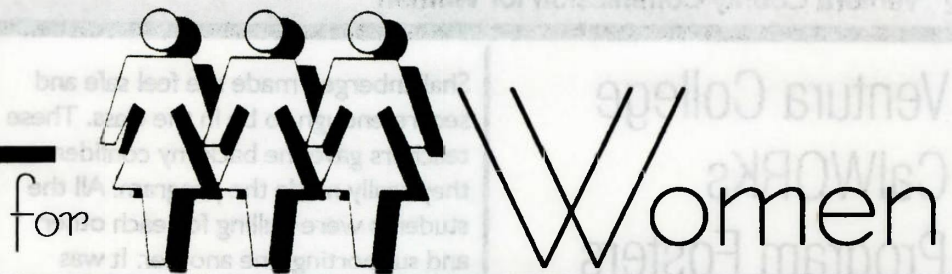


Commission

Human Services Agency
505 Poli Street, Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 652-7611
www.ventura.org/cfw-home.htm



Spring 1999

Family Law Forum Resounding Success at Simi Valley Adult School

What is the Commission for Women?

The Ventura County Commission for Women was established in 1981. The Commission serves as advisors to the Board of Supervisors on issues impacting and relating to women, and coordinates efforts with 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 quarter's newsletter (Spring, Summer, Fall or Winter)

Over 70 women attended the February 27th Family Law Forum, held this year at the Simi Valley Adult School, on a sunny Saturday morning. Mayor of Simi Valley, Bill Davis, presented Commission President Karen Gorback with a proclamation honoring the Commission for its work in putting the forum together. Good publicity in the Times and the Star, as well as our ad in the Times, helped by the built-in audience at the Simi Valley Adult School, brought the women out; the dedicated speakers and our ever-reliable moderator Susan Wittig made the day a success.

The evaluation report, printed by Supervisor Susan Lacey's office, brought valuable feedback, and may help next year's event to be even better. Adjectives such as great, excellent and very informative were used in comments regarding the speakers. We wish to thank Susan Wittig, Cathleen Drury, Gay Conroy, Judge Colleen Toy White, and Charles Stanley Trom for coming and providing so much information in a such a short time. The audience expressed their appreciation on the day of the event and in the evaluation sheets.

We also wish to thank the Mayor for making an appearance, the school for providing the use of the room free of charge, and the Kiwanis for a donation that allowed us to have the event catered by the Magic Muffin. Having juice, coffee, tea and the muffins and scones provided a jump-start and a mid-morning pick-me-up for the participants. Finally, the Commission members deserve a self-congratulatory pat on the back for planning and assembling the ingredients for the ninth annual Family Law Forum. (See photos inside for a visual report.)

Who Are The Commissioners?

District 1 (Susan Lacey)

Ruth A. Hibbard
Cecelia Fargo
Jovita Valdez

District 2 (Frank Schillo)

Angie Lavey
Karen Gorback
Vacancy

District 3 (Kathy Long)

Judy Cunningham
Sharon Hillbrant
Vacancy

District 4 (Judy Mikels)

Bonnie Warrington
Lori Zafiroopoulos
Vacancy

District 5 (John Flynn)

Bea Gan
Ruth Ann McAllister
Vacancy

We hope to fill the remaining vacancies soon.

Ventura College CalWORKs Program Fosters Early Success

(This article is taken exactly as written from the Human Services Agency's newsletter, HSA NEWS, with permission from Dr. Karen Gorbach, CalWORKs Coordinator at Ventura College. It was part of a longer article written by Ruth Irussi, CalWORKs program manager.)

Ventura College CalWORKs Program has seen remarkable success stories in its first few months. Intensive, short-term training programs in Accounting, Administrative Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant and Office Skills offered this past summer drew large numbers of students—from the entire community—seeking excellent, college-level job training in a short-term format. Among those in attendance last summer were numerous CalWORKs referrals—pursuing their employment goals. While many of the summer students have already secured employment, a particularly poignant success story comes from CalWORKs student Mona Woolard, who agreed to be interviewed for this article in hopes of inspiring other CalWORKs students to fulfill their own goals. The mother of 17-month-old twins, Dahmien and Devon, Mona enrolled this past summer in Ventura College's new, 8-week Administrative Assistant training program. Having been homeless and "hit bottom" at one point in her life, Mona knew that she needed the skills and confidence this program would offer in order to turn her life around. "I wanted something better for my children," says Mona in response to why she took the intensive training class.

"The first day of school was scary," she continues, "but the teachers, Sandra Kinghorn and Vicki

Shallenberger, made me feel safe and secure enough to be in the class. These teachers gave me back my confidence; they really made the program. All the students were pulling for each other and supporting one another. It was great."

In addition to keyboarding, 10-key, Windows, Word, Excel, and filing, Administrative Assistant students learn vital job search skills and prepare professional resumes and portfolios. "The actual job search was extremely scary," notes Mona, who is now employed as a Bankcard Assistant II at Charter Pacific Bank in Agoura Hills for \$10.38 an hour. "You have to go out on interviews right after you finish class to keep up your motivation. Don't wait."

Mona continues, "In my Interview at Charter Pacific Bank, I said there's nothing, I can't learn, and after I was hired, I was told that the reason I was hired was for my positive attitude. A positive attitude is everything!!"

Mona further notes, "I always remember something from an article you (the CalWORKs Coordinator) gave us in class, 'Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it!' It's really true, people make their own luck."

"Mona is an inspiration to all of us," notes Dr. Karen Gorbach, CalWORKs Coordinator at Ventura College. "I hope that Mona returns to school some day to obtain even greater skills and increase her 'luck.'"

For more information about the Ventura College CalWORKs program, including a new 12-week Multi-Skilled Medical Assistant program beginning in January 1999, call Karen Gorbach at (805) 648-8937.

CalWORKs Mentor Orientation/Training

The Ventura County Mentor Council, made up of 13 nonprofit organizations, is establishing mentor

programs to help CalWORKs clients overcome obstacles and successfully blend into the working world. Any working mother who has balanced home, a job and family obligations knows that the task can be daunting even with a helpful husband in the picture. Without that support, and adding the need to continually train and re-educate herself to "get a better job, get a career," the typical CalWORKs client needs a mentor to provide some level of that support. Often a phone call boosting the person's self-esteem is enough. Sometimes a sage bit of advice on quick, nutritious meals or balancing a checkbook from someone who's done it can help. Or just sense of "I know how hard it is, but you can do it," may be what is needed.

For more information or to volunteer, call Adelle Garza or Mary Arias at 805-983-3636.

How to Get Appointed: State or Local Positions

The California Coalition for Women has begun the Women's Appointment Project, a combined effort of the California Commission on the Status of Women, The National Women's Political Caucus of California and Leadership California. The Project involves recruiting, screening and recommending women for top policy-making positions. To assist women in navigating the state appointment process, the project identifies candidates and provides them with information and training. Visit their website at appointwomen.ca.gov.

Locally, information about the state positions can be obtained by calling either Judy Bysshe, state representative for NWPC-Ventura County at 648-3224, or call State Senator Jack O'Connell's office di-

rectly. To find out about local boards and commissions with appointments open, call NWPC-Ventura County Political Appointments Coordinator Mary Anne Rooney at 639-3886. She has produced an informative brochure listing all of the Boards and Commissions in the County, and is gathering information about the city's Boards and Commissions.

Hope for Recovery

Two Facilities in Ventura County

Prototypes Women's Center/Ventura County is celebrating a 10th Anniversary by holding an open house in a new location in Oxnard. Watch the local papers for news of the June event. This center allows women to have their children with them while in recovery and gives them a plan for continuing recovery when they leave.

Casa Latina, another residential recovery home in the county, is a project of Ventura County Health Care, Inc. They offer bilingual/bicultural services for Latinas, and also help the women deal with real-life family and life management issues, as well as addiction recovery.

What is CEDAW?

Simply put, it is an international Bill of Rights for women. Officially, it's called the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW), or sometimes it is just called the Convention. It was adopted at the 1979 U.N. Decade for Women Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen. It obligates those countries which have ratified it or acceded to it--two possible positive responses--to take "all appropriate measures" to ensure the full development and advancement of women in all spheres--political, educational, employment, health care, economic, social, legal, and marriage and family relations. It also calls for the modification of social and

cultural patterns of conduct in order to eliminate prejudice, customs, and all other practices based on the idea that either sex is inferior or superior.

A little history is in order here. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is one of the first bodies established by the U.N. Economic and Social Council. Set up in 1946, its job is to monitor the "status" of women-- their rights and conditions--to ensure they are meeting the standards which CSW sets as another part of its mandate. Over the years, the Commission has dealt with issues such as women's participation in political life and in decision-making, and women's role in and contribution to economic development. It then recommends policies about these roles and contributions to improve and enhance them. Its work with regard to violence against women led to the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women by the General Assembly in 1993.

CSW initiated the observance of International Women's Year 1975 and the world conferences on women. Various UN Conventions have set new standards in human rights over the years, and one of these is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The treaty came into force on September 3, 1981, after ratification. Currently, 139 countries--more than two-thirds of the members of the United Nations--are party to the Convention, and an additional 44 countries have acceded to the treaty, binding themselves to do nothing to contravene its terms. (The United States has not ratified the Convention, due to opposition in Congress.) Since 1985, and the third UN conference on women at Nairobi, CSW has also been responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategies to gain economic, political and social rights for women.

CEDAW authorized the formation of a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to

oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Experts in women's rights are elected by secret ballot from a list of individuals nominated by the countries that are party to the Convention. A total of 23 people are elected, and they serve as individuals, not representatives of the country of origin. There are two differences between this committee and all other UN committees: first, all but one of the members have been women; second, they come from a wide variety of backgrounds, whereas most other UN committees are made up of lawyers and judges.

(The information in this article is combined from three web sites that my "websurfing" led me to: gopher:hqfaus01.unicef.org:70/00/.cedata/cedaw/cedaw4, <http://www.un.org/Conferences/Women/PubInfo/Status/Scan3.htm> and <http://www.un.org/Conferences/Women/PubInfo/Status/Scan5.htm>, and <http://now.org/now/nnt/11-95/cedaw.html>. I used CEDAW as a search word.)

Conference on Women's Issues

Global Interactions, Inc., "a non-profit organization facilitating professional partnerships and development in education, science and technology through exchanges with counterparts domestically and worldwide" is sponsoring two conferences in 1999: the Second China-U.S. Conference on Women's Issues in Beijing being held October 11-14, and the Third China-U.S. Conference on Education to be held in Phoenix, in April 1999. Anyone interested in attending the Beijing Conference should call the organization at (602) 906-8886, or email them at global@goodnet.com. Gloria Lowe Walker, Exec. Director, Gary Women's Commission-National Association of Commissions for Women is on the U.S. Steering Committee.

Ventura's First Businesswomen

In Honor of Women's History Month, March 1999

Photo Courtesy of the Ventura County Museum of History and Art Library



Theodosia Burr Shepherd arrived in San Buenaventura in 1873. She came by steamer from Santa Barbara--having arrived there by the

cross-country train from the Midwest. Her husband was taking over the local newspaper, but was never able to make it a success. She set out first to exchange some seeds and cut flowers or plants for some nice things for her children. But she was soon inundated with requests and decided she could actually make some money at this little hobby.

'Heretofore I had given freely of everything in my garden, and when I announced that I would sell in the future, San Buena Ventura threw up its hands in horror, and a storm of disapproval greeted me! Everyone declared that no one would patronize my business and that I could never make it pay. But I flew in the face of public opinion and continued in the course I had set out for myself.'

Thus was started California's great bulb and flower seed industry. The first bulbs were collected from gardens about the town of San Buena Ventura, and the first seeds sown in cigar boxes in a propagating house made of an old piano-box! The first year I employed a man twenty-one days and watered my seedling plants with a hose attached to a hydrant in back yard... a delicate woman without previous

knowledge, little children clinging to her skirts, and poverty knocking at the door. My only assets were an overwhelming love for plants, boundless enthusiasm and, I hope, courage, and abiding confidence in myself...I believed then as I do now that if you will yourself to succeed, it must happen. You may not get everything, there will be setbacks, but willpower is bound to get you through.*

Theo, as she was called, worked hard at her business, but she also made time for improving her community and to spread the word to other women that they, too, could succeed in pursuits other than the three C's: church, children and clothes. She made many speeches as a businesswoman and gardener and that message was always included: You can do it, too.

When the possibility arose that women could get the vote in California, Theo was active in that effort. She entertained Susan B. Anthony when the venerable suffragist came to Ventura County, in preparation for the 1896 election. She and her husband had been Free Thinkers--that is, free of any alliance with a church, free to explore the many philosophies then being explored. Women's capacity to think clearly of things outside the home was demonstrated by her, daily.

Theo's garden became a famous site to bring visitors to see during the boom era of the eighties, when the railroad brought many visitors up from Los Angeles, and down from Santa Barbara. "The garden of Theodosia B. Shepherd had become so famous it was listed by Frank Wiggan, Secretary of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, as one of the show places of southern California, and she was heralded throughout the United States as the "Flower Wizard of California." She sent an exhibit of flower seeds to the Mechanic's Fair in San Francisco in 1890 and the Chicago World's Fair in 1892.* Her little exchange business had grown to world-wide proportions as the eagerness to try to grow Califor-

nia flowers grew.

Emma Plater Seabury, who interviewed Theo, wrote:

...Back of her success is the splendid woman. Tall, very slender, delicate, with blue eyes and light brown hair, a manner inspiring, enthusiastic, earnest, yet restful in its equipoise of character. Equally at home in literature and art, and alive to every question of the hour, she is essentially a woman's woman, with a heart that embraces the world in sympathy and desire for the good of all.... Her personality is charming, her enthusiasm stimulating and contagious, and she ought to give up her garden seed raising and teach people how to think and live, this apostle of the beautiful in the natural and spiritual world.*

Her own horticultural experiments were impressive and included new varieties of several flowers, including cosmos and begonias.

She contributed to [floral magazines] and spoke frequently before Los Angeles women's clubs and those of adjacent towns whose members vied in entertaining her... So many writers, artists and horticulturists came to the Shepherd home, Theo had little need for other associations though she still retained her early friendships. Those whose companionship she most enjoyed were Kate Sessions, then beginning her horticultural career in San Diego, and Luther Burbank, with whom she renewed her discussion of the influence of the mind upon the plant. When called the "woman Burbank" Theo disclaimed comparison... 'I rejoice in Mr. Burbank's discoveries, he in mine.'*

For all that she contributed to the world of horticulture and to the freeing of women to pursue business, she spread herself too thin and started projects in too many directions. Often failing in health, buffeted by family problems, she had periods of depression and illness. Her beautiful garden saved

(Cont'd on next page)

her several times, and when she was too ill to go out and work in it she could sit and watch for hours from her room.

Her daughter wrote a biography of her which has not been officially published. Copies of it can be seen and read at the Ventura County Museum Library for research only. The garden survived many seasons and changes, but eventually became the site of the E.P. Foster Library, now undergoing some changes and renewal of its own.

**All quotes are from the biography of Theodosia Burr Shepherd written by her daughter, Myrtle Shepherd Francis.*

Karen Gorback, Commission President, accepts a proclamation from Mayor of Simi, Bill Davis.



An eager audience awaits another speaker at the February 27, 1999 Family Law Forum in Simi Valley Adult School.



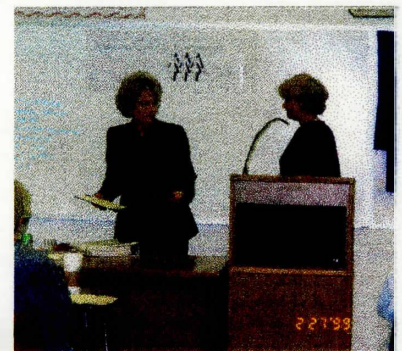
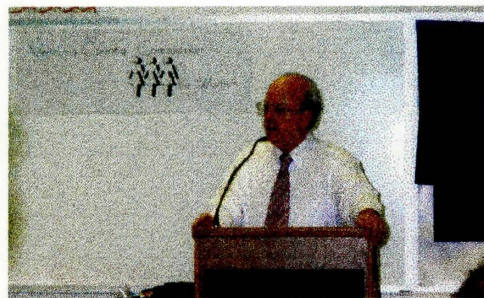
Family Law Forum 1999, in Pictures



Sondra Jones, School Principal, welcomes the participants to Simi Valley Adult School.



Cathleen Drury informs and even amuses with her presentation on "Community Property Issues and Rights"



Above: Judge Toy White and Susan Wittig confer on a point. At left: Stan Trom, Assistant District Attorney talks about Support Enforcement and Collection.



Left: Sondra Jones, Simi Adult School Principal, Judge White and Gay Conroy at break between sessions. Right: Commissioners Bonnie Warrington, Cecelia Fargo with Susan Wittig, in first photo; and Commissioners Jovita Valdez, Beverly Viola, Lori Zafiroopoulos, Sharon Hillbrant and Ruth Hibbard, in photo at far right.

