



**Santa Cruz County
Women's Commission
2009 Annual Report**

I. Role of the Commission

The Women's Commission is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues concerning inequalities of rights and opportunities and the means to remedy those inequalities for all people, with a specific focus on women. The Commission acts as a vehicle for conveying the concerns of women in the community to the Board of Supervisors. The concerns are gathered through public meetings and through reviewing information regarding women on international, national, and local levels.

Pursuant to Santa Cruz County Code Section 2.80.050, the purpose of the Commission is to advise and assist the Board of Supervisors in its efforts to achieve a parity of equal rights and opportunities on behalf of all people of Santa Cruz County. In carrying out its duties, the Commission may undertake to do all of the following:

- A. Advise the Board of Supervisors on matters affecting any current inequalities suffered by citizens of this County.
- B. Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to rectify any such inequalities.
- C. Make available to the public information and resources concerning equal rights and opportunities. The Commission shall also maintain a current file of services and resources useful to the community.
- D. Review the Santa Cruz County's Affirmative Action plan and policies and recommend to the Board of Supervisors and the Affirmative Action Commission any revisions which may be necessary to eliminate employment discrimination against women.
- E. Review Santa Cruz County rules and job descriptions and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and to the Civil Service Commission, as necessary, to assure that any unnecessary barriers to the employment of women are removed.
- F. Study the present and projected needs of women. Develop comprehensive goals to achieve present solutions and effective future planning.
- G. Review pending Federal and State Legislation, which would impact upon women and, where appropriate, advise the Board of Supervisors of its recommendations.

Exercise any other responsibilities related to the needs and concerns of women as set forth in the Commission's bylaws as approved by the Board of Supervisors.



II. Meeting Dates, Time, and Location

The Women’s Commission met the second Thursday of every month from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Government Center at 701 Ocean Street, Room 510 in Santa Cruz with the exception of the December meeting where they met informally to discuss current events. In lieu of a regular meeting in March, the commission held a Reception Honoring Exceptional Women who have been recognized by the Commission during the last twenty years. In September, the Commission held four evening work sessions to work on recommendations for the report on the Status of Women and Girls in Santa Cruz County. The Commission did not meet in July.

III. Commission Structure

The Women’s Commission is comprised of ten members representing five districts. The Board of Supervisor’s appoints two Commissioners for each district. To facilitate commission meetings, Co-chairs are elected annually. The co-chairs are Diana Moreno-Inman (4th District) and Laurel Keeffe (5th District). The Commission members as of December 31, 2009 are:

District	Commissioners
1 st District	Ariel Serre, Vacant
2 nd District	Kaki Rusmore, Kymberly Lacrosse
3 rd District	Stephanie Milton, Ali Spickler
4 th District	Joanne de los Reyes-Hilario, Diana Moreno-Inman
5 th District	Sheila De Lany, Laurel Keeffe

The following Commissioners either completed their terms, resigned, or were replaced in the last year: Robin Spring, Phyllis Greenleaf.

IV. Commission Staff

The Commission is supported by a ten hour per week staff person (Mary Thuerwachter)– the Commission Coordinator. The Coordinator takes minutes, prepares correspondence, publicizes Commission activities, provides information and referral for community members and represents the Commission in some of the Commission activities.

V. Attendance

Chart is on next page



V. Annual Goals and Accomplishments

The goals and objectives of the Commission are reviewed on an annual basis. The Commission's activities are influenced by the Commission mandate, emerging needs as expressed by the community and identified by Commissioners. Our Mission Statement is as follows:

The Santa Cruz County Women's Commission is a non-partisan advisory board that serves to advance the causes of all women. Toward that end, the Commission influences public policy by advising and working with the Board of Supervisors and the County on issues impacting women and girls, educating and informing its constituencies, and providing opportunities that empower women and girls to make their maximum contribution to society.

Summary of Objectives

The Women's Commission's objective is to be a credible, visible, community-based entity that advises the Board of Supervisors and serves women and girls in Santa Cruz County in the following ways:

- 1) Provide a safe and appropriate place for women to express community concerns
- 2) Provide an accessible and comprehensive clearinghouse for community resources and information
- 3) Initiate collaborations, bringing together needs and resources to inspire community action
- 4) Provide opportunities for leadership development and service
- 5) Take an active role in advancing Local, State, and Federal Legislation that positively affects women and their families.

Below are brief descriptions of the Commission's activities in support of the objectives identified above:

1) Provide a safe and appropriate place for women to express community concerns

Goal 1.1: Maintain a full and active Commission

Activities

In support of keeping the public informed of the Commission's activities, increasing Commission visibility, and attracting potential Commissioners the Commission did the following:

- ▶ Sponsored the following events:
 - Exhibit and Reception at County Building Honoring Twenty Years of Exceptional Women in Santa Cruz County
 - Reel Work Labor Film Festival in April – Speaker – Anu Menon – San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women on implementation on the Convention Against Discrimination Against Women in San Francisco
 - Reel Work Labor Film Festival – Films – Wilmar Eight – on striking female bank workers and Poto Mitan – on Haitian women fighting poverty
 - Annual Trailblazer Awards
- ▶ Represented the Commission, various Commissioners attended and participated in the following events:



- Expanding Your Horizons – workshop for girls 8-12 in hands-on Math and Science – Commissioner De Lany
 - International Women’s Day brunch hosted by Commissioner Rusmore
 - Reproductive Rights Network Brunch -Commissioners Rusmore and DeLany
 - Human Rights Network Dinner celebrating United Nations Day – Commission Coordinator, Commissioner DeLany
 - Community Programs Funding Task Force – Commissioners Moreno-Inman, Lacrosse, Spickler, Greenleaf, Serre and de los Reyes-Hilario
- ▶ Developed and utilized extensive e-mail list and sent press releases to reach the widest audience for special commission events and meetings.
 - ▶ Maintained the Commission web page, which provides information on Commission activities.
 - ▶ Utilized interns and volunteers through the County’s Volunteer Initiative Program to support various Commission projects including the Status on Women and Girls Report (SOWAG).
 - ▶ Maintained the Commission Bulletin Board outside of the Commission office to include the Commission’s Annual Report and information on Commission Activities.
 - ▶ Maintained updates on legislative issues and current events concerning women.

2) Initiate collaborations, bringing together needs and resources to inspire community action

Goal 2.1: Support Public Policy that promotes equity

Activities

- ▶ Commissioners DeLany, Lacrosse and Serre presented highlights of latest sections of the SOWAG report to the Board of Supervisors uncovering startling information on local women’s earnings as compared to men and amazing income disparities between women and men with higher education.
- ▶ Commissioners Moreno Inman and Lacrosse presented highlights of the SOWAG report at the Human Rights Day Fair events in both Watsonville and Santa Cruz.
- ▶ This last year the majority of the Commission’s efforts were directed toward the completion of a Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Santa Cruz County (SOWAG). The purpose of the SOWAG Report is to develop a body of reliable data on women and girls, and to use that data to recommend programs, policies, and practices that advance women’s rights at the County level. The report focuses on six areas: economic justice, violence against women, political participation, healthcare, criminal justice, and education. Each area examines the ways economic status, age, and ethnicity affect women as well as explores other key questions.

The Commission’s SOWAG Taskforce developed a set of questions for each area using input from local women affected by these issues, leaders involved in community-based programs, government agencies, and UCSC and Cabrillo professors and interns. Once the questions were completed the data collection began. Due to limited resources the Taskforce used an impressive team of interns to collect data from existing sources such as the Census Report, CAP (Community Assessment Project), and other State and Countywide studies. In addition, Taskforce members



and interns conducted focus groups and interviews with diverse groups of women and girls throughout the County to supplement the data with *real life* testimony.

The Commission is in the process of taking the raw data collected in each of the six report areas and compiling it into a user friendly, data rich document that will be useful to governing bodies for review of policy changes as they affect women and girls. The report will also aid groups seeking funding by providing current data which document areas of need for women and girls in the County. Each section of the report will include statistics, narratives, and personal testimony, with the intention of providing valuable information for policy makers, grant makers, and service providers. The report will also include recommendations for addressing any inequities in Santa Cruz County as identified in the report. A summary of the highlights from the sections on criminal justice, economic justice and education were presented to the Board of Supervisors at its meeting on May 5, 2009.

Funding for the report has been received from:

- Santa Cruz County Community Foundation's Mihalik Fund
- Soroptimist International of Santa Cruz County
- United Nations Association

These funds have been earmarked for costs to produce and distribute the Executive Summary in English and Spanish.

► CEDAW (The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) has been a longtime commitment and project of the Women's Commission, and the SOWAG Report is intended to serve as a tool to highlight the areas in the County where CEDAW would be an effective remedy. The CEDAW Taskforce evolved into the SOWAG Taskforce and continued its work through the preparation of the SOWAG Report. CEDAW, a U.N. Treaty that has been ratified by over 186 countries with the exception of the United States, has languished in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for well over twenty years. In response to the delay, women's groups nationwide have initiated efforts to ratify and implement CEDAW on a local level – County-by-County and State-by-State.

Implementing CEDAW at the local level involves a proactive examination of policies and procedures already in place -- an effort involving the cooperation of local government, community groups, and citizens. Depending on the resources available to the County, this effort can take different forms. San Francisco, the first County/City to implement CEDAW locally, chose to involve governmental departments in a gender analysis of their employment practices, budget allocations and service delivery. They found that the gender analysis process created sensitivity (previously nonexistent) to gender-related issues. Inequities were and continue to be identified and addressed through policy revisions, education and sometimes the reallocation of funds.

► In April, the Commission sponsored an evening at the Reel Work Labor Film Festival featuring Anu Menon, a speaker from the Commission on the Status of Women in San Francisco on the implementation of CEDAW in San Francisco. This discussion led to a United Nations Association Dinner focusing on CEDAW, leading to passage of CEDAW legislation by the California Senior Legislature and sponsorship of CEDAW legislation by Assemblyman Monning.



3) Provide an accessible and comprehensive clearinghouse for community resources and information.

Goal 3.1: Invited speakers to inform the Commission and the community on resources and vital information concerning the status of women in the County.

Activities

- ▶ This last year the Commission heard the following speakers:
 - Former Member of Board of Supervisors – Jan Beautz – on women in leadership
 - Carmen Herrera Mansir – El Pajaro Community Redevelopment Corporation, which includes a business incubator for a large number of childcare agencies. Most clients are Latino. Trainings include business planning and financial literacy
 - Sister Sheila – Central Coast Coalition - Focus on human trafficking where victims are primarily women and children
 - Pat Bakalian – Campaign for Gender Equality – Focus on gender issues including support for Presidential Commission on Women
 - Simon Reynaud – Finance Director – Santa Cruz Women’s Health Center – on the safety net of health services for women and children in light of state budget cuts
 - Carla Collins – CARDEA Project of Santa Clara County – met with the Commission at one of its August work sessions and reviewed SOWAG report sections and recommendations

4) Provide opportunities for leadership development and service

Goal 4.1: Honor extraordinary women in a unique and powerful way.

Activities

EXHIBIT AND RECEPTION HONORING EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN

In celebration of International Women’s Day and International Women’s History month, the Santa Cruz County Women’s Commission will be holding a Reception on March 12, 2009 at 5:30 on the First Floor of the County Building located at 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz. The keynote speaker will be Bettina Aptheker, activist, professor at UCSC of African American Women’s History and creator of the series, Introduction to Feminisms. An exhibit will feature a retrospective on women honored by the Women’s Commission during the last two decades and featured twelve women and what they are doing now and their thoughts on the status of women.

Bettina Aptheker
 Marge Franz
 the late Honorable Kathleen Akao
 Jo Kenny
 Gloria Nieto
 Celia Organista

Valley Women’s Club (Nancy Macy)
 Judy Darnell
 Maria Castro
 Dee O’Brien
 Tracye Lea Lawson
 Lillian Roybal Rose



ANNUAL HONORING OF TRAILBLAZERS

This last year the Commission sponsored the fourth *Annual Honoring of Trailblazers*, a ceremony honoring the women who have helped to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for women was held at the Horticulture Center of Cabrillo College in September and was well attended by community members (about 90 people). The Commission solicited nominations from throughout the community, making the selection process very competitive.

Honorees included this year were:

LaVerne Coleman for Health - Support of women with cancer through WomenCare

Krissi Durant for Criminal Justice – Sheriff's Sexual Assault Unit

Bernice Belton for Political Participation - Advocacy for social justice

Kelli Kopek for Economic Justice - Support of at-risk women and children

Laura Hinck for Domestic Violence - Support of survivors of abuse

Dena Taylor for Education - Empowering women through Fast Track to Work

Goal 4.2: Expand leadership opportunities to all women.

Activities

The Commission, through its work on the SOWAG Report, recruited more volunteers and community members than in the previous seven or more years. Thanks to the VIP (Volunteer Initiative Program), the Commission has benefited from active volunteers working on various aspects of the SOWAG Report. Many of these volunteers are/were student interns, who now have a better understanding of local government. One of the current commissioners started as a volunteer working on the SOWAG report.

Below is a list of the dedicated volunteers/interns that worked with the SOWAG Taskforce, along with members of the Commission, this last year. Those with an (A) next to their name actively worked toward the publication of the SOWAG Report in 2009.

- ★ Tacy Abbott
- ★ Sean Aten
- ★ Carmen Ausserer
- ★ Melanie Marie Ayres
- ★ Jennifer Bragar (A)
- ★ Michelle Bishai
- ★ Jill Cavanaugh
- ★ Naomi Chapman
- ★ Sheila De Lany (A)



- ★ Arnechia Dynes
- ★ Nathalie Fayad (A)
- ★ Shelly Grabe (A)
- ★ Ninder Grewal (A)
- ★ Hayley Goerisch
- ★ Evelyn Hall
- ★ Meghan Herning
- ★ Michele Hoss
- ★ Laurel Keefe (A)
- ★ Kymberly Lacrosse
- ★ Liza Ann Lazarus
- ★ Gisela Leitermann (A)
- ★ Jamie McPike
- ★ Candice Millhollen
- ★ Dana Montoro
- ★ Diana Moreno-Inman (A)
- ★ Huong Nguyen
- ★ Kaki Rusmore (A)
- ★ Ariel Serre (A)
- ★ Jessica Schindler
- ★ Priti Shah
- ★ Gillian Silver
- ★ Sarah Sterne
- ★ Tania Velazquez
- ★ Byrnyne Wangara
- ★ Kathy Weidlich

In addition, countless experts from both non-profit groups and governmental agencies have provided insights and data and reviewed sections of the report for accuracy. Similar commissioned reports have been produced at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars. While this report relies on community volunteers.

5) Take an active role in advancing Local, State, and Federal Legislation that positively affects women and their families.

Goal 5.1: Alert State and Local Legislators on upcoming Local, State, and Federal Legislation pertaining to women and family issues.

Activities

Commissioner Spickler reported to the Commission on the budget crisis as developments occurred and both proposed and enacted state legislation.

VI. Future Goals and Recommendations

- Publish the Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Santa Cruz County
- Continue working toward Local, State, and National ratification and implementation of CEDAW (Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)
- Maintain representation at the National and State of Coalitions of Women's Commissions



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- Monitor legislation that impacts women and girls.
 - Continue to explore ways to increase Commission visibility and access.
 - Continue to collaborate with other community organizations and resources to further the Commission's objectives.
 - Create the Commission's Strategic Action Plan for 2010-2015.
 - Follow up on the SOWAG Report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Thuerwachter,
Women's Commission Coordinator