

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

Norma Pipkin, Chair

Catherine Stewart, Vice-Chair

Katie Werner, Secretary



COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY:

James R. Guy, President
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Eric Colvin, Commissioner
Todd B. Morgan, Commissioner
John E. O'Connor, Commissioner

January, 2021

Subject: St. Mary's County Commission for Women Annual Report for 2020

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.

Purpose: To provide the Board of County Commissioners with advice and assistance concerning issues affecting women such as employment, education, health, public office and legal rights.

Meetings and Membership: The meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 pm in room 14 of the Potomac Building, Leonardtown, MD. Changes in the schedule are sometimes made for holidays and to accommodate the needs of the group and activities.

Elected from July 2020-July 2021.

Norma Pipkin, Chair
Catherine Stewart, Vice Chair
Katie Werner, Secretary

The officers for July 2019-2020.

Erin Walker, Chair
Mary Ludwig, Vice Chair
Katie Werner, Secretary

Current Membership

Kimberly Bannister
Oliva Bossert
Jazmine Bottoms
Carolyn Guy
Marta Kelsey
Juanita Nether

Norma Pipkin
Taylor Spencer-Davis
Catherine Stewart
Katherine Stone
Katie Werner

The Commission for Women is a very active group. The group strives to stay informed of current issues and trends and shares that information with county leaders. Each year a retreat is held and during that time priorities are established for the coming year. Major emphasis was placed on 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 Women's History Banquet. The speaker at the College of Southern Maryland Scholarship Luncheon was a recipient of the Jane Hale-Sypher Scholarship. It is exciting to know one of our recipients has reached her goal and graduated in January 2020. Although the event that was scheduled for March 19, 2020 had to be cancelled and was held virtually at a later date the event raised \$2,700. Currently the Jane Hale Sypher Endowed Scholarship has a balance of \$23,936.13. As of August 2020 there was a balance of \$2,868.27 in the Jane Hale Sypher Annual Scholarship which will cover the two the recipients for the 2020-2021 academic year.

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.

During 2020 Taylor Spencer-Davis, Norma Pipkin and Marta Kelsey worked with the St. Mary's County Board of Education to develop and implement a program for the high school and middle school students. The students designed and submitted posters to depict the signs of unhealthy and/ or the signs of healthy relationships. More than 50 students participated. Awards were given for first, second and third place in middle school and high school. The awards were provided by the Southern Maryland Family Advocacy Center and the St. Maries Optimist Club and were presented at a well-attended public forum entitled ***Always Safe Never Sorry*** held February 12, 2020 at the Dr. James Forrest Technology Center. An informative and engaging presentation was given by Melissa Willey, mother of Jaelyn Willey the slain Great Mills High School student and Gina Fioravanti, former St. Mary's County Assistant States Attorney specializing in Domestic Violence cases. There were refreshments and displays tables with information available from coordinating organizations. The art work was returned to the schools for display to encourage discussion and enlightenment.

The following list indicates some of the activities that the commission members participated in ***over and above the regularly scheduled meetings.***

January 2020

January 7: Healthy Relationship Initiative Committee Meeting

January 22: Family Violence Coordinating Council

January 27: Banquet committee meeting

February 2020

February 4: Proclamation recognizing Healthy Relationship Initiative

February 6: Healthy Relation Initiative Committee Meeting

February 8: Women's Wellness Fair with Health Connections/Delicados.

February 12: Always Safe Never Sorry Program

March 2020

Although it seemed the world stopped on a dime, in March 2020 St. Mary's County women kept working. Volunteers kept volunteering. Commission for Women members safely continued to explore ways to recognize the women of our community without the obvious advantage of being able to host a banquet that has become a well-attended, inspiring event. Months of planning and hard work were set aside and new plans and a commitment to soldier on to recognize the strengths and contributions of 11 Tomorrow's Women and 16 Women of the Year nominees became the focus of the Commission for Women.

March 8: Women's Day Rally Leonardtown Square. Erin Walker Chair of Commission for Women gave an informative speech during the rally.

May 2020

At the May meeting members divided the tasks and moved forward with planning a virtual recognition.

On May 26, 2020 the following announcement was made on the CFW Facebook page: *It is with a heavy heart that we share the news that the 2020 Women's History Month Banquet, which had been postponed, has now been canceled due to ongoing public safety concerns surrounding large gatherings and in compliance with Governor Hogan's orders regarding COVID-19....To every Woman of the Year and Tomorrow's Woman nominee – we are sorry that we cannot give you the night you deserve. Your hard work serving the community is worthy of recognition and celebration.*

June 2020

Recognition: On June 1, 2020 the St. Mary's County Commission for Women began daily recognitions with videos of congratulations, photos and write ups of nominees throughout the week. All of the 27 honorees were honored as well as Mary Lu Bucci, 2020 Lifetime Achievement honoree and on June 9, 2020 the award of Woman of the Year was announced. All sponsors of the event and many of those registered for the event chose to have their funds go toward the Jane Hale Sypher scholarship fund.

At the June 15 meeting members said goodbye to a strong leadership team. Both Joanna Colvin, chair of the Women's History event and Erin Walker ended their term with the Commission for Women. Marta Kelsey assumed the role of acting Chair until elections could be held.

July 2020

Four new members were appointed to the Commission, Kimberly Bannister, Olivia Bossert, Jazmine Bottoms, and Norma Pipkin were introduced and welcomed.

Marta Kelsey shared with the group that the nomination for Dr. Janice Walthour as a Shero was submitted to Maryland Commission for Women.

Juanita Nether announced the slate of officers and an election was held by email. Norma Pipkin, Chair, Catherine Stewart, Vice Chair and Katie Werner, Secretary.

August 2020

A binder was developed that included History, Women's History Banquet, Healthy Relationship Initiative, Outreach, Proclamations, Domestic Violence and Maryland Commission for Women. Several members collaborated on the development under the leadership of Marta Kelsey. The purpose of the binder was to give new members an introduction into the type of activities CFW has been involved with previously. Members received their binders prior to the virtual retreat.

Katie Werner 100 th Anniversary chair ordered masks that said VOTE and had the Commission for Women on the side as a way to stress the importance of voting and in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the women having the right to vote.

August 22: Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women Norma Pipkin and Catherine Stewart participated.

August 25: A proclamation was issued by the County Commissioners for the 100th Anniversary of the right to vote and Equality Day.

August 26: Maryland Commission for Women honored Dr. Janice Walthour during the Virtual Summit. Marta Kelsey and Norma Pipkin were in attendance.

August 28: Telephone conference with Dr. Brewster regarding Healthy Relationships.

September 2020

The telephone conference with Dr. Brewster revealed the St. Mary's County Health Department was in the midst of collecting health related data to include in the 5 year plan. Dr. Brewster was interested in the information from the Listening Tour that was held in 2018 that identified Domestic Violence as the number one concern and requested a copy. Further, she suggested that perhaps CFW could do a survey to determine if what is occurring in St. Mary's County with our young people is reflective the national statistics regarding dating violence. Throughout the month of September Norma Pipkin, Taylor Spenser Davis and Katie Stone researched and developed the Interpersonal Relationship Survey. Taylor analyzed the raw data and prepared the attached report.

September 4: Norma Pipkin and Katie Werner set up an information display table highlighting the 100th anniversary of the right to vote at First Friday in Leonardtown square. Katie Werner also representing the League of Women Voters and was available to register voters.

September 12: An informal virtual retreat was hosted by Marta Kelsey. Getting acquainted with new members and using the binder as guide members were able to identify committee leadership for the 2020-2021.

The death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg on September 18, 2020 reverberated throughout our country and especially on the hearts of women. CFW members voted at the September 21 2020 meeting to name the lifetime achievement award in memory of this champion of women's rights.

October 2020

October 2: Historic St. Mary's City allowed CFW to borrow the *Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote* Pop up display from the National Archives for First Friday in Leonardtown, MD. Norma Pipkin, Katie Werner, Kimberly Bannister, and Catherine Stewart with masks on and maintaining social distancing shared CFW information and Katie Werner registered voters.

October 6: Domestic Violence Proclamation.

October 15: Behavioral Health Team Meeting Marta Kelsey

October 19: Filming for Veterans Day recognition Norma Pipkin, Katie Werner, Catherine Stewart

October 28: Family Violence Coordinating Council, Katie Stone

November 2020

November 2: committee meeting for 2021 Women's History Symposium

November 11: Catherine Stewart delivered balloons, 43 bottles of dove body wash and the flash drive with the recording of congratulations to the Charlotte Hall Veterans home.

December 2020 usually in December each member will choose a person from the Guardianship program and purchase, wrap and deliver the gifts to Rebecca Kessler of the Aging and Human Services. This year however, due to Covid we decided to support the by giving a financial donation instead. Our most generous members donated a total of \$500 to this effort.

Dec: 19 Behavioral Health meeting

Looking forward: Although 2020 presented many challenges, including our inability to meet in person, we were able to reach many young people through the Interpersonal Relationship Survey and evaluate the results. We have been reminded that the survey in itself will heighten awareness and help young people identify warning signs. Our work is just beginning with the newly formed Violence, Injury and Trauma team of the St. Mary's County Health Department. We have been invited to give a presentation on the results of the survey. We are anxious to get started and see this as a way to increase community awareness and develop remediation programs.

We aim to improve the forms for the 2022 Womens's History Month event to include a link the would allow community members to pay on line when they submit said forms. Staff guidance will be needed in making this process more efficient and effective for all.

The Commission for Women stands ready to work toward addressing issues and concerns of women of our community and sharing those concerns with the Commissioners. We are anxious for a time when we can meet in person again and have open and honest participation in a confidential setting where women can feel free to bring their concerns forward.

Respectfully Submitted

Norma Pipkin, Chair
St. Mary's County Commission for Women

Attachment: St. Mary's County Commission for Women Interpersonal Relationships in Youth Survey 2020 Results