

Commission

Human Services Agency
505 Poli Street, Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 652-7611

Winter 1998-99



What is the Commission for Women?

The Ventura County Commission for Women was established in 1981 to assist the Board of Supervisors in addressing areas of education & job discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence and other injustices that women face. The Commission serves as advisors to the Board of Supervisors on issues impacting and relating to women, and coordinates efforts with Federal, State and local community groups to improve the quality of life for women.

In addition, at the request of the Board of Supervisors, the Commission will undertake studies or tasks, depending on resources being provided.

Information about social service agencies and organizations in Ventura County can be found on our web page at <http://www.ventura.org/cfw-home.htm>

The web page also has information of general interest to women and families, including links to other sites on the Internet, and will have articles from the current newsletter.

Family Law Forum 1999

The Ninth Annual Family Law Forum sponsored by the Ventura County Commission for Women and co-sponsored by the Ventura County Family Law Bar and the Kiwanis Club of Santa Susana will be held on Saturday, February 27, 1999, at Simi Valley Adult School, 3192 Los Angeles Avenue, Simi. Its purpose is to inform and educate on the subject of divorce and related legal issues. The event is open to the public at no charge. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. A continental breakfast will be served.

Thousand Oaks attorney Susan H. Witting will be the moderator of the Forum. The program begins at 9:00 a.m. and is broken into four sessions: Ventura County Pro Per Clinic Program, Community Rights Property Issues and Rights, Child and Spousal Support, and Support Enforcement.

Ventura County Family Law facilitator, Attorney Gay Conroy will provide information on the Ventura County Pro Per Clinic Program. She will be followed by Thousand Oaks Attorney Cathleen Drury who will address Community Rights Property Issues and Rights. The Honorable Colleen Toy White, Ventura County Superior Court Judge, will discuss Child and Spousal Support. The final session will feature Ventura County Assistant District Attorney Charles Stanley Trom who will focus on the topic of Support Enforcement and Collection.

Time will be allotted for questions and answers from the audience during the program presentations. The forum will conclude at 12:30 p.m.

The Commission has continued to present this forum because of the value of the information given by the speakers. The impact of divorce on women is severe on all members of a family but often women bear the responsibility for untangling the mess

(cont'd on next page)

Who Are The Commissioners?

District 1 (Susan Lacey)

Ruth A. Hibbard
Cecilia Fargo
Jovita Valdez

District 2 (Frank Schillo)

Angie Lavey
Karen Gorback
Vacancy

District 3 (Kathy Long)

Judy Cunningham
Vacancy
Sharon Hillbrant

District 4 (Judy Mikels)

Bonnie Warrington
Lori Zafiroopoulos
Eileen Gordon

District 5 (John Flynn)

Bea Gan
Ruth Ann McAllister
Vacancy

We hope to fill the remaining vacancies soon and be a full, active commission.

so that children can be secure, and the family can function. We are fortunate to be able to rely on local experts who are willing to give so generously of their time to present this information.

Commissioners Reach Out

Ventura County Commission members have been attending meetings both locally and in adjoining Los Angeles County. Sharon Hillbrant has been keeping up with the new Mentor Council formed to help women who use CALWorks be successful in finding and keeping jobs. Judy Cunningham is watching the efforts to organize Clothes Closets in the communities of the county. Ruth Hibbard is working with the League of Women Voters on the study of CALWorks, especially the Job and Career Centers. Sharon Hillbrant has participated in two seminars in Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Commission for Women's all day conference "Empowering Your Life 2000 and Beyond;" and the 1998 Governor's Conference, "Call to Action." Lori Zafiroopoulos also was involved in the Governor's Conference.

The following are reports from these Commissioners on their activities.

Mentor Council

Commissioner Hillbrant reported that an \$80,000 grant was received on November 1, 1998. This covers 200 CALWorks people, with social workers now involved. Of these, 75 are currently employed and 125 are seeking employment. The Mentor Council will write a book on mentoring. The Mentor Council continues to meet the last Friday of the month at 8 a.m. at the United Way Building in Camarillo.

Clothes Closets

Judy Cunningham reports that Soroptomists will sponsor Clothes Closets in most communities. Right now, Connie Clay is organizing the Simi Clothes Closet, and needs donations of clothing. In the future there may be a donation collection spot at the County Government Center.

League CALWorks Study

The local study committee of the League of Women Voters of Ventura County has had several interviews and meetings with people who have given us background information and the current picture. We have met nearly all of the Directors of the One-Stop Job and Career Centers, and toured the Center in Oxnard. This facility is impressive in the use of computers, with Internet access for job-seekers--to look at available jobs, and to post a resume. Several computers are available for writing and printing letters of introduction and resumes.

For the CALWorks clients, a team of CALWorks people and their "partners" decide what the needs of each client are, what the barriers to employment and self-sufficiency are and how best to address these. "Partners" are people who supply child support assistance, housing, child care, drug and alcohol treatment programs, transportation help--just about every service the county and state can offer.

League members plan to interview people in the areas impacting CALWorks clients during the first year of this two-year study. (Child care, housing, business, education, etc.) We plan to become involved, in an on-going monitoring and advisory capacity, at each of the One-Stop Job and Career Centers, as has been suggested by Randy Feltman, coordinator of the Ventura County CALWorks program.

Los Angeles County Commission for Women

"Empowering Your Life 2000 and Beyond," an all day conference sponsored by the Los Angeles Commission for Women and the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, was held Saturday, October 17, 1998, at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration in Los Angeles. Commission Vice President Janet E. Mummey, Esq., chaired the event which was free to the public and geared toward mid life and older women. Over 350 women attended.

Following the opening remarks, Dr. Pamela R. Kushner presented "The Little Old Lady - A Destiny or A Decision" which focused on preventing osteoporosis. She cited statistics showing one out of two women who had broken hips died as a result of complications.

Two series of workshops were held during the morning. The first offered the topics "How Can You Afford the Rest of Your Life?", "Grandparents as Parents" and "What Are My Rights?" These were followed by "Mind, Body, Spirit, Part I" (focusing on Alzheimer's and other geriatric diseases), "Who's Managing Your Care (HMOs, Insurance and Care Facilities), and "Elder Abuse: Creating Solutions." Question and answer sessions were incorporated into each workshop.

A catered lunch on the Mall featured activist Gloria Allred, Esq. Introduced by Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, Ms. Allred spoke on "Older, Wiser & Fighting for our Rights."

Concluding workshops featured experts on "The Strengths and Needs of Ethnic Populations," "Mind, Body, Spirit, Part 2: New Therapies for a New Age," and "Taking Charge of Your Life."

Call to Action

On October 8, 1998, over 7,000 women gathered at the Long Beach Convention Center to participate in the seventh annual 1998 Governor's Conference for Women, "A Call to Action." Thirty six workshops covering twelve topics including corporate leadership, careers for the 21st century, health, finance, politics, children, education and the future, were scheduled in three sessions. Various experts participated in the panel discussions and the question and answer sessions which followed. The exhibit hall was filled with booths sponsored by organizations who concern themselves with issues of primary interest to women. Over 20 women authors made themselves available to sign their books during the conference. Corporate sponsors such as ARCO, Eil Lilly & Co., KNX Radio, Pacific Bell, and Wells Fargo whose policies encourage the promotion of women to upper management positions bought tables for the event. During the luncheon five California women who have overcome serious obstacles to achieve an education were presented with Opportunity Scholarships to complete their studies. The keynote speakers were editor Anthea Disney, journalist Diane Sawyer and actress Linda Evans. Hosts were Gayle Wilson and TV anchor Laura Diaz. Governor Wilson in closing said he hoped the incoming governor would continue this tradition.

Women Leaders Wanted

Newly elected Governor Gray Davis has assembled a team that is seeking women leaders for appointments. The State of California Commission on the Status of Women with the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Re-

search, and the National Women's Political Caucus of California have formed a Coalition for Women. Its mission is to develop and deliver programs, products and services designed to serve women of California. One of these services is to provide a list of women leaders. There are 3000 appointments to be filled and the goal is to have women fully represented. Locally, former Commissioner Judy Bysshe has been informing 400 combined individual women and women's organizations of opportunities in the fields of health and education.

If anyone is interested who hasn't heard about this massive effort, please call Judy Bysshe at 648-3224.



"Every Child a Wanted Child"

This is a season of celebrating with joy and peace our blessings at the end of one year and the beginning of another. An appropriate blessing to contemplate--especially for women--is the knowledge that in America, at least, we now have the legal right to plan our families so that every child that comes to that family is received with joy and delight. It is not an unthreatened right, but it still exists. Much of the thanks for that goes to Margaret Sanger.

The sixth of eleven children of a poor Irish family, Margaret saw her own mother die at the age of 49 of tuberculosis as the result of too many pregnancies wearing her health down. She trained as a nurse and worked in maternity care in the Lower East Side of New York, delivering babies in the homes of poor, mostly immigrant women. Comstock laws prevented any

discussion of birth control methods, even if doctors were willing to do so.

"Tales," Sanger wrote, "were poured into my ears--a baby born dead, great relief--the death of an older child, sorrow but again relief of a sort--the story told a thousand times of death from abortion and children going into institutions. I shuddered with horror as I listened to the details and studied the reasons back of them-- destitution linked with excessive childbearing. The waste of life seemed utterly senseless."

From these experiences, Sanger began a crusade that was ultimately successful, but never easy. She opened a birth control clinic; the police closed it. She advertised a speech about the issue; the police surrounded the lecture hall and refused to let her in. She persevered in spite of these and many other, more personal setbacks. To read more about her and her crusade, use the internet--either at home or your local library or cybercafe. Start with the Planned Parenthood site:

www.plannedparenthood.org.htm. Or go to the Margaret Sanger research project site: www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger.htm. There you can view her own writings and speeches, see a photo album, or read articles about her. You can even order a video!

New Websites to Check Out

The President's Commission on the Status of Women
www.cup.edu/women/pcw.htm

National Association of Commissions for Women
www.nacw.org

The White House Project
www.thewhitehouseproject.org