

**Minutes from the
St. Mary's County Commission for Women
Annual Retreat
July 23, 2011
Solomons Maryland**

The meeting was called to order in the all-purpose room of the Solomons Methodist Church at 9:00 am by Vice-Chair Juanita Nether. Those attending were: Meredith Wilkins-Arnold, Krisanne Bentley, Kyle Bishop, Terry Hall, Marta Kelsey, Denise Krumenacker, Juanita Nether, and Jamilliah Thomas. Sharisse Swales, Katie Werner, Gretchen Hardman and Stephanie Figeroux were unable to attend.

After coffee and breakfast of scones, introductions were made, welcoming our newest members, Kyle Bishop and Terry Hall. Juanita then reviewed the annual report, summarizing what we accomplished last year in order to give our new members an idea of what the Commission does and to refresh everyone's memory. It was a busy year.

We held a Retreat to plan for the coming year, attended a Commissioner's Meeting for a proclamation declaring August 26 Women's Equality Day in honor of the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote in this country. In October we attended Commissioner's meetings for proclamations against Domestic Violence and Breast Cancer Awareness. In November, members of the CFW visited the Veterans Home in Charlotte Hall, presented all women veterans and spouses of veterans with flowers and a certificate of appreciation from the Commissioners. In December, we held a holiday party and collected personal items such as shampoo and nail polish to take to the Veterans Home to be used as Bingo prizes during the year. In February, a number of CFW members attended the Women's Health Fair sponsored by the Health Department and the Delicados and provided information on Domestic Violence. March, Women's History month, again saw us at the Commissioner's meeting for a proclamation declaring March Women's History Month. Later in the month we held our annual banquet honoring a Life-time Achievement award, a Woman of the Year award, and a Woman of Tomorrow award to outstanding women in our county, and also recognizing all those who were nominated. The banquet was also an opportunity to raise funds for our scholarship for a returning woman to CSM. Throughout the year a member of the CFW attended meetings of the Family Violence Coordinating Council. Two members also worked on setting up oral interviews with women in the county to preserve the work they have done. Work was also begun on our Healthy Relationships Initiative to be held in conjunction with the St. Mary's County Public Schools in the 2011-2012 school year. For details, see our annual report.

We then held an election of officers for the coming year. The Board is as follows: Juanita Nether, Chair; Marta Kelsey, Vice Chair, Katie Werner, Secretary.

Meredith then led a discussion of the Pioneering Rules introduced during Michelle Howard's key note talk at our March banquet. The rules are:

1. Stay committed to the journey.
2. Travel light.
3. Develop stamina.
4. Surround yourself or stay connected with other women.
5. Keep your sense of humor ... and sense of self.

Members then shared some of their experiences and guiding principals which have kept them focused. Terry recounted how she kept her high school aged daughter focused with:

- F – Failure is not an option
- O – Take advantage of opportunities
- C – Can't look at
- U – Ugly boys
- S – Success!

Krisanne offered three questions she asks herself when confronted with obstacles and difficult situations.

1. Can I control it → through coping strategies
2. If I can, will it matter 5 years from now.
3. What is the best way to handle it.

Meredith contributed that she has learned to respond vs. react to situations. Responding with an “Oh!” rather than immediate criticism or disagreement.

We were joined for lunch by Norma Pipkin, former chair of the CFW whose term limit has been reached. Norma gave us a status report on the Healthy Relations Initiative. The initiative revolves around a presentation give by the College of Southern Maryland's “Cause Theatre”. The presentation, “Don't U Luv Me?”, deals with the issue of unhealthy relationships in a high school setting. Norma, Juanita and Marta attended the presentation and felt that it would be very valuable for all high school students to see. We wrote a letter to the superintendent of schools, urging that this issue be addressed as Bullying was addressed last year. The school system has agreed and the CFW, with funds from last years budget, has purchased over 300 copies of the script, enough so that each 9th Grade English teacher will have a class set of scripts which can be used in future years as well. 9th graders will read the play and Cause Theatre will give two presentations in each of the high schools as well as an evening performance for the community. Our task now is to assist with paying the royalty fees for the performances and, hopefully giving the Cause Theatre some small stipend for their contributions. Norma has contacted a foundation which sounds very interested in our project and we will write a grant application to the foundation for funding. Norma has done an **OUTSTANDING JOB** on this project, keeping it on the table and getting everyone together.

We then discussed what our priorities should be for the coming year. We decided to continue to initiate the proclamations during the year, with members coming whenever

possible. We will also visit the Veteran's Home and various wellness days. The Banquet will be March 22, 2012 and will hopefully help us to fund the scholarship further and perhaps other projects as well. We will also pursue grant funding for the Healthy Relationships Initiative.

We set dates for various activities and a calendar will be distributed at our next meeting.

Meredith asked if we could hold our meetings on the 2nd Monday of the Month, (vs. the 3rd Monday) because she has an on-going conflict through work and has to leave the meetings early. All in attendance agreed that this was doable. Meredith will check with Sharisse, Katie, Gretchen and Stephanie to see if this will work for them.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marta Kelsey, Acting Secretary

P.S. Meredith did check and everyone agreed to the change in meeting date.

**OUR NEXT MEETING THEREFORE IS AUGUST 8TH
5:30 PM, ROOM 14, POTOMAC OFFICE BUILDING
SEE YOU THEN ☺**