

Commission

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

Winter 1997-98



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.

Commissioners Refocus at Fall Retreat

Facilitated by Wahneata Poteat, a daylong retreat in August at Commissioner Gorbach's home has given the Ventura County Commission for Women a means to refocus on our mission. As a group we are fairly new to our role as advisors to the Board, although even the newest Commissioners have had experience serving on community service organization. But our retreat was a way to look in depth at the original mission, the resources the first Commissioners had, and how much of that original mission we can fulfill with the resources available to us now.

The retreat began with the philosophical--what we hoped when we agreed to serve--and ended with some very practical steps we need to take to establish what we *can* do. In

addition to procedural steps to ensure that administrative duties are carried out without the help of a staff, we began a discussion on ways to assist all Commissioners to understand the importance of full participation. An Orientation Packet will be developed, which will be given to each member who has not had one, and a mentor assigned from the Commission in the future to help new Commissioners understand the packet and their role on the Commission. In addition, it became very clear that we needed to devote some time to revising the bylaws. This project alone has taken several meetings of intense discussion to complete, with Commissioners Gorbach and Zafiropoulos revising and re-revising after each discussion. The final bylaws will need to be approved by the Board of Supervisors before they become effective.

The process of revising the bylaws gave us a great deal of insight into what our role should be, given the
(cont'd on next page)

Who Are The Commissioners?

District 1 (Susan Lacey)

Ruth A. Hibbard
Monica McGrath
Roberta Payan

District 2 (Frank Schillo)

Mara Antos
Karen Gorbach
Corazon Ortiguerra

District 3 (Kathy Long)

Judy Cunningham
Lois Harrion
Sharon Hillbrant

District 4 (Judy Mikels)

Bonnie Warrington
Lori Zafiropoulos
Eileen Gordon

District 5 (John Flynn)

Bea Gan
Vacant
Ruth Ann McAllister

We hope to fill the remaining vacancy soon.

(Retreat, cont'd from front page)

restrictions on spending money, and the lack of administrative staff. Having a Web Page, developed by Commissioner Hibbard and reformatted and published on the Web by Russ Sperry, the Ventura County Web Coordinator, gives one very new and important way to have a presence in the community. This printed newsletter will continue to be produced in limited quantities four times a year, but distribution will be done by each Commissioner, as they are able through other organizations, libraries or possibly other bulletin boards. Our main focus for each year will continue to be special projects, such as the Family Law Forum, and having a booth at the Creative Options Day. But there are other possibilities for special projects, which continue to be under discussion.

What YOU Can Do!

Get Involved--somewhere on one of the issues that matter to YOU!

If you see an opportunity for women, let us know about it, or talk to other women you know. If you see an inequity or injustice to women, call it to the attention of the organization most likely to be able to work toward a solution. Call, or write letters to legislators; write letters to the editor; join organizations that work in an area you care about--there really is power in numbers.

Call the Commission for Women for more information about organizations and services for women: 805-652-7611.

Commission Hears about New Welfare Reform Impact in County

Randall Feltman, Deputy Director of Welfare Reform Implementation for Ventura County brought information and insight to the Commission meeting in September. The Commission had asked him to give us as much basic information about the new laws as was possible in the time available, to tell us what Ventura County is proposing to do to assist welfare reform, and to help us discuss what our role as a Commission for Women could be in welfare reform. He brought along printouts for us to keep for reference in further discussions.

Mr. Feltman enlightened us with the following information: 8600 families in Ventura County currently receive financial aid; two-thirds of these people are children and 80 to 85% of the adults are women; the most profound changes in the law are the elimination of the entitlement, and that there is now a five-year lifetime limit and 18-month initial work requirement. In addition, he pointed out that many of the social problems we face in our county are tied to poverty; the current program is designed for women with children; the ethnic distribution for the program is 58% Hispanic, 33% Anglo, 5.5% African American, 3.5% other; the aid recipients are generally not working due to a lack of child care, lack of job skills, limited English language proficiency, lack of reliable transportation. To a lesser extent, some of the aid recipients are not working due to poor health, drug addiction, or alcohol addiction. Some of the risks to the county from the changes in the law are increased cash assistance costs and loss

of federal/state funding when people are dropped off the system--if they are still unable to care for themselves, they cannot be left lying in the streets, so the County will be required to fill the gap.

The key policy changes outlined by Mr. Feltman that the County plan for implementing the new laws are: a job-oriented culture and environment with eight to ten community based "One Stop Job-to-Career Centers to replace "welfare offices"; a "work first" strategy, i.e., get a job, get a better job, get a career;" economic development/strategic planning to develop Cal Works employment opportunities; community involvement and organization; individualized levels of self sufficiency services; Pride Teams, regional, multi-agency, integrated of readiness teams; a coordinated network of public and private support services and resources.

Suggestions for the role of the Commission that Mr. Feltman brought to us at our request were: public education about the new laws, recruitment of volunteers who will be needed to bring about the changes effectively, the promotion of specific programs, recognizing volunteers, presenting public forums, and conducting statistical studies. These and other ideas continue to be analyzed for feasibility as projects for the Commission.

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newsletter.**