

Voices

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the First Women's Rights Convention.

Held in Seneca Falls, New York on July 19 and 20, 1848, the convention brought women of different ages, classes, occupations, and religions together to discuss their rights. With conviction and hope they developed their demands, including the right to vote.

Around a tea table in upstate New York, Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock, Jane Hunt, Martha Wright, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton set the conference — and the women's movement — in motion.



The
Nokomis
Foundation

161 Ottawa NW

Suite 305-C

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Creating a stronger voice

for women and girls.

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Permit no. 368

Inside Story

The only sure thing is change . . . or so the saying goes . . . and it certainly holds true for us at the Nokomis Foundation. This issue of our newsletter comes on the heels of several changes — all exciting and worth noting.

First, we changed our address. We moved into new offices in the Waters Building in downtown Grand Rapids. Now that the boxes are unpacked and the dust has settled, we're thrilled with our new digs! We have room to work, to grow . . . and to share. We are furthering our mission of building the capacity of emerging women's organizations by subleasing parts of our office to two local women's organizations. We welcome Women Matter and Witness to our office.

We've also changed the composition of our Board of Advisors. We say farewell to long-time board members Jim McKay and Deb Bailey. We will miss their direct involvement in our work, but know that the community will continue to benefit from their advocacy on behalf of women and girls. We welcome new board members Tom Clinton, Terri Denemy-Woods, Endia Weekley, Heidi Callen, Linda Likely, and Virginia Moralez. They'll be joining returning board members Faye Richardson, Mary Alice Williams, Dan Ballast, David Fairman, Carol Kooistra, and Twink Frey.

Another change — we modified our grantmaking guidelines by removing proposal deadlines. We now accept grant proposals on an ongoing basis. We'll make funding decisions at quarterly meetings, so grantseekers need to allow time for adequate review prior to meetings.

Change has been good for us. Watch for more in the coming year. We'll be releasing our Community Report soon, a Nokomis Foundation website will be available this summer, and we'll be sharing information and plans from our Focus on Girls initiative later this year. Change is the only constant!

Kym Mulhern, Executive Director

Nokomis Foundation Makes Legal Advice Accessible to Michigan Women

As our population ages, there are more than one million women age 60 and older living in Michigan who face a wide variety of legal and consumer issues. A new resource, *Advancing Smartly: A Legal Handbook for Michigan Women Age 60+*, published by the Legal Hotline for Older Michigianians, helps older women understand and make informed decisions on the legal issues that impact their lives.

Advancing Smartly, funded in part by the Nokomis Foundation, addresses consumer issues, Medicaid and Medicare, insurance and pension benefits, housing finance, and estate planning from a women's point of view. The handbook is easy to read and printed in large type. In addition, women age 60 and older can call the Legal Hotline with specific legal questions. The Legal Hotline provides free legal advice and information over the telephone at (800)347-5297 to people who are 60 years of age and older.

The Nokomis Foundation is pleased to be a part of this project. The handbook provides useful legal information on a variety of topics — all from an older woman's perspective. The handbook has been disseminated widely throughout the state, and is further supported with the legal hotline.

Four hundred free copies of *Advancing Smartly* were distributed statewide to libraries, senior centers, aging organizations, legal service providers, and women's groups. Additional copies can be purchased by sending a check for \$20 (per copy) to the Legal Hotline for Older Michigianians, 115 W. Allegan St., Suite 720, Lansing, Michigan 48933. (All orders must be prepaid).

Take Action for Girls

What can parents do at home:

- Your words are powerful and can influence attitudes and performance in school and at home.
- Encourage and praise risk-taking in female children and care-taking in boys.
- Avoid rescuing girls. Encourage girls to make an imperfect product, to get dirty, disheveled and sweaty in pursuit of a goal, to make big, interesting mistakes.
- Praise girls for their skills, ideas and successes, not only for their appearance.
- Provide opportunities for girls to explore roles, experiences and activities that are generally reserved for boys. Girls may not ask for the opportunity to hold a snake, learn carpentry, or construct an electrical circuit, but participate eagerly when given the chance.
- Enable every girl to become a media critic. Examine portrayals of girls and women in television programs, popular songs, movies, books and magazines. Are the portrayals realistic? Are female characters judged more by their looks or actions?
- Build your daughter's technological mastery and competence by finding a way for her to use a computer regularly; and by sending her to computer camp in the summer.
- Extracurricular activities add dimension. Support your daughter's interests and participation in extracurricular activities.

(provided by the Women's College Coalition)



Point to Ponder

According to the Office of Communications at Mount Holyoke College and the Women's College Coalition . . .

Women who take more than two college-level math courses often achieve pay equity with men, and in many cases, receive higher average pay than men.

Did You Know. . .

- Developmentally, girls take the lead. They talk earlier, read earlier, count earlier. In preschool, they score higher on IQ tests than their male peers. They usually receive better grades in elementary school than boys, yet in public schools, far more gifted boys than gifted girls are identified by fifth grade.
- Girls go underground with their talents and abilities sometime between fifth and ninth grades.
- Boys and girls come to very different conclusions about themselves, even when the data on which they base their decisions are the same. Research shows that boys are more willing to accept success and take credit for their accomplishments than girls are.

(Information provided by the Women's College Coalition.)



A Snapshot of American Women

The following statistics (from the Center for Policy Alternatives' *Women and the Economy* campaign) demonstrate women's progress, while highlighting where we need to go.

In the Workplace

Almost 1 in 2 workers in America are women. Almost 61 million American women work outside the home.

Contributing to the Economy

Women contribute \$2.3 trillion to the U.S. economy. 78.5% of women-owned firms have between one and nine employees, compared with 68.2% of all employer firms.

In the Electorate

- Women are the majority of the electorate (53%). Since 1975, the percentage of women in the U.S. Congress has increased slowly but steadily, from 4% to the current 11%. Women's representation in state legislatures has also increased from 8% in 1975 to the current 21%.
- Women voters exercised considerable power with a 16-point gender gap which placed President Clinton in the White House. Politicians have started to view the women's community as a powerful and many times deciding factor in the electoral process.

Yet we still have work to do!

- Nearly 80% of all women workers earn less than \$25,000.
- Women earn only 72 cents to the male dollar.
- 25 states have no female representation on their Congressional delegation.

Good Reads

Things Will Be Different for My Daughter

by *Mindy Bingham and Sandy Stryker*
A practical "workbook" of things parents can do to make things different for their daughters. This useful book is targeted to parents of daughters ages infant to early teens. Available for \$15.95 from Just Girls Book Club (1-800-465-5445).

Am I Thin Enough Yet?

by *Sharlene Hesse-Biber*
An analysis of why women get so caught up with the quest for thinness. This book is published by Oxford University Press, and is available at local book stores (\$13.95).

Great Books for Girls

by *Kathleen Odean*
A listing of over 600 books to "inspire today's girls and tomorrow's women." The book lists are broken down in to several subject and age categories. This book is published by Ballantine Books, and is available at local book stores.

Interesting Websites

The Role Model Project for Girls

<http://www.womenswork.org/girls/about.html>

Women's Voting Guide

<http://www.womenvote.org>

Girl Games

http://www.girlgamesinc.com/xprs_aggi.html

Mothers and Others

<http://www.igc.apc.org/mothers>

Expect the Best from a Girl

<http://www.academic.org/index.html#Index>

Herstory

Learn about the First

Women's Rights Convention!

Read *Remember the Ladies* (Norma Johnston), a detailed account of the convention for 3rd grade readers and up. Available from Just Girls Book Club (\$3.50). 1-800-465-5445

Remember the Ladies . . .

In the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation.

—*Abigail Adams in a letter to her husband, John Adams*
March 31, 1776

Women are like snowflakes.
One alone may melt, but
together we can stop traffic.

Laura Liswood
Director
Women's Leadership Project
Harvard University

New Address

The Nokomis Foundation has moved. Our new address is:

The Nokomis Foundation
161 Ottawa NW, Suite 305-C
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Our phone and fax numbers remain the same:

phone 616-451-0267
fax 616-451-9914

Our e-mail address:
kymmokfnd@igc.apc.org

Save the Date

Women Matter
Statewide Conference
Saturday, May 16, 1998
Kellogg Center
Lansing, Michigan

To receive more information about the conference, or to get on the Women Matter mailing list, contact Deb Bloom at 616-458-8711.

She Said It

I was taught that the way of progress is neither swift nor easy.

—*Madame Curie*

Newsworthy

- In October, 1997, Twink Frey, founder and President of the Nokomis Foundation, was awarded with the Exemplary Grantor Award presented by the Nat'l Society of Fund Raising Executives (West Michigan Chapter) at their Nat'l Philanthropy Day Awards.
- We congratulate Faye Richardson, Nokomis Foundation Board of Advisors, for two recent awards. Faye won the 1997 YWCA Tribute! award in the Business, Management & Industry category. Faye was also honored by Leadership Grand Rapids with a Distinguished Community Trustee Award.



Wage Gap Widening Again

The following highlights are from a *New York Times* article by Tamar Lewin, which appeared on September 15, 1997.

- After nearly two decades in which the wage gap between men and women was steadily narrowing, it is now widening again, piquing confusion and concern among economists and women's groups alike.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly earnings of full-time working women are just under 75% of the men's median, down from 77% four years ago.
- From 1979 to 1993, women's median earnings rose from 62% of men's to 77%. And in the early 1990s, the narrowing gap was widely trumpeted as evidence of women's greater opportunities, greater education, and greater work experience — trends that were predicted to continue indefinitely, edging women ever closer to pay equity.
- While some labor economists suggest tentatively that the gender gap may have something to do with welfare reform unleashing a flood of unskilled women on the job market, most warn that it is far too soon to say with any certainty just what, if anything, the earnings data portend.
- Most experts in the field caution against any conclusion that the earnings numbers are evidence of growing discrimination against women: They say it is more likely that the numbers reflect changes in the makeup of the workforce, overall economic trends, or statistical flukes, than any real reversal of women's workplace status.
- Generally, the youngest women workers have come closest to men's pay levels, with those ages 16 to 24 earning more than 90% of men's wages, those in their mid-careers earning about 75%, and those over 55 earning about 65% as much as the men their age.
- The effort to sort out just what the gender gap means is complicated, since it reflects larger economic trends.

Recent Grants

- Delta Sigma Theta** in support of Breast Cancer Awareness month activities targeting African American women.
- North American Indian Center** in support of the Circle of Life Breast Cancer Awareness and Education program.
- YWCA** in support of the annual Tribute! celebration.
- Heart of West Michigan United Way** in support of general programs.
- YWCA** in support of the EncorePLUS breast and cervical cancer screening, awareness, and support program.
- Actors' Theatre** in support of "The Waiting Room" project.
- Center for the Education of Women (University of Michigan)** in support of a policy analysis project focusing on changes in Michigan's educational environment for women.
- Grand Rapids Cantata Choir** in support of the Amy Beach project.
- Michigan Trails Girl Scout Council** in support of the Face It peer leadership program.
- Volunteers in Service** in support of the Car Ministry program, providing low cost cars, maintenance and support for low-income women.
- Center for Policy Alternatives** in support of Phase II of the *Women's Voices for the Economy Campaign*.
- Women Matter** for general operating and fund development support.