

## ICSW: A New Mission

In August, the ICSW held a strategic planning retreat to focus and energize commissioners and staff on the future work of the Commission.

As part of the process, the ICSW developed a new mission statement: *Through responsive advocacy, the ICSW champions the success and wellbeing of women and girls in Iowa and vision: Growing Iowa's opportunities so that every woman and girl can reach her full potential.*

The following three strategic goals will be focus of our work:

1. Girls in Iowa are safe, healthy, and prepared for success.
2. Women, girls and their allies are fully engaged with the ICSW vision.
3. Systems are in place to support and challenge women to reach their full potential and enhance Iowa's future.

To further these goals, the 2009 Iowa Legislative Policy Agenda was adopted during the December Commission Meeting:

- Enhanced equal pay protections
- Sustainable funding for domestic violence and sexual assault centers
- Extension of gender balance requirements to local boards and commissions
- Support for increasing participation of women and girls in skill shortage areas

A more detailed policy agenda will be released on-line at [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov) and in the *Forward* Winter edition. Bookmark our page for legislative reports.

## Elections: Gains for Women?

The historic elections of 2008 show little improvement in the number of women representing Iowans at the state and national levels. While the top ticket was sure to make history, overall the election showed few gains for women.

As White House Project President and Founder Marie Wilson recently wrote, "Frankly, when I hear the current exclamations over women's electoral gains in 2008, I am shocked at the apparently low expectations for where women should be politically." (Wilson was 2004 recipient of the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice.)

Both women -- Becky Greenwald and Mariannette Miller-Meeks -- who ran for US Congress were defeated by male incumbents. Iowa remains, with Mississippi, as the only state to have never sent a woman to Congress or the Governor's mansion. Since the first Congress, 11,699 people have served in the House or Senate. Of these, 215 (less than 2%) have been women.

In the 130 races for seats in the Iowa General Assembly, 53 women ran and 30 were elected. Nine women will serve in the Iowa Senate (six Democrats and three Republicans) and 26 women in the Iowa House (10 Republicans and 18 Democrats) for a total of 35 or 23.3% of the Legislature.

Four women of color will serve: Senator Swati Dandekar and Representatives Deborah Berry, Helen Miller, and Phyllis Thede.

Women can make gains in future elections by preparing themselves now. Cities, counties, and the state search for interested people to serve on boards and commissions. If you are interested in serving, contact your city, county, or visit <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/> to learn more about serving on a state board.

**News from other states:** Women will take the majority of the New Hampshire State Senate, where women will have 13 of the 24 seats. South Carolina elected an entirely male House of Representatives.

## *IoWoman* Becomes *Forward*

Beginning with the 2009 Winter edition, the *IoWoman* will become *Forward*. No longer published by Friends of the ICSW, the newsletter will be published quarterly and will be circulated primarily electronically.

To ensure you continue to receive the newsletter and other updates from the ICSW, please e-mail your e-mail address to [women@iowa.gov](mailto:women@iowa.gov). You may opt to still receive the newsletter by mail by calling the office: 515/281-4461 or 800/558-4427.

You will continue to be able to access the newsletter on the ICSW's new website. Our new website was revised in November. Please visit [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov) to find resources and tools for women, ICSW initiatives, and information for girls. We would love to hear your feedback.

## Empower Yourself - Get the Facts The Basics of Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a medical condition characterized by diminished bone strength and increased risk of fracture. Most people think of their bones as being solid like a rock. Actually, bone is a living tissue, just like other parts of the body—your heart, brain, or skin for example. Bone just happens to be a harder type of tissue. Bone is always changing. Your body keeps your bones strong and healthy by replacing old bone with new bone. After menopause the body removes more bone than it replaces which in many women may lead to osteoporosis. Osteoporotic bones are weaker and are more likely to break. Postmenopausal osteoporosis can be prevented, and with proper therapy it can be treated.

### Who is affected?

An estimated eight million women in the U.S. have osteoporosis. And 40% of women age 50 or older will experience an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime. Osteoporosis also affects men, but to a lesser extent. For those at risk for or who have osteoporosis, prevention and treatment are the best defenses.

### Diagnosis

Because bone loss is gradual and without warning signs, women often do not seek medical treatment until they experience a bone fracture. That's why osteoporosis is often called a "silent disease." To prevent the complications caused by osteoporosis, postmenopausal women should undergo a bone density test to determine the condition of their bones. If you are over age 50 and have other risks for osteoporosis such as the ones listed below, a bone density test could be your first step to understanding your risk for fracture.

### Risk Factors

Answering the following questions may help you to determine if you are at risk for osteoporosis-related fractures.

- Are you postmenopausal?
- Have you had a bone fracture after age 50?
- Did your mother suffer a fracture after age 50?
- Do you weigh less than 125 pounds?
- Are you taking oral medicines such as cortisone or prednisone?
- Do you currently smoke?
- Do you need your arms to stand up from a chair?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be at risk for osteoporosis-related fractures. Talk to your doctor about your risk for osteoporosis.

Although it sounds somewhat intimidating, a bone density test is one of the safest, most accurate ways to measure bone density and provide information about your bone health. Since you can't see or feel bone loss, this test is a way to tell if you have or are at risk for osteoporosis. Knowing your bone mineral density test result (which is called a T-score), your doctor can tell if you have lost bone and if you are at increased risk for fracture.

Understanding your risk for osteoporosis is the first step to preventing fractures. With this knowledge you can develop a strategy with your doctor that may include a diet rich in calcium, dietary supplements, exercise, and in some cases, prescription medicines. Your bones will thank you for taking this small but important first step.

## Iowa Voices Project Photography Exhibit

*by Laurie Schipper, Executive Director of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) in collaboration with Katie Thompson, writer and photographer, began the Iowa Voices Project in 2007 as a way to challenge stereotypes regarding victims of domestic violence. Katie interviewed 31 Iowa survivors who put powerful and inspiring words to their experiences. These stories were made available during last October's Domestic Violence Awareness month in local newspapers, radio and ICADV's website.

As part of the project Katie took photos of the 31 women. The photos capture the light and courage that these women all possess. Through the photos, Katie captured the strength and perseverance that the women clearly pulled from in order to survive their partner's violence. The photo exhibit is a testament to women's ability to cope and transcend the violence they experienced. It is a powerful message to women currently trying to survive violent relationships. The author traveled with the exhibit during the month of October to nine cities across Iowa. Many of the survivors accompanied the exhibit and participated in a brief program at each site.

ICADV is working with a publisher/distributor and plans to release the book "Thirty-One Stories of Domestic Violence Survivors in America's Heartland" in October of 2009.

For more information on The Iowa Voices Project or to order an advanced copy of the book, please contact Sarabeth Anderson at

sarabetha@icadv.org for information on the location and dates of the Iowa Voices Project Photography Exhibit, as well as the survivor's photo gallery and stories, go to [www.icadv.org](http://www.icadv.org).

## Enough Sexual Assault, Iowa

by Elizabeth Barnhill, Executive Director of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Allegations of sexual violence at a major university, allegations of sexual violence by police officers in a small town, allegations of sexual harassment and assault at an agribusiness – all in Iowa, all within the last few months.

University students, small town workers, undocumented immigrants – all allegedly victimized in communities that should be holding their students, officials, and employees to higher standards. Those are the front page incidents; many more are never reported, never publicized.

Thirty years after women started to speak out about their experiences, thirty years after the establishment of rape crisis centers, thirty years after the first take back the night rallies, very little has changed. Unless victimized by a stranger, it is still likely a victim's experience will be doubted, and still unlikely an alleged offender will be successfully prosecuted.

Most victims, 70 – 80 percent, are victimized by someone they know. That fact alone means they are unlikely to be believed. Our communities and colleges and workplaces have not managed to stop sexual assaults, or to adequately assist victims. Victims of sexual assault are, very often, accused of bringing the assault on themselves. They are accused of having committed "crimes" of poor judgment: drinking too much, working too late, or working without documentation. Or doubt is raised as to whether a crime actually occurred, as if women routinely endure medical exams and police interviews for entertainment value.

In 2005, 15 years after creating funding to assist victims of sexual assault, the Iowa legislature removed the line item that created funding to assist victims. For the last 3 years, rape crisis centers have relied on money transferred from a fund never intended to support ongoing services. Now that fund is depleted, and in 2010, there will only be \$150,000 available to 28 rape crisis centers, to serve over 4,000 victims of sexual assault each year.

Enough. In 2008 women should be able to attend school, live safely in a small town, and work any job that puts food on the table – without fear of rape. Those who are assaulted should have the help they deserve. Enough stories of women who have to flee to colleges in other states, enough stories of women who have to leave their friends and families in small towns, enough stories of women who develop serious health and emotional problems because they are in physical danger in the workplace. Enough of administrations and city councils and employers who cannot manage to guarantee women safety. Enough stories of Iowa values that exclude such basic values – the right to one's own bodily integrity, and help when that is violated. Enough, Iowa, enough.

[Editor's Note: IowaCASA and ICADV are working on a collaborative funding restoration project for 2009. To learn more, go to [www.victimstosurvivors.org](http://www.victimstosurvivors.org).]

## Annual Essay Contest

To give students a deeper and more relevant appreciation of women's roles in history and celebrate March as Women's History Month, the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Iowa Department of Education, and the State Historical Society of Iowa invite Iowa's youth to participate in the 25<sup>th</sup> annual *Write Women Back Into History* Essay Contest.

**Whether you are a student, family member, teacher, youth volunteer, or interested citizen, we ask you to encourage the young people in their lives to participate in this contest.**

**2009 Theme: *Women: Taking the Lead to Ensure Our Rights*** This year's theme provides a special opportunity to discover and celebrate women's work in civil rights and social justice. Students in grades 6-9 are encouraged to choose a woman, preferably from Iowa, from any historical period, past or present, and write about the accomplishments of her life and how she has made a difference to the student and to society in the social justice and civil rights arena.

Winners will be honored in a ceremony at the State Capitol in March 2008. All winners will receive a certificate of participation signed by the Governor, and modest cash prizes are available this year.

Guidelines can be found on the Women's History Page of the ICSW website, [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov). With questions, contact Lori SchraderBachar at ICSW, 515/281-4470 or 800/558-4427 or by e-mail, [lori.schraderbachar@iowa.gov](mailto:lori.schraderbachar@iowa.gov).

---

## ICSW Lunch & Learns

Save the dates! From January through May, the ICSW will hold a Lunch and Learn on the **second Friday of each month**. The free events will begin promptly at 12 noon and end at 1 p.m. Bring your own lunch to the State Capitol Complex and hear more about policy issues for women and girls.

The exact location of the event and presenters will be posted on our website: [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov). For more information or for special accommodations, please contact the ICSW, 515/281-4461, 800/558-4427, or [women@iowa.gov](mailto:women@iowa.gov).

# Bits and Pieces

Did you miss our **Calendar of Events**? Check out our website for upcoming events: [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov). You can also submit your event there.



More than twenty people and organizations presented to the ICSW at its annual Public Hearings in September and October. Women and organizations were invited to share issues and concerns that are facing Iowa's women and girls. Hearings were held in Marion, Urbandale, and Storm Lake. Topics discussed included pay equity, direct care workers, violence against women, women's health, women and girls in the correctional system, child support, child care, mental health, and economic issues.



Iowa ranks 37<sup>th</sup> among all states for wage equity, and high wage earners

are hit the hardest, according to **"Women, Work and the Iowa Economy,"** released this fall by the Iowa Policy Project. The study found that 67% Iowa women are in the workforce, compared with the national average of 59%, and for those in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile of earners, Iowa has the eighth largest paygap in the nation. The study is linked on our website under About Women in Iowa.



The National Women's Law Center reports that over half a million jobs disappeared in November, the largest one-month loss in over 30 years. **The unemployment rate for adult women is at its highest rate in over 14 years,** at 5.5 percent, and unemployment among women who maintain families has jumped to 9.3 percent, a 41 percent increase this year.



**Challenges and Opportunities Impacting the Mental Health of Rural Women** examines the physical, mental, and financial health challenges faced by rural women as well as housing considerations and caregiving responsibilities. It addresses successful ways to meet these challenges through positive mental health promotion programs and affordable supports available through the Cooperative Extension System. Shirley Gerrior, Caroline Crocoll, and Joseph Wysocki, CSREES national program leaders, and Celia Hayhoe, cooperative extension specialist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, collaborated on this paper, recently published in the Journal of Rural Community Psychology and can be found at [www.marshall.edu/jrcp/V11%20N1/Gerrior.pdf](http://www.marshall.edu/jrcp/V11%20N1/Gerrior.pdf).



Help save printing/postage costs! If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please write or call the ICSW office. You may also send your e-mail address. Thank you!

**Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women**  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
**Telephone:** 515/281-4461 or 800/558-4427  
**Fax:** 515/242-6119  
**E-mail address:** [women@iowa.gov](mailto:women@iowa.gov)  
**Website:** [www.women.iowa.gov](http://www.women.iowa.gov)  
[www.friendsoficsw.org](http://www.friendsoficsw.org)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Des Moines, IA  
Permit #3386

Enclosure of items in the newsletter does not necessarily connote endorsement by the Friends of the ICSW or by the ICSW. All information must be mailed or faxed to the ICSW no later than the 15th day of all even numbered months. The use of any submitted material is at the discretion of the editor. The *Iowa Woman* is mailed six times per year to 8,400 persons or organizations.

Michelle Durand-Adams, President • Rachel Scott, ICSW Division Administrator • Lori M. SchraderBachar, Editor

**Friends of ICSW**  
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 5 Fall 2008

# Iowa Woman