

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report

May 2018

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women ~ Commissioners

Ana Brenescoto ~ Attleboro

Sylvia Gomes ~ New Bedford

Kelli Hiller ~ Freetown

Michelle Keith ~ Dartmouth

Cynthia Rose ~ Dartmouth

Erica Scott ~ Fall River

Stephanie Taylor ~ Taunton

The following were nominated and elected as officers:

Michelle Keith ~ Co-Chair

Stephanie Taylor ~ Co-Chair

Purpose:

The purpose of the Commission shall be to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women. The mission of the Bristol County Commission on that Status of Women is to act as a permanent centralizing force and effective voice in the County of Bristol to ensure the equal status of women of every race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin, ability, age and sexual orientation in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres including the provision of information, referrals, and guidance. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

Membership:

In April 2018, both Ana Brenescoto of Attleboro and Erica Scott of Fall River were appointed as Commissioners. Two remaining positions will be filled from the pool of applicants at the next advertisement in August 2018.

Hearings/Public Forums:

The Bristol County CSW and the Mass Commission on the Status of Women held a public hearing on "Women's Issues" in New Bedford, Ma on February

Commissioners:

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27th at the New Bedford Public Library. The theme: “Citizens, government officials and organizations that advocate for women and families in the region are invited to attend and encouraged to participate. Let us know about issues that are important to you, your children, your family and your community. “

The event was attended by about 40 people. The link to view the event can be found on New Bedford Government Access at:

<http://173.9.65.75/CablecastPublicSite/show/4075?channel=1>



Issues raised were access to housing, education, affordable day care, and rights and laws to protect women from violators. Also raised were the need for more supports for women living in poverty, greater access to quality care as women have $\frac{1}{3}$ of the beds available that men have for treatment of substance abuse disorder, and the need for greater representation in Fall River elected leadership and intervention specifically with regard to healthy relationship and cultural competency trainings in schools and communities.

Beth Perdue and Michael Bonner, both from “The Standard Times” newspaper, attended the hearing and reported the following article in print, on Twitter, and on Facebook:

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<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/news/20180227/world-where-no-woman-has-to-say-again-me-too>

A world where no woman has to say again, 'Me too'

By Michael Bonner mbonner@s-t.com

Commission on Status of Women hears concerns in New Bedford

NEW BEDFORD — Her voice cracked at the end of her address to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women on Tuesday night. Pamela MacLeod-Lima, the executive director of the Women's Center, asked what women wanted and described respect, access to education, affordable day care and rights and laws to protect their bodies from violators.

As the first speaker, MacLeod-Lima's words gripped the entire third floor room in the New Bedford Public Library. Her final words acted as the most powerful, even altering her voice.

"What do we want?" she asked one more time. "We want a world where no woman has to say again, 'Me too.'"

It drew applause from those attending the forum held by the Commission on the Status of Women, which is in its 20th year of existence comprised of 19 commissioners who dedicate their time to assess the status of women across the state and work for legislative changes.

Tuesday represented the third public hearing in a series being held across the state.

MacLeod-Lima began the discussion but others joined in with emotional testimony.

Erica Scott, of Fall River, introduced a niche topic, however, which is exactly the reason for the implementation of the commission.

Scott said she debated whether to speak about paid family medical leave or housing, but instead she spoke on running for political office as a female. In Fall River, she said, of the city's 17 elected officials, only one is a woman.

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Amy Blanchette, who sat next to Scott, ran for School Committee in Fall River and said she was bombarded by negative feedback through social media. Blanchette described a meme that said she would be raped and photos that spoke about her weight.

“Women had very negative experiences of being everything from cyber bullying to offline bullying to being told you’re not a qualified candidate because you don’t have a car or because you’re a single mom or you’re a working mom,” Scott said. “Basically a variety of reasons targeting their gender specifically.”

Scott and Blanchette concluded the meeting that extended a bit beyond its 2-hour scheduled block.

Seven women and one man addressed the commission presenting topics ranging from childcare to the census, from minimum wage to harassment. Cindy Couto, the director of Child Care Works for the state, added a voice of expertise to an issue that was highly discussed.

She said only Washington D.C. offers more expensive childcare in the country than Massachusetts. It can run more than \$100 a day, she said.

While her office can provide subsidies to families that need it, she said, more than 10,000 remain on the waiting list.

Raising the state’s minimum wage to \$15 per hour, another topic discussed, wouldn’t likely help families pay for childcare, either.

“It’s a hardship. It’s a hardship for many families,” Couto said. “...Childcare is so expensive even if you are getting a subsidy. I don’t know how anyone pays for childcare privately.”

The six commissioners scribbled scores of notes as each person spoke. They promised each to bring what they heard back to lawmakers.

“We hope it goes somewhere,” Margot Parrot, a commissioner, said. “We try make it go somewhere.”

Commissioners:

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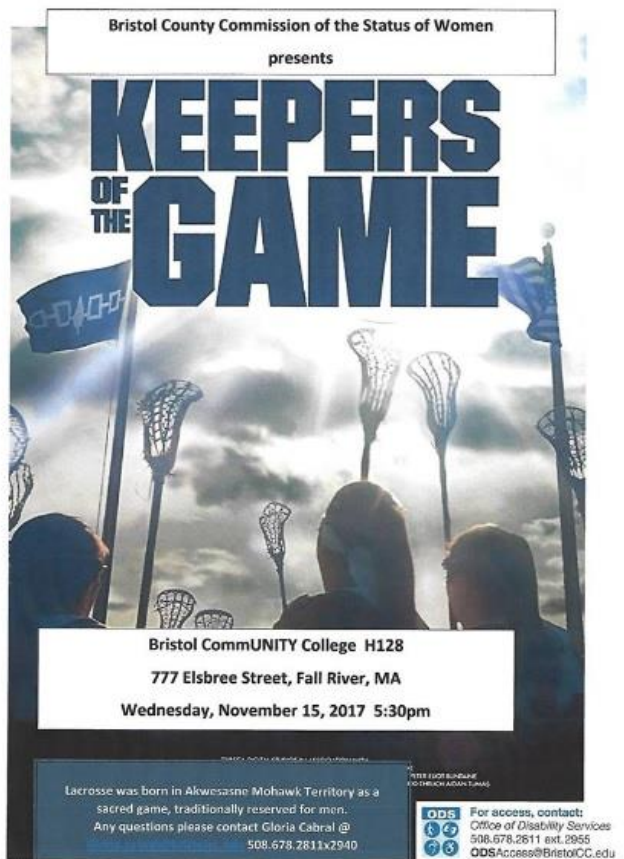
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Additional Activities:

- **Film Screening: Wednesday, November 15, 2017**



On Wednesday, November 15, 2018, Bristol County CSW held a Film Screening of "Keepers of the Game" at 5:30PM at Bristol Community College followed by a discussion. The film focused on changing cultural norms within the Native American community with regard to Lacrosse as a sacred game, traditionally reserved for men. See preview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMm1GdXUmVI>

- **Community Television Show Production (ongoing):**

Bristol County CSW continued producing the Community Television Show: "Voices of Women" with 23 shows completed to date. This year's themes

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included the Lighting the Way, Alda's Angels, Sexual Assault, Women & Politics, Girls Exclusive, Advocacy Day, and the annual Oscar Special.




Voices of Women Show

11 subscribers


HOME VIDEOS PLAYLISTS CHANNELS DISCUSSION

Uploads PLAY ALL




Voice of SouthCoast Women
"Women in Entertainment"

426 views • 2 years ago




Voices of Women Alda's
Angels

210 views • 1 year ago




Voice of Southcoast Women
"Domestic Violence"


173 views • 2 years ago



Voice of SouthCoast Women
Immigration



Voices of Women YWCA Girls
Exclusive



Voice of SouthCoast Women
The Status of Women

- **Free Financial Workshop: Saturday, March 3, 2018**

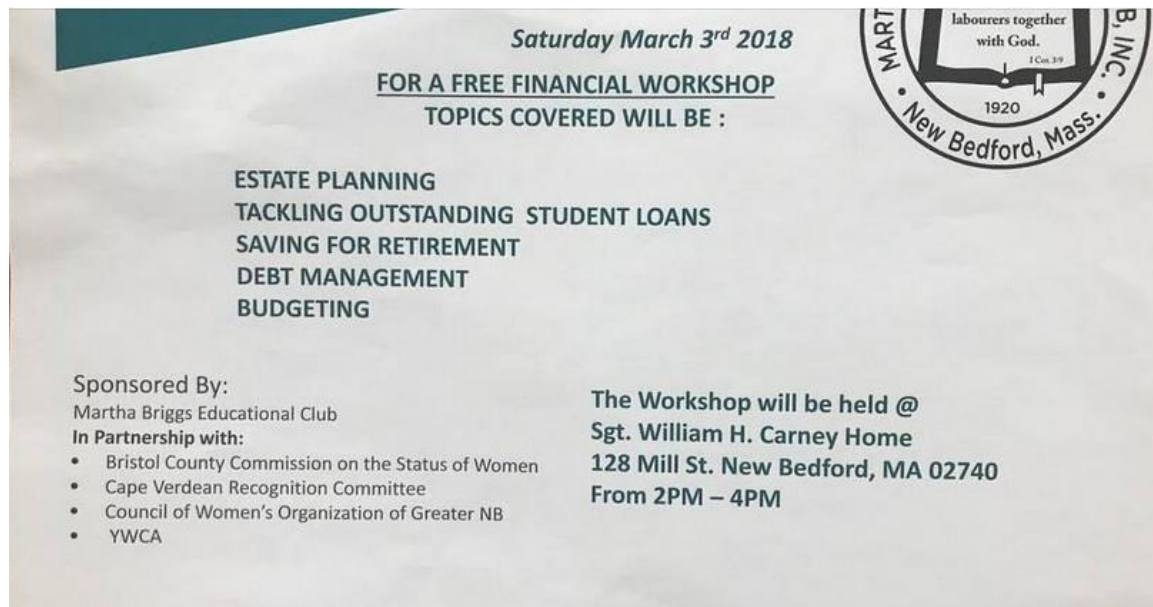
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On Saturday, March 3, 2018 the Bristol County CSW held a Free Financial Workshop in partnership with the Martha Briggs Educational Club, the Cape Verdean Recognition Committee, The Council of Women's Organization of Greater New Bedford, the YWCA Southeastern Mass, and Citizen's Bank. The workshop was attended by 24 women and covered the following topics: Estate Planning, Tackling Outstanding Student Loans, Saving for Retirement, Debt Management, and Budgeting.

- **International Women's Day Celebration "HISTORY, HERSTORY, OUR STORY": Thursday, March 8, 2018**

The Bristol County CSW participated in the following International Women's Day Celebration on Thursday, March 8, 2018 described via Facebook event as follows: <https://www.facebook.com/events/214269015817103/>

WHAT: International Women's Day is March 8th. Join a consortium of local organizations as they celebrate with a women's resource fair, networking event, and a screening of the TED talk on "intersectionality" with a panel discussion to follow. Reception with refreshments following the program.

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WHO: AHA! New Bedford, Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women, Cape Verdean Association of New Bedford, Coalition for Social Justice, Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, Martha Briggs Educational Club, New Bedford Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Our Sister's School, SouthCoast LGBT Network, TEDx New Bedford, The Women's Center UMass Dartmouth Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Women's Fund of Southeastern Massachusetts, YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts

WHERE & WHEN:

International Women's Day
Thursday, March 8, 2018
Jacobs Family Gallery
New Bedford Whaling Museum
18 Johnny Cake Hill
New Bedford, MA 02740

5:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M. Networking and Resource Fair

6:00 P.M. - 7:15 P.M. Film & Panel Discussion

7:15 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. Reception

WHY: International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

Goals for 2018 - 2019

- 1. Collaborate with the Mass CSW and Regional Commissions to to raise awareness of critical issues facing women in Massachusetts and to grow the participation and involvement of individual and organizational allies in the work of advancing equity for women of Massachusetts.**
- 2. Maintain regular contact with our legislators and officials on issues that concern women that have been identified as our priority areas of focus.**
- 3. Produce a webinar entitled, "Your Voice Matters! Learn How to Produce a Free TV Show to Amplify Your Message" to be presented on Friday, June 1, 2018 via NACW.**

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- 4. Present two (2) Negotiation Workshops in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Treasurer's Office, the AAUW, and Community Colleges. Two Bristol County Commissioners have already attended the training and are certified to present the workshops.**
- 5. Present additional Free Financial Workshops addressing more specific legal issues affecting women.**
- 6. Continue to produce the "Voices of Women" Community Television Show.**
- 7. As a direct response to the Fall River issues identified at the February 27th Hearing, the Bristol County CSW plans to collaborate with the community to present a Women's Leadership Forum in October 2018 at Bristol Community College in Fall River featuring the Women's Leadership Breakfast by the Women's Fund from 8:00AM-10:30AM followed by two panels. The "Beyond Me Too Panel" will run from 11:00AM-12:30PM and will be co-sponsored with the Massachusetts Bar Association. The "Women As Allies" Panel will run from 1:00PM-2:30PM and will be co-sponsored with the Women's Bar Association. The aim is an outcome which will address the need for greater representation in Fall River elected leadership and intervention specifically with regard to healthy relationship and cultural competency trainings in schools and communities.**
- 8. Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities by establishing Bristol County CSW Committees and Task Forces.**

Submitted by: Michelle Keith, Co-Chair of the Bristol County CSW

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