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Women's Research Institute of Nevada Newsletter

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Women's Research Institute of Nevada

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Research is not a luxury

Director’s Message

by Joanne Goodwin

From oil price increases to home mortgage foreclosures and state budget deficits, these are challenging economic times. Individuals as well as institutions of higher learning are taking defensive positions to get through the rough patch. So is WRIN. It is worthwhile at times like these to remind ourselves why research is not a luxury to be cast aside, but an answer to current problems.

Research holds the potential to explain large trends; trends that impact individuals, yet demand solutions larger than one individual. Linda Basch, President of the National Council for Research on Women, recently noted that, “Research not only reveals the real challenges faced by women but paves the way for developing effective policies and strategies to address those challenges and ignite transformative change.”

The Ford Foundation used research in such a manner with its 2007 study on economic insecurity (p. 2) in which it explored the rising sense of insecurity felt by American workers. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research took the Ford data and sorted out how the downturn affected American women in ways distinctly different from their male peers. They discovered that after decades of employment growth, women experienced the first “sustained period of job loss” in 40 years with the recession of 2001. Since economists believe that women’s earnings (on average) comprise one-half of family incomes, their job losses and failure to return to jobs with the same pay rates raise particular concerns about long-term economic well-being for individuals, families, as well as communities.

Our Status of Women in Nevada project (p. 2) tracks the economic well-being of women workers as well as the changing status of their education, health, and welfare. Rather than an “extra,” this research provides vital information to our state’s leaders.

Big 5 campaign issues announced

At its annual conference in June, the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW) announced the “Big Five” issues of concern to women that it would like to see candidates address.

Economic security: More women over age 16 live in poverty than men. When women are economically secure, they are able to contribute to society, earn comparable salaries for comparable work, provide for their families, and develop their capacities without restrictions or discrimination.

Health: A majority of U.S. citizens have identified access to affordable health care as a priority for them and for their families. Along with affordable health care, universal and portable health care, health disparities, and reproductive health are top concerns for women and girls.

Violence: In the United States, each year, women are the victims of more than 4.5 million violent crimes. In a 2006 NCRW poll, three-quarters of adults surveyed (74%) said they were in favor of fully funding the Violence Against Women Act to ensure adequate support for domestic violence shelters, prevention programs, and rape crisis centers.

Immigration: Women are 50 percent of the foreign-born U.S. population. Immigrant women often receive low wages, have higher family caretaking demands, and are vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment at higher rates.

Education: Access to education is key to women's economic security and well-being. More vigorous efforts are needed to ensure sufficient federal programs to fund education across income levels, especially for low-income women.

For additional information on all of the issues, the research behind them, and the NCRW, please go to http://www.ncrw.org.
Status of Women in Nevada Project
By Barbie Held

In 2004, WRIN collaborated with the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) on their Status of Women in the States project to produce The Status of Women in Nevada. The report is intended to make critical information on the well-being of Nevada’s citizens available for our legislators, educators, and the general public. It also provides information for policy change. The report provides basic demographics and focuses on women’s status in five areas: political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being. In an attempt to get states to continue the Status project, IWPR provides information to interested parties on how to organize and reproduce their findings. Following organizations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, Chicago and others, WRIN collaborated with the Nevada Women’s Fund in 2005 to release The Status of Women and Girls in Nevada. This report expands the areas discussed in the earlier report by including areas on education and criminal justice, violence, and safety.

In an effort to continue the Status project and track changes in Nevada women’s progress, WRIN hired Barbie Held, a Ph.D. student in Sociology, in August of 2007. Since coming to WRIN, Barbie has compiled extensive data on women and men in Nevada. The current data collection includes 2005 and 2006 data and is currently being analyzed for future release.

Holding the ability to update the database annually, WRIN will be in the position to inform the community of changes in women’s engagement in community life and volunteerism, such as what sectors women volunteer in and how much time they spend a year volunteering. It will be possible to pay special attention to women’s health in Nevada with a focus on disease control and reproductive health. In studying women’s employment, WRIN will not only be able to report women’s earnings, but also track their distribution among industries and occupations compared to men. As women become greater contributors to family incomes, this information is crucial. Facts and information released by WRIN will be comparable to both national and county level data.

The Status of Women in Nevada project is currently seeking a sponsor to support this important work. In the interim, WRIN will release fact sheets on specific areas such as employment and education.

Women & Economic Security
In February 2007, the Rockefeller Foundation funded The American Worker Survey to explore Americans’ sense of economic insecurity. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research analyzed the survey data to explore impacts based on gender, racial and ethnic identity, education, employment status, and other important demographic characteristics. This report found, “Women have different socioeconomic characteristics that fundamentally affect their need for public policies.”

Women’s sense of economic insecurity exceeds that of men about:
- Their ability to stay ahead of inflation.
- Having enough money to live on.
- Losing healthcare coverage.
- Not being able to afford health insurance.
- Not having enough money to retire on.
- Reductions in their Social Security retirement income.

The report suggests that most women’s status in the economy leaves them more vulnerable in an economic downturn. The full report may be found on the IWPR website at http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/D482AWSReport.pdf.

Need Stats on Women? See femstats.net
When WRIN wanted information on the status of women in Nevada, the best source available in 2000 came from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research in Washington, D.C. Now their national data are more accessible through a website http://www.iwpr.org/femstats/index.htm. A detailed study of women of color and economic risk is currently featured on the site. Their fact sheets and state report cards are also available.

New Oral History Webpage Coming Soon
This fall the WRIN website will include new pages on our oral history projects. The expanded section will include individual pages on the oral histories in the Nevada Women’s Oral History Project. Each page will contain an audio clip from the interview as well as photos and a biography of the interviewee. These new pages will offer visitors to the website a chance to interact with our oral histories and will be a good resource for researchers to learn more about these remarkable women.

News Blog
Check out Aisha O’Brien’s blog, Neon Feminism at http://feministinvegas.wordpress.com. There is a fine audio piece on the NEW Leadership Nevada Keynote dinner with thorough and actually informative coverage. She interviewed program manager Diana Rhodes, first lady Dawn Gibbons, and Advisory Council member Linda Rivera. She also included clips of Attorney General Cortez Masto’s talk.
Three Oral Histories Near Completion

Featured below are three of the women interviewed this year for the Las Vegas Women Oral History Project, each integral and pioneering in the development of civil, political, and cultural facets of greater Las Vegas, its community and industry.

Selma Bartlett

Selma Bartlett has been instrumental in the growth and development of Henderson and Las Vegas’ banking industry since her arrival in 1954.

One of the first female bank officers in the state of Nevada, her career in banking has been impressive and important. Bartlett has an easygoing way about her, yet is articulate and direct with an ironclad work ethic: do what you love, do it well, treat people well, and create community. Bartlett has stayed true to her words. She began working for Bank of Nevada at its Henderson branch shortly after its establishment in 1954. Bartlett has been involved in banking for over sixty years and is currently the vice chairman of Bank of Nevada. Throughout her years in the industry, she has belonged to the National Association of Bank Women, serving as their regional vice president from 1958-1960. She has also taught at the American Institute of Banking.

Along the way, Bartlett and her husband, Troy, have worked tirelessly to help grow Henderson into a livable, thriving community. Bartlett saw the importance of developing a solid infrastructure in the small community, and through her knowledge of banking helped create community and commerce in Henderson. For all of her work, Bartlett has been recognized by the Henderson Chamber of Commerce and the city of Henderson. She sits on the board for St. Rose’s Dominican Hospital and also the Henderson Boys and Girls Club. In 1992, Bartlett was recognized by the Clark County School District when they named an elementary school in her honor.

Thalia Dondero

Thalia Dondero quietly arrived in Las Vegas in 1943 and worked for Basic Magnesium, Inc. in Henderson. Soon after her arrival, she met Harvey Dondero, a young teacher at Las Vegas High School and they were married two years later and had five children.

As her children entered school, Dondero became involved in the local PTA. Eventually she became president of the Clark County chapter, and then the statewide PTA. Her work with the local PTA was a catalyst for her lifelong career centered on education, community, and politics.

Indeed, Dondero has been highly influential in developing and shaping the education and political spheres of Las Vegas. In 1974, she became the first female Clark County Commissioner, a position she held for twenty years. She has also served on the Nevada State Parks Commission and the National Public Lands Advisory Board, two groups instrumental in preservation and designation of public lands. She played a crucial role in working with the Sierra Club to make Red Rock Canyon a national recreation area. Throughout her career, Dondero has served on more than 60 boards, councils, commissions, and task forces. In 1996, she stepped back into public office when she was elected to the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents, where she still champions the importance of education and community.

Myrna Williams

Myrna Williams, born in Chicago, moved to Las Vegas in 1959, back when it was “just a cowboy town.” Her role in Nevada politics began almost immediately upon arrival, when she became a member of the Young Democrats and struck up a close friendship with Flora Dungan.

Williams taught in UNLV’s department of social work for 11 years, and was a member of the Nevada Assembly for 10 years. In 1995, she was elected to the Clark County Commission and served until 2006. In addition to her political and social work in Las Vegas, she is a member of numerous community organizations and sits on the board of the Public Education Foundation, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Williams counts amongst her greatest accomplishments the work she did during her time as a commissioner, which includes the establishment of four new parks throughout the valley, and the upgrading and modernizing of six existing parks. She is also proud of her role in the creation of neighborhood pride programs, and instituting the city’s Graffiti Abatement program. Her greatest pride, however, is the creation of the Cambridge Recreation Center, a community center that houses a skate park and a pool, as well as programming that focuses on at-risk youth. In 2007, the Cambridge Center was designated as the Myrna Tormé Williams Community Campus, a fitting testament to Williams’ dedication to improving people’s lives and opportunities throughout Clark County.
WRIN hosts another successful year of NEW Leadership Nevada

NEW Leadership Nevada grew into its 6th year and was, again, another success! It was a time of transition for the NEWL staff; but that didn’t stop us. We had a number of really great applicants this year, and ended up with twenty-three new students for the ’08 program. Our students represented every Nevada System of Higher Education institution in the state.

Since 2003, when WRIN became the southwestern partner of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, we have graduated 145 alumnae. The NEW Leadership program helps develop students as community leaders and encourages civic engagement through intensive workshops and panels with established women leaders. With an emphasis on mentorship, students are connected with women in business, gaming, academia, politics, law, and the non-profit sector.

The students this year met an amazing and inspirational range of women leaders, including an opening dinner at Assemblywoman Kathy McClain’s house, a one-on-one session with Assemblywoman Barbara Buckley, and a number of panels that included Administrative officials at UNLV and other women legislators, such as Dina Titus and Valerie Weber. Students also learned about the impact women have made in the state of Nevada through educational workshops and panels. This included a visit from the women of “Operation Life,” including Ruby Duncan and Alversa Beals, who told stories about their involvement in the 1970s Welfare Rights Movement in Las Vegas.

Nevada State Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto was the highlight of the week, serving as our Keynote speaker at the NEWL Keynote Reception and Dinner. One student claimed, “She was amazing! I really was motivated by her speech and learned so much!” Not only was the Attorney General an inspirational speaker, the students really shined during the Networking Reception. One student mentioned, “I learned how to be fearless and approach important figures. They surprisingly really want to get to know you!”

Two hundred people attended the Keynote sponsored by Caesars Entertainment with many community members attending in support, such as First Lady Dawn Gibbons, UNLV President Dr. Ashley, Liberal Arts Dean Dr. Chris Hudgins, Executive Director for the Black Mountain Institute and UNLV President Emerita Dr. Carol Harter, and many more representatives of the community.

NEW Leadership meets its goals

By Barbie Held

As of June 2008, WRIN has completed six years of the NEW Leadership Nevada program, graduating 144 alumnae. Most of the participants (58%) attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the University of Nevada, Reno. Three percent of the participants attended college out-of-state, while all other participants (39%) attended other Nevada colleges and universities.

WRIN collected data on the NEW Leadership participants since the start of the program to assess if the program met its goals. Data is collected at the end of the six-day program to assess the participant’s pre and post program knowledge and skills. Follow-up assessments are sent six months after completion of NEW Leadership Nevada, followed by yearly assessments. The figures below include participants over all the years who responded to our surveys.

Participants were asked to rate their personal understanding of leadership before the program, 48% indicated having a high or very high understanding. This increased to 98% immediately after the program, and 92% at the three and four year assessments. When asked about their confidence in their ability to lead others, 45% of the participants indicated a high or very high confidence, this increased to 92% immediately following the program and 84% at the three-year assessment. 55% of the participants indicated they had a high or very high understanding of their own biases toward others before participating in NEW Leadership. Immediately following the program, their understanding increased to 92% and 85% four years after participating in the program.

NEW Leadership Nevada continues to have a positive impact on the participants and furthers their interests in civic engagement. As one participant stated, when asked if she has worked on her strengths and limits as a leader as a result of participating in the NEW Leadership program, “I became more involved in the feminist movement, helped organize rallies against budget cuts for k-12 education, college tuition and children’s health care, and co-founded several clubs.”
Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto gives inspiring keynote address

The speaker at the NEW Leadership Keynote Dinner was Nevada State Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto. Her vast experience in the field of law and her commitment to social justice in the state made her a strong and inspirational speaker for the students and everyone else who attended.

Masto took oath as the Attorney General in January 2007. Prior to her service at the Attorney General’s Office, she worked as Assistant County Manager for Clark County with her work involving the county’s agencies to improve children’s services including foster care, adoption, services, child welfare services, and juvenile justice programs.

During her Keynote Address, Masto addressed many issues dealing with women in leadership positions. Specifically, she emphasized the importance of women running for elected office. She spoke about how women and men approach the campaign process differently saying, “Before a woman will run for elected office, she will first question whether she has the experience, education, training, and commitment for the job. On the other hand, when a man runs for elected office, the first thing he asks is, ‘How much does it pay?’” Her message was simple: women need to stop questioning themselves and strive for the best they can be, without caring what people think or say along the way. The Attorney General’s inspirational speech energized a room of women who, afterward, felt compelled to shatter the glass ceiling and prove what we’re made of!

This was her overall message during the entire address: Women need to stop questioning themselves and strive for the best they can be, without caring what people think or say along the way. As women, we should not be constrained by someone else’s prejudices nor should we be bound by another person’s labels.” She went on to discuss working together as a society to eradicate discrimination by working together. “By learning to recognize our similarities and appreciate our differences, together we can overcome prejudice and intolerance, and work toward a more peaceful and productive world.”

She also mentioned her uneasiness with the supposed glass ceiling many speak of when discussion career advancement. “I don’t believe in the use of the term glass ceiling, nor do I let it define my professional development.” Whether or not the abstract glass ceiling actually exists was not the point. Her point was to convince young women to work hard and to never doubt themselves because they’re women.

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NEW Leadership Nevada Alumnae Internships

Harrah’s Entertainment has been one of the most foremost supporters of the NEW Leadership Nevada program. In 2007, Harrah’s partnered up with WRIN and developed its first paid internship position strictly for NEW Leadership Alumnae.

This year, we are pleased to announce that Harrah’s Entertainment has opened up a second internship for NEW Leadership Nevada alumnae in their National Diversity Relations Department.

A graduate of our 2008 NEW Leadership Nevada program, Telia Greer, has been selected as the NEW Leadership Intern for this department. She is a psychology student at UNLV, and is involved in a number of student organizations such as the Black Student Organization and the Center for Cultural Diversity.

The internship for the Government Relations Department will be filled during the fall semester.

Alumnae in Action

Emily Powers (2005) was named a 2008 Truman Scholar and will receive up to $30,000 for graduate study. She was selected from among 595 candidates after an intensive interview process. She is the first UNLV student to win the award since 1987. Congratulations, Emily!

Kenia Morales (2006) is an advocate for reproductive rights and quality healthcare for Latina women, currently working for COLOR (Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity & Reproductive Rights).

Edith Gonzalez (2008) was the legislative intern for Speaker of the Assembly Barbara Buckley during the recent Special Legislative Session. She will be returning during the general legislative session in February 2009 to be Barbara Buckley’s full-time intern.

Juawana Grant (2006) is a case manager for Aid for AIDS Nevada (AFAN). She assists HIV positive individuals and their families navigate the social services system by providing a number of services, including legal and financial assistance.

Jennifer Hemphill (2008) is a Deputy Field Director of Congressional District 3 for the Nevada State Democratic Party in Las Vegas. She is the Director of approximately 60 paid canvassers.

Melinda Guillen (2008) recently received an internship to work with Dr. Christine Clark, Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at UNLV. She will be working on special projects for Dr. Clark, including helping to open the long overdue Multicultural Center at UNLV.
Leadership program: Utah, Arkansas, and possibly developing and funding a NEW Leadership program. At least three states showed interest in the Nevada program.

At least three states showed interest in possibly developing and funding a NEW Leadership program: Utah, Arkansas, and Nebraska. CAWP and WRIN are very proud of the successes of NEW Leadership and hope to see this program eventually develop in all 50 states!

Grant assists students

Ceece Abrahams lived in northern Nevada and worked to improve the lives of women and girls. This year several students who attended the NEW Leadership Nevada program did so because of her generosity and legacy.

WRIN applied for and received one of three Ceece Abrahams Memorial Grants in the amount of $10,000. Abrahams was an advocate for expanding opportunities for women. The competition asked for proposals that could demonstrate education on women's issues for the leaders of tomorrow. This goal seemed like a natural fit with WRIN's NEW Leadership program.

The Sierra Nevada Region of Soroptimist International administered the grant and agreed. The local chapter of SI of Greater Las Vegas has been actively supportive of NEW Leadership since its beginning. If you are not familiar with the wonderful work undertaken by Soroptimist International, please visit their website to learn more. http://www.soroptimist.org

Local activist Ruby Duncan receives national award for ‘Political Courage’

Favorite NEWL speaker and friend of WRIN, Ruby Duncan received the 2008 Margaret Chase Smith Award from the National Association of Secretaries of State. The award is presented to candidates who show “political courage and selfless action in the realm of public service.” Duncan is a longtime social activist and advocate for women, children, and the poor.

Thu-Thao Rhodes leads NEWL Nevada

The Women’s Research Institute of Nevada is excited to introduce our new program manager, Diana Thu-Thao Rhodes. Diana is an alumna of the NEW Leadership program (2006) and graduated from UNLV magna cum laude with a degree in Women’s Studies and Sociology.

Diana’s participation with NEW Leadership Nevada changed her outlook on politics and activism. She traveled with staff and alumnae to Carson City for Grassroots Lobby Days in 2007. Diana returned to NEW Leadership in 2007 as a Faculty-in-Residence (FIR) and absolutely loved it. From student to program manager, the experiences Diana gained through NEW Leadership have been an integral part of her development as an individual who is committed to social justice within her community.

In addition to her activities at WRIN, Diana is active in the local feminist community. Diana is a certified Facilitator for the Child Assault Prevention Program housed in the Rape Crisis Center and teaches students about assault prevention. Diana spends much of her free time volunteering her time and energy for local organizations, such as the Women’s Empowerment Network, The Gay & Lesbian Center of southern Nevada, the United Coalition for Immigrant Rights, the Vagina Monologues, and the Rape Crisis Center. She is also a freelance writer for QVegas Magazine, covering stories that affect the local LGBT community.

Diana has a number of plans to develop the NEW Leadership Nevada program and is excited to be WRIN’s newest staff member. She would like to continue to cultivate strong relationships with community partners and supporters, while creating new ones. She plans to recruit heavily at all the colleges to ensure that NEW Leadership Nevada continues to be a competitive program for motivated and dedicated students.
Advisory Board Members Spotlight

Patricia Miller

Patricia Miller has been the Chief Executive Officer of Girl Scouts of Frontier Council for 20 years. Prior to this, she was with two other Girl Scout councils in Colorado Springs, Colorado and Seattle, Washington working in Membership, Program, Camp, and Facilities Management. She graduated from San Jose State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation Administration and attended the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs taking business administration courses. Before she began her Girl Scout career, Patricia worked for the Glendale Unified School District as an interpreter for deaf students. She is active with the Las Vegas Rotary, and Women’s Research Institute of Nevada Community Advisory Board. She has also been a volunteer at Central Christian Church for the past 18 years in the children’s ministry department. She enjoys doing anything outdoors, reading, and playing guitar, banjo, and harmonica.

Lana Buehrer

Lana Buehrer has served on the Community Advisory Board of WRIN since 2002 and chaired the board for several years.

Buehrer worked as a full-time teacher until her children were born. Following their births, she worked as a substitute teacher. She came to Las Vegas in 1983 from Ohio when her husband took a job with Southwest Gas. In 1985, she took a job as a technical writer with the Department of Energy and has worked for the DOE for 23 years. She also earned an MBA from the University of Phoenix and is completing the requirements for Facility Management Professional through the International Facility management Association.

Community involvement is important to Buehrer. She also is a member of the local chapter of the Project Management Institute. Buehrer was one of the founding members of the Nevada Women’s Lobby. She served on the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood of Southern Nevada and also on the Nominating Committee for Frontier Council of the Girl Scouts.

Conference Updates

The Nevada Network of the American Council on Education/Office of Women in Higher Education will hold its 3rd Annual meeting in Reno on October 10. This year’s theme is Advancing Women’s Leadership: Styles, Strategies, and Tools. Workshops and panels cover networking and fundraising. Dr. Christine Clark, UNLV’s Vice-President for Diversity and Inclusion, presents one keynote on progressive leadership and Soraya Coley, Provost of California State University, Bakersfield presents a keynote on leadership modules. The afternoon is a two-session workshop on Taking Control of your Career led by Narcissa Polonia.

Everyday Fundraising

If you use the web to search for anything or if you ever buy things online, you can now raise money for WRIN as you do your daily business online. Community Advisory Board member Rekaya Gibson helped WRIN register as a “charity” with GoodSearch, an online fundraising venue. All you have to do is go to: http://www.goodsearch.com/default.aspx and select Women’s Research Institute, then browse as you normally would or shop at your favorite stores. You can make goodsearch your default browser to save time and earn money. And thanks. We will leave no stone unturned to support our work.

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Publications Available from WRIN

The following publications are available for the cost of reproduction, handling, and postage from our offices. Please contact WRIN if you would like copies at 702/895-4931 or wrin@unlv.edu.


The Status of Women and Girls in Nevada (2005), Nevada Women’s Fund with chapter contributions from Joanne Goodwin, Ph.D. and the Center for Business and Economic Research at UNLV. $20.


Looking Back at Nevada Women, 2-part video series with mini-documentaries on women’s contributions to the state. $20.

Upcoming Events

Sept. 24, 7:30 pm  Barrick Museum Auditorium
“Teen Pregnancy: Rallying the Community for Prevention,” Jennifer Zipoy of the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy at UNLV and Jean Henry, associate professor of health promotion at UNLV’s School of Public Health, discuss the social cost of teen pregnancy and what’s happening in southern Nevada.

Oct. 10  University of Nevada, Reno
Advancing Women’s Leadership: Styles, Strategies, Tools Annual meeting of the Nevada Network of American Council on Education/Office of Women in Higher Education

Dec. 3, 7 pm  Doc Rando Hall
Panel: “Sexism and Racism in Post-Election America,” Susan Faludi, Katha Pollitt, Farai Chideya, and State Senator Dina Titus as moderator. Sponsored by the Black Mountain Institute

WRIN’s Gender Research Roundtables will resume this fall. Please check the website, http://wrin.unlv.edu/events/ or call 702/895-4931 for details.