



## **Fiscal Years 2020-2023 Report and Work Plan**

## Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women Work Plan

This purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has provided to the County for the fiscal years 2020/21, 2021/22 and current projects for 2022/23.

As has been well documented, the COVID Pandemic hit women particularly hard. Workers on the front lines providing healthcare and other essential services are principally women. The increased responsibilities and roles of primary caregiver for children and elderly parents has overwhelmingly fallen to women. Critical data on these issues in Sonoma County will be presented in our **Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Sonoma County**, being published March 2023 in partnership with Mount Saint Mary's Center for the Advancement of Women and the California State Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. We look forward to utilizing that data to help inform future projects.

Much of the work our Commission has done since 2020 centered around listening to women in Sonoma County, whether through in person or online surveys captured through **Voices of Sonoma County Women ad hoc**, panel discussions with our **COVID 19: Women & Families ad hoc**, interviews on our **Radio Project** or by inviting a wide range of advocates and community leaders to speak at our monthly Commission meetings. What has stood out in these conversations is the need for affordable and accessible childcare, the need for affordable healthcare including mental health care, the fact that Sonoma County residents suffer from structural food insecurity, and the challenges women face who run for office. said, there are more women and in particular BIPOC women in elected office as of 2023 than at any other time in Sonoma County History (Five of our Commissioners since 2020 have run for public office and three are currently elected officials). Through our **Spirit Award ad hoc**, we have identified and recognized the many heroes amongst us who work hard behind the scenes to lift our community.

In 2022, women continued to lose basic rights, globally. Our **Women & Girls Reproductive Rights and Health ad hoc** is working with our **Junior Commissioners** to determine what reproductive health services are and are not available in our county and what that means to women and girls of different cultures, from different districts, and from different socioeconomic communities.

Please read further for more details on the important work your Commission on the Status of Woman has been doing during this very challenging time. We look forward to your input as guidance on essential projects for our 2023/24 strategic planning.

## Mission Statement and Purpose

The purpose of the Commission on the Status of Women is to promote equal rights and opportunities that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls, and to address issues of discrimination and prejudice that negatively affect women in Sonoma County.

We are advisors to the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors and work to ensure that the issues impacting women and girls are given the necessary visibility to affect positive changes in public policy.

The Sonoma County CSW meets the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm at 575 Administration Dr, Ste 117C, Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

## Land Acknowledgement

The Commission on the Status of Women of Sonoma County recognizes that we are on the ancestral lands of the Pomo, Wappo, and Coast Miwok, who are the original stewards of this land. We further acknowledge that the office of the Commission on the Status of Women resides on Southern Pomo land in Santa Rosa. We respect and honor the past, present, and future generations, and are grateful for the opportunity to give our respect to the first inhabitants.

## Ad Hocs and Projects

### Voices of Sonoma County Women

The **Voices of Sonoma County Women** (in various iterations 2019 to present) project focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the status of women of all backgrounds in Sonoma County and engaging the community in developing solutions.

January 2019 through January 2020, we collected data through live “Listening Sessions” held throughout the county and with the women housed at the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility

We also distributed a survey in-person and online (413 participants)

Fall of 2020 we published an in-depth report, highlighting the numerous structural and individual challenges facing women in Sonoma County. As the pandemic hit our County, we recognized a future project would need to record and measure the pandemic’s impact.

We shared the report with our Board of Supervisors, other local elected officials, the Sonoma County Office of Equity, and community organizations.

Our 2021-22 COVID-19 edition survey focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted Sonoma County women and girls. This survey included additional questions that captured a wider array of life experiences.

We did not hold live Listening Sessions this year, but expanded our outreach and marketing, collecting over 800 survey responses through the end of 2021.

Contributing Commissioners: Jan Blalock, Katie Gordon, Ofra Isler and Marta Cruz and former Commissioners Trisha Almond, Dianna MacDonald, Peg Rogers and Jenny White.

### Women’s Recovery Response

In January of 2022, our Voices committee applied for and was awarded a grant through the Women’s Economic Recovery Response, managed by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. We are collaborating with Mount Saint Mary’s Center for the Advancement of Women on this project, the **Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Sonoma County**. MSM provides Status reports for many California Women’s Commissions

For 2022/23, this project has transitioned from Voices into the **Women’s Recovery Response** ad hoc,

for the completion of our project.

The final report is to be completed by March 2023. We are actively seeking funds to translate this report to Spanish. We will share this report with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors as well as other elected officials and non-profit organizations throughout Sonoma County.

Contributing Commissioners: Katie Gordon, Jan Blalock, Ofra Isler, Marta Cruz, Julie Schulman

### **COVID-19: Women and Families**

The **COVID-19** ad hoc (2020/21) focused on the impact of the pandemic on women and families as related to the need for childcare and structural food insecurity.

The ad hoc was split into two teams:

- One team designed an interview tool to survey the scope and breadth of structural food insecurity in Sonoma County. They implemented the tool in the first supervisorial district.
- The second team focused on the impact of the lack affordable childcare on women in the workplace.
- Team two partnered with local organizations focused on this topic (e.g., First Five, 4 C's and Parent Voices) to bring awareness to this important issue, collaborated on panel discussions and sponsored events.
- Carrying forward this work, in 2022 we promoted and endorsed the ***Our Kids Our Future*** campaign initiative to add a ¼ cent sales tax to support childcare to the November ballot.

Contributing Commissioners: Joanne Brown, Jessica Wood, Marta Cruz

### **Gender Equity**

The Gender\* Equity ad hoc (2020 to 2021) focused on issues of inequity and discrimination that emerged from the 2020 Voices of Sonoma County Women data. To these ends, we embarked on several projects:

- We updated and expanded our Women & Family Resource Guide for Vital Services on our website and as a handout.
- We launched the **Sonoma County Spirit Award** that recognizes a local resident from each district who stepped up to support women and girls during the pandemic.
- We drafted a **CEDAW** resolution (a UN treaty on gender equity for local governments) that we plan on submitting for an upcoming meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

Contributing Commissioners: Katie Gordon, Jan Blalock, Caitlin Quinn, Ofra Isler

\* We include women, transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, and gender non-conforming persons in our understanding of *gender*.

## Sonoma County Spirit Award 2022

For our second year of presenting this award, the Commission was lucky to have four of last year's winners – Disabilities advocate Larkin O'Leary, Petaluma City Councilmember Dennis Pocekay, "PrepCulture" founder Alma Bowen, and Human Trafficking Survivor/advocate Elizabeth Quiroz - as well as Sebastopol City Councilmember Neysa Hinton as our judges. The judges had a nearly impossible task of selecting five winners from over two dozen nominees, all of whom are doing incredible work for women and girls in our community.

This year's theme was "A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats." We wanted to uplift and honor leaders in our community who are working hard to better our community, even if they are not explicitly focusing on women and girls, because we know that racial justice work, work to protect labor rights, work to empower immigrants, work to improve accessibility, and all other social justice efforts benefit women and girls of all backgrounds.

The winners of the 2022 Sonoma County Spirit Award are:

**Lisa Diaz-McQuaid**, a resident of District 1 recognized for her work empowering indigenous women and survivors of human trafficking;

**Jasmine Palmer**, a resident of District 2 recognized for her work saving Athena House and its programs from closure earlier this year;

**Nadia Leal**, a resident of District 3 recognized for her work supporting students and their families at Roseland Elementary School;

**Brigitte Mansell**, a resident of District 4 recognized for her work mentoring young people and advancing climate activism; and,

**Dr. Roam Romagnoli**, a resident of District 5 recognized for their work as a professor teaching systems-impacted and incarcerated women.

Contributing Commissioners: Caitlin Quinn, Gina Fortino Dickson

## Sonoma County Spirit Award 2023

This year's Spirit Award theme is **Building Bridges, Forging Unity**.

We are asking the community to nominate someone who:

- Actively builds bridges across divides of race, gender, class and politics to deepen empathy and understanding.
- Has catalyzed and inspired collective action to make concrete changes in community and/or workplace conditions, policies, culture that resulted in greater equity and inclusion.
- Leverages their own power, privilege, influence and/or position to lift and amplify the voices of those in our community who are marginalized.
- Inspires others and sets a clear example of cultural humility and respect.

Most of our previous year's awardees will serve as judges. The awards will be presented at our March 9 CSW meeting, celebrating Women's History Month.

Contributing Commissioners: Caitlin Quinn, Gina Fortino Dickson, Angie Dillon-Shore, Jessica Wood

### **Radio Project: Women in the Situation Room**

For 2020 to 2021 the **CSW Radio Project**, “Women in the Situation Room,” hosted ten one-hour conversations with individuals and organizations, covering:

- Voter registration and rights
- Female veterans
- Sexual abuse and assault
- Intimate Partner Violence and Human Trafficking
- Mental Health
- Women’s History
- Challenges faced by BIPOC women
- Female elected officials in Sonoma County
- Homelessness

Conversations were held via Zoom and recordings were edited for radio. Recordings were broadcasted via KPCA streaming and on KPCA.fm.

Contributing Commissioners: Former Commissioners Trisha Almond, Angelica Nunez

### **Women & Girls Reproductive Rights and Health**

The purpose of this 2022/23 ad hoc is to create a model for community groups and interested individuals to use to determine what information and services are available to girls and women regarding their reproductive rights and health in Sonoma County.

- We are developing a survey instrument to be used with focus groups to tease out information relative to-different domains of access (e.g. schools, peers, family, clinics etc.).
- We are collaborating with a Junior Commission ad hoc as focus group participants. The Juniors will be used to make sure the questions are complete and clear.
- We are preparing a summary of current laws that directly affects access to sex education, contraception, and reproductive health services in schools and in the community.

The project developed by the ad hoc will be a resource for advocates working with youth to ensure that they are aware of their rights. This work should be completed by the second quarter of 2023 with our tools and a report available for distribution to the Commission for use in other Districts and to interested parties with recommendations regarding advocacy.

Contributing Commissioners: Joanne Brown, Nancy Padian

### **Junior Commission on the Status of Women**

The **Junior Commission on the Status of Women** is a project that provides mentorship to high school youth for future leadership roles in our community. All students in the County are invited to apply. 12-22 students are selected and connected with mentors. Each term the Junior Commissioners participate in several activities including round table discussions, a career panel, community-based projects, volunteer activities and mentor-led field trips. Participants are also exposed to issues regarding women and girls through assigned group topics. Past group topics include empowering women, human trafficking, relationship violence, and healthy mind and body. Past career panelists include a diplomat, judge, journalist, marketing specialist, STEM engineer, activist, worker’s

compensation lawyer, elected official (vice mayor), and professor of geography.

Contributing Commissioners: Ofra Isler is the current Project Manager. Current Mentors include Nancy Padian and Julie Schulman. Past Managers were Leticia Padilla and Ariana Diaz De Leon and mentors included Jan Blalock

## **Liaising, Partnering, Collaborating**

### **Organizations we liaise with:**

- Sonoma County Human Trafficking Task Force

Commissioner/Chair Blalock has been our liaison to the SCHTTF for the past 7 years. Meetings take place at the Family Justice Center. The Task Force includes partners from Law Enforcement, the D.A.'s office, service providers such as Verity, Polly Klass Foundation, Redemption House of the Bay Area and SAY as well as Community organizations such as Soroptimists, Jr League, CSW and CHR. CSW's leadership has been integral to the Education and Outreach Committee and their projects which have included January's Human Trafficking awareness month billboards along HWY 101, hosting films and panel discussions on Human Trafficking for local colleges, organizations and community members, and now internal and external signage regarding human trafficking on buses throughout Sonoma County.

- CSW Legislative Committee

Each member of this committee monitors the legislative program/agenda of groups with a similar focus, i.e., issues confronting women and girls, protection of women's rights, and women's wellbeing. Members monitor bills introduced in the state legislature, assess, and report back to the Commission. The Commission discusses and authorizes writing letters, communicating with local legislators, or partnering with groups in advocacy in support or opposition to the legislation.

Future plans: continue with what we have been doing and as appropriate, share information about bills of interest in the state legislature to the Commission webpage and social media presence.

- YWCA

For many years we have partnered with the YWCA in support of their work with domestic violence survivors. We have co hosted fundraising events during October, DV Awareness Month. Pre pandemic, we toured the DV Shelter and preschool. Our Junior Commissioners also visited the shelter and helped with painting and planting a garden

- Association of California Commissions for Women and Girls
- California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
- National Association of Commissions for Women and Girls
- National Women's History Alliance

- Impact 100 Redwood Circle
- League of Women Voters Sonoma/Marin
- 4 C's
- First Five Sonoma County
- Parent Voices Sonoma/Marin

**Projects/events we have sponsored and participated in:**

- Athena House Fundraiser

We have worked with Athena House for many years and are aware of the necessity of this program providing housing, education, and life skills in a sober living environment for Sonoma County women and their children. Summer of 2022 it was announced that Athena House would be closing. We sprang into action to support the efforts to save Athena House. We sponsored their fundraiser, 'Keeping Hope Alive', which was integral to the coming together of the community to save this program.

- Verity

We work with Verity on education and outreach, fundraisers, and numerous projects. In 2022 we were proud to be a sponsor of the riveting documentary "Survivors: Living Beyond Sexual Assault", which premiered at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts

- League of Women Voters
- Presented a nonpartisan, pre-election interactive talk on "Pro & Cons" of the state ballot propositions at our October 2022 meeting.
- 4 C's Annual Fundraisers, "Champions for Children"
- Parent Voices Annual "Stand for Children"
- Sonoma County Pride
- Women in Conversation
- MWAN (Military Women Across the Nation) Holiday Gifts for Female Veterans
- CCNB (Conservation Corps, North Bay) Holiday Gifts for worker's children

**Conclusion:** The Commission was established by Ordinance by the Board of Supervisors in December, 1975. Since that time, more than 400 women from Sonoma County have been appointed to the Commission, volunteered countless hours, collaborated with groups to bring public attention to the realities of life in Sonoma County impacting women and girls, and advocated for the allocation of public and private resources to meet the needs of women and girls. This report summarizes our primary efforts during the past three years. However, this is only the beginning.

**Thank you for your support.**