

### *We Continue to Grow*

Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice was founded by four women in the Spring of 2005. Three years later, we have a total of 185 dues-paying members and another 246 friends on our e-mail subscriber list. The group was granted status as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization by the Internal Revenue Service in August, 2007. Our request for state tax exemption was denied by the Missouri Department of Revenue; the denial is being appealed.

As we have grown in numbers, we have also expanded our efforts on behalf of social justice causes in our community. Our mission statement: "to identify, research and discuss social justice issues; to mobilize, energize and inspire our members and others, and to work as individuals and in community for social justice," continues to guide us as we look for ways to make a better world. Much of our work is carried out through small focus groups.

### *Our Focus Groups Are Working*

*The Environment Focus Group* cooperates and joins with other organizations that seek to guard and preserve the Earth for our own and future generations. In the past year this group has:

- Secured a grant from AmerenUE for 600 compact fluorescent light bulbs and arranged for their distribution to low-income households in the Hyde Park neighborhood by students in the North St. Louis YouthBuild program.
- Cosponsored, with the Sierra Club and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, a "Climate Action Summit" at the St. Louis Ethical Society for more than 150 participants.
- Joined with "Think Outside The Bottle," a national campaign to challenge corporate control of water.
- Participated in the Earth Day 2008 festival at Forest Park, emphasizing the importance of reusable bags and water bottles.
- Met with executives from St. Louis area groceries and offered suggestions to promote the use of reusable shopping bags.

- Toured a landfill and learned how methane gas can be captured and used for energy.
- Learned about and supported the Children's Eternal Rainforest.
- Traveled to Jefferson City to participate in Conservation Lobby Day.

And in the past year the group has produced some new educational pamphlets: "Tap Water vs Bottled Water: What Will You Drink?," which compares the cost, safety and environmental impact of tap versus bottled water; "Global Warming, Local Solutions," which outlines some of the easiest ways for communities to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions; and "Tell your Retailers to Wake Up! Those Bags Aren't Free," outlining ways consumers can ask their local retailers to minimize the use of single-use plastic bags and promote use of reusable ones.

*The Health Care Focus Group.* The group's 20 members believe that quality, affordable health care should be available to all. Recognizing the enormous gap between what should be and what is, members work on many fronts and with many organizations to improve the accessibility and quality of care for all Missourians. During the past year, members have:

- Produced and distributed thousands of postcards highlighting the crisis in our state's health care system to those leaving Michael Moore's film, "Sicko."
- Spoken out in favor of restoring health care coverage to 54,000 Missourians through the "Insure Missouri" program.
- Joined Missouri Health Care for All (MHCFA), a coalition of community and faith-based organizations working together toward a health care system that will meet the needs of all state residents.
- Created a training program for MHCFA through which volunteers, including several members of the group, will be trained to make presentations about the coalition.
- Partnered with Grass Roots Organizing (GRO) to collect signatures for the "Missouri Healthcare Restoration Act," an initiative petition members hope to get on the November ballot.
- Raised their voices against President Bush's veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Because health care is such a complicated issue, members of this focus group are constantly looking for opportunities to learn. They invite experts to meet with them, attend lectures and conferences, read and study, and share what they learn with each other.

*The Media Watchdogs*, our newest focus group, was organized in November, 2007, after several members expressed their concerns about increasing corporate control of the media and the difficulty in obtaining comprehensive and objective information about local, regional and national issues. Members of this group have:

- Issued alerts and calls to action on proposed FCC rules governing media ownership and on proposals regulating the cable industry.
- Provided information on web sites of interest to members who need more information about Presidential candidates and issues in the 2008 election.
- Planned a meeting, open to all members, to discuss the implications of the book, “Don’t Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate.”

*The Diversity Initiative* was launched in 2007 by Women’s Voices in an effort to expose our members to more diverse populations and to make Women’s Voices better known and more easily accessible throughout the greater St. Louis community. Leaders of this initiative have:

- Facilitated baby-sitting services for our general meetings, so that women with young children are more able to participate.
- Organized a tour of Paraquad for members to learn about that organization’s advocacy for the disabled.
- Planned an evening for members at the Black Rep Theater, which will double as our year-end party and a membership drive.

### *Other Women’s Voices Activities*

- Marched, for the third year, in the annual Pride Parade.
- Participated in the “Walk As One” event sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice.
- Cosponsored, again, the “First Freedom Breakfast” for legislators in Jefferson City.
- Cosponsored, again, the Freedom of Choice Council’s January party marking the 35th anniversary of Roe v Wade.
- Cleaned and sorted books, videos and toys for the Child Day Care Association.
- Seven members traveled to Des Moines, IA, for the Heartland Presidential Forum.
- Three traveled to Jefferson City to advocate for a moratorium on the death penalty.
- Five participated in a field trip to the North St. Louis YouthBuild program in Hyde Park.

### *We Continue to Learn*

Our primary objective as members of Women’s Voices is to learn about social justice issues, so that we can engage our members and our community in intelligent and bold action. We appreciate the following individuals who spoke to us this year:

**William Freivogel**, director, School of Journalism, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale

**Dr. Terry Jones**, professor of political science and public policy administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis

**State Senator Jeff Smith**, Missouri 4th District, adjunct professor of political science at Washington University, co-founder of the Confluence Academies (urban public charter schools)

**The Rev. Martha Brunell**, pastor of Friedens United Church of Christ

**Dr. Gultan Ilhan**, professor of global studies at Meramec Community College

**Ambassador Marshall McCallie**, retired, U.S. Ambassador to Namibia, 23 years of service with the U.S. Foreign Service.

**Tiffany Baldwin**, immigration attorney with Greensfelder, Hemker and Gale, and

**Joan Saurez**, Immigrant Rights Task Force, Jobs With Justice

### ***Members of Missourians for Honest Elections***

All of these speakers and programs helped to educate and inspire us. We are grateful.

## *Leadership of Women’s Voices Raised for Social Justice, 2007-08*

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Diversity Initiative: Judy Martin Finch, Shelly Lemons