

# 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

## PRESIDENTIAL NOTES



By Joyce Skobinsky

Happy Mothers Day! I did a little reading into the origins of this holiday and was surprised to find it wasn't established by Hallmark Cards. So a little "herstory" if you will: Mother's Day was originally started after the Civil War as a protest to the carnage of that war, by women who had lost their sons. Here is the original Mother's Day Proclamation from 1870 by Julia Ward Howe of Boston, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic. I hope you enjoy reading this information as much as I did, and that when you finish reading, you feel personally proud and inspired to continue the work of our mothers.

"Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be that of water or of fears!

"Say firmly: "We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says "Disarm, Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.

Blood does not wipe our dishonor nor violence indicate possession. As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel. Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them then solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after their own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar, but of God.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace."

For the next thirty years Americans celebrated Mothers' Day for Peace on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

*The following excerpts were written by Ruth Rosen, Professor of History at UC Davis:*

Many middle-class women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that they bore a special responsibility as actual or potential mothers to care for the casualties of society and turn America into a more civilized nation. They played a leading role in the abolitionist movement to end slavery. In the following decades, they launched successful campaigns against lynching and consumer fraud and battled for improved working conditions for women and protection for children, public health

services and social welfare assistance to the poor. To the activists, the connection between motherhood and the fight for social and economic justice seemed self-evident.

In 1913 Congress declared the second Sunday in May to be Mother's Day. By then, the growing consumer culture had successfully redefined women as consumers for their families. Politicians and businessmen eagerly embraced the idea of celebrating the private sacrifices made by individual mothers. As the *Florists' Review*, the industry's trade journal, bluntly put it, "This was a holiday that could be exploited"

The new advertising industry quickly taught Americans how to honor their mothers – by buying flowers.

Since then, Mother's Day has ballooned into a billion-dollar industry.

With a little imagination, we could restore Mother's Day as a holiday that celebrates women's political engagement in society. During the 1980's some peace groups gathered at nuclear test sites on Mother's Day to protest the arms race. Today our greatest threat is not from missiles but from our indifference toward human welfare and the health of our planet. Imagine if you can, an annual Million Mother March in the nation's capital. Imagine a Mother's Day filled with voices demanding social and economic justice and a sustainable future, rather than speeches studded with syrupy platitudes.

Some will think it insulting to alter our current way of celebrating Mother's Day. But public activism does not preclude private expressions of love and gratitude (Nor does it prevent people from expressing their appreciation all year round.)

Nineteenth century women dared to dream of a day that honored women's civil activism. We can do no less. We should honor their vision with civic activism.

## **Elkins Park Volunteer Update**

*Submitted by Deanna Linn, Volunteer Coordinator*

This newsletter was folded by the Monthly Tea Party / in-service / newsletter-folding / socializing event. This activity will be held on a monthly basis with in-service credits as well as refreshments provided. The topic of the first month was "DV 101" review; this month was Diversity/Isms. Next month's topic will be Confidentiality plus a review of the changes in the Protection from Abuse order law. The next date will be *Thursday, June 1* from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. If there is sufficient interest, evening Tea Party / in-services will also be scheduled.

A training for new volunteers is scheduled starting June 6 at the Elkins Park office. It will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 – 9 pm, running until August 3. If you know of anyone interested in taking the training course, have the future volunteer give me a call.

The new resource manuals are available. As I add material to the manuals, I am attempting to keep everyone updated. Any new information or resources you have please send to me so it can be distributed to everyone.

## **Annual Meeting of the Membership**

The Annual Meeting of the Membership will be held in conjunction with the June meeting of our Board of Directors on **Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m.** in the Elkins Park office. For those of you new to the Women's Center, the annual meeting is an opportunity for our members to be present for the announcement of the election of the Board of Directors, to thank departing Board members for their service, and to be updated on the state of the organization as we completed our fiscal year.

Dessert and coffee will be served at the meeting.

## **Norristown Volunteer Update**

*Submitted by Jenn B - Norristown Volunteer Coordinator*

Our next WAP in-service is scheduled for May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from 1-3 pm in the Norristown office. This will be an Advocates Issues in-service with guest speakers, Susan Strong and Ed Danelski from Legal Aid. They will be discussing the services they provide and answer any questions we may have.

Tuesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006 is our next Legal Remedies Workshop. The information session will be 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! Facilitator is to be announced.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

Our Farewell WAP in-service is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from 12-3 pm in the Norristown office. We will discuss any office updates and lunch will be provided for all! WAP inservices will resume in September.

Happy Spring!

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*The following article was submitted by our of our members and appeared in a 4/27/06 web publication at [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)*

### **We Can All Agree on This, Right?**

*By William Fisher (t r u t h o u t | Perspective)*

In the unlikely event that our senators and congresspersons come together to pass an immigration bill sometime in this century, it is virtually certain to overlook a heartbreakingly simple humanitarian issue: battered women seeking asylum. This is far from a new issue. It has been kicking around for years - and it has been kicked around for years.

Kicked from the old Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to the US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) within the wildly dysfunctional Department of Homeland Security. And to compound this bureaucratic nightmare, BCIS now shares jurisdiction with the Justice Department (DOJ) for preparation of new guidelines that would cover this category of asylum seeker.

Rewind to 1995, when the INS actually produced some acceptable guidelines concerning women's issues. There was only one problem: the INS failed to follow its own guidelines.

That little lapse resulted in the bizarre case of Rodi Alvarado, a Guatemalan woman who was subjected to extreme domestic violence by her husband, who broke her jaw, kicked her when she was pregnant, wielded a machete and threatened that if she tried to escape he would leave her wheelchair-bound for the rest of her life.

In 1995, Mrs. Alvarado did escape - to the United States, which granted her asylum. But this decision was immediately appealed by the INS and overturned by the Justice Department's Board of Immigration Appeals in 1999.

The Board claimed she was not seeking asylum due to membership in a social group, political opinion, race, religion or nationality. They claimed she needed to show a nexus between the beatings and her political opinion or membership in a social group. She was allowed to remain in the US pending an appeal of the appeal. And she's still here, living in California and working in a convent.

Near the end of the Clinton administration, Attorney General Janet Reno proposed regulations to expand the ability of victims of domestic violence (and other gender-related human rights abuses like trafficking, sexual slavery and honor killing) to seek asylum in the United States.

But those regulations were never implemented. And when John Ashcroft became attorney general, he failed to recommend that the regulations be adopted. Instead, he re-certified Ms. Alvarado's case to himself in order to review it, since the attorney general has authority to make decisions on any immigration case.

But Ashcroft left office in 2004 without making a decision. He said the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security should agree on a set of guidelines covering women's issues, including domestic violence. Since then, both agencies continue to claim they are working on these guidelines. Despite the fact that proposed regulations were drawn up back in December 2000, nothing has been finalized in more than five years.

According to Rodi Alvarado's lawyer, Karen Musalo, of the University of California's Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, "The complication, as we understand it, is that now both DHS and DOJ have jurisdiction over the regulations because of the reorganization of the INS, and there has not been consensus between the two agencies on how to proceed." One has to wonder about how hard these two taxpayer-funded behemoths are working to solve the problem.

Meantime, Mrs. Alvarado and others in her predicament remain in legal limbo.

The current immigration debate has rekindled interest in cases like that of Mrs. Alvarado. But a coalition of refugee and human-rights groups is taking a new approach: it is urging Congress to examine the "root causes" of population movements.

Responding to the claim by some congresspersons that easing asylum restrictions would "open the floodgates" to still more undocumented aliens, a report by one of the members of the coalition, the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California at Hastings, argues that "the solution is not to deny protection, but to look at the root causes of refugee flows, and to craft foreign policy responses to address them."

And it is taking its case not to immigration agencies but to a few key members of Congress who, they hope, will help them to take their message to the State Department.

The reason they want State involved is that there is credible evidence that domestic violence is part of a larger and even more deadly phenomenon: Femicide. And the State Department is a major funder of programs to strengthen the judiciary and other rule of law institutions in Guatemala and elsewhere around the world.

For example, in Mrs. Alvarado's country, Guatemala, the coalition says "there is violence and murder of women with total impunity - with more than 2,200 women killed since 2100, and perhaps 10 or 11 prosecutions and convictions. Local media has largely ignored the issue.

Femicide is also a problem elsewhere in Latin America. Earlier this year, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala sent a delegation of activists to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington to focus attention on femicide.

Incomplete murder rates presented to the Commission cite 373 known murders of women in Bolivia from 2003 to 2004, 143 in Peru during 2003, and more than 2,000 in Guatemala. In Colombia, a woman is reportedly killed every six days by her partner or ex-partner. Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua City, Mexico, two cities where the femicide trend was first widely noticed, have suffered the murder of more than 500 women from multiple causes since 1993, according to press and other sources. Dozens more remain missing.

Globally, the problem is no less severe. In many parts of South Asia and the Middle East, for example, so-called "honor killings" usually go unpunished. Leading the femicide campaign are four non-governmental organizations — the Washington Office on Latin America, Amnesty International USA, the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, and the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission.

Three members of Congress - California Democrats Barbara Lee, Tom Lantos, and Hilda Solis - are drafting a letter to the State Department, which they hope will be signed by most of their colleagues, regardless of party. The letter will urge State to provide funding and personnel to examine the femicide issue as well as the murder of human rights activists.

It would be tough to think of two issues less controversial than femicide and asylum for battered women. They are not immigration issues - they are issues of compassion, justice and basic fairness. Congressmen like James Sensenbrenner and Tom Tancredo ought to be able to sign on in a heartbeat.

But, given the incredible rancor generated by the immigration issue, I'm not holding my breath.

*William Fisher has managed economic development programs in the Middle East and in many other parts of the world for the US State Department and USAID for the past thirty years. He began his work life as a journalist for newspapers and for the Associated Press in Florida. Go to [The World According to Bill Fisher](#) for more.*

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**Mission Statement  
of the  
Women's Center of Montgomery County**

The Women's Center of Montgomery County is a volunteer, community organization with a primary focus on freedom from domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Our programs, policies and procedures reflect our strong commitment to empowering women.

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**Benefit the Women's Center When You Shop On-Line!  
Website Shopping Links**

The Women's Center of Montgomery County will earn a percentage of each purchase you make with our online vendors if you link to their site through the Women's Center website at [www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org):

Staples.com  
Boscovs.com  
Barnes&Noble.com  
IBM.com  
PetSmart.com  
Priceline.com  
MusiciansFriend.com  
Kmart.com  
Amazon.com  
OldNavy.com  
Modell's Sporting Goods  
Verizon Wireless  
Proflowers.com  
Entertainment Book

**Become a part of our Community Education and Outreach Program.  
Help us define our role in raising awareness!**

**Community**

n 1: a group of people living in a particular local area; “the team is drawn from all parts of the community” 2: common ownership; “they shared a community of possessions” 3: a group of nations having common interests; “they hoped to join the NATO community” 4: the body of people in a learned occupation; “the news spread rapidly through the medical community” [syn: profession] 5: agreement as to goals; “the preachers and the bootleggers found they had a community of interests” [syn: community of interests] 6: a district where people live; occupied primarily by private residences [syn: residential district, residential area] 8: (ecology) a group of interdependent organisms inhabiting the same region and interacting with each other [syn: biotic community]

**Education**

n 1: The act or process of educating or being educated. 2: The knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process. 3: A program of instruction of a specified kind or level: driver education; a college education. 4: The field of study that is concerned with the pedagogy of teaching and learning. 5: An instructive or enlightening experience: Her work in the inner city was a real education.

**The Women’s Center of Montgomery County needs Community Education  
volunteers to:**

- ◆ Spread the word about the services that we provide to our communities
- ◆ Educate our Montgomery County community about domestic violence
- ◆ Raise our visibility to those who need our services
- ◆ Present hope to victims
- ◆ Help victims open doors to their freedom from Domestic Violence
- ◆ A LITTLE BIT OF KNOWLEDGE IS A WONDERFUL THING!!

**You can help The Women’s Center of Montgomery County by participating in a variety  
of programs that we offer to our Montgomery County Communities**

- ◆ Healthy Relationships workshops to elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and adult groups
- ◆ Educate little ones through our pre school program. “My Hands Are Not For Hurting”
- ◆ Educate community groups and churches about the services that we provide
- ◆ Connect us to YOUR church, synagogue, or school.
- ◆ Speak to police departments about our permission slip program and our services
- ◆ Become part of the United Way Speakers Bureau.

*There is something for EVERYONE in Community Education.  
By helping us, you will help MANY!  
Choose something that fits you and join us in our efforts!  
The ones whom you will help thank you in advance!*

Call Janine Kelly 610-525-1428 or email: jkelly1@dca.net

# What's new ? MOVIE MATINEE AT THE CENTER !

Friday, June 9th, 2006  
2:30 P.M.

We invite our members to join us for the first in a series of movie viewing and discussion sessions. For our first movie discussion group, we have chosen:

## The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio

The true story of one woman's effort to keep her family afloat under difficult circumstances comes to the screen in this bittersweet comedy drama. Evelyn Ryan (Julianne Moore) was a woman of intelligence, talent, and pluck living in the small town of Defiance, OH, in the 1950s. Evelyn was married to Kelly Ryan (Woody Harrelson), a man who gave her ten children but not much else; Kelly had a severe drinking problem, struggled to hold on to a job, and tended to spend his money as soon as he earned it. It was seemingly up to Evelyn to support the family, but with ten kids to look after, taking a job outside the home hardly seemed practical. But the resourceful Evelyn discovered a way to bring some extra money into the household — at a time when a number of companies held contests to find new advertising jingles for their products, Evelyn had a genius for coming up with slogans and winning contests, and for the better part of a decade Evelyn kept food on the table and a roof over her head by dreaming up jingles, tag lines, and ad headlines and winning contests with her handiwork, often selling the merchandise she won to pay the bills. The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio was based on the best-selling memoir by Terry Ryan, who was the sixth of Evelyn Ryan's ten kids. ~ Mark Deming, All Movie Guide

We supply:

DVD, Large screen television,  
Snacks, Coffee, & Coke  
AND  
Discussion following the film.

**The film is 99 minutes long and will be followed by a 45 minute discussion.**

No admission fee but you must call to reserve seats – 215-635-7340

### Book Club Updates

- May 17<sup>th</sup> “Crow Lake” By Mary Lawson  
Discussion will be led by Sunny at Sue's house.
- June 21<sup>st</sup> “The Known World” by Edmond P. Jones  
Discussion will be led by Sue at Helen's house

All book club meeting start at 7:30 for socializing and 8:00 the discussion begins. Any questions call Dorothy at 215-782-2259.

**WOMEN'S CENTER OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
AND SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF POTTSTOWN  
PRESENT OUR SECOND ANNUAL  
"UNMASK THE ABUSE"  
WALK-A-THON**

**SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2006  
10:00 AM TO 12:00 NOON**

**5K (3.1 MILES) WALK-A-THON  
AT MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
BLUE BELL CAMPUS**

**Join us as we work to raise awareness and promote community collaboration in our effort to end  
domestic violence!**

**For more information on how you can help,  
Please contact Denise in the Norristown Office at  
610-279-7474.**

**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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