



STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN WOMEN'S COMMISSION
DETROIT

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

Susy Avery
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 20, 2016

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Governor, State of Michigan
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Snyder,

Pursuant to Public Act 1 of 1968, which states that the Michigan Women's Commission shall submit an annual report to the Governor including recommendations based on its studies, we are pleased to submit to you the 2015 Annual Report of the Michigan Women's Commission for the calendar year of January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.

In its strategic plan, the Michigan Women's Commission identified three specific goals:

- identifying the needs of the more than 46,000 Michigan women veterans by acquiring Michigan-specific data to help advocacy efforts;
- increasing awareness of human trafficking in Michigan through collaborative initiatives with local, county, regional, state, and federal partners; and
- advocating for women to have an increased number of leadership roles in corporate governance, by exploring potential partnerships/relationships to develop strategies to increase women's membership on corporate boards.

We worked to accomplish our statutory goals, and in doing so, helped improve the quality of life for Michigan women by taking the following actions:

1) We conducted four quarterly meetings of the Michigan Women's Commission, in different regions of the state:

- January, 2015 in Lansing where we heard from Jeff Barnes, Veterans Affairs Agency, and Karen Phillippi, Office of New Americans. We also held a Welcoming Reception for all Michigan women legislators;
- April, 2015 in Grand Rapids where we heard from Jana Hall, COO, and Cindy Miranti, Ph.D., of the Van Andel Institute, and were given a tour of the Institute's research facility;
- August, 2015 in Sault Ste. Marie where we heard from Mayor Anthony Bosbous, Senator Wayne Schmidt and Susan Puska, President and CEO of Kanava International;
- October, 2015 in Livonia where we heard from Ari Adler, Special Projects Manager, Executive Office of Governor Snyder.

2) We helped raise awareness of the needs of Michigan Women Veterans. More than 46,000 women veterans live in Michigan. Many may not think of themselves as “veterans” because they have not served during wartime or in a combat-specific role. Reaching out to these women to inform them of available federal, state and community benefits and services is challenging, because they do not self-identify as veterans, nor do they access information through traditional channels. When Director Barnes of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency spoke to the Commission last January, he pointed out that Michigan ranks among the bottom five states for federal spending per veteran. The Commission believes that increasing women veterans’ knowledge about and use of available benefits would help both the woman veteran herself and the state’s financial situation.

- To build a knowledge base to support advocacy efforts on their behalf, the Michigan Women’s Commission conducted the first-ever survey of Michigan women veterans. In 2015, we completed our survey, and staff of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency generously assisted us with analysis of our initial findings. We hope these findings, shared through testimony before the House Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, and the Senate Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security Committee, will start a policy dialogue on how to address the issues that our brave Michigan women veterans reported.

- The Michigan Women’s Commission will be conducting a follow-up survey. Based on the results, we hope to better develop a strategy that will allow our Michigan women veterans to say that our State of Michigan recognizes them as heroes, acknowledges their challenges, and helps them overcome obstacles they may face.

- Two of our Commissioners have met several times with staff of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and other interested parties to discuss what issues are of concern to women veterans. Our Commissioners have stressed that the states that have had the most success in supporting women (and all veterans) are those who have been able to identify and communicate with veterans individually.

- Commissioners and staff have participated in meetings of existing and newly-formed Veterans Community Action Teams (VCATs) around the state. VCATs focus on identifying solutions for gaps in veteran services, reducing duplication of efforts and simplifying connections with local resources.

- One of our commissioners attended the Ohio Women Veterans Conference in September to learn about what has made Ohio one of the most successful states in supporting women veterans. Two initiatives stood out. Ohio created a Veterans Bonus Program to thank Ohio Veterans who served during periods of conflict. When individuals applied for the bonus, the contact information provided allowed the veterans agency to then share information about available federal and state benefits with the applicant. Also, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services has a permanent Advisory Committee on Women Veterans whose goal is “to locate, educate and advocate” for all women veterans who served in the United States military. The committee is dedicated to outreach through initiatives including a biennial statewide women veterans conference, and promotion of benefits and health care for women veterans.

- To honor the role of Michigan's women veterans, we participated in the development of the Michigan Women's Historical Center's exhibit examining the roles women have held in the military from WWII to today, centered on the all-female NUWARINE Post 535.

3) We continued to bring attention to the problem of human trafficking in Michigan. We have continued to help co-ordinate, facilitate and participate in awareness programs and projects including legislative initiatives. Commissioners are active in bringing awareness of human trafficking to the Michigan's medical, educational and hospitality communities. The Commission's strategy has been to reach out to influence leaders in these communities to educate them on issues related to human trafficking.

- Our Michigan Women's Commission Commissioner began the work leading to a partnership between the Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association (MLTA), the Michigan Women's Commission, the South West Michigan Human Trafficking Force and the Safe Action Project. The Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association has joined the Safe Action Project, a project to train hospitality employees about the warning signs of human trafficking, with a focus on child sex trafficking. The MLTA, in making this commitment, joins only two other states in the nation.

- Our Commissioners organized two visits to Michigan by Jordan Greenbaum, MD, the medical director of the Stephanie Blank for Safe and Healthy Children, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, who is a national expert on the sex trafficking of children. The purpose of these visits was to provide continuing medical education training seminars on human trafficking and to discuss outreach and treatment strategies with other providers and advocates. CME seminars were presented at Mott Children's Health Center and Hurley Hospital of Flint, Borgess Medical Center of Kalamazoo, Mercy Health St. Mary's of Grand Rapids, and the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital of Grand Rapids, among other institutions. Dr. Greenbaum also met with the Wayne County and Genesee County Medical Society leadership.

- We also assisted Dr. Greenbaum in identifying locations in Michigan, including Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, and teen health clinics in other parts of the state, in which an easy-to-use screening tool, specifically designed to use in health care settings to identify minor victims, could be clinically validated.

- Commissioners and staff worked with Senator Judy Emmons on her "Shine the Light on Human Trafficking" forums in Detroit and other locations in Michigan.

- Our Commissioners have partnered with concerned community organizations to form new regional human trafficking task forces in two West Michigan counties. Commissioners continue to be active partners in existing task forces in Southwest, Mid-Michigan and Southeastern Michigan. These task forces raise awareness in communities and provide training to law enforcement, health professionals, educators, and the general public.

- We have assisted healthcare providers, empowering them to take the lead in raising awareness within their own spheres of influence, by linking entities to other resources on the federal, state and local levels. One example is Beaumont Health Systems' partnership with FBI staff to

provide training, which was facilitated by one of our commissioners.

- We attended a stakeholders meeting with US Dept. of Homeland Security officials concerning the “Blue Campaign” efforts to combat human trafficking.

- We continue to participate in the statewide human trafficking task force. Several commissioners attended its statewide conference in October entitled “Human Trafficking: A Closer View”.

4) We advocated for increased participation of Michigan women on corporate boards. We are committed to this advocacy because advancing women to corporate board positions has a positive impact on the business landscape.

- Commissioners are enthusiastically pursuing connections with organizations and corporate board recruiters in identifying and promoting qualified senior female leadership. Three of our Commissioners attended a meeting in Chicago of the National Association of Corporate Directors in September. This national association helps to encourage corporations to be diverse in their board compositions as well as helping to identify women currently serving on corporate boards.

- We have begun discussions with Diana Lawson, Dean of the Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University, and Mary Kramer, Group Publisher, Crain’s Detroit Business, on ways to examine how women in Michigan have achieved positions on corporate boards.

- We have researched the board composition of Michigan-based publically traded companies, and begun sending letters to companies with two or more women board members, thanking companies for their commitment to offering women opportunities in corporate governance.

5) We continued to reach out to other organizations and governmental entities to advocate for, provide education and training to, and celebrate women in Michigan. Our 2015 Sponsorships, partner events and outside meetings include the following:

- We worked with the Michigan Women’s Historical Center and Hall of Fame, sponsoring a reception that celebrated both Women’s History Month and the opening of an exhibit on women in the military. We, along with several of our Commissioners and Department Liaisons, attended the Michigan Hall of Fame Induction ceremony in October, 2015.

- We participated in the United States Army’s TACOM Life Cycle Management Command tribute to National Women History Month in March, 2015. Major General Gwen Bingham, a Central Michigan University graduate, leads TACOM (the first women to do so). Our Commissioner Deidre Lambert Bounds was a featured panelist.

- We partnered with the Michigan Department of Education Office of Career and Technical Education, Michigan American Council of Education, and Central Michigan University to present a one-day ‘Young Women Strong Leaders’ conference in April, 2015. Over 300 female juniors and seniors, from college and universities across Michigan, attended. Presenters included

Michigan's Talent Investment Agency staff; CMU Faculty in Biology, Communication, Management, Marketing, Hospitality Services, and CMU's University Research Corporation; and Dow Chemical's Pam Spencer, Ph.D.

- We sponsored 28 junior and senior high school girls from Detroit High Schools at three Detroit Economic Club Luncheons. Our sponsorship enabled the young women to personally meet and ask questions of the national speakers.

- We continued to serve on the Community Advisory Board of the Center for Gender in Global Context, Michigan State University. This included a special meeting with Barbara Ehrenreich, the noted author of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, to discuss women's issues.

- We helped sponsor the Association for Women in Science – West Michigan Women in Science Career Panel at Grand Valley State University.

- We met with Jordyn Salmon, the new director of the Conference of Western Wayne, to discuss potential partnerships.

- We attended First Lady Sue Snyder's June, 2015 'End Campus Sexual Assault' Conference; the ACE Women's Network's 2015 Legislative Dinner honoring women who have made a significant public policy impact; the Michigan Department of Education Office of Career and Technical Education's Breaking Traditions Awards Presentation; the Michigan Women's Foundation's Celebration of Women of Achievement; the Michigan Political Leadership Program (MPLP) at Michigan State University programs; the Southeast Michigan Women in Blue event honoring women in law enforcement; Elder Law's "Call to Justice" Awards; the Women's Resource Center at MSU's "Women Matter" event; the University of Michigan Center for the Education of Women's "State of Black Women in Michigan" conference; and the Detroit Regional Chamber's Detroit Policy Conference.

- We promoted and attended the October, 2015 Rosie the Riveter event at historic Willow Run Airport, to regain the world record for Rosie attired attendees to celebrate the history and legacy of the women who worked at the Willow Run bomber plant during WWII.

- We attended two Michigan Governing Conferences. Susy Avery and Elizabeth Thompson were nominated to the 2016 Governing Advisory Board and attended their first Advisory Board meeting in December, 2015.

- We wrote over one hundred letters to Michigan women, congratulating them on exceptional accomplishments in their fields of professional endeavor.

- We had the opportunity to share strategies for women's involvement with Magdalena Gawronska, from Poland, the Director for External Relations to the Community of Democracies, a global intergovernmental coalition of democratic states. The coalition's Working Group on Women seeks to exchange best practices between democratic governments to increase women's political participation. We are pleased to know that our website has an international reach, as she

reached out to the Michigan Women's Commission, based on our website.

6) Continuing our use of social media to communicate with Michiganders, we maintained an active Facebook, Twitter and website presence, with particular focus on women veterans, human trafficking, and women on corporate boards. Elizabeth Thompson continued to participate in related training provided by eMichigan and other entities.

7) The Older Michiganders Act names the Executive Director of the Michigan Women's Commission as an ex-officio member of the State Advisory Council on Aging. Elizabeth Thompson attended the Advisory Council's meetings throughout the year, and participated in the workgroup on veterans. The State Advisory Council has recommended that Area Agencies on Aging change intake procedures to ensure that women were asked about their military service, to help ensure women were made aware of available veterans benefits. Elizabeth also participated in the state's No Wrong Door process improvement process, which is streamlining ways in which Michigan seniors can access services.

8) As has been the practice of the Michigan Women's Commission to report all out-of-state travel, the following travel was approved by the Director and utilized the approved State of Michigan standardized travel regulations during the 2015 calendar year:

- One Michigan Women's Commission Commissioner attended the State of Ohio's Women Veterans Conference to gain knowledge as to that state's best practices regarding women veterans;
- Three Michigan Women's Commission Commissioners attended a meeting in Chicago of the National Association of Corporate Directors to gain knowledge as to that organization's influence with regards to appointing women to corporate boards.

Sincerely,



Chris Etienne
Vice Chair



Susy Avery
Executive Director