



The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

SEATTLE/KING COUNTY CHAPTER

OWL is a national non-profit grassroots membership organization that addresses social, economic and legislative concerns of mid-life and older women through advocacy, education and networking. Seattle/King County OWL is a chapter of National OWL.

Fall 2011

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OWL Groups

Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee met in July and awarded four \$2,000 scholarships. See article in this newsletter.

annual meeting on October 22nd. Joan Lemire is chair of the committee and can be contacted for more information.

Bequest Committee

The Bequest Committee has not met this year.

Social Security Works

This is a coalition that OWL has joined. The goal is to prevent any cuts to Social Security and to strengthen it in the future. This group is working hard now on educating the public on the threats to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. They are sponsoring a forum, "The Threat to Social Security: An Issue for All Generations" at the UW at 2pm on Monday, November 21. The featured speaker will be Terry O'Neill, National President, NOW (National Organization for Women). For questions contact Carol Hannum or visit www.socialsecurityworkswa.org

Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee holds monthly meetings at the Northgate Library. The meetings are from 1:00-3:00pm the last Monday of each month. All OWLs are invited to attend.

Outreach Committee

Ruth Askey and Joan Lemire represented OWL and dispensed information at the Compassion & Choices

Sound

by Jean Slocum

I thought that rocks preserved it.
Sound could be mined,
The great orations
Milled into speaking coins.

OWL Program Recap

May

Marielle Higler, an active OWL member, spoke to us about her journey and insights from 23 years as a single mom to author of Showing up for the Golden Years. In midlife, each person must find her own solutions on purpose and meaning, necessity of employment and sharing/mutualism. Finances must be in order to be able to meet the solutions. Emancipation is a personal thing. Some of the things women need to do are overcome the desire to be “nice,” find ways to promote the skills of motherhood, and learn to negotiate salaries. We need to figure out ways to package our wisdom. This can be done through mentoring, autobiographies, and ethical wills.

June

Dr. Sima Kahn began her career as an OB-GYN specialist, but she left that field when she saw the great need for Healthcare Advocates. She founded and is the current director of Healthcare Advocacy Partners. See “Healthcare Advocates” in this issue for some highlights of the presentation.

Summer

There were no meetings in July and August. Our summer luncheon was held at University House on June 23rd and 26 OWLs attended, including

three from Oregon and one from the Peninsula. Our special guests were Margaret Huyck, President of the National OWL board, and Ken Schug, President of OWL Chicago Hyde Park chapter. Margaret told us of her background and work with the national board. She talked of the work that Laurie Young did to bring National OWL back to sound financial footing. She told of the loss of chapters due to “aging out.” Midlife women must be reached through social media more than just a meeting structure. The Mother’s Day reports are now done all in house. The current debate on Social Security and Medicare is a major battle OWL is working on now. Ken stated that the Hyde Park chapter remains vital by concentrating on local issues, especially aging in place. They are in contact with their aldermen to make sure they hear and listen. They are a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Community Conference.

September

Our speaker, Martha Koester is currently a full time activist focusing mainly on health care issues. She is a board member of Health Care for All - Washington and a

member of Physicians for a National Health Plan. Her topic was “Health Care Reform – Where do we go from here?” Martha is a long time advocate for a single payer health care system. Currently her efforts are going into the fight to save Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. She had handouts for the talking points and how to send free faxes to advocate to the members of the SuperCongress.

October

A. Linda Taylor, Housing Director for the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle was our speaker. She teaches reverse mortgage courses within the School of Social Work at the UW which was the subject for her presentation. She told the pros and cons of reverse mortgage.



Healthcare Advocates

By Helen Winkler and Marielle Higler

Navigating our healthcare system leaves many people feeling like they have “washed up on foreign shores.” These were Dr. Sima Kahn’s opening words of a very interesting presentation.

What is a healthcare advocate?

A healthcare advocate is a “go between” you and your doctor(s). This relatively new service becomes more and more needed because there are so many new advancements in the medical world and so many treatment options to choose from. What makes things even more complicated: in the current health care system doctors are required to move patients quickly through their office, which doesn’t leave much time for questions, doubts, or explanations.

What do healthcare advocates do?

They educate you about your disease or ailment and the options for treatments. They go over your records with you, go to appointments with you, find treatment centers and/or doctors for you and help arrange care after treatment. They can work with your family, facilitating family

discussions and ways to support you during your treatment. They can organize medications from multiple doctors to maximize treatment, avoiding adverse interactions. They can also help you navigate the insurance systems.

How do you know if you need an advocate?

When you get that “washed-up-on-a-foreign shore” feeling or you can’t get or are not satisfied with a diagnosis.

How do you find an advocate?

You can check with the National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants www.nahac.com. Some hospitals have patient advocates/navigators to help find your way in that particular hospital. Oregon has a non-profit healthcare advocacy group: <https://www.hasolutions.org/welcome>. It is to be hoped that Seattle will follow their lead.



Advocates are not covered by insurance. The average cost is \$200/hour, so a bill for extended services can run into thousands of dollars. But an advocate can be used only for those things that are essential. You or a family member can also be an advocate. If a family member or friend is your advocate or you are your own advocate, follow these ten points:

- (1) Bring a note taker.
- (2) Ask “What else could it be?”
- (3) Accept treatment only after you thoroughly understand it.
- (4) When in the hospital, make sure everyone who enters your room washes or sanitizes their hands.
- (5) As an outpatient, have a list of questions for continued care.
- (6) If something feels uncomfortable, consult another doctor or change doctors.
- (7) Obtain and use checklists for safety available at www.campaignzero.org
- (8) On the internet use only reliable sites, e.g. www.mayoclinic.com and www.uptodate.com
- (9) Be assertive.
- (10) Trust your instincts.

Downsizing

by Marielle Higler

Downsizing at any point in life is all about making changes. Changes make us feel vulnerable. We have to leave behind what we are familiar with to go towards what we don't know yet.

We decide to face this agonizing process because something happened in our life that made it impossible to continue in the old way: the kids moved out, after a divorce, after the passing of your spouse, you get married later in life and need to merge two households, money becomes too tight, you retire, and in the sunset years of life, when it becomes too much work to keep going on your own.

Going through my own lifestyle reductions over the years and from research and interviews for my book, I have gathered some thoughts that may make downsizing into a senior home or community less stressful:

- Read up on the process of change
- Be aware of what brought on your decision to downsize or move into a retirement home.
- Define clearly what you want, i.e. you want easier social interaction, good food in good company, someone else to organize your fun activities. Besides costs, available services and amenities, location can be important. Decide what you want from your neighborhood: close to supermarket, family, friends, park, library, bus, volunteer job. Be brutally honest when you make your wish list and take it with you when you visit different communities and facilities.
- Map out and plan as much as you can before making the first move and before spending the first penny.
- All this has to be affordable. Define affordable first: do your money!!! Find out about income from Social Security, insurances or pensions you may have. Lay out your finances in as much detail as possible. Check everything, don't take anything for granted.
- Find or create a support system. It is OK to ask for support and in the absence of family and friends there are professional organizers to assist you. Seattle has several professional organizers specializing in downsizing for seniors. If these services are too expensive, Senior Services (call 211) is an excellent resource for referrals to volunteer organizations or community programs. The community or facilities you visit may have information as well.

The whole purpose of downsizing is to make your future possible. You have much more control than you think especially if you are proactive in the process.

You are in charge and your participation in this process will reflect in the end results.



One OWL's Opinion of "Occupy Wall Street"

by Eleanor Owen

Dear Reader,

The following comments are strictly my own. In addition to being a full-fledged, long time OWL, I am now proud to say I've become an **OWS**. Further, I would like all OWLs to get fired up about the injustices of Wall Street, Big Banks and PhRMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) and to make their convictions public. I want OWL to support Occupy Wall Street. I've made a bright bumper sticker that reads --

**OWS
Save America
Go Go Grow**

How about OWL for OWS? Doesn't that look neat? I'll volunteer to make a bunch of stickers to glue onto your cars or put up in your front door.

OWL, I believe, has been given a second chance to help promote and support the passion and justifiable outrage of those who want to Occupy Wall Street. A number of years ago I was dismayed when -- as a member of the National OWL Board -- I received a response from the National OWL Executive Director rejecting my request that OWL publicly support Cindy Sheehan. The letter stated, "It wasn't an OWL issue." Cindy Sheehan, a midlife mother was personally protesting the Iraq War outside President Bush's ranch in Texas after her son had been killed. Not an OWL issue?

I almost dropped my membership in OWL as I actually did with AARP because of its heavy lobbying for passage of Part D in Medicare -- an open

purse for the pharmaceutical pirates. Now and forever more I will simply recycle the continuing onslaught of appeals to "renew."

OWL has been given a second chance. Midlife and older women will benefit from OWS protests. We can help diminish the chokehold that the pharmaceutical industry (seven lobbyists for each congressman!), Big Banks, and the Financial Services Industry has on America. All we have to do is show up at protests, donate a few dollars and help Save America. With a little luck and by making our voices heard, who knows, we might swing the presidential election.

- *Citizen Activist, Eleanor Owen*

Women's History Note

Picture this:

New York harbor, October, 1886. Dignitaries, including President Grover Cleveland, elbow each other on the Bedloe's Island platform, huge crowds crane their necks toward a tall draped Statue of Liberty about to be revealed. In the water, flag-flying steamers, tugboats, rowboats. Look closely and you see a barge

carrying some well-dressed white ladies holding signs: "American Women Have No Liberty. Give us the vote."

Lillie Devereux Blake and her companions set the stage for an even more daring event three decades later. In December, 1916, women piloting small bi-planes and dropping "Votes for Women" leaflets hovered over President Wood-

row Wilson's yacht as he sailed down the Hudson River to preside over the electrical floodlighting of the statue.

Now *that's* American history. Wouldn't it be nice to see these troublemakers in textbooks and documentaries, but not likely. Too provocative...

Scholarship Committee Report

by Helen Winkler

The Committee met on July 7th to review the applications. We awarded four scholarships of \$2,000 each. Those awarded were: Felicity Burdick – UW, Masters in Social Work to become geriatric social worker; Angeles Elliott – Lake Washington Technical College, AA in Social and Human Services to become geriatric counselor or advocate; Mary Greene – Seattle Vocational Institute, Medical Assistant Certificate prefers work in geriatrics; and Jackie Harden – North Seattle Community College, Medical Assistant Certificate. All recipients conveyed their thanks to OWL and seemed excited to get to work at school. We also started a formal yearly contact

with previous recipients to determine their status and our success rate.

For the 2010 recipients, four reported they were still in school. One had completed her certificate and had opened a business in her field of study, horticulture.

We heard from four of the 2009 recipients – two are still in school, two have finished, one of those has not yet found a job in her field. JoAnn O'Connor has found a permanent job with YouthCare in her chosen field. She wrote a very upbeat letter about her current situation. She says, "...between getting the job and getting this sweet little cottage (a new residence near her job), I feel like I am the luckiest

girl in the world... and I couldn't have done it without the support I got from OWL. Getting the scholarship was such a huge confidence builder for me. I felt like I had someone who believed in me and would help me attain my goal...I can't believe how hopeless everything was and not knowing how or what I was going to do and then to have all of this. I have to remind myself that it didn't just happen magically. It came from a lot of hard work and sacrifice and having to pull myself up by the boots straps every day...and from the help I received from OWL and the support of friends who kept telling me I was doing great and would make it just fine!"

Paid Sick Day Ordinance

by Helen Winkler

On July 6, 2011 a number of OWLS attended the Seattle City Council hearing on paid sick days. Carol Hannum testified in favor of the ordinance on behalf of Seattle/King County OWL. Her testimony included:

"This is a women's issue. The majority of the 190,000 people working in Seattle without sick leave are in jobs typically filled by women. They are our child-care workers and caretakers, our grocery clerks, retail workers, waitresses, food preparers, hotel & motel housekeepers, mothers and grandmothers who

may be forced to choose between losing pay and sending a sick child to school. We are joining the Seattle Coalition for a Healthy Workforce to make it possible for Seattle workers and their children to stay home when they're sick without economic hardship.

Women are often at a disadvantage in lower paying jobs without benefits. Paid sick days will help to offset some of that disadvantage. Sick workers spread germs, are not productive, and may get sicker and possibly lose their jobs, thus further increasing

the disparity between men's and women's annual earnings.

We urge you to pass the Paid Sick Days Ordinance."

The City Council passed the Ordinance by a vote of 8-to-1 and Mayor McGinn signed it into law on September 23rd. This law covers most of the half million workers within the city limits. Starting in September 2012, companies with 5-49 full-time workers must allow workers to earn up to five paid sick days, firms with 50-249 workers must provide seven days and larger firms, nine days.

Marielle Higler Sends Her Last Message from Seattle

When I joined OWL, four years ago to the day almost, I landed in a hefty conversation about whether OWL Seattle should stop to exist or not. My first words in the group were: please exist!!

I realize and over the last four years have found it to be true, that it is difficult to stay motivated with a dwindling membership, or to find speakers with substance for our small audience. It is a lot of work to maintain the website, keep the money in check and a presence in the community. And I still say: please exist!!

OWL's voice is unique. We have looked and not found other organizations that focus on women in midlife and older. Our work is not done. Let's find the women coming up behind us and engage them in the issues that we focus on. In the age of electronic baby boomers we will most likely find them on the Internet. Not our natural habitat, for sure, but we have

weathered bigger storms in the past, so why would this small hurdle make us stop? I hope our passion for women in midlife and their unique challenges will prevail.

Thank you for being here and for sharing your friendship with me.

I will leave for Cape Town on October 28th to get married and build a new life there. Thanks to the same scary Internet and email, we will be able to stay connected and continue sharing ideas.

Take good care.

- Marielle

When Marielle joined OWL, she jumped right in to an active working role. She gave her time and energy to our chapter. She has led the business meetings and leadership committee for more than three years. We will sorely miss her energy, enthusiasm and work at net-

working with so many other organizations that can help us.

As a chapter we said good-bye at a luncheon at Eleanor Owen's on September 28th. We enjoyed Eleanor's wonderful lentil soup and large delectable lemon curd tart as well as great potluck contributions brought by others. We even had some very old champagne. We hope we can hold on to the spark Marielle brought to our OWL chapter and fan the flame with her contagious enthusiasm and continued support via email for the empowerment of midlife and older women.

Marielle, thanks so much for all that you have done for Seattle/King County OWL. Best wishes in your new life. We know you will be an activist for women and justice in South Africa also. And we look forward to your future articles for our Newsletter.

Need to Get Rid of Sensitive Clutter?

Roxanne Harper tells us how she got rid of all her bank statements, Visa bills, etc. that were more than three years old.

The company name is Shred-

it (mobile paper shredding and recycling) and they are located in Kent. Telephone: 425-390-4995 or 877-607-4733. For more information their web site is

www.shredit.com.

Roxanne called, got their address and asked necessary questions, then took the box in, paid \$10 and got a receipt.



The voice of midlife
& older women

The Older Women's League

Older Women's League
Seattle/King County Chapter
117 East Louisa Street # 176
Seattle, WA 98102-3203
(206) 781-6679

VISIT OWL ON THE INTERNET

Local:
www.scn.org/hoot

National:
www.owl-national.org

OWL Newsletter—Fall 2011

Leadership Committee: Ruth Askey, Isabel Egglin, Marietta Foubert, Carol Hannum, Joan Lemire, Eleanor Owen, and Helen Winkler

The Threat to Social Security
An Issue for All Generations



FEATURING
Terry O'Neill
President, National
Organization for Women

UW Seattle Campus
Kane Hall, Rm. 210
Monday, Nov. 21st
4:30-6:00 PM

- SPECIAL GUESTS -



Rep. Jim McDermott
7th Congressional District

Ron Sims
former King County Executive & retired Deputy
Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development



Free and open to the public

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Annual dues of \$35 include \$10 for Seattle/King County and \$25 for National OWL. Members receive newsletters from the local chapter and National OWL. When you pay dues to the Seattle/King County chapter, you automatically become a member of the National OWL. No one is denied membership. For waiver, apply or send check to:

Older Women's League
Seattle/King County Chapter
117 East Louisa Street # 176
Seattle, WA 98102-3203