



# **COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

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**FY 2008 PROGRAM REPORT**

**CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENDATIONS**

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## FROM THE CHAIR

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During the past two years, the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women has been engaged in revitalization, growth and discovery. As we were planning the annual program for FY 2008, we received welcome support from County Executive Leopold's office in the form of technical assistance and grant funding. The results have been the development and launching of a website [www.aacounty/cw.org](http://www.aacounty/cw.org), which provides information relevant to the issues of women in Anne Arundel County, the design of a new marketing brochure to let people know who we are, and the organization of four informational forums that enhanced the awareness of the commission members about issues of importance to county women and families. The four focus areas were *Family Safety, Health, Education and Economics*.

The focus areas were developed during the Commission's annual retreat in 2007. Historically, the Commission has attempted to address these four areas. However, during the retreat, it became clear that the formation of work groups in these areas would help the organization operate with clearer purpose. The task of each work group was to research the focus area and to build knowledge and a resource basis for use by the Commission. During FY 2008, research included, but was not limited to inviting professionals/experts in the specific area to present information on selected topics within a focus area.

Through the forums, we made connections with a number of individuals and organizations whose work directly impacts the lives of women in Anne Arundel County. This effort was dubbed *Operation Outreach* and these entities have become our partners in the effort to be better informed about community needs and county resources so that we may, in turn, serve as a collective resource to women and to the County Executive's office. Primarily, that is our mission.

This report summarizes the information we gathered in each focus area. The *Conclusions* indicate specific actions that county government, Commissioners, our partners, or other organizations might take to continue improving the lives of women and families in the county. The *Commendations* represent opportunities for us to highlight some of the current exceptional activities and enhancements that have helped to improve the social fabric of our county.

We found that the panel format of gathering information was beneficial not only to the Commission, but also to the professionals and experts who served as panelists. All expressed a desire to work closely together and to continue to develop partnerships to improve life for women in Anne Arundel County.

On behalf of the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women, I am proud to present the organization's *FY 2008 Program Report*. We hope that this document will be useful to you.

Jeanne D. Cooper, LCSW  
Chairperson

## **FAMILY SAFETY**

*As we reflect on the challenges and successes of the year, we look forward to the opportunities ahead of us to maintain safe communities in Anne Arundel County. With your support, we will continue to provide professional and faithful police service to all the citizens we serve.*

Colonel James Teare  
Chief of Police 2007 Annual Report  
Anne Arundel County Police Department

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In November 2007, the AACCW engaged a panel of professionals and experts from county agencies and organizations to share information on family safety by examining the many issues that affect safety within the home. While a number of topics were raised, the panel discussion highlighted several issues including the strong relationship between mental illness, drug abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and homelessness as core concerns that have a significant impact on family safety concerns.

One in five adults will experience some type of mental illness during their lifetime. Mental illness affects all ages including children, adults and the elderly. The earlier mental health issues are identified and treated, the more likely there will be a successful outcome. This is especially true for children where early treatment allows them to fully participate in their education and ensures appropriate development of social skills, thus lessening the affects of the illness on the family and throughout the life of the child.

Anne Arundel Medical Center sees as many as 240 mental health patients and Baltimore Washington Medical Center sees 220 patients through the emergency room each month. However, the fact that there are only 16 psychiatric in-patient beds in Anne Arundel County poses a significant problem. Mental health patients are either transferred to out-of-state or out-of-county facilities where they often lose the support of family and friends, or they are released back into the home environment where appropriate services may not be available. Additionally, Medicare covers only limited mental health services for both in-patient and outpatients.

Domestic violence, sexual assault and teen dating violence are issues that often co-occur and are of significance to women in Anne Arundel County. The Rape Crisis Center, funded through the Anne Arundel County Health Department, has been administered by different organizations at various locations over the last 10 years. Consistency in location and easy access to services is critical if this effort is to reach those needing services and should be a consideration in the procurement process.

Homelessness is also strongly related to family safety issues. According to the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services (AADSS), 92 percent of women in homeless shelters are or have been victims of domestic violence, 30 percent of adults in our shelters were once in the foster care system, and 500 or more children are registered with the Board of Education as homeless. While we live in one of the wealthiest counties in Maryland, homelessness is a significant problem for women and children. It is widely recognized that there is a need for affordable housing coupled with a need for a coordinated assessment and referral center, emergency short-term housing, and access to health care.

## ***FAMILY SAFETY (cont.)***

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### ***Conclusions:***

- School officials, physicians, social workers and nurses should be trained to identify mental health issues early so that treatment can begin before the child enters school and continue, as necessary, throughout the child's education.
- In-patient psych facilities are severely limited in Anne Arundel County and this is a significant issue as families often struggle to keep their members at home rather than send them to an out-of-state or out-of-county facility. This increases the stress on the family unit making respite care even more critical. It is vital that we find a way to expand such services within the county.
- School system personnel and all health care professionals should be trained to recognize the symptoms of depression and should have access to referral information.
- Domestic violence, sexual assault and dating violence are issues that affect women and children in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Teachers, staff, guidance counselors, and others need to have appropriate training and information about resources that address these issues.
- The Rape Crisis Center is an important asset for our community and should be easily and consistently accessible.

### ***Commendations:***

- The county is to be commended for adding free mental health and drug abuse services for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families. Nearly one-fourth of homeless people in Maryland are veterans suffering from some type of mental illness. This service will improve the opportunities for military families to stay safe, healthy and together.
- We commend Anne Arundel County for being a leader in the use of "lethality assessment" in cases of domestic abuse which is gaining momentum as a way to identify potential lethal situations before they occur. However, domestic violence still occurs in our county far too often.
- We commend Anne Arundel County for identifying the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County as the Sexual Assault Center.

### **Our thanks to the following experts who participated in our forum on November 8, 2007:**

Alice Harris, Local Management Board for Children, Youth and Families; Kathy Miller, Oasis Center for Mental Health; Kit Breen, Psychologist; Michael Cohen, Executive Director of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence; Frank Sullivan, Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, Lorraine Chase, U.S. Department of Justice-Victim/Witness Assistance; Officer Cifala and Corporal Waters, Anne Arundel County Police Department; Jennifer Pollitt-Hill, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and Katie Sears, Student Commissioner, Anne Arundel County Commission for Women.

## **HEALTH CARE**

*It's up to all of us—through communities, our jobs, our schools, our places of worship and our government—to use these indicators to create solutions that will improve the health of Anne Arundel County residents.*

Frances B. Phillips, RN, Anne Arundel County Health Officer  
May 2008 Report Card of Community Health Indicators

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In December 2007, the Commission held a forum on the topic of health care in Anne Arundel County. A broad view of the health status of county residents was presented by the Anne Arundel County Health Department and other professionals and experts on the topic of health care. Topics also included health issues of particular importance to women including cancer, infant mortality, and cardiovascular disease. Commissioners reviewed information regarding the number of uninsured Anne Arundel County residents and their access to health care services. Legislation at the state level in the 2008 session made significant strides in broadening access to health care insurance through the MCHIP program beginning in FY 2009.

The 2006 statistics in the most recent Anne Arundel County Department of Health (DOH) Report Card indicate the leading causes of death in our county for both whites and blacks are cardiovascular disease (heart disease, stroke and others) and cancer. Findings have indicated that the introduction of awareness programs and screening activities, particularly for minorities between 1999 and 2005, have had an impact on reducing the cancer mortality rate for blacks. While similar statistics are not available for cardiovascular disease, it is reasonable to surmise that comparable programs and simple life style changes can go a long way in reducing risk factors for heart disease.

Infant mortality continues to be of concern in Anne Arundel County. Since 1990 the infant mortality in Maryland has ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states. Specifically, here in Anne Arundel County, infant mortality for African-Americans has continued to increase beyond the Maryland and the national rate.

Anne Arundel County ranks 12<sup>th</sup> among Maryland counties in cancer mortality rates. The cancer mortality rate is falling and the unacceptably higher rate among blacks is decreasing but there is still concern about the high cancer rate in our county.

The Commissioners concluded that a major overarching theme expressed by all the professionals and experts on our panel was access. Access is the key to achieving better health care in Anne Arundel County, whether in the form of access to services, to information and education, or to comprehensive health care and this was especially true for minority women and children.

## ***HEALTH CARE (cont.)***

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### ***Conclusions:***

- Continued support for legislation providing comprehensive and affordable health care for all Anne Arundel County families is necessary as many Anne Arundel County women and children remain uninsured or underinsured.
- Advocacy is needed for the location of a second AAMC Outreach Center on Forest Drive to address the growing uninsured patient base requiring care in the Annapolis area.
- The addition of an Annapolis Transit bus stop at the Health Department on Harry S. Truman Parkway would significantly improve access to their services and those of the co-located health center.
- DOH services at each of the five County health centers should be continually evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of their local communities.
- Perhaps the county could establish a mobile health unit similar to the Governor's wellness mobile that currently operates on the AACC campus and provides low-cost primary health care services to uninsured & underinsured MD residents.
- Additional multilingual health information to reach the Hispanic and Asian populations of the County is needed.

### ***Commendations:***

- Anne Arundel County continues to reduce cancer rates by bringing to bear the full resources of the health department on this critical issue. Most recently, the addition of colorectal screening will continue to bring the cancer mortality rate down.
- The County Executive's continued interest in and focus on reducing the infant mortality rate is crucial particularly for African-American families in North County. He should be commended for recognizing this as an imperative in his administration.

#### **Our thanks to the following experts who participated in our forum on December 13, 2007:**

Frances B. Phillips, RN, MHA-Health Officer, Anne Arundel County Health Department; Michael Freedman, MD-local physician/director of the AAMC's OUTREACH program; Leni Preston-Vice Chair, Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform; Anne S. Kasper, PhD-Chair of MD Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform; John Martin, MD-Surgeon and Director of Dare to C.A.R.E. vascular screening program.

## **ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE**

*Whether you are a company considering Anne Arundel County as a location or one of the 14,000 businesses already here, you will find that Anne Arundel County is a great place to live and a great place to do business.*

County Executive John Leopold  
Greetings from the County Executive  
Anne Arundel County Economic Development Corporation

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In February 2008, the AACCW hosted a forum focused on economic enterprise for women in Anne Arundel County. While women owned businesses account for 51 percent of all businesses, less than 1 percent of those businesses reach the one million dollar or more in revenues. Small businesses are the lifeblood of economic independence for many women but there are larger challenges to growing a small businesses owned by women and minorities.

Dunn and Bradstreet reports that there are 3,000 women owned businesses in Anne Arundel County, accounting for less than 12 percent of all businesses they report in the county and certainly underrepresented even by our local economic development information. This is significantly lower than the national percentages and implies that women are facing even greater challenges here in Anne Arundel County.

The county has many resources and organizations that support minority economic enterprise including the Minority Business Enterprise Program and Council, the Anne Arundel County Economic Development Office and the Anne Arundel Community College.

National data indicate that women are less likely to find mentors or to network effectively. Our local Minority Business Enterprise Council is a significant resource addressing these issues. Additionally, recent events by the Council have focused on helping women and minority owned businesses gain better access to state and federal contracting where national statistics tell us that they are significantly underrepresented.

The Commission also recognizes that the economic slow down will adversely and disproportionately affect women business-owners as they often self-finance or use their personal credit cards rather than establishing business loans sufficient enough for growth or for surviving in a down economy. This impact is likely to affect not only the business owner but their entire family.

## ***ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE (cont.)***

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### **Conclusions:**

- The county should continue to sponsor summits and conferences for women entrepreneurs with a focus on how to network and conduct business within Anne Arundel County.
- Providing an opportunity for business women to identify key barriers to establishment, growth, and success of their businesses would provide a basis for continued efforts to assist women and their businesses.
- Developing and publishing a coordinated list of business resources for women-owned businesses in the county, including organizations and services, would be an asset to women as they develop their business plans and as they attempt to grow their businesses.

### **Commendations**

- The County Executive should be commended for supporting the Minority Business Enterprise Council and the Minority Business Enterprise Program that seeks to increase the number of minority vendors in county procurement. This type of support will be extremely important in the current economy for women and minority owned businesses.
- The county should be commended for creating a directory of women and minority owned businesses in the county and for maintaining the list on their website.

### **Our thanks to the following experts who participated in our forum on February 21, 2008:**

Joanne Jackson, Minority/Small Business Enterprise Coordinator, Anne Arundel County Office of Central Services; Carol Kasper, Bank of Annapolis; Gloria Berthold, and Charlene Templeton, Anne Arundel County Community College.

## **EDUCATION**

*Education Week, the nation's preeminent education newspaper, recently named Maryland schools among the very best. Maryland ranked third in the nation and the publication's research director found that no state has schools that are more consistently excellent.*

Maryland State of Education Report, 2008

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In March 2007, the education work group invited representatives from the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), and a student of Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) to discuss the status of educational achievement and educational resources in the county. We were pleased to learn about the quality of educational resources available to the citizens of Anne Arundel County. However, in light of the current economic environment, we know it will be challenging to continue to improve education for all students in K-12, to address continuing concerns about the disparity between minority and majority student achievement, and to maintain the historically low tuition rates at the community college. As with other communities there is always concern with the level of funding available for K-12 education. We encourage the County Executive and the public school system to work together to ensure sufficient funding so that Anne Arundel County continues to have a first-class educational system.

County residents are indeed fortunate to have access to Anne Arundel Community College and all its resources. Its mission of providing access to higher education to every citizen of the county will be particularly important as the economy tightens and families are faced with rising college costs. It is expected that AACC will continue to see an increase in the proportion of high school graduates who choose AACC as their entry to higher education.

Nationally, there is a shortage of students graduating in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math and our community is no different. There is also an increasing need for health services professional at all levels. These programs of study are extremely expensive but are absolutely necessary for the future economic and social well-being of our county. AACC and the K-12 system will need to continue to encourage students to study in these fields and provide the support services necessary to make them successful.

The senior class of 2009, the first class to graduate under the new high school assessment requirements, had 4,569 enrolled students. As of last March, 1034 or 22 percent of all students in the cohort had not met all of the assessment requirements. However, among the African American students approximately 40 percent had not yet met all the requirements. Updated information provided by AACPS showed that by October 2008, only 7.5 percent of the cohort had not met all the assessment requirements and the proportion of African American students had declined to 15 percent. While there is still a disparity between white and African American students, the Board of Education's goal is to work with students, parents, and the community to ensure that each of these students meets all the graduation requirements by the spring 2009 graduation date.

## ***EDUCATION (cont.)***

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Our student panelist expressed her belief that students will be successful in AACPS when teachers encourage students, use hands-on activities and other techniques to challenge students, make assignments challenging, and set high expectations of for all students.

Educational institutions, of course, do not act in isolation. Learning starts at home. Parental involvement in the form of school visits, monitoring of curriculum and home work, direct contact with teachers and participation in PTA and school board meetings is imperative if our students are to be successful.

### **Conclusions:**

- Many AACC students rely on the public transportation system and access to college for some county residents is dependent upon expansion of the system.
- A mentoring program for young women and for minorities in K-12 established by a partnership among the public school system, community college and other community organizations would benefit young women and may lead to higher success rates.
- A scholarship program for students in areas such as teaching, science, nursing, and engineering that encourages students to use their skills and education in Anne Arundel County would increase the number of workers where employment short-falls are expected.
- Broadened access to pre-school may help improve the disparity among student populations in the future as this is a program with proven success. It would also provide additional opportunities for young parents to enroll in the community college.

### **Commendations:**

- For the first time since 2003, when the Adequate Yearly Progress program was implemented, all 12 of the county's public high schools have met the targets set forth as part of the No Child Left Behind Legislation.
- AACPS currently has eight National Blue Ribbon Schools and 12 State Blue Ribbon Schools, an indicator of excellence in our public school system.

#### **Our thanks to the following experts who participated in our forum on March 20, 2008:**

Carlesa Finney, Director, Office of Equity Assurance, Anne Arundel County Board of Education; Tonja McCoy, Office of Equity Assurance, Anne Arundel County Board of Education, Martha A. Smith, PhD, President, Anne Arundel Community College, and Michelle Lilley, Student, Old Mill High School.

## WHO WE ARE

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The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women (AACCW) was established in 1975 through an Executive Order by then County Executive Robert Pascal to inform and advise the County Executive on the status of women and issues of importance to women in Anne Arundel County. The organization's mission became to provide leadership to enhance the quality of life of Anne Arundel County women of all walks of life, by influencing legislation, policies, and programs affecting them. Today, we work cooperatively with public and private organizations, government agencies, and non-profit groups, including other women's advocacy groups, to raise awareness and bring about solutions to issues affecting women in our county.

The Commission is a 16-member organization of women from diverse backgrounds, residing in various communities of the county and appointed by the County Executive. Appointees may be identified by existing Commission members and recommended to the County Executive for appointment or they may be identified by the County Executive directly and appointed. The term of service is two years and members may serve up to four consecutive two-year terms.

Associate members may be voted onto the Commission by the membership, upon the recommendation of the group's Executive Board, for a one-year term. The Commission created a Student Associate membership as a way to facilitate outreach "across the generations" of women. The position was approved by former County Executive Janet Owens and instituted in FY 2008. To be eligible for this position, an Anne Arundel County student must be about to enter her junior year of high school when she is voted onto the Commission, and she serves through her senior year. During her tenure, she is charged with creating a project in keeping with the program of the Commission. The project is adopted by and supported by the full Commission.

To carry out its work, the AACCW has four standing committees: **Legislation, Outreach, Finance and Membership** and during FY 2008 four focus area work groups: **Family Safety, Health, Economic Enterprise and Education.**

The committees are outlined in the Commission's by-laws. The Legislation Committee monitors current and/or proposed legislation that may have an impact upon the quality of life for county women and participates with other groups, such as the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women in voicing concerns as well as providing perspective pertinent to issues affecting women overall within the State of Maryland. The Outreach Committee engages the public through the Commission's website and other media. The Finance Committee has oversight of financial operations. The Membership Committee interviews prospective appointees and orients them to the work of the organization.

To help us continue what we have begun, we are seeking to fill a few vacancies and welcome those interested in participating with us as Commissioners or associate members. The current membership is representative of Hanover, Laurel, Severn, Severna Park, Crownsville, Crofton, Gambrills, Glen Burnie, Arnold, Annapolis, and Edgewater. Representation from other areas of the county in addition to diversity in culture, ethnicity and age is most welcome.

## **WHO WE ARE (CONT.)**

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Time, talent, willingness, and commitment are attributes that a Commissioner brings to the organization. If you or someone you know would like to work with us, please send a letter and a resume to: Anne Arundel County Commission for Women, P.O. Box 70, Arnold, MD, 21012.

### **FY 2008 Commissioners**

Chong Barden (Hanover)  
Kimberly Brown, PhD (Laurel)  
Lynn Campbell (Severn)  
Jeanne D. Cooper, LCSW-Chairperson (Laurel)  
Martha Davis Fridrich (Edgewater)  
Janis M. Harvey (Hanover)  
Katherine Higdon (Annapolis)  
Barbara Houchen, PhD (Arnold)  
Rhonda Johnson (Gambrills)  
Claire Louder (Crofton)  
Phyllis Marshall (Edgewater)  
Susan Peeler, MD (Crownsville)  
Anne Rutherford (Severna Park)  
Ruth Tillett (Annapolis)  
Janice Hayes-Williams (Annapolis)  
Joan Wolle, PhD (Crofton)

### **Associate Members**

Katie Sears, Student Associate (Annapolis)  
Rita Brooks (Crownsville)  
Tonja McCoy (Glen Burnie)

Individuals can change things...If everyone will just do their little part, then we can make a tremendous difference in the lives of other people. --*Sarah Purcell*

## ***SPECIAL THANKS***

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**T**he Commission for Women of Anne Arundel County is grateful to those who spent time with us discussing the important work they are doing on behalf of the citizens of the county, particularly women and girls, and we welcome the invitation to participate in some way in that work.

We offer our thanks to County Executive John Leopold for his continued support of the Commission.

Also, we offer our gratitude to the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County for making meeting space available for our monthly meetings, which are held on the second Thursday of the month, September through June, as well as for some of our special events. The location, parking, and conference room have been made available for the past five years free of charge.

Finally, we give a very special thank you to Anne Arundel County Public Schools for printing this report for us.