

# Womenews

W o m e n ' s C e n t e r o f M o n t g o m e r y C o u n t y



## A Message from the Special Events Committee of the Women's Center of Montgomery County

### *Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> - Save The Date!*

The Special Events Committee is hard at work planning the festivities for our upcoming spring event! Invitations will be going out in the mail in early February for our annual fundraising brunch, so we encourage to check your mail and save March 25<sup>th</sup> on your calendar!

As you know from past newsletter articles, this year's event – a Jazz Brunch featuring music by Ken Silver – includes a silent auction and will be held on Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at the Meadowlands Country Club in Blue Bell. Our honorees this year are: Montgomery County District Attorney **Bruce L. Castor**, **Susan Kelly-Dreiss**, founding member and Executive Director of the PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and **Jean Sasson**, human rights advocate and author.

We chose March for its special significance as Women's History Month. Since March 25<sup>th</sup> is also the birthday of Gloria Steinem, for many of us the day symbolizes the essence of the Women's Center – the empowerment of women! We hope you will join us in our celebration of our honorees and the Center's mission.

As part of this year's event, we are also thrilled to be offering the opportunity to pre-purchase Jean's latest book, **"Love in a Torn Land: Joanna of Kurdistan: The True Story of a Freedom Fighter's Flight from Iraqi Vengeance."** Although the book is scheduled for release in mid-March, the publisher has generously agreed to supply the Center with copies in advance of our event for sale to our members. A significant portion of the proceeds from the sales generated by the Center will be donated back to us, so we encourage you all to place your orders now! In addition to getting the book before it is on the shelves, Jean has also graciously agreed to autograph copies at the event.

For those of you unfamiliar with Jean's new book, this latest book is also based on true life experiences. In the words of the publisher, the story of the Kurdish people and their struggle for survival under Saddam Hussein is one that has remained largely untold—until now. In this incredible true love story, bestselling author Jean Sasson shares Joanna's personal journey of fear and fortitude through a Baghdad childhood and life as a Kurdish freedom fighter during the Iran-Iraq War. From the threat of Iraqi patrols and raids to chemical attacks and bombings, Joanna reveals how she and her husband survived extreme physical danger as they made their way through Kurdistan's perilous mountains and beleaguered villages to seek temporary safety in Iran. Inspiring and unforgettable, *Love in a Torn Land* shares Joanna's passionate and unflinching determination to survive and fight—for love, life, and the freedom of her beloved Kurdistan.

To pre-order your copy of this book at the list price of \$24.95, please contact the Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340 or send in the order form on the back page of the newsletter! And we hope to see you on March 25<sup>th</sup>!

**The Women's Center of Montgomery County  
Presents a Jazz Brunch Celebration  
With Music By Ken Silver**

**Celebrating With Our Honorees:  
Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce L. Castor, Jr. ,  
Susan Kelly-Dreiss, Executive Director of the PCADV  
and Jean Sasson, author and human rights activist  
Sunday, March 25, 2007**

In preparation for our annual Spring event, we wanted to continue to introduce you to our honorees. In selecting the honorees for the event, which will be held on Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at the Meadowlands Country Club in Blue Bell, our Special Events Committee identified three very special individuals who embody our principles of leadership and empowerment. We hope that as you learn about our honorees you will share our enthusiasm and join us in our celebration in March!

**Bruce L. Castor, Jr., District Attorney, Montgomery County.**

Bruce L. Castor, Jr. has been a prosecutor since 1986 and was elected District Attorney of Montgomery County, PA in 1999 and re-elected in 2003. During Mr. Castor's career, he has prosecuted primarily homicide cases. In 1995, he received the Trial Advocacy Award from the National Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation for his work investigating and prosecuting homicides. He has received recognition for his efforts by the state legislature on two occasions, as well as by Governors Ridge and Casey. In 1990, he was named by a local Chamber of Commerce as Montgomery County's Law Enforcement Man of the Year. Mr. Castor is listed on the Martindale-Hubble Lawyer Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers since 1996 and has been named a "Pennsylvania Super Lawyer," by Philadelphia Magazine in 2005 and 2006.

Prior to becoming District Attorney, Mr. Castor served as First Assistant District Attorney, Deputy District Attorney (Chief of Trials), Assistant District Attorney in charge of the Major Crimes Unit, and as an assistant district attorney on the Sex Crimes Unit. He has supervised the County Investigating Grand Jury and conducted numerous wiretap investigations. He has also acted as special prosecutor for the Office of Attorney General on many occasions. He frequently lectures on topics related to criminal investigation and prosecution.

In addition to Pennsylvania, Mr. Castor is a member of the bar of the United States Supreme Court, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, and the Federal District Court. Mr. Castor is also a member of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys' Association Executive Committee, the Pennsylvania and Montgomery Bar Associations, and a charter member of the Pennsylvania Homicide Investigators' Association. He has served on the board of the Montgomery Bar Association and is currently a Trustee of Norristown State Hospital having been twice appointed by the governor.

Mr. Castor acquired his undergraduate degree from Lafayette College and his law degree from Washington and Lee University. He has received advanced education from the National College of District Attorneys & at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, VA.

Mr. Castor is a life long resident of Montgomery County and lives in Lower Salford Township with his wife, Elizabeth, and their two children, Bruce III, and Alexandra.

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**Susan Kelly-Dreiss,  
Executive Director – PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

For more than 30 years, Susan Kelly-Dreiss has worked to enact legal protections, implement innovative services and heighten public awareness on behalf of battered women and their children. Having grown up in a violent home, Ms. Kelly-Dreiss began her career in victim advocacy by helping to start a shelter for battered women in her hometown of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In 1976, she joined with a handful of other women to successfully lobby for passage of Pennsylvania's first domestic violence law. She also helped to develop a legislative strategy and lay the foundation for the nation's first domestic violence coalition, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV). As the Executive Director of PCADV since its founding, Ms. Kelly-Dreiss has overseen the growth of the network from nine community-based programs to 62 programs now operating throughout the state. In 1993, she was instrumental in securing federal funding to help PCADV establish the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and to manage the National STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Technical Assistance Project. She has served in leadership positions on family violence task forces under two Pennsylvania attorneys general and was appointed by Governor Tom Ridge to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Susan recently announced her plans to retire in 2008. The Women's Center of Montgomery County joins our sister members in the coalition in celebrating her incredible career and dynamic leadership!

**Jean Sasson, Author and Human Rights' Activist**

Jean Sasson is an American writer who first went to live in the Middle East in 1978. She lived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for 12 years, from 1978 until 1990. From that time, she has traveled the world, visiting 59 countries. Jean's first book, "The Rape of Kuwait," was published in 1991. She mainly writes true stories about women's issues, although her book "Ester's Child" is a historical non-fiction. Her books have been published in over 29 editions, in more than 30 languages. She is a well-known humanitarian and, when not researching or writing, spends her time on various humanitarian issues. Her main interests deal with women's rights and animal rights issues.

Her books include:

- The Rape of Kuwait
- Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia
- Princess Sultana's Daughters
- Princess Sultana's Circle
- Ester's Child
- Mayada: Daughter of Iraq
- Love in a Torn Land: Joanna of Kurdistan (to be released in March 2007)

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**Notes from the Elkins Park Office**

In the newsletter each month there is a calendar of events for that month and the next. Since I add or revise the schedule each month, please keep the newest calendar on your bulletin board.

The topics for in-services this month include Active Listening, Children & Youth, and a guest speaker from the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County. In addition to in-services, the calendar also lists community education activities. If you are interested in the community education activities, please contact Janine at the Bryn Mawr office at 610-525-1428.

The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County in-service is on **Monday, February 26**, from **1-3pm** at the Elkins Park office. Rita Fitzgerald will present the Council's mission of advocating for fair housing rights, monitoring of discriminatory housing practices and trends, and providing informational assistance to home seekers looking for open

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## **Biden Wants Legal Brigade for Domestic Safety**

*Run Date: 01/11/07*

*By Allison Stevens Washington Bureau Chief*

*Sen. Biden is drafting a bill to encourage lawyers to work on behalf of domestic violence victims. The bill would also create a network of 100,000 legal volunteers. Seventh in our “Dangerous Trends, Innovative Responses” eight-part series.*

WASHINGTON (WOMENSENEWS)—When it comes to domestic violence, Sen. Joseph Biden likes to compare the federal government to a lawnmower. “Combating violence in the home is like cutting the grass,” the Democrat from Delaware is fond of saying. “You can’t just do it once.” In other words, the scourge of domestic violence can’t be cured with one piece of legislation or one round of federal spending, he says. It’s a persistent problem that needs to be addressed year after year, one congressional session after the next. That is why Biden—author of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, which created and funded federal programs to help victims of domestic violence—keeps thinking about new ways to reduce violence against women. And now with his party in power in the House and Senate, he is in position to find more support. His current plan involves legal assistance. Only 170,000 low-income domestic violence survivors have legal representation each year, less than 20 percent of at least 1 million victims who experience it annually, according to a 2005 report by the Institute for Law and Justice in Alexandria, Va., and the National Center for Victims and Crime in Washington, D.C.

### **Creating a Legal Network**

To address this need, Biden, an attorney, has written a bill that would create an electronic network of 100,000 lawyers willing to do volunteer work on behalf of victims of domestic violence. The bill would also set up a fund to help a separate group of lawyers—those who spend a majority of their time working on behalf of domestic violence victims—pay back their school loans. The median salary for a lawyer who joins a private firm is \$85,000, while the average entry-level public sector salary—such as a lawyer who works at a legal aid clinic—is \$35,000, according to Biden. Most lawyers graduate with a combined debt from undergraduate and graduate school of more than \$80,000, according to the American Bar Association in Chicago. Biden’s proposal comes at a time when the amount of domestic violence in the United States is dropping, although assaults and other crimes at the hands of intimates has remained at about 10 percent of all violent crimes over the past decade. A report released last month by the Department of Justice indicated that the rate of intimate partner violence in the United States fell by more than half between 1993 and 2004, a finding that paralleled an overall decrease in violent crime during the same period. The rate of homicides, rapes, assaults and robberies against women fell from 10 in 1,000 to 4 in 1,000, according to the report. The report is a sign of success that the VAWA programs are working, said Allison Randall, public policy director at the National Network to End Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C.

### **Economists Studied Earlier Drop**

In 2002, in an analysis of a decline in domestic violence during the 1990s, economists at Colgate and the University of Arkansas concluded that the availability of legal services, improvement in women’s economic status and higher levels of education explained why women’s risks of being battered had dropped. An aging population was also cited, because older women are significantly less vulnerable to this kind of abuse. Economists Amy Farmer of the University of Arkansas and Jill Tiefenthaler argue that although shelters, hotlines and counseling services provide critical crisis-intervention services, they do not give women the ability to permanently leave their abusers. Legal assistance gives victims the tools—such as protective orders, child support and public assistance—to achieve financial independence and freedom from harm. Under Biden’s bill, lawyers who devote more than half of their full-time caseload to low-income domestic violence survivors for more than two consecutive years will get a 20 percent discount on their student loan bill, paid for by the Department of Justice. Lawyers who serve four and five years in their practice will get a 30 percent break. “There is a wealth of untapped resources in this country, lawyers who want to volunteer,” Biden says in a one-page written summary of the bill that goes on to say that law-school graduates are saddled with tremendous debt that can become

unmanageable in lower-paying fields of law. Biden is also working on legislation to combat violence against women at an international level. Called I-VAWA, for International Violence Against Women Act, the bill would, for the first time, commit the United States to ending violence against women around the globe. The measure is expected to involve remedies in the areas of public health, the global economy, foreign law, international conflicts and humanitarian crises, according to Esta Soler, president of the Family Violence Prevention Fund in San Francisco. She said in a statement that the bill—based on the premise that financial independence helps protect women from domestic violence—will include provisions to promote more equitable property rights, teach women how to build credit, improve women’s access to education and job training programs, provide training and sensitization programs for judges and judicial officials, raise awareness of gender violence in the workplace, increase women’s access to reproductive health services and incorporate domestic violence and sexual assault screening into HIV/AIDS programs.

### **Follows 2005 WHO Report**

The legislation follows a 2005 study by the World Health Organization that found that domestic violence is common worldwide and its effects devastating. The WHO report indicated that between one-fifth and three-quarters of females around the world had experienced physical or sexual violence since age 15. As a result, women are more vulnerable to exposure to HIV/AIDS and are subject to greater health risks during pregnancy, when violence often continues or escalates. “This report reveals a global picture of the treatment of women and the statistics are appalling and egregious,” Biden said last year in response to the WHO report. “In some communities, women are safer in the streets than they are in their own homes.” Biden, the chief anti-violence advocate in the Senate and a contender for his party’s 2008 presidential nomination, now holds a seat in the majority party and, as a result, has greater sway in Congress. Even so, prospects are uncertain for the two bills, which he plans to introduce this spring. Some advocates fear objections to the price tags of the two bills, especially as lawmakers are tightening the fiscal reins in response to a high federal deficit and the prospect of increased spending on the war in Iraq. “The deficit is a problem,” said a nationally recognized leader in the domestic violence advocacy community on the condition of anonymity. “The content is not the barrier. But any bill that requires new funding streams is going to have a hard time of it.” The Congressional Budget Office has not estimated the total cost of the lawyer bill, but a Biden staff member expected the loan forgiveness portion of the bill to be about \$20 million in the first year. An additional \$8 million would be needed to recruit volunteer lawyers, operate a referral system, launch a pilot program and roll out a national program. The international bill to combat domestic violence could be trickier than the domestic legal services legislation because lawmakers are generally more reluctant to spend federal money on foreign programs than on domestic ones. The bill does not yet have a formal cost estimate. *Allison Stevens is Washington bureau chief at Women’s eNews. This series is supported by a special grant from Mary Kay Inc.*

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### *Notes from the Elkins Park Office continued from Page 3*

and affordable housing in Montgomery County. The Fair Housing Act is a set of federal, state, and local civil rights laws that protect people from discrimination in ALL housing. This parallels the WCMC concern for non-discriminatory housing practices for women and children and those with disabilities.

Please also remember for those volunteers unable to come to the office for in-services, we do frequently video-tape trainings and in-services, which can be borrowed on video, DVD and/or CD/audio format. We do give partial credit toward annual training requirements for trainings viewed in this alternate format, provided you write a brief written summary of the material post-viewing. Please contact the Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340 for information about our training library!

*Submitted by Deanna Linn  
Director of Volunteers*

**Condolences**  
**Saying Goodbye to Our Friend and Colleague,**  
**Margaret “Peggy” Fox**

It is with extreme sadness that we report the loss of our friend and long-time volunteer, Peggy Fox, who passed away on Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>. For those of you who knew Peggy and shared our affection and respect for her, it should come as no surprise that, despite her illness over the past year and a half, Peggy has remained a constant and vital member of our hotline volunteer pool. When complications from emphysema prevented her from coming into the office in 2005, she continued to take multiple shifts each week from home. So great was her commitment that, in recent weeks, when her failing health required hospitalization, she still spoke lovingly and passionately about ‘coming back to her shift’. She was a deeply caring person, quiet yet dedicated and always willing to help, in whatever way she could, with humor and compassion. While rare was her anger – except for the occasional outrage at some flagrant abuse or injustice – her emotional connection to our work and her passionate devotion to helping others made her the fiercest of advocates for victims of domestic violence. All of that passion, however, was always tempered by a patience, humor, knowledge and skill that made her a most extraordinary hotline counselor.

As a person, as a friend, and as a colleague, she will truly be missed by those of us here who had the honor and pleasure of working with her. I last saw Peggy during the holidays when she made the trip here to the ‘new’ offices to visit. Her love for the Center and the people here was so evident, as she promised to return after the New Year for another visit and spoke with hope and optimism about the future. Although we now mourn her passing, I’d like to believe that all the special qualities she brought to her work here has touched us all, and she will continue to inspire our work and our vision with her compassion and optimism for the future.

On behalf of the Board and staff of the Women’s Center of Montgomery County, I would like to offer our deepest sympathies and condolences to Peggy’s family and friends. She was a very special friend who will be sorely missed!

With sincere respect and sympathy,  
Maria Macaluso  
Executive Director

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**Norristown Volunteer Update**

Winter is here! Hope you are all surviving the cold weather that is now finally upon us! To those volunteers traveling or spending time in warmer climates, I hope you are enjoying the time with family and friends!

***In-Service:***

Thank you to the volunteers for all the wonderful, positive comments about the active listening in-service last month. I would like to thank Deanna for facilitating an interesting and interactive active listening in-service for the volunteers. Deanna will be back again in the spring to facilitate another active listening in-service for those who were unable to attend this past month. Our next in-service will be **Tuesday, February 13, 2007** from **1-3pm** in the Norristown office, this will be an advocates’ issues in-service and we will be viewing a DVD about domestic violence. Hope you all will be able to attend!

***Legal Remedies:***

The next Legal Remedies Workshop will be **Tuesday, February 20, 2007**, from **5-7pm**, facilitator to be announced. The information sessions are held at our Norristown office at 18 West Airy Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor from 5-7p.m. Please call 610-279-7474 to register to attend. Also, please refer a family member or friend to this valuable program!

Stay warm!

Jenn B.  
Norristown Volunteer Coordinator

To end domestic violence, we must change our behavior.  
To change our behavior, we must change our attitudes.  
To change our attitudes, we need education.  
To educate our communities, WE NEED YOU!

### **Pre-School Program – My Hands Are Not For Hurting**

February 5, 2007 – Jenkintown Day Nursery – 10:00-11:30 - 3 groups@20minutes  
May 3, 2007 – Saint Andrew Preschool  
2 groups @20 minutes from 9:15- 10:10  
2 groups @20 minutes from 12:30-1:20  
May 4, 2007 – Saint Andrew Preschool  
3 groups @20 minutes from 9:15- 10:40  
2 groups @20 minutes from 12:30-1:20

### **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WORKSHOPS And SPEAKING EVENTS**

February 7, 2007 – Upper Merion High School – 1:30-2:30  
February 8, 2007 – Montgomery County Community College- Pottstown – 11:10-12:35  
February 12, 2007 – Momobile – Bryn Mawr Hospital – 10:00-11:30  
February 20, 2007 – Ambler Day School – 10:15-11:00 (middle school)  
February 21, 2007 – Ambler Day School – 12:00-1:00 (High School)  
February 21, 2007 – Chestnut Knoll Assisted Living - Boyertown – In-service – 8:00-9:00PM  
March 24, 2007 – Paralegal Association – 9:00 (location tba)  
April 17-20 – Harriton High School – time: tba)

### **TABLE EVENTS**

April 21, 2007 – 16th Annual International Spring Festival – 11:00AM – 5:00 PM  
April 20, 2007 – Healthy Lifestyles Expo – Montco Community College - Pottstown – 9:30-1:30

Contact Janine Kelly  
The Women's Center of Montgomery County  
Community Education Coordinator  
610-525-1428  
616-525-1429 (fax)  
jkelly1@dca.net  
www.wcmontco.org

### **News from the Nominating Committee of the WCMC Board of Directors**

Our Nominating Committee is currently looking for outstanding community leaders and talented individuals to serve on the Board of Directors. If you or anyone you might like to recommend desires to serve in this capacity, please contact Maria at the Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340 or by email at mmacaluso@dca.net.

## Order Form

To pre-order a copy of Jean Sasson's soon-to-be released book, "**Love in a Torn Land: Joanna of Kurdistan: The True Story of a Freedom Fighter's Flight from Iraqi Vengeance**," please submit this form with your payment (credit cards are accepted) to the Elkins Park office. Please note that \$10.00 of every sale will be donated by the publisher back to the Women's Center, so in addition to a wonderful literary experience, your purchase will also benefit the women we serve!

I wish to order \_\_\_\_\_ copies of Jean Sasson's book, "Love in a Torn Land: Joanna of Kurdistan: The True Story of a Freedom Fighter's Flight from Iraqi Vengeance" at a cost of **\$26.95 per copy**, which includes \$2.00 for shipping per copy. Enclosed please find my check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_. If you plan to pick the book up at one of our offices, please do not include the \$2.00 shipping cost!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To charge your payment to your Visa, Mastercard, Discover or American Express, please provide the following information:

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to the  
**Women's Center of Montgomery County** and mail to:  
WCMC 8080 Old York Road, Suite 200 Elkins Park, PA 19027

### Women's Center of Montgomery County

#### Elkins Park Office

215-635-7344

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

FAX: 215-635-7347

#### Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

#### Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

#### Lansdale Office

215-853-8060

FAX: 215-853-8065

#### Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

[www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

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