



Anne Arundel County
Commission for Women

Annual Report 2021

Submitted by Kari Hotchkiss Maltz, Former Chair
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aaccwomen@gmail.com

Commissioners

Kari Hotchkiss Maltz – Chair

Jessica Gorski – Vice Chair

Jennifer Dwyer – Secretary

Jessica Gorski – Legislation

Feyella Toney – Membership

Meghan Honesto – Social Media/ Communications

Althea Whieldon

Linda Hicks-Boyd

Mary Leisenring

Laura Gutierrez

Cynthia Adams

LaTondra Kinley

Catherine Kirk Robins

Carolyn Keaton Culp

Mariah McKutchin

Gina Worthey

Karen Butler

Karen Francis

The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women was created in 1975 to serve as a resource and advocacy group for women of the County and to advise the County Executive on issues of significance to women. The Commissioners, comprised of women with different backgrounds and occupations, represent various areas of the County, and bring a diversity of viewpoints and experience to the service of women, children, and families in the County.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women had a productive year in 2021 despite ongoing challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We continued to conduct our meetings remotely and use our social media channels as our primary means of delivering on our mission. Commissioners developed a great rapport even though most have never actually met in person.

While we were unable to meet and collaborate in-person, we reached out to find specific needs that we could fill with our partners. We focused on our longstanding relationship with Chrysalis House, Inc. and delivered several meals throughout the year and holiday gifts to their residents and children. We worked directly with Chrysalis House leadership to ensure that their residents received items that they specifically wanted and needed.

We re-imagined our sub-committees as follows: 1) rebranded Human Trafficking as Survivor Advocacy Violence Education (SAVE), 2) implemented a robust social program for Women's Health and Wellness to include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, and 3) brainstormed our first in-person Women & Girls Leadership event planned for 2022; a career and mentoring event for High School – College age girls.

Other activities and accomplishments included:

- Launched the Anne Arundel County Human Trafficking Coalition
- Created an online Membership Manual
- Adopted a new logo
- Implemented a centralized on-line Social Media Calendar and SLACK channel
- Re-organized, re-branded and re-ignited our sub-committees

Commissioners served on several boards and panels, attended meetings and webinars, and participated in and promoted a state-wide survey conducted by the MD Commission for Women to determine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Women across the State.

We invited three new members to join us in the Fall and ended the year with a full membership representing all areas of Anne Arundel County, a renewed focus, and several exciting new initiatives planned for 2022. These are summarized in greater detail later in this report.

OUR MISSION

The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women is a non-partisan advisory board that serves to provide leadership on important issues that affect the quality of life of Anne Arundel County women and families. This is accomplished through development and implementation of community outreach, educational programs, and advocacy, often through collaborative action with partner organizations in the public and private sectors.

OUR VISION

The AACCW continues to focus on a four-part vision:

- To serve as a highly visible, respected voice on issues of importance to women in Anne Arundel County.
- To expand possibilities for all women and girls and to advocate for empowerment and equality.
- To establish the Commission for Women as a leading organization on important local issues through collaborative partnerships.
- To serve as a liaison to the County Executive and County Council regarding women's issues.

MEMBERSHIP

The Commission operated with nearly full membership throughout 2021. We invited three new candidates to join us in the Fall due to vacancies from member resignations.

The Membership Committee presented a new member "Welcome Letter" and digital "Membership Manual". These were created to enhance a new member's onboarding experience, their understanding of the Commission's mission and vision, Commissioner roles, responsibilities, and opportunities, and to encourage early participation and engagement with the group. As we continue to meet remotely, we believe this manual will be extremely useful. We are excited to put this into practice in 2022.

The Membership Committee introduced us to the "SLACK channel" application so that we can streamline conversations instead of having to track lengthy email threads. We expect to use this frequently in 2022.

LEGISLATIVE

Members of the Legislative Committee closely followed the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) priorities and joined their fall meeting to review and vote on key legislation anticipated for the 2022 General Assembly session. They continued to educate members on the lobbying and legislation advocacy procedures and guidelines and encouraged members to

actively support the MLAW slate of top 10 issues of the session. We had lively discussions of various proposals and hoped for outcomes.

The Legislative Committee launched a new program called “Meet your Legislator” for residents to get to know who represents them at the local or state level. The plan includes having each female legislator provide a short video to 1. introduce herself, 2. share the geography she represents, and 3. summarize the legislation she is most proud of sponsoring or supporting. The intention is to include women representatives from the Maryland General Assembly, members of the Anne Arundel County Council, women leaders of the City of Annapolis, and women leaders serving on the Anne Arundel County School Board. This initiative will be rolled out in 2022

Going forward we will renew our membership with MLAW and continue to educate ourselves and advocate for legislation relevant to the needs of women in Anne Arundel County.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The AACCW currently has accounts on several on-line platforms, each of which speaks to a different audience and requires a different approach. Our social media content is a balance of information, recognition and celebration, social engagement, encouragement, and light-heartedness. We make every attempt to consider and apply diversity, equity, and inclusivity through our social communications.

Our audience is made up of 92% women and 8% men primarily between the ages of 35-64. Approximately 25% live in Annapolis and Severna Park with 3-5% approximately/equally distributed throughout other communities across the County. We are tracking Likes, Follows, and Share activity to determine which posts resonate with our followers.

We currently have accounts on the following platforms (although all are not active):

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Pinterest

Throughout 2021, our social media presence continued to climb. To date we have recorded 1,700 Facebook followers, a 5% annual increase over 2020. Our primary focus has been to post on Facebook (over other channels) and to create “Boards” on Pinterest with content we feel is relevant to our mission and resonates with women and girls in the County.

This year, the Social Media Committee introduced us to a new application called “TeamUp”. With this application, each committee can upload their social post schedule and all Commissioners can view the master social calendar at any point in time. This new program will greatly enhance how we manage our social media strategy.

The Social Media Committee also introduced a new AACCW logo which provides us a unique and recognizable brand identity. Commissioners reviewed several design options and voted to adopt their favorite (see below).



Following is an overview of our monthly social media observances for fall/winter 2021.

September

- Fill out the Census
- Walk out of Darkness Suicide Prevention – Candlelight Vigil
- Suicide Prevention
- Hispanic Heritage Month

October

- Breast Cancer Awareness
- COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot

November

- COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Ages 5-11
- Veteran’s Health/Military Appreciation

December

- Mental Health – Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- World AIDS Day
- Re-share Yoga and Strength Training Video
- Preparing for the New Year
- Mindfulness

Our goal for 2022 is to continue to increase engagement with our viewers. We are also looking at ways our bi-lingual Commissioners can help us support our Asian and Spanish speaking communities.

2021 Sub-Committees

Trafficking in Persons

The Commission partnered with the Board of Childcare and the local alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority to organize a County-wide human trafficking stakeholders meeting. Stakeholders include community-based organizations, non-profits, law enforcement and government agencies who engage with survivors and at-risk populations representing all ages and demographics. They provide education, awareness, serve as first responders, and provide survivor healthcare and legal services among other services. The intended outcome is to establish a formal County-based trafficking task force, collaborative or coalition made up of these stakeholders.

This first Stakeholders Meeting was held on April 21, 2021, and the AACO Human Trafficking Collaborative (AACOHTC) was created. Nearly 40 public, private, non-profit leaders, and members of the Maryland General Assembly signed-on to a set of Guiding Principles committing to actively participate and support this initiative.

The Commission supported the 2020 Virtual Dash for Dignity Race through social media promotion of the event.

Once the HTC was established, it was decided to broaden the scope of this sub-committee to include victims of abuse and trauma. We renamed this sub-committee Survivor Advocacy Violence Education (SAVE).

Women & Girls Leadership

The Women & Girls Leadership sub-committee's goal is to improve the community by supporting an inclusive environment for women and girls that provides resources and leadership opportunities to empower all to reach their full potential.

Due to the continued impact of Covid-19, we were unable to plan any in-person events. However, in the meantime, we expanded the Commission's Pinterest account to include the following Boards:

- Mentorship
- Healthy Eating
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Books for Self-Improvement
- Trafficking
- Black Authors

There is so much more content that we can share here, and we look forward to increasing engagement with this platform.

The Women & Girls Leadership committee is planning a Leadership Day to include a career panel and a speed mentoring event to discuss education and employment opportunities available to young women and girls in 2022.

Women's Health & Wellness

The Women's Health sub-committee created a strong mission and vision for 2021 with a detailed plan to execute their vision through social media.

The Women's Health sub-committee will focus on a variety of wellness topics relatable to women and families residing in the County. Health and wellness resources, events and exciting challenges will be shared on our social media pages throughout the year being inclusive of ages. Local events will also be promoted.

The women's health subcommittee will post content related to fitness, hydration, and overall wellness. Themes will focus on loving your whole self, using a holistic approach (physical, emotional, and spiritual), and helping women of the County find life balance.

ANNUAL STRATEGY SESSION

The Commission met in August for our annual strategy session. This 4-hour Zoom focused on setting goals, priorities, and time management as part of our initiative to include professional development training in our meetings. We discussed our annual social media strategy, sub-committee goals and membership recruitment plan for filling open seats.

PARTNERSHIPS

Members of the Commission reached out to other women leaders in the County to learn what their organizations were doing and create opportunities to collaborate and serve. These organizations included:

- The Links, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
- Chrysalis House, Inc.
- City of Refuge
- HOPE for All
- Board of Childcare
- Chesapeake Arts Center
- Stella's Girls
- Pretty Girls Academy

Commissioners donated meals, personal items, toiletries, children's books and toys to Chrysalis House residents and their children throughout the year.



Pictured above: Linda Hicks-Boyd, Kari Maltz, Dawn Davis (meetup at Trader Joe's parking lot to hand off meals for Chrysalis House). Gift bags, decorations, and holiday gifts for the children.



Pictured above: Kari Maltz, Catherine Robins, Feyella Toney, Cynthia Adams, LaTondra Kinley and her beautiful Goddaughter. (Meetup at the Chrysalis House parking lot to deliver meals).



Pictured above: Meals delivered to Chrysalis House (Spring 2022).

Tours planned for Drink at the Well and HOPE for All were postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

VICE-CHAIR RECOGNITION AWARD

The Commission leadership feels strongly about supporting our members and recognizing their work. This year we introduced the AACCW Vice Chair Award – to be bestowed each year (by the Vice-Chair) on 1-3 members whose volunteer efforts on behalf of the Commission exceed expectations and move the mission forward. These members show outstanding effort in contributing their time, energy, and skills to serve the mission of the Commission for Women.

2021 Recipients of the Vice-Chair Appreciation Award were:

- *Feyella Toney* – for her initiative to fully digitize the Commission's recruitment, onboarding and offboarding procedures as well as create a fully digital Membership Manual.
- *Althea Whieldon* – for her unwavering commitment to create a County-wide Trafficking in Persons Taskforce aka AACCO Human Trafficking Coalition.
- *Jessica Gorski* – for her leadership in re-imagining and re-igniting both the Legislative Committee and Women's Health and Wellness Sub-committee.

As women leaders in our community, Commissioners served on numerous non-profit boards and panels, and attended or led Zoom meetings, webinars, and seminars that addressed issues affecting women in our County.

Organizations we served included:

- Bowie State University
- Wiley H. Bates Legacy Center
- Chase Lloyd House Board of Trustees
- Annapolis Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta

- Annapolis Chapter Links, Inc.
- Baltimore City Human Trafficking Collaborative
- Eastern Shore Human Trafficking Task Force
- Victim's Services Subcommittee of the MD Human Trafficking Task Force
- Amazing Grace Ministries at Heritage Community Church
- City of Refuge Baltimore
- Anne Arundel County Human Trafficking Coalition

Other places we showed up:

- National 100 Black Women Coalition – AACO Legislative Advocacy Day
- 6th Annual Women's Empowerment Forum, Annapolis Chapter of The Links, Inc. Focus: Opportunities and Challenge for Incarcerated Women
- Maryland Non-profit Organizations
- Growing with Google Training
- Women Leaders in Action: Making a Positive Difference for Anne Arundel County Women and Children
- 2021 Commissions for Women Roundtable Meeting
- Diversity and Inclusion Forum for Military Women and Veterans
- UMBC Internship Hiring Program Panel
- Severna Park High School Mock Interviews
- US Department of Labor Webinar on the Impact of the Wage Gap on Women in the Workplace
- AACO Executive Townhall - Eliminating the Opportunity Gap – Community & NAACP leaders discussed steps to take inside and outside the school system to address the root causes of the opportunity gap that impacts our kids
- Maryland Commission for Women survey and discussion on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on women in Maryland and specifically women in Anne Arundel County
- Maryland Insurance Administration online Financial Education Series

LOOKING AHEAD

The Commission has identified the following priorities as currently most relevant to women in AACO. As circumstances shift, businesses open and we can gather in person again, we will continue to reassess our programs and activities and focus our resources and efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

- Women's Mental and Emotional Health
- Employment Flexibility
- Childcare
- Financial Stability
- Education

The following initiatives, programs and events are planned for 2022:

Meet your Legislator

The Legislative Committee will launch their “Meet your Legislator” program. The plan includes having each female legislator provide a short video to 1. introduce herself, 2. share the geography she represents, and 3. summarize the legislation she is most proud of sponsoring or supporting. The intention is to include women representatives from the Maryland General Assembly, women members of the Anne Arundel County Council, women leaders of the City of Annapolis, and women leaders serving on the Anne Arundel County School Board.

Live Interviews plus Yoga, Meditation, Self Defense

The Commission will continue to conduct live interviews with local women on topics of interest to women in accordance with our monthly social media observances. We will also invite women instructors to hold free classes on Facebook Live or Zoom in support of women at home who need a break; including mothers of young children and seniors who may feel isolated.

Serve a Meal

The Commission will serve a meal to the residents of Chrysalis House this Spring while their kitchen is closed for renovation. This need will be ongoing for several months. We will also seek donations.

#Make22AboutYou

The Women’s Health sub-committee will focus on a variety of wellness topics relatable to the women and families in the County. Health and wellness resources, events and exciting challenges will be shared on our social media pages throughout the year being inclusive of all ages. Live events will also be promoted.

Girls Leadership Day - Education and Career Speed Mentoring

The Women & Girls Leadership group is planning a Leadership Day for girls to include a career panel and speed mentoring event. The speed mentoring event will pair up local women business leaders and high school-college age girls to offer the girls an introduction to a variety of professional and vocational career fields available to them.

Potential locations for Girls Leadership Day include:

- Chesapeake Arts Center
- University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Anne Arundel Community College
- Anne Arundel County Library

AACCW 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION 1975 - 2025

We had the opportunity to meet with former AACCW member, Mary Kay McClure who served on the Women's Commission in the early 1980s. She shared a vibrant history of the AACCW from the 1970's and 1980's and their role in supporting the rollout of Title 9 by partnering with the AACO Library and holding education sessions as well as marching on the Capitol in DC to support this and other equal rights efforts / agendas. She also shared The Capital Gazette newspaper articles, brochures, meeting minutes and other AACCW documents from that time. It was interesting to note that the original founding members of the AACCW included both women and men.

The 50th Anniversary of the founding of the AACO Commission for Women is in 2025. We are eager and excited to gather historical information to share our rich history and milestone timeline with women in the County.

The Commission for Women continues to thrive and strive to identify the needs and serve the women of Anne Arundel County. We welcome other organizations and agencies to join us in this mission.