

WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S CENTER BULLETIN

General Meeting - Sunday, June 4, 1:00 p.m., Community Bookshop
2028 P. St., N.W.

Women's Song and Dance Fest - a huge success!! Profits were over \$400.

Headline

Supermarkets support women's dance!! Ha! Ha!

The following is the body of a letter that went out to the central offices of Safeway, Grand Union, A&P, Giant, 7-11, and Co-op food stores:

...Considering the fact that women are the major consumers in this economy, we have every confidence in your generosity. This festival is one of our most important fund raising events and we are counting on its success in order to open the women's center.

We issue a bi-weekly newsletter...We plan to include a special thanks to your organization in our next edition."

In response to our request, we received: \$5 from Safeway, \$2.50 from Grand Union, \$10 from A&P, and \$10 from Giant. 7-11 and Co-op did not bother to reply.

I'm sure we all join in expressing our heart-felt fight on's to these benevolent corporations for their extreme and unprecedented support of our Center in the amount of \$27.50. Thanks a lot friendly supermarkets!

Workshop Discussion - Organization for the Center

To date there have been three workshop meetings to discuss the organization of the women's center--April 14, April 28, and May 5.

We have been hashing out ideas about the possible governing bodies of the Center and their functions. A consensus was reached as to the need for some kind of coordinating council as well as a general assembly--both need to be clearly defined and their functions established.

There was much discussion as to who would be represented on the coordinating council--projects, organizations, and women at large.

Projects or project groups - might be defined as on-going collectives working closely with the center and based in the center. Examples: the health projects, rape counselling, crafts collective.

Organizations - might be defined as groups wanting to be affiliated with the center but not necessarily based in the center. Examples: W.E.A.L., Women's Legal Defense Fund, Y.W.C.A.

Women at Large - might be defined as women not affiliated with any particular group but who use the center facilities in some way.

There have been many questions raised about the ways to choose representatives, the number of representatives from the various groups. The General Assembly might be defined as being composed of every woman who relates to the center. It could also refer to a general, open meeting (like out women's center meetings now) of all women involved in the center, including coordinating council members.

We agree that decision-making must be designated to some form of governing body to decide upon such questions as representation in the center, affiliation with the center, who determines the outcome of issues pertaining to the center as a whole, who gets space, will there be paid staff, what house to rent, etc. Once we decide upon this body--even if it is temporary--then the structure and functions of other bodies can be better defined.

Some basic questions raised in the workshops which we should all be considering include:

What is the composition and function of the General Assembly and the Coordinating Council?

Which group initiates the decision-making process?

How are decisions finalized?

What is the role of ad hoc committees or workshops?

Other questions to be considered in whatever governing bodies we establish include the following. Let's begin thinking about them now!

1. Who makes decisions about new projects, political stands, paid staff, criterion for affiliation, and allocation of money and space?

2. Who sets up rules concerning the responsibility of each project group in maintenance, fundraising, and rent for the center?

3. How do we involve new women and groups?

4. How do we avoid concentrations of power? How frequently should chairwomen and representatives change? How do we avoid an elite "in-group"? How do we avoid General Assembly meetings being packed by different factions?

5. Do people who live in the center (e.g. crisis center staff) or work there a great deal of time get represented on the coordinating council?

Experiences from Biltmore Street

On May 11 a workshop was held at I.P.S. on "The Rise and Fall of the Biltmore Street Women's Center." Several of the women who had been involved in the Biltmore St. Center discussed their opinions and feelings with about 20 of us who have been working on the present women's center. In our discussion of organization the issue of "hidden leadership" was raised, i.e. the phenomenon of one woman and/or a group of women acting as leaders because they have the information and foresight and are making most of the decisions. But they are not recognized as leaders and therefore they cannot be held responsible or accountable. This problem exists because of the lack of a clearly defined structure for the organization. There are no named leadership positions and functions, and therefore no accountability.

Another important issue (which we have been discussing from the beginning) is the question--whom do we serve? Do we want to act as a social service center geared to providing the "community" with what we might call "alternative" services? Realistically, we could only duplicate (at best) already existing services but with a more sensitive, humane approach. Many women feel this is too great a goal to set at the beginning. On the other hand, should we only concentrate on meeting the needs of the women who relate to the center, i.e. our own needs? Many women feel this is selfish and elitist and that we cannot ignore the needs of the greater community. Should various groups or projects within the center answer this question themselves or should there be a central policy?

At the General Meeting on Sunday, May 14, many of these issues were discussed. It was decided by consensus that we should establish a coordinating council and define its specific functions and powers. The General Assembly already exists, as the membership of the General Meetings. Its functions should be defined. It was also decided that the Women's Phone will act as a temporary core group to take overall responsibility for coordination and organization of the center.

It was agreed that the formal organization which we set up now will be reconsidered after the center has been in existence for six months.

As you can see by the schedule below the Women's Phone Collective is very small. If you want to join, Call 232-5145. We need help on evenings and week-ends! Don't you have a few hours to give to the center?

Monday-- 1:00-7:00

Tuesday-- 9:00-12:00, 1:00-5:00, 7:00-9:00

Wednesday-- 12:00-5:00

Thursday 12:00-5:00

Friday-- 1:00-5:00

IMPORTANT!! The next Workshop meeting will be held on Sunday, May 21 at 3:30 p.m. at 2134 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.

Trip to Baltimore-- Contact Barbara Simmons about the trip to visit the Baltimore Women's Center.

Funding and Housing--

We're still looking for a house. Please help us out--if you see the perfect house right around the corner call Liz Milbrandt at 333-0761. We are also submitting proposals to some local foundations for seed money. Project groups that are working on their own proposal and need advice and help, call Gerri at 785-3111.

Publicity Committee-- We have decided to put articles in local papers such as Off Our Backs, Colonial Times, and The D.C. Gazette. The articles would concern specific issues or projects, rather than just a schedule of meetings. Our next meeting is Thursday, May 25 at 7:30p.m. at 3712 35th St., N.W. Call Lynda Weston if you are interested.

Day Care--

At the General meeting child care was discussed. It was agreed that the center should provide child care facilities for women who come to use the center. The type and extent of the facilities will be determined by a Child Care Project Group. It was agreed that the burden for child care should not rest only with women with children. Anyone interested please speak up! We need the name of a contact person in order to get a group together.

Symposium on Women's Health--

The Montgomery County Chapter of NOW is sponsoring a symposium on women's health on Saturday, June 3 at 10:30a.m. at the Wheaton Library. The speakers include Dr. Jesse Bernard, Dr. Yvonne Brackbill, and Ruth Pancoast. Bring your lunch. For information call Faith Gabelnick at 460-4198.

Women's Art Collective--

If you are interested, call Debbie Maloff after 6:00p.m. at 333-6697.

New Chairwomen-- The new chairwomen for the General meeting are Liz O'Sullivan and Anne Hatfield. If you want something included on the agenda call them. Liz: 234-5354, Anne: 347-3776



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