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January, 2023

**Subject:** St. Mary's County Commission for Women Annual Report for 2022

**Background:** The St. Mary's County Commission for Women (CFW) was established in July 1976 as a result of legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly to address matters of specific concern to women. The St. Mary's County Commissioners appoint members.

**Mission:** To celebrate and support St. Mary's County women through outreach, advocacy and service to secure an equitable community for all.

**Meetings and Membership:** The meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 pm. Changes in the schedule are sometimes made for holidays and to accommodate the needs of the group and activities.

Elected from July 2021-December 2022.

Norma Pipkin, Chair  
Catherine Stewart, Vice Chair  
Taylor Spencer-Davis, Secretary

The officers for January 2023- July2023.

Catherine Stewart Chair  
Norma Pipkin, Vice Chair  
Taylor Spencer-Davis, Secretary

**Current Membership**

Kimberly Bannister  
Jazmine Saunders  
Carolyn Guy  
Marta Kelsey

Norma Pipkin  
Taylor Spencer-Davis  
Catherine Stewart  
Katherine Stone  
Katie Werner (term expired 12/31/2022)

The Commission for Women (CFW) is a very active group. The group strives to stay informed of current issues and trends and shares that information with county leaders. A priority for our members is recognizing women of St. Mary's County that make significant contributions to our County through volunteer work. The Commission continues to support the Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship through funds raised at the Annual Women's History event. The Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship Endowment currently stands at \$34,746.57 and it generated \$1,276 for the 2022-2023 academic year. Therefore, we awarded two scholarships for the 2022-2023 academic year in the amount of \$1,000 each. Thirty scholarships have been awarded since its inception in 2010. This scholarship differs from most as it is designed to help returning students over the age of 25 and can be used for part time enrollment.

The issue of violence against women remains a top priority and is a complex topic that requires multiple partnerships and coordinated efforts. Katherine Stone serves on the Family Violence Coordinating Council. Her role is to represent the citizens of St. Mary's County and to inform the Commission for Women of the ongoing work of responding agencies and any gaps in service.

Members of the Commission for Women are community minded women and serve throughout our county in a variety of roles. Their involvement allows us to have a broad view of current efforts, successes and needs.

### **January 2022**

**January 10:** Meeting

**January 27:** Violence Injury and Trauma Action (VITA) meeting

### **February 2022**

**February 1:** Dating Violence Prevention Proclamation

**February 7:** Meeting

**February 8:** When Dating Hurts Event

This virtual event was held through the efforts of the Commission for Women and the VITA team. The collaboration was enormous and included: St. Mary's College of Maryland, Southern Maryland Family Advocacy Center (SMFAC), St. Mary's Health Department, the Minority Alliance and Cove. Taylor Spencer -Davis was the moderator and the guest speaker was author of the book When Dating Hurts, Bill Mitchell. SMFAC, the Minority Alliance and Rich and Grace Fuller donated books to be distributed in connection with the event. Laura Web from the Cove hosted a book club. The post event comments were very positive and indicated the topic needs to be addressed in a variety of ways. Although the pandemic was a huge barrier to our in person plans the group found ways to overcome and provide an educational and meaningful virtual event attended by approximately 75 people.

**February 24:** VITA meeting

### **March 2022**

**March 15:** Proclamation for Equal Pay The purpose of this proclamation is to bring to light the vast disparities in pay between men and women. This is the date to which a woman would have to work in 2021 in order to earn as much as a man in the previous year. According to the Maryland Commission for Women, women represent 49% of the Maryland workforce, but represent 60% of the minimum wage workers. To equal the average lifetime earnings of men aged 60:

Asian women would need to work until aged 68.

White women would need to work until aged 71.

Black women would need to work until aged 79

Hispanic women would need to work until aged 108.

Women's average earnings are less than men at every educational level. Social Security is based on earnings therefore, women are more likely to be impoverished in their retirement years.

**March 20:** Members attended a call-to-action event hosted by the Sherriff's Department held at Great Mills High in remembrance of Jaelynn Willey and others lost to Domestic and Dating violence.

**March 21:** Meeting

March is Women's History Month. Every day during the month of March, Marta Kelsey highlighted a notable woman in history and Katie Werner posted it on our Facebook page. Raising awareness of Women's contributions continues to be at the forefront of the work of CFW.

**March 24:** A symposium was held on March 24<sup>th</sup> in the Chesapeake Building in Leonardtown, MD. The theme for 2022 was, *Providing Healing and Promoting Health*. Therefore, it was fitting that CFW members decided to honor Dr. Brewster with the Hometown Shero Award. Her courageous, effective leadership through the pandemic was nothing short of remarkable. Barbara Ives was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Further, the group chose Laura Joyce as our guest speaker, Ms. Joyce is the Executive Director of Southern Maryland Family Advocacy Center. Under her leadership the staff shepherd families through crisis, provide resources, legal representation and case management. Thirteen women and one teen were recognized for their volunteer work in the community.

### **April 2022**

#### **April 11:** Meeting

In April the commission received the results of the survey conducted by Maryland Commission for Women on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic. Two hundred seventy-three (273) women from St. Mary's responded. The 5 topics addressed were Women's Health, The Pandemic and Work, Finances and the Pandemic, Relationships and Family, Concerns Going Forward. Our results mirrored those of other Maryland residents. Of particular concern was increased anxiety for themselves and family members as well as women postponing health care.

### **May 2022**

#### **May 2:** Commissions and Board training.

**May 10:** Presentation of the check for the amount of \$2,705.00 from proceeds of Women's History Event to the College of Southern Maryland Foundation, Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship during the Commissioners Meeting.

#### **May 16:** Meeting

### **June 2022**

#### **June 13:** Meeting

Final plans were made for the July team building. Katie Werner informed the group of the Primary Candidate Forums June 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### **June 23:** VITA meeting

### **July 2021**

#### **July 6:** Met with new member, Mary Fearn

#### **July 16:** Tabling at the Safe St. Mary's Event at Great Mills Pool

#### **July 28:** VITA meeting

#### **July 31:** Team Building

### **August 2022**

#### **August 15:** Meeting

#### **August 25:** VITA meeting

#### **August 27:** Equality Day Proclamation

The Seneca Falls Convention took place in July 1848. The first women's rights convention in the United States launched the women's suffrage movement. It would be 72 years later on August 26,

1920 before the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution of the United States was finally ratified. Many of the women that began the fight died before they were able to exercise their voting privileges.

### **September 2022**

**September 19:** Meeting. Guest Speaker, Roslyn Jones the Women's Veteran Program Manager with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs presented her vision and work in the newly created position. Ms. Jones, also a veteran, shared that many women are not aware of the benefits and services available to them as veterans. She went on to say, that women are the fastest growing population in the military. However, women served for 60 years before they were actually able to receive benefits. She is looking to build partnerships and would like some "military women ambassadors" to help with the program. Ms. Jones also shared with the group there is a separate date to honor women veterans in June.

Also, at this meeting Katie Werner changed her CFW hat for a League of Women Voters hat and informed the group of the upcoming Voter Forums to be held at the Lexington Park Library on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.

**September 29:** We provided an educational information table and participated in the St. Mary's County Health Department Annual Meeting.

### **October 2022**

**October 4:** Domestic Violence Proclamation.

During 2022 Taylor Spencer-Davis, Norma Pipkin and Marta Kelsey continued their work on Dating and Domestic Violence Prevention. The Commission for Women was invited to become members of the Violence, Injury and Trauma Action Team (VITA) coordinated through the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership with St. Mary's County Health Department. We are excited that the VITA members have not only been supportive but have joined us in our endeavors to raise awareness about the issue of domestic and dating violence.

In addition, Norma Pipkin and Taylor Spencer-Davis participated in a virtual event hosted by Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence where Martina Patterson and Lyneasha Greenwell, two St. Mary's County citizens were remembered among the 58 lives that were lost to Domestic Violence in Maryland. Ninety two percent of those lives were women and seventy six percent were a result of gun violence.

**October 15 and 16.** We set up an information table in the St. Maries' Optimist space at the Oyster Fest.

**October 17:** Meeting

On **October 26, 2022**, "Why Don't They Just Leave", (a phrase often heard when the topic of domestic violence comes up) was held at the Lexington Park Library. The format was a short skit followed by a panel of persons working in the field to help the audience understand the unique challenges of person living in domestic violence situations. This event was sponsored by the Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy, the Family Violence Coordinated Council, the Commission for women and supported by VITA members.

**October 27:** VITA meeting

**November 2022**

**November 11:** Catherine Stewart delivered 40 gifts for the female residents of Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

**November 12:** Kim Bannister participated in the MLAW conference. Fifteen laws were submitted for approval concerning topics such as incarcerated women having access to their babies, marriage no longer being a defense for sex crimes, child custody and divorce in DV situations, and sex trafficking. MLAW members will vote on the priority proposals and provide information for advocacy.

**November 21:** Meeting Guest Speaker, Melanie Sharpiro from Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence gave a presentation on proposed relevant legislation around the issues of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

**December 2021**

**December 1:** VITA meeting

No official CFW meeting was held this month.

**December 14** Members delivered gifts to Rebecca Kessler, with the Office on Aging for 10 persons in the Guardianship Program. The gifts were purchased by the generous members of the Commission for Women and a contribution from the St. Maries Optimist Club. Later, we gathered for dinner and a salute and thank you to Katie Werner for all her community involvement and hard work with the CFW for many years,

**Looking forward:** We will continue to advocate for procedures, programs and legislation for women's equality. We will offer a forum to discuss local issues relevant to St Mary's County women. Finally, we are committed to our mission, to building partnerships and strengthening our community.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Norma Pipkin