



## Our History



The Michigan Women's Commission (MWC) has enjoyed a long and successful history, beginning with its statutory creation in 1968. State Senator Lorraine Beebe was the author of the enabling statute. In the early 1960's, the seeds for equal rights for women germinated. In 1962, President Kennedy recognized the growing concern among women for equal status in society. He reacted by establishing the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, and ordered that it examine and recommend remedies to combat prejudices and outmoded customs that act as barriers to the full realization of women's basic rights.

Here in Michigan, Governors Swainson and Romney quickly worked to create and support our own Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. This short-lived commission lasted from 1962 to 1964, and was chaired by Dorothy McAllister and Margaret Callam Goebel.

Once the permanent Commission was created in 1968, it immediately set forth to improve the quality of life for Michigan women. That year, Governor Milliken appointed 15 members as well as representatives from the Departments of Education, Social Services, Labor and Civil Service. The new Commission held its first meeting on September 11, 1969. Betty Finegan chaired that inaugural meeting, and the Governor addressed the Commission.

The Commission's first project was holding a state-wide public forum in 1970 to determine what issues were a priority for Michigan women. In 1971, Lorraine Beebe, the former state senator who wrote the legislation creating the Commission, was appointed its Chair. With the appropriation of state funding, the Governor appointed Patricia Cuza to be the first Executive Director of the Commission.

In 1973 the Commission began holding annual conferences dealing with priority issues. Their first conference, "Equality: Challenge of Change" was a tremendous success, and attracted 800 participants. Throughout the 1970's, the Commission worked across the state holding conferences and workshops designed to educate the public and provide a forum for debate and discussion. In 1974, the Commission held the workshop "Women and the Law", and published the brochure "Sex Discrimination in an Elementary Reading Program" to illustrate how certain texts create and perpetuate stereotypical gender roles. The brochure developed into a major campaign that included weekly public service announcements and over 125 speeches were given on the subject.

In 1975, Clare Daniels took over as Chair of the MWC, and was instrumental in hosting the "Women and Children in Contemporary Society" conference. The Commission published a book based on papers presented at the conference. In 1976, Patricia Hill Burnett was appointed Chair. During her term, the Commission initiated a

public outreach program, and began publishing and distributing *Michigan Women*, the newsletter still in circulation today. A speaker's bureau was also established as part of the program.

That year, the Commission completed extensive research on domestic violence and held public hearings on the topic. The Commission then published "Domestic Assault: A Report on Family Violence in Michigan" based on their findings. This report proved to have a tremendous impact on policy in Michigan. State Senator Connie Binsfeld introduced a package of bills targeting various aspects of domestic assault, ranging from training police to handle domestic assault situations to improving techniques for gathering information and statistics for domestic assault cases. The Commission report also played an influential role in the establishment of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board. Representative Daisy Elliot sponsored the legislation creating the board, utilizing the recommendations made by the Commission.

In 1977, Margaret Cooke replaced Patricia Cuza as the Executive Director. The following year, Mary Elizabeth Low became the new Chair. In 1977, the Commission examined the problems of women and alcoholism at its "Women and Alcohol" conference. The other issue highlighted that year was nontraditional employment options for women. The Commission studied the state of women's employment to determine the types of jobs most typically held by the 1977 woman. They then developed the STEP UP program, an apprenticeship training program designed for careers in the building trade. As a result of the research done on the women's career options, the Commission published the brochure "Occupations and Aspirations" and participated in workplace sexual harassment public hearings.

Governor Milliken's 1977 State of the State address prompted the Commission to comprehensively review all state laws that involved discriminatory sex distinctions. The Commission made recommendations regarding gender bias in Michigan, and legislation based on those recommendations became law in 1983.

In 1979, Nan Frost-Welmers was appointed Chair. That year, dubbed the *International Year of the Child*, the Commission researched and established a "Friend of the Court Task Force." The Task Force published the report "In the Best Interests of the Child." A Friend of the Court legislative reform package based on the report was introduced in the House of Representatives and signed into law in 1982. That legislation served as the model for subsequent federal legislation. The Commission also addressed the issue of incest in 1979 in a multi-media effort that included radio, television and newspaper interviews.

With the beginning of the 1980's, the Commission examined how to increase women's economic independence in the coming decade. The Commission held a conference entitled "Dialogue for Women in the 80%," referring to the fact that 80% of all dead end, low paying jobs were held by women. The conference sought to come up with ways to increase career opportunities for Michigan women. In addition, the Commission sponsored a conference for women business owners and published the

Women Business Owners Directory. Furthermore, the Commission researched educational barriers women face in order to correlate such limitations to barriers in the workplace. The Michigan Department of Education utilized this comprehensive information by developing the "Michigan Model Pilot: Increasing the number of Female Administrators in Michigan Public Schools."

Bernadine Denning was appointed Chair of the Commission in 1981. She led the Commission to develop a model for future conferences entitled "Getting Smart in the 80's." These conferences continued to promote the theme of female economic independence, and included such topics as job entry, financial management, and expanded mobility on the job. The Commission then organized the *Women's Assembly III*, a coalition of major women's organizations. It adopted the platform "All issues are women's issues!"

In 1983, the Commission shifted its attention to issues affecting aging women. Along with Lansing Community College and the Office of Services to the Aging, the Commission sponsored "A Celebration of Women... 39 and Counting," a conference to address the concerns of older women. They co-sponsored a similar conference with the University of Michigan and the Institute on Gerontology in 1984. It was also in 1984 that Dr. Nanette Reynolds served as Acting Executive Director.

During 1983, the Commission sponsored public hearings in order to make policy recommendations regarding child care. Those recommendations were published three years later, and resulted in the establishment of the Michigan 4-C (Community Coordinating Child Care) Association at the state level.

In 1985, Mary Addison became the new Executive Director of the Michigan Women's Commission, and Dorothy Jones was appointed Chair. The following year, the Commission received a directive from the legislature asking it to research older women's issues and use that research to form policy recommendations. The Commission promptly formed the Task Force on Older Women's Issues and conducted five public hearings. It used its findings to publish the report "Older Women's Issues," which was then submitted to the legislature.

In addition to its work on older women's issues, the Commission tackled several other projects from 1985-1986. It established a grassroots network of women's organizations throughout the state, held hearings on the ability of women to obtain loans, and held conferences on part-time work for women and the world women in poverty.

The Commission teamed up with then first lady Paula Blanchard in 1987 to co-sponsor the "150 First Lady Award" to commemorate Michigan's sesquicentennial anniversary. The award sought to celebrate unsung heroines throughout Michigan's history.

Throughout 1989-90, the Commission worked in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Public Health's Breast Cancer Task Force and supported five pieces of breast cancer legislation.

The 1990's began with a new Governor and a new Chair of the Commission. In 1991, Governor Engler appointed Patricia Thomas as the Commission's new Chair, and Patti Holden as the Acting Executive Director. The Commission began a project to investigate the living conditions in Michigan's women prisons, and published their findings in a report.

In 1992, the Commission published another report, this one entitled "Part Time Employment: An Issue of Concern for Michigan Women" to highlight problems faced by Michigan's female part time workforce. The Commission also published a brochure to educate the public on the ten newly enacted federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

Patti Garrett became the Chair of the Commission in 1993, which was also the first year the Commission published the *Women's Resource Directory*. An updated version of this book, which is a comprehensive list of state-wide services, groups and organizations, is still distributed by the Commission today via the Commission website.

During the mid 1990's, the Commission co-sponsored an annual essay contest along with the American Association of University Women. The contest celebrated Women's History Month and sought to develop self esteem in 6-12th graders. Themes for the contest included honoring female role models and female leaders, and winners received savings bonds at a reception hosted by then Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld and First Lady Michelle Engler.

In 1992, the Commission continued its tradition of influencing legislation passed in Michigan when it lobbied for the passage of anti-stalking legislation. The legislation that was passed gave Michigan the strongest anti-stalking laws in the country. In order to inform the public of their new rights under the anti-stalking laws, the Commission published the brochure "Are You a Victim of Stalking?"

Anne Mervenne became the Acting Executive Director in 1994. The Governor appointed Sharon Miller to be the permanent Executive Director in December of that year. The Commission continued its crusade against domestic violence by supporting a package of legislation that included fifteen domestic violence bills. Those bills were passed and became effective the following year. The Commission published an informational brochure to explain the new laws. These laws included provisions to mandate arrests in domestic violence situations even if the victim does not press charges, stricter penalties for repeat offenders, and requirements for police to advise victims of their options, as well as several other measures.

In 1995, the focus of the Commission shifted to health education and financial self-sufficiency, which was fostered by the completion of vast research on the factors

that effect economic independence. The Commission also implemented a year long public outreach campaign promoting women's health concerns.

That following year, Kathy DeGrow became the Executive Director of the Commission. The Commission continued its work helping women achieve economic independence, and also focused on increasing the public profile of the Commission. The Commission published the brochures "So You're Thinking of Running for Elected Office" and "How to Succeed in Starting a Business." The Commission also participated in the Michigan Department of Education's Sex Equality Task Force.

In 1998, the MWC focused on health issues, personal safety and promoting self esteem in young girls. The Commission further continued its work in promoting economic independence for women by researching and reporting on family friendly, flexible work schedules. The Commission also joined the Governor's Advisory Committee on Day Care for Children.

In 1998, the Commission began its involvement in the fight against the rape drug, GHB. The Commission campaigned to expose the dangers of GHB, rape drugs and club drugs. In October of 1999, Martha Truscott was appointed Executive Director. Shortly following, Anne Norlander was appointed new Chair in March 2000. The Commission set the goal to increase public awareness of GHB, rape drug and club drugs, and the public profile of the Commission. In May 2000, Chair Norlander teamed up with the Director of the Department of Community Health, Jim Haveman, to produce a public service announcement about GHB, which was broadcast throughout the state. The Commission also began a public speaking campaign on the subject. Additionally, the Commission has teamed with the Department of Community Health to publish brochures on GHB and other rape drugs and club drugs.

In October of 2000, Judy Garland was appointed Vice Chair of the Commission. In 2001, the Commission partnered with the Michigan Department of Treasury and co-sponsoring "The Prosperity Institute for Michigan Women." The purpose of the conference was to help women learn about financial independence and secure the tools to gain it.

Domestic violence prevention became a primary concern in 2001, and staff of the Commission served on a panel of 12 dedicated professionals created to the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Task Force. The Task Force, created by Governor Engler, released recommendations in April 2001 to improve legislation regarding prevention of domestic violence related homicides. As a result of the recommendations, the Commission supported 23 new legislative bills that passed in Michigan legislature. Also in 2001, the MWC translated the brochure "Safety Tips for You and Your Family" into Spanish.

In October 2001, Jean Kordenbrock became the new Executive Director of the Commission. The Commission kicked off 2002 with a speaking campaign educating

high school students across Michigan on the dangers of GHB, club drugs and rape drugs. Teamed with the Department of Community and the Samantha Reid Foundation, the Commission brought the GHB PowerPoint Presentation to over 12,000 students during the months of March, April, and May.

Additionally, the Commission was proud to sponsor the First Annual Governor's Unsung Heroine Awards in March 2002. Six extraordinary women were recognized for their achievements and selfless dedication to community advancement.

In May 2003, Governor Jennifer Granholm, the first woman Governor of Michigan, appointed Emma Bell as the new Chair and Judy Karandjeff as the new Executive Director. In August 2003, Gloria Woods was appointed as the new Vice Chair of the Commission. In 2003, the Commission hosted a summit of all the women's organizations to discuss their priorities and also initiated a survey of women's issues through our newsletter.

In 2004-2005, MWC worked with Institute for Women's Policy Research and others to conduct a survey on the Status of Women in Michigan. Then MWC worked with the Faith A. Knight Foundation to conduct a similar study for each of the 83 counties in Michigan. A summary and individual county sheets are available on our web site.

In 2005 and 2006, MWC and a number of women's organizations conducted "Run, Girl Run" workshops in order to encourage more women to run for political office. The workshops were held in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit. Approximately 100 people were trained.

In the summer of 2005, Governor Jennifer Granholm released her women's agenda, based on our input from public hearings and meetings with women's organizations. In 2005 and 2006, the MWC took a position opposing a ballot proposal, Proposal 02-06, to end affirmative action programs in Michigan. MWC conducted many activities to educate others about the status of women in Michigan and the possible impact of the proposal. The proposal passed in November 2006. We also hosted our first networking meeting of women's organizations.

In 2006, the MWC and the MSU Women's Resource Center, with the support of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Michigan Office of Career Development, hosted the "Young Women, Strong Leaders" Conference on Thursday, March 30 through Friday, March 31, 2006, at Michigan State University. The "Young Women, Strong Leaders" Conference aimed to support the personal and professional development of young women who may not already consider themselves leaders.

In 2007, we hosted our second women's organizations networking meeting and completed another update of the Women's Directory which lists over 600 women's organizations in the state. The Commission also adopted a three year strategic plan. The commission also worked with the Governor in preparing initiatives to prevent unintended pregnancies. We continue to work with the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame to recognize Michigan's women. MWC also partnered with The White House

Project as it opened an office in Michigan in order to train more women to run for political office.

In 2008, the Michigan Women's Commission celebrated 40 years since its establishment. Governor Jennifer M. Granholm hosted a reception at her home for past and present commissioners as well as for representatives from women's organizations. Additionally, Judy Karandjeff, Executive Director, continued to serve on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Women's Commissions. The Commission also hosted a number of organizations for the "Creating a Toolbox for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" workshop. Additionally, Judy Karandjeff, Executive Director, continued to serve on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Women's Commissions.

In the spring of 2009, we held three more Young Women' Strong Leaders" conferences with the MI Advancement of Women in Higher Education, MSU Women's Center and others. The conferences were held at Grand Valley State University, Wayne State University and Albion College. The conferences were one-day and enrolled over 300 young women. We also worked with Elder Law of Michigan and Wider Opportunities for Women to highlight the Elder Economic Security Index. The Commission also continues to utilize the Legislative Committee as an opportunity to support and oppose legislation as well as to partner with other women's organizations in Michigan. The Commission also filed a complaint with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights regarding the practice of the Lansing School District in scheduling of girls and boys basketball games.

As always, raising the public profile of the MWC as a resource for women is a goal for the Commission. We are accomplishing this through testifying before the Legislature, speaking engagements, media opportunities and personal contact. The MWC serves as a referral agency for Michigan women and helps them to navigate federal, state and local resources. Over 100 women contact the MWC each month via e-mail, letter, phone or fax requesting information ranging from how to start a small business to how to get help for domestic violence situations. We also make available a women's resource directory, a calendar of events for the year on the Internet, and produce a quarterly newsletter that serves over 13,000 women per publication.

9/2009

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chairwoman</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Vice Chairwoman</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Executive Director</u> <u>* Acting Director</u>
09/69	Bette Finegan	09/69	Helen Warren	9/72	Patricia Cuza
01/73	N. Lorraine Beebe	01/73	Krana Grossman	11/77	Margaret Cooke
06/75	Clare Daniels	06/75	Clare Daniels	06/84	Nanette Reynolds*
08/76	Patricia Burnett	09/75	Patricia Burnett	01/85	Mary Addison
11/77	Mary Elizabeth Low	08/76	Bernadine Denning	05/91	Patricia Holden*
10/79	Nan Frost-Welmers	09/78	Irene Prophater	04/94	Anne Mervenne*
10/81	Bernadine Denning	03/79	Nan Frost-Welmers	12/94	Sharon Miller
09/86	Dorothy Jones	10/79	Virginia Nordby	04/97	Kathy DeGrow
05/91	Patricia Thomas	01/85	Susan Moiseev	11/99	Martha Truscott
01/93	Patricia Garrett	01/86	Dorothy Jones	10/01	Jean E. Kordenbrock
03/00	Anne Norlander	09/86	Sharon Myers	05/03	Judy Karandjeff
05/03	Emma Bell	01/88	Judith Kienitz		
		05/91	Evelyn Crane		
		08/95	Judith Smith		
		10/00	Judy Garland		
		08/03	Gloria Woods		