



Anne Arundel County
Commission for Women

Annual Report 2020

Submitted by Kari Hotchkiss Maltz, Chair
February 2021
aaccwomen@gmail.com

Commissioners

Kari Hotchkiss Maltz – Chair
Dawn Davis – Vice Chair
Jennifer Dwyer – Secretary

Feyella Toney – Membership
Jessica Gorski – Legislation
Mariah Mckutchin – Social Media/ Communications

Althea Whieldon
Linda Hicks-Boyd
Mary Leisenring
Laura Gutierrez
Cynthia Adams
LaTondra Kinley

Diane Brashears
Tonya Baroudi
Catherine Robins
Carolyn Keaton Culp
Meghan Honesto
Berenice Schneider

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 experienced an exciting year in 2020. Like many organizations, we were challenged by the social changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we were inspired to rethink our mission and how we execute, deliver and serve.

Early in the year our members continued with programs and initiatives that had been planned in 2019 with respect to our three priority areas of action: addressing the opioid epidemic, empowering women and girls, and combatting human trafficking.

However, with the onset of the Covid-19 virus, subsequent cancellation of all in-person gatherings, closure of schools and impact particularly on women, by mid-summer, it was evident that we needed to set aside our aforementioned priorities and redirect our attention to the most urgent needs facing women in our County. It was clear that our social media channels would become our primary means of communication and outreach.

We experienced a 50% member turnover due to term completion. With a vigorous recruitment effort, the AACCW ended the year with a full membership representing all areas of our County,

a renewed focus on how we activate our mission, and a number of exciting new initiatives planned for 2021.

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.

While 2020 challenged our ability to fulfill our vision in traditional ways, we rallied and found new and creative ways to become informed, collaborate with partners, and help serve the women in our County.

MEMBERSHIP

The Commission operated with full membership for the first half of 2020. June 2020 saw a drop in members by nearly 50%. This was anticipated and due to the term completion of several members. Throughout late summer/early fall we conducted a thoughtful, multi-step recruitment and interview effort. All our active members participated in telephone and Zoom interviews. We subsequently welcomed several new energetic and passionate women to the Commission, bringing us back to full membership by December.

Our Membership Chair led a successful effort to standardize and streamline our candidate recruitment, application, interview and evaluation process, and converted all onboarding materials to digital format.

LEGISLATIVE

Pre-Pandemic, commissioners attended in-person events including the Montgomery County Commission for Women legislation advocacy day.

Due to the shortened Maryland General Assembly (MGA) session, the AACCW legislative committee operated primarily in a monitoring mode. We continued to follow the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) priorities and joined them in reviewing key legislation anticipated in the 2021 session. We educated ourselves on the new lobbying and legislation advocacy procedures and guidelines put in place by the MGA.

Several Commissioners attended the MLAW fall meeting via Zoom and closely followed the legislation slate to be supported in 2021.

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 the following platforms, each of which speaks to a different audience and requires a different approach.

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

Throughout 2020, our social media presence continued to climb. We established a social media calendar and to date have recorded 1,500 Facebook followers, a 20% annual increase over 2019. We have also recorded 1,302 Facebook Likes, a 10% annual increase over 2019. We attribute this increase to our shift in focus to social media as our primary platform for outreach. We expanded our use of Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest and scaled back our use of LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter. We have made exceptional progress and continue to learn what actions to take on different platforms.

Along with a year-long plan for monthly themed content, and weekly posts - Trafficking Tuesdays and Wellness Wednesdays - our social media is a balance of information, social engagement, encouragement and light-heartedness.

Following is an overview of our monthly social media themes for fall/winter 2020.

September

- Fill out the Census
- Walk out of Darkness Suicide Prevention – Candlelight Vigil
- Suicide Prevention
- Women’s Health
- Alcohol and Drug addiction

October

Register to Vote
Outdoor Job Fair
Anti-Trafficking Tuesdays
Cyber Safety
Mental Health
Breast Cancer Awareness

November

Vote
Domestic Violence
Mental Health Support for Women
Diabetes
Great American Smoke Out

December

Mental Health and Ways to Reduce Stress During the Holidays
Yoga and Strength Training
Emotional Boundaries
Professional Development
Holiday Traditions

We are tracking Likes, Follows, and Share activity to determine which posts resonate with our viewers. Our live interviews on positive psychology and character strengths and living with metastatic breast cancer were clearly the most popular in 2020 receiving as many as 1,600 views.

Our goal for 2021 is to increase engagement with our viewers. We are also looking at ways our bi-lingual Commissioners can help us support our Latino and Hispanic Spanish speaking communities.

2020 WORKING GROUPS PRE-PANDEMIC

For several years, the focus of the Commission has been on the following three thematic areas:

- Trafficking in Persons
- Opioid Epidemic
- Women and Girls Leadership

Trafficking in Persons

Anyone regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, education, or socio-economic status can fall prey to human trafficking. However, individuals living in northern Anne Arundel County/South

Baltimore, Maryland are especially vulnerable. This is a densely populated urban area with a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development with growing populations. International airports and major interstate highways bring tourists by the thousands to Baltimore and the surrounding area, along with extremes of wealth and poverty that meet in mega-malls, arenas and casinos that have provided the demand, the means and the opportunity for people to engage in modern day slavery.

This area was noted in the AACO Community Foundation Report, Poverty Amidst Plenty VI, as having the highest number of residents living in poverty, the highest rate of substance abuse, the highest rate of parental incarcerations in the state, along with high levels of unemployment. The situation has only gotten worse with the pandemic.

The Commission partnered with the Annapolis (MD) Alumnae chapter of The Links, Inc. to conduct a vulnerability and trafficking awareness presentation for the Girls Leadership Academy at Anne Arundel High School. Thirty-five girls participated in the discussion which covered topics from personal risk, warning signs and situational awareness for themselves and friends to confidence, value and self-worth.

The Commission also participated in a community awareness event focused on the children of trafficking survivors.

With contributions from many public, private and government partners, a county-wide Combatting Human Trafficking Resource and Protocol Guide and accompanying Tip Sheet were created and officially published on the AACCW website. We encourage all interested parties to download and share the documents.

Consistent with prior years, the commission supported the Dash 4 Dignity, a 5k/1k run/walk which raises awareness of modern-day slavery in our area. The event raises funds for local outreach to vulnerable individuals in and around Anne Arundel County/South Baltimore, MD. We are proud to continue to support The Dash for the foreseeable future.

Our plan for 2021 is to host a County-wide human trafficking stakeholders meeting in partnership with the Board of Childcare (recent recipient of Governor Hogan's grant to study trafficking) and the local alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority. 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. The Commission will subsequently attend and participate in meetings as an informed, interested member.

Opioid Epidemic

The AACCW supported the County's efforts to 1) prevent new users, 2) educate the community on the use of naloxone and 3) help individuals succeed in recovery. However, in light of the impact of the pandemic, we saw the need to re-assess this focus and broadened our attention to the larger concern of women and children's health to include:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Emotional Health
- Spiritual Health

Mid-summer, one of our Commissioners attended the National State of Childcare Right Now report (via zoom), in support of our Legislative and Women's Health focus. As a result, the Commission decided to support Maryland State legislation in line with this issue and to add mental health aspects of women and childcare under the umbrella of our Women's Health focus.

Women's & Girls Leadership

The Commission'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. When the pandemic hit, we saw that the impact affected women the hardest with the immediate loss of employment specifically in the service, restaurant, hotel and hospitality sectors, school closures, loss of childcare, food insecurity, and subsequent isolation. As a result, Commissioners participated on many zoom calls throughout the summer addressing these concerns.

Pre-pandemic, several Commissioners attended the annual Maryland Public Television Women's Leadership Forum. We also supported this event with social media and live interviews. Later in the year Commissioners attended (via Zoom) the Centennial Celebration to commemorate 100 years of Women's suffrage hosted by the Maryland Centennial Commission and the Maryland Commission for Women.

Going forward we are looking to plan and host an education and career panel to discuss education and employment opportunities for women and girls.

ANNUAL STRATEGY SESSION

The Commission met in August for our annual strategy session. This 4-hour Zoom focused on establishing a "go forward" plan with the social media platform Facebook as the epicenter of our outreach. We drafted an annual social media publication strategy and discussed our membership recruitment plan for filling open seats.

We modified the former working group approach and introduced professional development and training to our meetings. It was determined that in order for the Commission to operate

effectively and efficiently, we needed to standardize our procedures, policies and document sharing. We also needed to create opportunities for each member to contribute their skills and strengths either to 1) mission outreach or 2) organizational operations such as program/project management, research and content management across the Commission's multiple social media channels.

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. These organizations included:

- Leadership Anne Arundel
- Women Giving Together
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
- The Links, Inc.
- City of Refuge
- HOPE for All
- Drink at the Well
- Board of Childcare

AACCW Brick at the Library

Members of the 2019 – 2020 AACCW proudly donated personal funds to purchase a brick recognizing the AACCW's support for the new Annapolis Michael E. Busch Library.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Commission has identified the following priorities as currently most relevant to women in AACO. As circumstances with the Covid-19 pandemic shift, businesses open up and we are able to 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.

- Income/ jobs / Employment
- Food
- Housing
- Childcare
- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Economic Equality
- Education - for their children and women themselves
- Resources for Seniors
- Resources for anxiety, stress and mental health support

The following programs and events are currently planned for 2021:

Live Interviews plus Yoga, Meditation, Self Defense

The Commission will conduct live interviews with local women on topics of interest to women in accordance with our monthly social media themes. 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. In particular, 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 one Saturday night this Winter/Spring. This was a request of a specific need to give their cooks a break.

Pack a Purse

The Commission will launch a collection for critical items needed by women and families. We are in talks with Chrysalis House, Sarah's House and Hope for All to determine their organization and clients' needs and how the Commission can partner to best serve them. Items collected and recipient organizations will be reassessed annually.

Education and Career Panel

The Commission is partnering with the Annapolis (MD) Alumnae chapter of The Links, Inc. to host a career panel (via zoom) for the members of the Leadership Academy at Anne Arundel High School. We will be bringing together professional women from different disciplines in a 40-minute discussion and Q & A format to discuss higher education, vocational training and career opportunities available to them.

Human Trafficking Stakeholder's Meeting

The Commission is partnering 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. The Commission will subsequently attend and participate in meetings as an informed, interested member.

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.