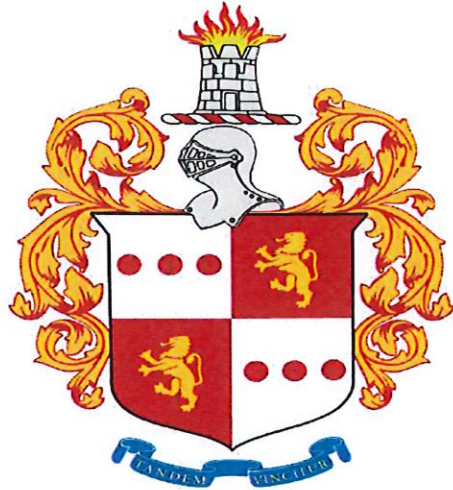


Morris County
Advisory Committee on Women



Annual Report 2022

Report to the Morris County Board of County Commissioners

MORRIS COUNTY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Mission and Purpose

The Morris County Advisory Committee on Women was established by the Board of Commissioners of Morris County on December 22, 2003. The main goals of the committee are to serve as a fact-finding resource by studying the needs, problems, interests, and concerns of the women who reside and work in Morris County, research and centralize information regarding resources, issues, events, and programs that involve women's concerns and promote their interests, advise and promote reforms in the law, public policy and public attitudes that will advance the status of women, and recommend programs to address the needs of women including, but not limited to, business, leadership, equal opportunity and quality of life issues.

Membership

At the beginning of 2022, the Advisory Committee on Women had 9 members: Pam Bennett-Santoro, Joann Bjornson, Donna Boyce, Elaine Muller, Karen O’Keeffe, Eileen Specchio, Sydney Ugalde, Sandra Garcia, and Charlotte Miller. The Commissioner Liaison to the committee was Kathy DeFillippo and the Human Services liaison to the committee was Kasey Errico.

Committee Organization

Karen O’Keeffe and Joann Bjornson served their second year as Chair and Vice-Chair. Kasey Errico, Director of Human Services meets with the Chair and Vice-Chair each month to set the meeting agendas. Liz Kisatsky, Private Secretary to the Director of Human Services provides administrative support to the committee in taking meeting minutes, sending meeting invitations and documentation, and providing clerical support as necessary.

Focus Area

In 2022, the Committee decided to focus on “Housing as Healthcare” and learn how these issues impact women in Morris County.

The Committee invited community member, Jeff Bashe, to a meeting and learned about the efforts to establish a Homeless Trust Fund in Morris County. Mr. Bashe informed the committee about how a Homeless Trust Fund would further serve the needs of at-risk residents. After the presentation, the Committee unanimously agreed to send a letter endorsing the establishment of a Homeless Trust Fund in Morris County to the Commissioners. The letter was sent to the Board of Commissioners on July 22, 2022.

The Committee invited Michelle Roers, Director of Strategies for ALICE, United in Care, and ALICE Action Network and Peggy Rauscher from Parsippany Child Day Care Center to speak at a meeting. The speakers provided comprehensive insight into the challenges people face in finding adequate childcare and the challenges childcare facilities are having with staffing shortages.

Ms. Roers reported that many ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) families are living in unstable housing situations. Children in general who fall below the ALICE threshold, 55% of those households

were in rentals vs. 19% who live in their own homes. On a positive note, in NJ, there has been a lot of emphasis over the past several years, in expanding public pre-school and access to pre-school services. New Jersey, however, is struggling with childcare for infants and toddlers. Part of the challenge is staffing which is a major issue. Many childcare providers are women. Unfortunately, the salaries for these positions often do not meet the financial needs to sustain a family household. The United Way kicked off a “United in Care” initiative to try to address some of these challenges.

The Committee invited Laura O’Reilly-Stanzilis, RN, Executive Director, the North Jersey Health Collaborative (NJHC). The NJHC collaborates with health care, community agencies and local offices of public health on community health improvement in municipalities across Morris and other counties in NJ. One of the goals of the organization is to help establish a more coordinated, multi-sector approach to target the drivers of poor health and eliminate health disparities in communities and to help seek innovative and bold interventions to create communities where opportunities for health and well-being are available for all people.

Seeds of Change

The committee awarded the 2022 Seeds of Change Award to Morris County resident, Mary Ledyard. The Seeds of Change Award was created to honor the legacy of Leanna Brown who valued grassroots activism and building up the community. The award is named Seeds of Change to reflect the concept of planting seeds, nurturing seedlings, and cultivating real change over time. The Women’s Committee solicited nominations for a woman who has planted seeds to benefit other women in our community and selected a winner after a careful review of the candidates. The award was presented to Ms. Ledyard at the Board of Commissioners meeting on March 9, 2022.

At the same meeting, the Board of Commissioners also recognized the important contribution of longtime Women’s Committee member, Carole Harper. Ms. Harper served on the Committee for 19 years and worked to develop leadership skills, researched availability and coordination of Morris County social services, and encouraged women to become involved in their communities.

Moving Forward

In 2022, the committee adopted the focus of Housing as Healthcare and spent time learning about this topic in terms of the needs of women in Morris County. The committee also continues to focus on building membership and increasing visibility. In 2023, the committee plans to hold full committee meetings every other month with sub-committee meetings in the interim months. The meetings will continue to be held virtually. The Seeds of Change award is targeted to be presented at the Board of Commissioners meeting in March to correspond with National Women’s History Month.