

HUMBOLDT COUNTY
COMMISSION
ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN
ANNUAL REPORT
July 2006- June 2007

Diana Cooper
Chairperson

BACKGROUND

The Humboldt County Commission the Status of Women, authorized by County ordinances 1178 and 757, was created in March 1971 in response to state legislative statute. Humboldt County's Commission on the Status of Women was the second such group in California, preceded only by Sacramento.

The Commission advises the Board in matters concerning the status of women within Humboldt County. It monitors basic and legitimate women's concerns by working for the elimination of such inequities in laws, practices or conditions as they may adversely affect women and girls within the County. It recommends activities and materials to public and private entities working to develop equitable programs to meet the special needs of women and girls. It acts as a two-way information agency for federal, state and local women's groups and other Status of Women Commissions. It helps promote awareness of women's unique role in traditional fields or otherwise, by planning special study groups, workshops, conferences or events.

The Humboldt County Commission on the Status of Women serves as an information center on the effect of social attitudes, norms, and practices that shape the role of women in Humboldt County society.

THE MEMBERS AND THEIR TERMS OF OFFICE ARE AS FOLLOWS

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|--------------------|-------------------|---------|
| District 1: | Susan Hoffman | 6/30/09 |
| District 2: | Diana Cooper | 6/30/07 |
| District 3: | Julie Millard | 6/30/09 |
| District 4: | Vacant | |
| District 5: | Cynthia Sutcliffe | 6/30/07 |

At Large:

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Susan McGee | 6/30/09 |
| Paula Arrowsmith-Jones | 6/30/09 |
| Vacant | |
| Vacant | |
| Vacant | |

Members are appointed to four-year terms by the Board of Supervisors, with one representing each of the five supervisory districts plus five at-large appointments. Commissioner Hoffman resigned her position in August 2006. Commissioner Cooper was unanimously voted into and accepted the role of Chairperson. Commissioners McGee and Arrowsmith-Jones were appointed during this report period.

The commission meets monthly on the first Tuesday of the month, at the Humboldt County Courthouse, at 5:30 P.M. Notices of the meetings are posted at the County Courthouse and are reported in the Times-Standard and the Eureka Reporter.

FINANCES

The commission is unfunded but maintains a small account for donations. In July 2006 there was \$153.13 in the Commission's checking account and \$152.61 in the savings account. In June 2007, there was a total of \$ 162 in the checking and \$154.26 in the savings account.

FOCUS

During the report year the commission primarily directed their attention to the issues of domestic violence, pay equity and recruitment.

ACTIVITIES

Pay Equity: To follow up on the 2005 recommendation by Supervisor Bonnie Neely asking the Commission to survey other entities on this issue, a draft survey was created during the previous report year. The survey was to be reviewed and distributed during this report period, however the item was tabled for months and no action was taken. Commissioner Cooper wrote a "My Word" article for the Times-Standard.

Domestic Violence: In October, Commissioner McGee presented a course on responding to domestic violence to Salon Professionals. The event was well publicized. Commissioner McGee coordinated the presentation with the Humboldt Domestic Violence Services and the North Coast Rape Crisis Team.

Recruitment: The Commission completed a welcome packet, to be distributed to prospective Commissioners and available at community events. The packet contains the brochure, by-laws, and a one-page synopsis describing the Commission. Draft business cards were developed during this year to be used as recruitment tools. Commissioner McGee drafted a letter to be sent out to the local Tribes requesting their participation on the Commission. Commissioner Cooper personed a table at the Liberty for All event on August 26th at the Arcata Plaza.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Dr. Lauren J. Oliver of CirclesWork Development attended the February meeting and asked to make a brief presentation. Dr. Oliver introduced herself and discussed the work that she has been doing in southern Humboldt. She also outlined plans that her

group has around local women's issues, the up coming United Nations Hearings on the status of women, and the fifth Women's World Conference. She will come and present to the Commission, after the hearings. Dr. Oliver informed the Commission that her group in southern Humboldt may ask the Commission to co-sponsor a forum to present the results of the United Nations hearings, possibly in late April.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

We request that the Board of Supervisor's take action on all recommendations, still to be acted upon, from prior year's reports including:

- Direct law enforcement, under their jurisdiction, in arrests involving domestic violence, to accurately identify the primary aggressor. We believe that women are being arrested under this identification process when they engage in self defense and have injured their attacker, even though they are not the primary aggressor.

Mental Health and the County Jail Recommendations:

- A form of database access between the county jail and mental health agency, whereby an individual being booked, can be identified early as a 5150 case and therefore be diverted to a crisis unit.
- Shorten the medication dispensing process for inmates
- Review the procedures of handling suicidal and high-risk inmates in the county jail
- Provide substance abuse and therapeutic counselors to the inmates
- Establish a separate facility for women

Aging Population Recommendations:

- County programs must remain sensitive to the aging population and their related need for services
- When possible, co-locate services and share resources

Commission on the Status of Women Recruitment

- The Commission needs more members. We request that the Supervisors encourage their constituents that have an interest in women's issues to join the Commission. With a full compliment of members, the Commission could be even more effective in providing the Board with information and perspective on the issues and problems that affect Humboldt County Women

The Commission understands and empathizes with the dire nature of the County's current and future financial situation. We understand that many of the problems the Commission has identified and has made recommendations for correcting would not exist if the financial standing of the County was better. The members of the Commission stand willing to assist the affected departments in seeking low or no cost solutions to these problems. Further, the Commission hopes that as departments seek grant funding that these recommendations can be utilized to assist in applying for grants.