

Commission

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

Spring 1998



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 the Commission for Women 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. In the future we hope to include referrals to local government and private non-profit organizations which provide services to women and families in this county.

Creative Options Day

Several Commissioners participated in Creative Options Day at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks on March 7, 1998. Bea Gann and Ruth Hibbard arrived early to set up materials at our table. The auditorium was bustling with activity inside and out, with many women representing their groups at tables ranged along both sides. We brought the Commission brochures, a booklet about employer child care, and our Winter Newsletter. We shared a table with the National Women's Political Caucus and the Ventura County Professional Women's Network. The list of co-sponsors is long, and the variety of community service and professional organizations impressive.

The keynote speaker for the event was Ann Bancroft, who led a four-women team to the South Pole, after first being part of a team that went to the North Pole. Ms. Bancroft has been a physical education teacher,

as well as explorer and lecturer. She emphasized the connections she and her team made before leaving with school children who kept track of the progress of the team throughout the expedition. Her story was told with humor and honesty about the incredible accomplishment of skiing long days in sub-zero weather pulling 200 lbs. each. It was a fitting inspiration for the many women who come to this day of workshops to reassess and take charge of their lives.

President Judith Cunningham and Lori Zafiropoulos attended workshops. At the end of the day they completed our responsibilities by picking up the materials remaining at the table.

(See inside for note about Creative Options unique fund-raising event this fall--a weekend retreat for women at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort, above San Luis Obispo.)

Who Are The Commissioners?

District 1 (Susan Lacey)

Ruth A. Hibbard
Vacant
Roberta Payan

District 2 (Frank Schillo)

Vacant
Karen Gorback
Corazon Orteguerra

District 3 (Kathy Long)

Judith Cunningham
Lois Harrion
Sharon Hillbrant

District 4 (Judy Mikels)

Bonnie Warrington
Lori Zafiropoulos
Eileen Gordon

District 5 (John Flynn)

Bea Gan
Dorothy Maron
Ruth Ann McAllister

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

Women's Suffrage in America 1848- 1920

A summary of events leading to the passage of the 19th Amendment

- Starting from the Seneca Falls Convention in a Seneca Falls, New York church, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton insisted on including the right to vote in the Declaration of Sentiments, the struggle lasted 72 years.
- Women were fighting for other rights--to own their personal property, to keep their children after divorce, their earnings and their inherited property--but quickly realized these would be nearly impossible to achieve without the vote.
- Carrie Chapman Catt, in looking back on the struggle, said: "It is doubtful if any man, even among suffrage men, ever realized what the suffrage struggle came to mean to women before the end was allowed in America. How much of time, patience, how much work, energy and aspiration, how much faith, how much hope, how much despair went into it. It leaves its mark on one, such a struggle. It fills the days and rides the nights. Working, eating, drinking, sleeping, it is there. Not all women in all the States of the Union were in the struggle. There were some women in every State who knew nothing about it. But most women in all the States were at least on the periphery of its effort and interest when they were not in the heart of it. To them all its success became a monumental thing."
- Two women led the struggle in the beginning, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton was

incensed by the refusal of the men at an anti-slavery convention in London to allow women to speak. Along with a handful of friends, she switched her considerable talents to working for women's rights, especially suffrage

- Susan B. Anthony was a young idealistic Quaker, raised on a farm. She had worked as a teacher, been promoted to headmistress and was deeply dissatisfied with the treatment of women teachers. She tried working as a paid agent for the temperance movement, but this was run by men and they would not accept a woman leader.

- Soon after Anthony met Mrs. Stanton, they began a lifelong friendship and working relationship that brought the fight for women's suffrage and many legal and property rights from the radical fringe to respectability. They formed the National Women's Suffrage Association in 1869 to fight for a national suffrage amendment.

- The American Women's Suffrage Association, headed by Lucy Stone, and focused on a state by state effort, had some successes and some failures. In July 1890, Wyoming was admitted as a state with full enfranchisement granted to women in its constitution. Colorado, Utah and Idaho passed women's suffrage in the '90s. But the national franchise was always a difficult fight. The two organizations joined together in 1890, and alternately tried to get state and national amendments passed. For a period of decades, the movement was in the doldrums. It needed new leadership. It needed professional organization--and money.

- A large parade in New York City was organized in 1910 by the Women's Political Union, led by Harriet Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, and repeated with even larger crowds each year after.

- In 1911 the campaign succeeded in California by only 3,857 votes: an average of only one vote for every precinct. And it happened not only because of the organization that

went into the campaign leading up to the election. Suffragists also stayed at the polls until every vote was counted--correctly--so that the vote could not be stolen from them as had happened not only in California, but other states in the past. This gave women the vote in six states.

- In March of 1913, before Wilson's inauguration, from 5-8,000 suffragists paraded in Washington, D.C. Inadequate police allowed them to be mobbed by an abusive, jeering crowd. The organizer, Alice Paul, was not discouraged: she had formed the National Women's Party, and she was determined to take a more "direct approach." She formed the Party in January of 1913, revived the moribund movement, but was expelled from the NAWSA by December. In 1917, when Wilson still hadn't come out publicly in support of Women's Suffrage, although he promised he would, Paul gained public attention by organizing round-the-clock picketing of the White House. Eventually many were arrested, went on hunger strikes and were force-fed. After her release, Paul organized a train called the "prison special" which she rode around the country to tell about the experience.

- Meanwhile, the NAWSA, the joint suffrage organization, had received an endowment, and adopted Carrie Chapman Catt's strategy to win the franchise through Congress. Like a general she recruited and organized and sent out her troops to fight where there was hope, and give up where there was none. She wanted one southern state, although all southern senators were opposed because of the possibility even a campaign would disturb the Jim Crow legislation that had effectively taken away the right to vote from blacks. She wanted massive effort, supported nationally but led by small, local groups, in states where the fight seemed likely to succeed, and no effort in states that looked hopeless. Many African-American women, when refused membership, subtly or overtly,

to segments of the women's movement, formed their own organizations.

- After World War I, women who had again put aside their personal goals to perform war work, as they had done in the Civil War, were incensed when Wilson resisted public support for women's franchise.

- In 1919, a year after the end of the war, The National Women's Party, placed an urn in a direct line of sight from the White House front door, and proceeded to burn the words of every hypocritical speech of Wilson in a "watchfire for freedom." They thought him hypocritical because he was arguing for representative democracy for Europeans but not supporting the right to vote for half of the population of his own country.

- Wilson did come to support women's suffrage in the crucial months before it was voted on in the House of Representatives.

- Finally, in May of 1919, the House of Representatives passed the 19th Amendment, 304 to 89, a margin of 42 votes over the required two-thirds majority. The Senate passed it in June 1919. And, on August 1920, the amendment was ratified by the 36th state, Tennessee, and then by a margin of one vote, a young legislator admonished to vote yes by his mother.

Milestone for Women's Rights

July 19 and 20, 1998, will mark 150 years since the first convention was held to discuss women's rights in Seneca Falls, New York. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others wrote the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" that began the official Women's Rights Movement in 1848. In 1923, Alice Paul wrote an Equal rights Amendment, in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention, and succeeded in having a constitutional amendment

introduced into Congress. The amendment came close to being adopted in the 1970's but finally failed in 1982, just three states short of ratification.

Of course we have made progress, but we are not there yet--full equality. We need these people's stories to inspire us to keep on fighting.

Many events are planned across the U.S. Locally, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors honored women's groups in the county, including the Commission, with a proclamation that states, in part:

...**WHEREAS**, the twenty-first century will find an ever-increasing need for both women and men to share in the fundamental responsibilities for our national life and the blessings that must result from full and equal participation in society; and

WHEREAS, there still remain substantial barriers to the full equality of America's women before our freedom as a Nation can be called complete.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors hereby recognizes the 150th anniversary of the women's Rights Movement under the national theme "LIVING THE LEGACY: WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1848-1998."

What YOU Can Do!

With the new laws governing welfare, throughout the nations there is a push to get out into the job market, but without any safety net when things don't go well. Many needs associated with working will require massive assistance--child care, transportation, education and training. But there is also a desperate need for individual volunteer mentors for women facing an unfamiliar world. Everyone can remember their first job and the feeling of being overwhelmed. You can help model behaviors and attitudes, and offer advice on resources, knowledge that can only from experience.





A new organization has been formed to meet this need: Ventura County Mentor Council. They are reaching out to the community. If you hear an appeal through an organization you belong to, please consider becoming a mentor. Or, call Connie Owens at (805) 485-6285, or Marion Hugie at (805) 987-1694 or FAX at 987-1137, to learn more about the process and responsibilities.

Do You Remember...

If any of you have pictures, posters, T-shirts or just memories of the fight for the ERA in the seventies, would you share them? Call the editor, Ruth Hibbard, at 654-1294, or 642-6168. Both numbers can accept a FAX. I will publish any stories or even some pictures, with your permission.

Creative Options in Hot Water!

Creative Options Fall Event - October 2-4, 1998 - a Weekend Retreat at the Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort

-  Registration \$70 per person; room rates from Deluxe Suites for \$250 each for 2 (\$320/person for the weekend) to Standard Rooms for \$84 each for three (\$154/person for the weekend.)
-  Each room features a full size hot mineral spa on a private deck or balcony.
-  1/3 of the room charge due on registration; remainder due by August 15.
-  Proceeds benefit scholarships for re-entry women at California Lutheran.