction to the Commission for Women.

Despite these challenges, the Commission for Women carried out three very successful initiatives: The 2012 Women's Legislative Briefing, a series of four Family Law Seminars, and a celebration of the Commission's 40th Anniversary, and responded to hundreds of individual requests for help. Each of these programs will be described in more detail in this report.

2012 Women's Legislative Briefing

Universities at Shady Grove

January 29, 2012

Planning Committee Chair: Wilma K. Holmes

Commissioner Committee Members: Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Jennifer Cryor Baldwin, Debra Bright Harris, Maliha Ilias, Leticia Mederos, Jaclyn Lichter Vincent

The 32nd annual Women's Legislative Briefing was held at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville on January 29, 2012. The purpose of the event is to inform the residents of the state about legislative proposals before the Maryland General Assembly and the U.S. Congress that address issues of specific concern to women.

The Briefing was attended by almost 700 people from across the region. Eighty women's and community organizations helped organize the program led by the Montgomery County Commission for Women. Exhibitor displays of 30 of these organizations lined the hallways. A pre-briefing networking session offered presidents, chairs and leaders of the state's many women's advocacy organizations to meet and share strategies and priorities.

Kaiser Permanente contributed substantial financial support as the Briefing's Premier Sponsor, joined by AARP as a Major Sponsor.

The opening session included greetings from Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett, Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker, Susan Lee, President of the Women Legislators of Maryland, Marilyn Kawamura, President of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States and Dr. Estella M. Hyde representing AARP.

Catherine Leggett, Esq. Senior Vice President, Human Resources, ICMA- Retirement Corporation, moderated a panel addressing ‘Women’s Issues in the U.S. Congress.’ Panel members included Senator Benjamin Cardin, Congressman Christopher Van Hollen, Congresswoman Donna Edwards and Senator John Sarbanes.

The afternoon offered eight seminars each featuring legislators and prominent advocates. Seminar topics included: Effective Legislative Advocacy; Advocating for Older Women’s Issues; Health Care Reform for Women; Victories for Women in the 2011 Maryland General Assembly; Women in the Public Realm; Women, Families and Poverty; Work and Women; and Safety, Justice and Human Rights.

The Briefing came to a close with a networking reception providing elected officials an opportunity to meet with the conferees at the Briefing.

Program Planning Committee

Family Law Seminars

Planning Committee Chairs: Colleen Kelly and Maliha Ilias

Commissioner Committee Members: Maria Montserrat Alvarado, Vanessa Atterbeary, Nick Martinez, Manar Morales

Community Committee Members: Samantha Kravitz, Esq., Rachel Grossberg, Esq., Sharon Johnson, Esq., P. Lindsay Parvis, Esq., Robert L. Baum, Esq., Nelson Garcia, Esq., John Spiegel, Esq., Amy Griboff, Esq., Kate Scharff, Esq., Jamie Lapin CFC, Sharon Zissman, Esq., Suzanne Ferrero, Esq.

With considerable support from the Family Law Division of the Montgomery County Bar Association, the Montgomery County Women’s Bar Association, family law mediators and financial counselors, the Commission for Women was able to respond to a resident need for access to information about the legal process of separation and divorce.

While career and personal counseling is offered elsewhere in the community for those who can afford it, there is no resource for easily affordable information about how to find and select an attorney, what to expect from the attorney and the courts when a family faces what for many will be their most difficult crisis.

With a focus on striving for a healthy re-structuring of the family, rather than a destruction of the family and its financial resources, the Commission for Women worked with the organizations and professionals in the community who were pushing to re-establish the former counseling center’s programs for divorcing families.

In April, four seminars (one in Spanish) were offered, with a total attendance of almost 100 individuals. Two of the seminars were led by attorneys P. Lindsay Parvis and Robert L. Baum, and two were led by attorney and former commissioner Nelson Garcia. Registration and a modest fee collection was handled through the Eventbrite online registration site.

Attorney Parvis volunteered her time and considerable expertise to develop an outline and Power Point Presentation for two seminars: *An Overview of the Legal Process of Separation and Divorce*; and *What About the Children?* (legal issues such as custody, visitation and support for divorcing families). Commissioner Montserrat Alvarado provided the Spanish translation for the 55-page Power Point Presentation.

Participant evaluations of the seminars were uniformly positive, with many people expressing their appreciation for this program, and commenting on how much better equipped they felt to handle the challenges their families are facing.

While planning for the seminars, the committee also began updating the former counseling center's Guidebook for Separating and Divorcing Families. This work will continue into FY 13 with the hope of publishing the book in English and Spanish on the CFW's website.

Throughout the year, the office of the Commission for Women responded to requests from individuals experiencing serious life crises and transitions. Americorps Project Change assigned an Americorps member to work in the office of the Commission, assisting in general with its various projects, but primarily taking calls from county residents seeking help with problems in their family and their workplace. The Americorps Intern was assigned to the office from September 1, 2011 – August 31, 2012. She handled information requests, and referred callers and walk-ins to resources within the community. She was especially helpful in handling requests for the Commission's "Legal Call Back" program, which was able to continue because of the dedication of a team of volunteer attorneys, willing to receive referrals from the Commission office, and to return the call providing legal information on a variety of cases.

Before the Counseling Center closed at the end of FY 11, a list of referral resources was developed, and it proved useful in FY 12 as people continued to call the Commission's office for advice and assistance. However, many of the calls were from service providers working at the very agencies on the list, seeking to refer clients who could not afford their services, to the Commission for Women's Counseling Center, which they said had become their standard referral source for such cases.

During the 13-month period of July 1, 2011 – August 31, 2012, the staff and intern responded to over 500 calls for assistance:

Total: 504

Individuals Seeking Assistance: 405

Professionals: 58

Other: 41

Types of Requests for Service:

General Counseling: 109
Family Counseling: 89
Specifically requesting Divorce Law Seminars: 56
Career Counseling: 95
Domestic Violence: 21
Request for Counseling in Spanish: 15

Housing Issues: 12
Legal Callback Request Program: 47
Lawyer Representation: 32
General Information/Services: 44
Volunteering/Getting Involved/Internships: 15
Financial Counseling/Assistance: 5

CFW 40th Anniversary

Women's History Archive

July 11, 2012

Committee Co-chairs: Leila Aridi Afas and Jaclyn Lichter Vincent

Committee Members: Chandra Walker Holloway, Larniece McCoy Moore, Jennifer Cryor Baldwin and Maria Montserrat Alvarado

On June 7, 1972, the Montgomery County Council enacted legislation that established the Commission for Women. Forty years later, almost 200 people gathered on July 11, 2012 at the Hilton Hotel in Rockville, to recognize four decades of advocacy and service on behalf of the women and girls of this county.

In 2002, to commemorate its 30th anniversary, the Commission created an Archive of the biographies of 30 women whose lives were of historical significance to Montgomery County.

These honorees include such luminaries as Rachel Carson, the mother of the modern environmental movement who made her home in Silver Spring, and Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross whose historic home graces the Glen Echo area of the county. The Montgomery County Women's History Archive includes educators, judges, the first woman lawyer, and the first woman doctor in the county, and the first woman to represent our county in the U.S. Congress – The Honorable Connie Morella, who provided the keynote address at this event. The Archive also includes Emily Edmonson, a former slave who worked side by side with Frederick Douglas in the abolition movement, but whose contributions were almost lost to history, because she was a woman.

When the Commission for Women first conceived the notion to create a Montgomery County Women's History Archive, the Internet was just beginning its spectacular trajectory into the daily lives of most Americans. The Commissioners in 2002 took advantage of the new technology to make the information in the Archive accessible to anyone.

So, rather than a paper file, the Commission established an “on line archive” - still a relatively new concept at that time - of the biographies of these women so that researchers, whether social scientists, historians or students, could easily find their stories.

Anne Sanderoff-Walker was president of the Commission for Women in 2002, and was fully supportive of using the new technology. But she also knew the importance of continuing and honoring our historically female traditions.

The art of quilting has a long history in America, particularly for women, as do most of the needlecraft and fiber arts. An accomplished fiber artist herself, then-CFW President Sanderoff-Walker (1997 to 2004) created a quilt commemorating the field of accomplishment for each of the 30 outstanding women whose biographies were included in the newly created archive.

This work of art has been proudly displayed at the Commission’s office – and moved with the CFW to find a place of honor with each new location – for the past 10 years. To help commemorate the accomplishments of the 10 new honorees, Ms. Sanderoff-Walker donated the creation of another quilt to be permanently displayed near the first, at the CFW office, to memorialize the contributions of the 10 new honorees, a full eight years after she completed her term on the Commission.

2012 Montgomery County Women’s History Archives Honorees:

The Honorable Sharon V. Burrell: First African American to serve on the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the state’s highest court; she was also the first African American female judge in Montgomery County;

Patricia E. Cornish: Business and Professional Women USA national President; Chair, BPW Foundation; National Committee on Pay Equity Board of Directors, President, Montgomery County Commission for Women; Maryland CFW Chair (2012);

The Honorable Jean B. Cryor: Maryland House of Delegates for three terms (1995 – 2007), fought for the establishment of the Pay Equity Commission; Editor, Publisher, Vice President of Gazette Newspapers; Thornton Commission; Montgomery County Planning Board;

Pamela J. Foltz: First woman in Montgomery County to complete fire recruit school; first female career firefighter in Montgomery County (1979);

Barbara J. Krumsiek: Chair, President and CEO of Calvert Investments, Inc. a socially responsible investment company managing over \$12 billion in assets; led development of first global code of corporate conduct focusing exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide;

Ingrid U. McKee: First female criminal investigator in Montgomery County Police Department; first female “Policeman of the Year” in MCPD; first woman to retire from the Montgomery County Police Force;

Terry A. O’Neill: Feminist attorney, professor and activist for social justice; President of the National Organization for Women (2009), the NOW Foundation, and chair of the NOW Political Action Committee;

Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard: First African American woman President of Montgomery College, Steering Committee; White House Hispanic Community Action Summit, and many other boards;

Carmen Delgado Votaw: Life-long civil and human rights advocate; Director of Government Relations for Girl Scouts of the USA; Council of Foreign Affairs, Maryland Trial Court Judicial Nominating Commission; author of *Puerto Rican Women*;

Eun Yang: Morning news anchor for NBC Washington; host on NBC Washington Nonstop; among the first reporters hired by National Geographic Channel, anchored 2009 blizzard coverage and covered the 2002 sniper shootings.

Each of the ten honorees was presented with a Congressional Citation from Congressman Chris Van Hollen, a certificate from the Commission for Women and an etched crystal vase. The County Executive and the County Council presented a joint proclamation to the Commission for Women, and the Congressman also sent a citation for the Commission. Maryland State Senator Jennie Forehand presented a citation from The Maryland General Assembly and Senator Roger Manno sent a Resolution from the Maryland State Senate, all recognizing the Commission for Women’s 40 years of advocacy and service.

Advocacy Activities:

Throughout the year, the commission for Women addressed other issues through its advocacy and advisory roles. In FY 12, the CFW:

- Was a “power partner” for the 2011 Power Conference, an event designed to help women advance in corporations and to “grow” their own businesses. The CFW’s responsibility was to support the event by assisting with publicity and sharing the announcements with its distribution lists and other contacts;
- Co-sponsored the October 22 F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference, again helping with publicity. This year’s honoree was Maxine Hong Kingston;
- Nominated the late Maryland Delegate and County Planning Board member Jean Cryor for inclusion in the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame; bringing attention to Ms. Cryor’s considerable contributions to the county and state and her advocacy for women and girls;
- Designated Commissioners and staff to serve as liaison members to several other organizations, including the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, the Business and Professional Women, the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women, the Family Justice

Center, the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Task Force, and the National Association of Commissions for Women Board of Directors;

- Submitted written testimony to the County Council on October 19, 2011, in opposition to proposed Bill 29-11 which would have subjected a number of county boards, committees and commissions, including the CFW, to “sunset” provisions;
- Provided a speaker at the annual conference of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women;
- Assisted Discovery Communications in connecting with organizations serving young women of low income for its “Say Yes to the Prom” program;
- Presented testimony by commissioners Ilias, Bright Harris and Alvarado before an audience of at least 100 at the February 23, 2012 annual meeting of the county’s boards, commissions and committees with the County Executive;
- Requested and received a joint proclamation from the County Executive and the County Council for 2012 Women’s History Month;
- Participated in the Montgomery College Women’s Studies Women’s History and Scholarship program on March 27;
- Received a presentation from representatives of Human Rights Matter! about a proposal to establish a sister city relationship between Montgomery County and a community in Israel where significant abuses of women’s human and civil rights have been recently reported, and wrote to the County Executive recommending that women’s human and civil rights be considered in all county partnerships;
- Wrote to the county’s U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives urging opposition to proposed cuts to the U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau;
- Helped Crittenton Services distribute its survey of teen girls, and attended the conference where the results of the survey were announced, highlighting the need for healthier meals in schools, and teen girls’ fear of unplanned pregnancy;
- Wrote in support of state legislation paving the way for the inclusion of a statue of Harriet Tubman in the U.S. Capitol;
- Sent an 11-page report in response to questions submitted to all county boards, committees and commissions by the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB), documenting the CFW’s work, the continued need for the CFW, its accomplishments for the prior two years, the resources required to staff the CFW, and its plans for the future;
- Was represented at the Montgomery College STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) labor force conference, “The Gathering Storm: Rapidly Approaching Category 5,” where discussion focused on the paucity of U.S. students preparing for careers in the STEM fields, and the even greater shortage of woman and most ethnic minorities in the “pipeline,” and the problems this poses for the country’s future industry; the CFW brought the conference to the attention of the county’s Office of Public Information, recommending a link to the video of the conference on the county’s website to make the valuable information presented there more accessible to the public;
- At the request of Alaska State Senator Bettye Davis and the National Association of Commissions for Women, presented testimony by the MC CFW Executive Director via conference call to the April 3, 2012 hearing of the Alaska House State Affairs Committee, in support of Alaska SB53 proposing to re-establish the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women