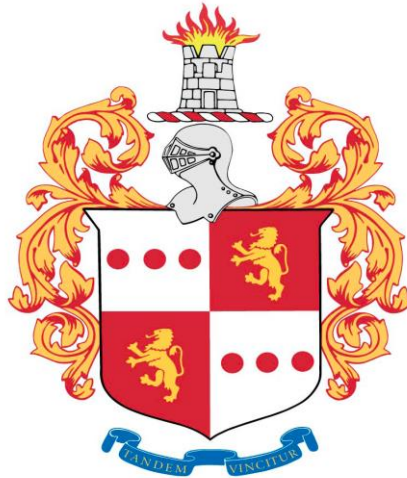


**Morris County
Advisory Committee on Women**



Annual Report 2021

Report to the Morris County Board of County Commissioners

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Mission and Purpose

The Morris County Advisory Committee on Women was established by the then Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders 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 2021, the Advisory Committee on Women had 10 members: Pam Bennett-Santoro, Joann Bjornson, Donna Boyce, Xiomara Guevara, Carole Harper, Elaine Muller, Karen O'Keeffe, Shelby Rhodes, Eileen Speechio, and Sydney Ugalde. 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 were approved as Chair and Vice-Chair on February 16, 2021. 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

The pandemic put a halt on many activity plans. Historically, the Advisory Committee on Women held very successful informational events but were limited from doing due to pandemic restrictions. 2021 was spent gathering information to inform a focus area for the committee.

Information Gathering

The committee invited Molly Rennie, Director of Strategic Partnerships at United for ALICE to speak at a meeting. Ms. Rennie provided comprehensive insight into understanding the challenges for the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population in Morris County. The committee learned about a United Way child care pilot program called United in Care which is a collaboration of entities, including the state government, on how to deliver more child care opportunities inexpensively. There is a pilot program currently being conducted in Morris County. The ALICE Report data (in 2018) revealed that 65% of female-head of household demographic are living below the ALICE threshold in Morris County.

The committee also invited Rebecca Sherrod-Capozzi, Associate Director, Child & Family Resources, Inc. to speak at the April 21, 2021 meeting. The committee learned that during the pandemic 63% of the 27 million women in the workforce had difficulty securing child care. It is speculated that 500,000 child care slots may have been lost due to permanent closures of child care centers thereby reducing the supply.

Plan

The committee approved the theme of Housing as Healthcare as a focus for the next three years. Committee members read articles and discussed the importance of stable and affordable housing as a foundation for other important issues such as health, child care, and employment.

Seed of Change

The committee received nominations for the Seeds of Change Award from individuals throughout the county. 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 recipient of the Seeds of Change Award will be recognized at the Board of County Commissioners meeting on March 9, 2022.

Moving Forward

2021 was a reorganizing and refocusing year during the pandemic. The committee took time to learn about the needs of women in Morris County which helped narrow the future focus of the committee on the theme of Housing as Healthcare. The committee is also focused on building membership and increasing visibility. In 2022, the committee will plan to hold monthly meetings except in August and December. The meetings will continue to be held virtually with the hope that one or two meetings will be in person.