Summer 2012 • Free
Celebrating the aspirations and accomplishments of women

Published by YWCA Northern Rhode Island
Volume 8, Number 2 • www.sheshines.org
Celebrating women holding office
May - June, Girls Just Wanna Paint: Exhibit at Duxbury Free Library, 77 Alden Street in Duxbury, MA. A ‘Meet the Artists’ Opening on May 19th, from 2 to 4pm. See work in acrylics by Kelley MacDonald, cover artist for the summer edition of She Shines. www.duxburyfreelibrary.org

May 3, Speed Networking: Join Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce for breakfast and networking from 8 to 9:30am. Quick, focused opportunities to meet those who can propel your career and business. Cost: $5 for members, $15 for non-members. www.nrichamber.com

May 5 - 27, Imagination Playground: At Providence Children’s Museum, 100 South Street in Providence. Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

May 5, The Big Night Out Fiesta: Join Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State at Bullocks Point, RI State House. Walk to End Domestic Violence: from 10am to 5pm. Inspires children to invent their own ways to play, shape environment, make their own rules, and work together to create imaginative structures. Admission: Free for members. $8.50 for non-members. www.childrensmuseum.org

June 2, Rhode Island Mission of Mercy / Free Dental Care: At Community College of Rhode Island Flanagan Campus, 1762 Louisaquisset Pike in Lincoln (RIPTA bus service available from Kennedy Plaza, Providence). Doors open at 6am. Patients seen on first-come, first-served basis. For adults and children who are uninsured, underinsured or otherwise unable to visit a dental office and do not have a medically compromising condition that prohibits receiving care. Children under age 18 must be accompanied by parent or guardian. Cleanings, fillings, extractions, limited treatment partial dentures and some root canal therapy will be offered. All work is provided for free by dental professionals and community volunteers. Photo identification, social security number or other personal identification or documentation is not required. Interpreters available to assist patients. Please do not wait for the Rhode Island Mission of Mercy to seek care for severe dental pain, as this could signal a serious condition. Visit www.rimom.org for a list of low cost dental clinics and other Rhode Island dental information.


June 16, Opening Day Garden of Wings Butterfly Pavilion: At The Farmer’s Daughter, 716 Mooresfield Road in Wakefield. Monday through Sunday from 10am to 4pm. Immerse yourself amidst hundreds of brilliant butterflies as you stroll through a landscaped pavilion brimming with flowering plants. Discover the beauty of Rhode Island’s indigenous butterflies and moths. Admission: $3 for children (3-12), $5 for adults. www.thefarmersdaughterrti.com

June 20, Rhode Island Cancer Summit: The Changing Faces of Cancer Survivorship from 7:30am to 3pm at Crowe Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue in Warwick. For health-care professionals, community members, cancer survivors and caregivers. Free and open to the public. CEUs available. Contact 401-222-7899 for details.

June 24 - 29, Youth Leadership Institute for Teens: Youth ages 14-18 explore the histories of some of the most important issues in human relations: sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, interfaith respect, cultural appreciation, privilege, prejudice and discrimination. They work together to create solutions for our future. At Camp Canonicus in Exeter. Registration: $500 for the week.

July 4, Parade Picnic at Linden Place: 1810 Federal mansion in the heart of Bristol. Reserved bleacher-style seating, tables and chairs under the shade of Linden trees, continental breakfast, picnic lunch and restrooms. Watch the annual parade in patriotic style and support the restoration of this landmark. Tickets: $70 adults, $55 children (includes breakfast and lunch). Linden Place members receive $10 discount on tickets. www.lindenplace.org

July 9 - 12, Girls Summer Camp at All That Matters: From 1 to 4pm each day with celebrated yoga-for-teens teacher Nancy Escher. Yoga is a powerful, natural and effective way for girls to thrive in their physical bodies and cultivate their body-mind-spirit connection. Girls ages 9-13 will enjoy four afternoons of exploration, learning, movement and fun. Registration: $125. www.altthatsmatters.com

Events are listed in the calendar as space allows. Submissions may be e-mailed to info@sheshines.org, faxed to 401-769-7454, or mailed to She Shines, c/o YWCA Northern Rhode Island, 514 Blackstone Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895.

18th Annual YWCA Golf Tournament

Sunday, July 15, 2012
1pm Shotgun
at Foster Country Club

Support YWCA Northern Rhode Island as a player, sponsor or raffle prize donor.

The funds support YWCA breast health awareness and outreach programs.

For more information, visit www.ywcanri.org.
To participate, call Holly Courtemanche or Debbie Fay at 401-769-7450.

“Women make up less than 10 percent of world leaders . . . Women’s participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace in all contexts - during peace, through conflict and post-conflict, and during political transitions.”
- UN Women / United Nations

Women and Politics in Rhode Island

Federal Office:
U.S. Representatives Claudine Schneider (1980-1990)
State Office:
General Treasurer Gina M. Raimondo (2011-present)
Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts (2007-present)
Secretary of State Barbara Leonard (1993-1995)
Secretary of State Kathleen S. Connell (1987-1992)
Attorney General Arlene Violet (1985-1987)
Secretary of State Susan L. Farmer (1983-1986)
Secretary of State Kathleen S. Connell (1987-1992)
Secretary of State Barbara Leonard (1993-1995)
Secretary of State Kathleen S. Connell (1987-1992)
Attorney General Arlene Violet (1985-1987)
Secretary of State Susan L. Farmer (1983-1986)

For more information, visit Center for American Women in Politics: www.cawp.rutgers.edu
“Peaceful Garden, this ‘Painting Safari’ was held at Linden Place in Bristol. Of all the places and things I could paint, I was drawn to the small garden area with the beautiful green hydrangeas and pink lilies, not to mention the fabulous red, white and blue buntings.” Kelley MacDonald finds that women from her workshops, often share how painting gives them something positive and hopeful to look forward to. Photos courtesy of MacDonald.

getting where you want to be

“Women need to stand up and protect our rights – and support and coach other women . . . in my own way, through my art, I pour out my heart and soul.”

- Kelley MacDonald

Kelley MacDonald paints in a contemporary realist style, focusing on small daily paintings and large landscapes and skyscapes. The process of “almost” daily paintings hones her skill of composition and proportions. She acknowledges that as an artist, one needs to paint acres to get to where you want to be. She goes on “safaris” to paint, teach and sell her art.

Her own journey towards art was stumbled upon, considering that she never pursued art or even stepped into an art museum until her college days. Pivotal was an art history class while attending Wheaton College. Later she discovered that she didn’t just want to study the history, she wanted to interpret in paint. On the first of the month we post them.

She even organized a “Girls Just Wanna Paint” Challenge Group, perhaps in a way replicating her all girls educational environment from elementary to high school.

“That experience gave me confidence. I get upset when I see girls/women step back. Our opinions matter.”

“We started a blog and every month have a topic that we interpret in paint. On the first of the month we post them. That week we get together to see the work in person, have a glass of wine and a pot luck dinner. We share information on shops, often share how painting gives them something positive and hopeful to look forward to. “

Each year, she takes 2-3 week long painting trips to various places with women of all ages, and from all kinds of backgrounds. “The camaraderie is unbelievable. We critique and encourage each other.”

MacDonald lives in Tiverton with an inspirational view.

She Shines is a trademark of YWCA Northern Rhode Island. The circulation for this summer edition is 8,750.

How to:

Contribute She Shines welcomes letters to the editor, articles, poetry, stories, graphics, photos and calendar events. Contact us if you have an inspiring story to tell or have a suggestion of someone to be featured. Only original contributions will be considered and may be edited due to space limitations. Include contact information: name, e-mail, address, and phone number. Images provided electronically must be high-resolution.

Submit Cover Art The cover is reserved as a gallery of art in keeping with the She Shines theme. For consideration, send in a photo by e-mail attachment or mail. This is a wonderful opportunity for local artists to show their work. A biography is published in conjunction with the “Artist Canvas” section of She Shines.

Advertise Visit sheshines.org to view the advertising media kit. She Shines reserves the right to refuse to sell space for any advertisement if the staff deems it inappropriate for the publication.

Receive the Magazine She Shines is a free publication mailed to members and friends of YWCA Northern Rhode Island. To be added to the mailing list, send in the subscription form available online at sheshines.org. The magazine is also available at YWCA Northern Rhode Island and at various special events.

Contents

Calendar

Women and politics in Rhode Island

Artist Canvas

Kelley MacDonald, Peaceful Garden empowerment through art

From the Chief Executive Officer

Deborah L. Perry, we need more female representation

Talking Points

Political participation

HerStory

Women Holding Office Celebration

HerStory

Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Awards

4th Annual Celebration

YWCA Northern Rhode Island recognition and thank you

Shining With

Maryellen Butke, RI-CAN education reform advocate

Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Honorees

Gina M. Raimondo, Leadership General Treasurer

Nancy Stevens, Leadership former East Providence School Committee Member

Donna M. Nesselbush, Justice Bristol Town Administrator

Claudine Schneider, Freedom former U.S. Representative

Myrth York, Dignity former State Senator

Rising Political Stars

Sabina Matos Providence City Councilwoman

Teresa Tanzi State Representative

Insert

YWCA Northern Rhode Island spring mini session brochure
moving forward
we need more women in politics and government

We need more women to run for elected positions because that is the only way we can increase the number of women holding public office. Historically in Rhode Island, and across the United States, women have been underrepresented in positions of elected office. As women, we need to change that.

YWCA Northern Rhode Island is committed to supporting women who hold office, women planning to run for office or becoming involved in campaigns, and encouraging women to become more included in the electoral process. More and more we see women’s rights being challenged. To ensure we are moving forward and not backward, we need women to have a voice in politics.

To date, former U.S. Representative Claudine Schneider is the only woman to ever represent Rhode Island in the United States Congress. She is a trailblazer and created a path that we hope many other Rhode Island women will follow in the future.

In this edition of She Shines, YWCA is recognizing eight women who either hold or have held public office in Rhode Island. Read about why they feel we need more women holding office at all levels of government and learn about their experiences as elected officials.

You’ll also read about Maryellen Butke, an advocate for education reform, who learned the importance of making your voice heard as a parent trying to navigate the public education system. Now, she is working to ensure all Rhode Island children have access to a high-quality public education. Butke is an example of how an individual you can work with decision-makers and elected officials to create positive change in your community.

These are just a few of the amazing female advocates making a difference in our state. In many ways, they have turned personal into purposeful. Now they inspire us to get involved in the political process, too.

Very truly yours,

Deborah

Deborah L. Perry
president / chief executive officer, YWCA Northern Rhode Island
publisher, She Shines magazine
why women should vote

As an organization that has been dedicated to improving the lives of all women in our nation for more than a century, YWCA is proud of the role we have played in voter education efforts. This election season is critical to the well-being of women, girls and people of color. During this election season, our vote counts now more than ever.

Voting is the most important tool that women and people of color have to help shape the policies that affect their lives and those of their loved ones. Voters cast ballots for elected officials who make major decisions that impact the lives of women, girls and people of color.

Every election, voters have a choice to elect candidates to positions of power who make critical decisions about state, local and federal budgets, education, and health care. These candidates are involved in key decisions that shape the future of our families, communities and our nation.

Women are a powerful voting bloc in the United States. Women typically have higher voting participation rates than men. The United States Census reports that in the 2008 Presidential Election, women had a higher voting rate (66 percent) compared to males (62 percent).

Young women, in particular, play a critical role in the outcome of elections. According to a Rock the Vote report, there are nearly 22 million women between the ages of 18 and 29 eligible to vote in the U.S. Young women vote at higher rates than their male peers. In fact, in 2004 young women led the overall young voter turnout increase, jumping 10 percentage points over 2000 levels.

Women influence the direction of critical policies such as childcare, healthcare, personal safety and economic security, budget and tax issues, education and a healthy environment. Senior women especially, are concerned about campaign issues related to retirement security specifically Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.

When women vote, it drastically shapes the outcome of any given election. Women largely determine the issues debated on the campaign trail and as a large voting bloc, they significantly influence which candidate wins.

YWCA USA advocacy priority issues

- Increasing Women's Income, protecting women's economic and financial security
- Welfare Reform, ending poverty and supporting economic security
- Child Care & Early Education, ensuring opportunities for a new generation
- Racial Justice, ending discrimination and promoting equality
- Hate Crimes, strengthening hate crime laws
- Affirmative Action, promoting equality
- Violence Against Women, preventing and ending violence against women
- Health Care, supporting health care reform
- Global Issues, supporting human rights
- Housing, creating affordable housing
“At the annual Women Holding Office Celebration, YWCA honors female political leaders from the past, present and future. Without women in politics and government, someone else will always be speaking for us, if anyone speaks up at all. Thank you for your voice, courage, vision and leadership.”

- Deborah L. Perry
president / chief executive officer YWCA Northern Rhode Island

3rd Annual Women Holding Office Celebration
Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Awards 2011:
Leadership - Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts
Peace - State Senator Rhoda Perry
Justice - former Attorney General Arlene Violet
Freedom - former State Senator Lila Sapinsley
Dignity - State Representative Anastasia Williams

Rising Political Stars 2011:
State Representative Grace Diaz
State Representative Deborah Ruggiero
Woonsocket School Committee Member Vimala Phongsavanh

2nd Women Holding Office Celebration
Keynote Speaker: Melissa Unemori Hampe
senior vice president at McAllister & Quinn, LLC
experienced government affairs liaison

Inaugural Women Holding Office Celebration
Keynote Speaker: Victoria A. Budson
founding executive director of the Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government
Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Awards
herstory

Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill (1880-1975) – youngest of 13 children of a former Woonsocket city councilman – became Rhode Island’s first female legislator in 1922. Other state and national titles would follow including Deputy Senate Floor Leader and Democratic National Committee woman.

O’Neill was also appointed as President Franklin Roosevelt’s legislative liaison to the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics. She held this position through the Great Depression and most of World War II. O’Neill resigned in 1943 to return home, where she held an executive position with the Rhode Island Department of Labor until her 1954 retirement.

At the 4th annual Women Holding Office Celebration on April 30, 2012, six women were honored as the second recipients of the Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Award – Bristol Town Administrator Diane C. Mederos, State Senator Donna M. Nesselbush, General Treasurer Gina M. Raimondo, former U.S. Representative Claudine Schneider, former East Providence School Committee Member Nancy Stevens, and former State Senator Myrth York.

Women Holding Office articles begin on page 11.

event underwriters and participants

smart women make smart financial decisions

Joanne M. Daly
Vice President/Financial Advisor
UBS Financial Services Inc.

Joanne is passionate about helping smart, affluent women and their families gain greater control of their financial life. Many of Joanne’s clients are women who have become responsible for their financial future after experiencing divorce, death of a spouse, career transition or inheritance of significant wealth. Joanne works in partnership with her clients to help them become financially empowered and secure in their financial future. She helps her clients take control of their financial life through personal financial coaching sessions, educational workshops and developing their personal financial lifestyle plan. Each plan incorporates a personalized investment strategy and Joanne’s proactive wealth management process. Joanne’s financial planning knowledge and expertise with her 20 years of combined CPA and wealth planning experience gives her the exceptional ability to offer a boutique of wealth management services and resources exclusively to her clients. Joanne is chair of the Financial Planning and Literacy Committee of the RI Society of CPAs. She is a past recipient of the YWCA Women of Achievement Award for helping women become financially empowered and is a frequent guest speaker at community and corporate events. Contact Joanne for a complimentary consultation, about speaking at an event or to attend a seminar.

One Citizens Plaza, Suite 900
Providence, RI 02903
phone: 401-455-6731/800-333-6303 fax: 855-870-7984
email: joanne.daly@ubs.com
web: www.ubs.com/fa/Joannedaly
We are proud to celebrate Women Holding Office

Congratulations to the 2012 Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill Award Recipients and Rising Political Stars

Opportunities Unlimited
For People With Differing Abilities, Inc.
401 942 9044
www.oppunlimited.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE ISABELLE AHEARN O’NEILL AWARD
General Treasurer Gina M. Raimondo
State Senator Donna M. Nesselbush
Bristol Town Administrator Diane C. Mederos
former U.S. Representative Claudine Schneider
former State Senator Myrth York
former East Providence School Committee Member Nancy Stevens

CONGRATULATIONS TO RISING POLITICAL STARS
State Representative Teresa Tanzi
Providence City Councilwoman Sabina Matos

You are well deserving of these honors for your many contributions to the State of Rhode Island

Paid for by the Friends of Gordon D. Fox

LISTEN TO THE STORIES OF WOMEN WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Deb Ruggiero
Host/creator of AMAZING WOMEN
• 2011, 2008 Associated Press Award for BEST Public Affairs Show
• 2007, 2005 Metcalf Award for Broadcast Diversity

Sunday Mornings
8:30am on 630 WPRO AM and 99.7 FM
6:30am on 92 PRO FM
6:00am on LITE ROCK 105

Online Anytime
www.amazingwomenri.com

Hear the stories of women who make a difference in education, healthcare, business, politics, and the arts.
Rhode Island does not have a procedure for certification or recognition of specialization by lawyers.

Susan Gershkoff
Counsellor at Law
401-333-3550

Lincoln Center
132 Old River Road, Suite 205
Lincoln, RI 02865
susan@susangershkoffesq.com

Licensed in Rhode Island and Massachusetts

✓ Last Wills and Testaments
✓ Revocable Living Trusts
✓ Testamentary Trusts for Minors
✓ Powers of Attorney for Finances and Health Care
✓ Estate Tax Minimization Planning Techniques

www.susangershkoffesq.com
TICS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

TEEN GYMNASTICS
13 to 18 years old
Sat. 9-10:15am $44/5wks
Fri. 4:30-5:30pm $35/5wks

A great all around introductory gymnastics program. Students have the opportunity to advance to higher levels.

GYMNASICS ACADEMY

BEGINNER GYMNASTICS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS
A great all around introductory gymnastics program. Preschoolers have the opportunity to advance to higher levels.
Fri. 3:30-4:30pm $35/5wks
Sat. 10:30-11:30am $35/5wks

BEGINNER/INTERMEDIATE GYMNASTICS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS
A great all around introductory gymnastics program. Students have the opportunity to advance to higher levels.
Thurs. 3:30-4:30pm $35/5wks

4 to 7 years old

ADVANCED PEW VEY GYMNASTICS-LEVEL I & II
Thurs. 3:30-4:30pm $35/5wks

5 to 12 years old

ADVANCED GYMNASTICS
Tues. 3:45-5pm $44/5wks

PRE TEAM
Sat. 11:30am-1:30pm

5 to 12 years old

CONTINUING GYMNASTICS
All classes listed below require permission from the instructor for participation. Call Jennie Graham or Debbie Fay at 769-7450.
YWCA Northern Rhode Island Gymnastics Academy Competitive Coaches are USA Gymnastics Certified.

4 to 7 years old

ADVANCED GYMNASTICS
Tues. 3:45-5pm $44/5wks

5 to 12 years old

ADVANCED GYMNASTICS
Tues. 3:45-5pm $44/5wks

PRE TEAM
Sat. 11:30am-1:30pm

SUMMER CAMPS

Register today at 514 Blackstone Street, Woonsocket | 401-769-7450. Registration and deposit required for summer camps. $5/week members. $10/week nonmembers. Safety is our first priority. Our second priority is fun.

DOODLE BUGS
For children 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 years of age (may wear pull-ups). From 9am-1pm, Monday through Friday (2 day minimum). Daily cost: $20/day. Weekly cost: $100/week. In order to participate, you must register your child in advance, 769-7450. Early Birds and/or after camp options available. Families needing additional hours, speak with receptionist regarding rates.

Begins June 11. Enjoy books, games, activities, water play, playground, and more with weekly themes . . .

June 11-15: Dive into Summer
June 18-22: Jump, Jump, Jump
June 25-29: Make a Noise
July 2-6: Parade for All
July 9-13: Down on the Farm
July 16-20: Little Ducks and Friends
July 23-27: In the Jungle
July 30-Aug 3: Polar Pals
Aug 6-10: The Big Wide Ocean
Aug 13-17: It’s “Shore” Fun
Aug 20-24: Summer Spectacular

August 20-24: Summer Spectacular
August 13-17: Zoo Animals Basketball
August 6-10: Clifford Kickball

KIDS SPORTS CLUB
For children 4 to 6 years of age. From 9am-1pm. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Weekly cost: $80/week. In order to participate, you must register your child in advance, 769-7450. Early Birds and/or after camp options available. Families needing additional hours, speak with receptionist regarding rates.

Begins June 18. Enjoy sports, cooking, crafts, water play, playground, and more with weekly themes . . .

June 18-22: T-Rex T-Ball
June 25-29: Bugs, Bugs, Sports and Bugs
July 2-6: Transportation Run
July 9-13: Under the Sea Floor Hockey
July 16-20: Chef Combo’s Fantastic Fitness Fun
July 23-27: Bob the Builder Basketball
July 30-Aug 3: Scooby-Doo Soccer

ADVENTURE
Accredited by the American Camp Association.
For children 6 to 12 years of age with groups divided by age. Junior Leadership option available for children 13 and over. From 6:30am-6pm, $29/day. Half days/$15 for 4 hours. No extra charges for trips or other activities. Accept DHS subsidy. Free snack provided in the afternoon. In order to participate, you must register your child in advance, 769-7450. Call for details.

Begins June 14. Enjoy sports, arts/crafts, cooking, dramatic play, imagination/creativity, games, guest presenters/worksshops, field trips and more with weekly themes . . .

June 18-22: Getting to Know You
June 25-29: Health & Safety
July 2-6: Our World
July 9-13: Animal Week including Dinosaurs
July 16-20: Our Nation
July 23-27: Expanded Horizons
July 30-Aug 3: Ancient Mythologies
Aug 6-10: Arts and Dramatic Play
Aug 13-17: Mysteries of the Deep
Aug 20-24: End of Summer Surprise Week
PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION

Enroll today for the preschool year 2012-2013: We know the first six years of a child's life are the most important to his/her physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. We have a history and reputation of providing quality and meaningful learning experiences. Children must be 3 years old prior to September 1, 2012 and toilet trained to be eligible to attend.

Open House Dates: Parents and children are welcome to explore the classroom, meet teachers and receive a tour of the facility.

Monday, May 7 from 4:30-6:30pm
Wednesday, May 9 from 9:30-11am
Wednesday, May 16 from 4:30-6:30pm
Thursday, May 31 from 9:30-11am

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER

Open for child care at 6:30am. For details on child care, pre-preschool or preschool call Mary Anne Deslauriers, Director of Early Childhood Education, at 769-7450.

YWCA is a provider agency of the NACCRA Military Fee Assistance Program. *

CHILD CARE

INFANT/TODDLER
Our philosophy is to provide a developmentally appropriate program for children 8 weeks (6 weeks with pediatrician consent) to 3 years that focuses on a child's individual needs. We provide a safe and nurturing program, parents can rely upon throughout the year. The Early Childhood Learning Center encourages healthy social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. *

PRE-PRESCHOOL

Pre-preschool for children 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 years of age. With a consistent daily schedule modeled after our existing preschool program, children will be offered opportunities for socialization, creativity, and toilet training. Daily schedule includes circle time, songs, storytime, snack, play, and creative projects.

9am-noon. Two, three, or five day options available. Early Birds and Lunch Bunch available. Child care option also available for the afternoon. *

PRESCHOOL

PRESCHOOL
The YWCA preschool is a developmental program for children age 3 to 5. Our philosophy is reflected in a "hands on" approach to learning through interactive experiences with peers, the environment, and adults. Our most important function at the YWCA preschool is to ensure that each child's first school experience is safe, joyful, and enriching. Our curriculum and assessment align with the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards. Two, three, and five-day programs with morning, afternoon or full day options available. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Education and by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. *

STEPPING STONES
Unique transitional program for children whose parents are postponing Kindergarten entrance. YWCA Stepping Stones is a developmentally appropriate setting where children participate in a program designed to enhance growth and development socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Our curriculum and assessment align with the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards. Small class size (maximum 15) allows for much individual attention and teacher/peer involvement. Program meets Mon.-Fri., 7-11am. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. *

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAMS:
YWCA offers programs to help accommodate a parent or guardian's schedule. $6/hour

EARLY BIRDS
Children enjoy morning activities in a classroom environment from 6:30-9am, then are escorted to respective classrooms.

LUNCH BUNCH
Children eat lunch in a social environment then are offered activities and gym/playground from noon-1pm. Lunches brought from home.

AFTER PRESCHOOL CARE
Children are engaged in age-appropriate activities including gross motor play in playground from 4-6pm.

YOUTH ENRICHMENT

Now open for youth enrichment at 6:30am. For program details call Nathan Smith, Youth Enrichment Program Coordinator, 769-7450.

APPLE YOUTH ENRICHMENT
For students attending any Woonsocket elementary school (public or Catholic) and the Woonsocket Middle School. Mon.-Fri., 2-6:30pm (3 day minimum). Before school option available beginning at 6:30am (not available for Woonsocket Middle School). Children are bussed to/from YWCA and their schools, enjoy a free afternoon snack, participate in fun activities, offered homework help, and special events. Builds on the strengths and values of youth by providing them with a supportive, safe, and culturally diverse environment in which they can develop positive qualities for school success and a productive future. Activities geared towards fostering individual creativity and imagination and the ability to implement the child's own original ideas. Library available. *

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES
WE'RE OPEN
We are here for you when school is closed. YWCA provides an all day youth enrichment program for children age 6-15 when school is cancelled due to inclement weather and during school vacation. In order to participate, you must register your child in advance, 769-7450.

BEFORE KINDERGARTEN CARE & AFTER KINDERGARTEN CARE
Transportation provided. Flexible hours. Qualified, friendly staff will provide enrichment activities for your child in safe indoor and outdoor environments. Morning: gross motor play in gymnasium, creative play, stories, music, movement, free choice play, table games, and time to eat (breakfast brought from home). Afternoon: sports classes, gymnastics, homework time and youth enrichment activities. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families.

BEFORE SCHOOL AGE CARE & AFTER SCHOOL AGE CARE
Transportation provided. Our philosophy is to provide a developmentally appropriate program for children in Kindergarten to age 15. The program focuses on a youth's individual needs. We provide a safe, nurturing and enriching program, which parents can rely upon throughout the year, especially after school, school vacations and during the summer. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. Program encourages healthy social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

APPLE Youth Enrichment Curriculum includes:
Academics
Physical Education/Recreation
Prevention
Leadership
Empowerment.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

For details, call Deb Smith, RN and Parenting in Progress Site Coordinator, at 769-7450.

PARENTING

16 to 21 years old

PARENTING IN PROGRESS®
Parenting In Progress (PIP) is an alternative education, life skills, and job training program housed at YWCA. Collaborative partners for this YWCA program include: Woonsocket Education Department, Project RIRAL, BYCAP, Connecting for Children and Families, and area businesses. Eligible applicants must live in Woonsocket and be pregnant or parenting young women under 21 years old. Mon.-Fri., 9am-1pm.

ART STUDIO

ART CLASSES

New and returning students welcome. Every session, new artists and projects are covered.

5 to 10 years old

ART FOR CHILDREN
Introduces young students to basic color theory via fun, hands on, interactive lessons and creativity games. We'll explore a variety of materials and learn about a famous artist or two. Art material fee included in session fee.
Missie St. Sauveur
Fri. 5-6:30pm: $53/5wks

11 and 12 years old

ART FOR TWEENS
Call for appropriate art class placement, 769-7450. We will gladly try to accommodate.

13+ years old

ART FOR TEENS
Appropriate for a range of experience levels. Combines theory and hand-on projects with a relaxed and social atmosphere. Each class is divided into two sections. In the first, a lesson plan that incorporates art theory, history, new materials and/or technique. Second half, student work on guided projects of their own choice. Art material fee included in session fee.
Missie St. Sauveur
Mon. 5/15-6:45pm: $42/4wks

Adults and Teens

FEARLESS ART FOR ADULT BEGINNERS
Have you always wished to try painting, sketching or sculpting? In this class, you get an introduction to art-making, and a little art history, in a relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere. Come have fun. You may be surprised by what you create. Art material fee included in session fee. Note: Teens welcome if attending with adult.
Missie St. Sauveur
Mon. 7-8:30pm: $42/4wks

SHE SHINES™

Metcalf award Winner for Diversity in the Media
www.sheshines.org
Published by YWCA Northern Rhode Island, She Shines is a magazine that celebrates the aspirations and accomplishments of women.

Share it. Trust it. Smile.
To receive a FREE subscription or reserve advertising space, contact Lisa Piscatelli at 769-7450.
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Gym activities are under the direction of Debbie Fay.

GYM ACTIVITIES

Walking to 3 years old

JUMPING BEANS

Gymnasium play with parent. Tues. 9-10am $35/5wks
Thurs. 10-11am $35/5wks

JUMPING BEANS GETS MESSY

One hour of gymnasium play with parent then 1/2 hour of messy activity - crafts or cooking.
Fri. 9-10:30am $35/5wks

SOCIALIZATION ACTIVITIES

2 1/2 to 3 1/2 years old

Independent classes for your child (do not have to be toilet trained).

SMALL WORLD I and II:

Children offered opportunities for socialization, creativity and toilet training. Includes storytime, songs, crafts, playtime and snack.

EXERCISE FACILITY

YWCA Membership plus $50 league fee. All volleyball leagues are under the direction of Debbie Fay. Coaches prepared to play on organizational nights. Dates subject to change due to weather or other uncontrollable circumstances. To verify times/dates, call Debbie Fay at 769-7450.

INTERMEDIATE MIXED CO-ED

Sunday: Intermediate. Players bring in their own teams. If you don’t have a team, we will try and help you find one. Organization night is Sunday, November 4 from 6-8pm. League starts on Sunday, November 11. $116/20wks & playoffs/plus membership fee.

BELLY DANCING I

Learn exciting moves of ancient Middle Eastern art form: snake arms, figure eights, hip circles, traveling steps and shimmy. Class is for first time students or those wanting to continue with basics before moving on to more advanced skills. No previous dance experience required. Fun, supportive environment.
Aimee Renaud
Tues., 6:30-7:30pm $35/5wks

BELLY DANCING II

Continue to learn and evolve in the timeless beauty of the belly dance. Perfect the basics, along with learning new steps, undulations, turns and choreographies. For returning students who are ready for some more advanced moves. Introduction to veil and music theory will be covered as the session progresses. Stay fit while feeling like a goddess!
Aimee Renaud
Tues., 7:30-8:30pm $35/5wks

WOMEN’S CLUBS

APRES-MIDI

The Apres-Midi Club provides opportunities for women to share activities, information, and gain new friendships. Activities include guest speakers, outings, restaurant tours, luncheons and demonstrations. Membership is open to women 30 years of age and over.
Meetings held on alternate Thursdays at 1:30pm from September through June.
Call YWCA for details, 769-7450.

WALKING CLUB

If interested in participating in a Walking Club, call Joyce Dolbec at the YWCA Health Office, 769-7450.

HEALTH

BREAST CANCER INFORMATION

The Love/Avon Army of Women provides women the life-changing opportunity to partner with the scientists who are conducting the research that will move us beyond a cure and teach us how to end breast cancer once and for all. Sign up at www.armyofwomen.org.

CHRONIC DISEASE SELF-MANAGEMENT

Living Well Rhode Island. If you have asthma, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, arthritis or another chronic disease, this FREE workshop is for you. You will receive a healthy life book and relaxation CD.
Topics: overview of diabetes and self-management, healthy eating, preventing or delaying complications, physical activity, dealing with difficult emotions, medication usage, communication skills, strategies for sick days, working with your health care professional, planning for the future, and more. A friend, caregiver or relative is welcome to attend with you. This workshop includes 6 consecutive classes that are held for 2 1/2 hours each. Call for the schedule and to register. For details, contact Lisa Piscatelli at 769-7450.

ENCOREplus®

ENCOREplus® is a systematic approach to women’s health promotion, in particular breast and cervical cancer education. YWCA offers community outreach, breast and cervical health education, linkage to clinical screening services and assistance in accessing and navigating diagnostic treatment services when necessary. YWCA also offers support during diagnosis and treatment.

If you are over age 40 and have no health insurance or your insurance does not cover breast and cervical screenings every year, you may qualify for FREE services. The Rhode Island Department of Health Women’s Cancer Screening Program provides a women’s health exam including clinical breast and pelvic exams, pap smear, mammogram and follow-up services. For more details call Joyce Dolbec, YWCA Health Consultant, at 769-7450. If hearing/speech impaired call 1-800-745-5555.

MINORITY HEALTH PROMOTION

YWCA Northern Rhode Island has been designated as a Minority Health Promotion Center by the Rhode Island Department of Health. It is the only organization in northern Rhode Island to receive such a designation. Our Association develops and implements health information, health education and risk reduction activities that improve the quality of life and eliminate health disparities for Woonsocket’s racial and ethnic populations.
Call the YWCA Health Office for more information, 769-7450.

SMOKERS’ QUITLINE

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
FREE cessation information, multi-session telephone counseling, and self-help materials.
Call the YWCA Health Office for more information, 769-7450.

YWCA HEALTH IN CENTRAL FALLS

YWCA Northern Rhode Island in partnership with our sister agency offers health outreach and information to members of the Central Falls community. Contact Joyce Dolbec for further information, 769-7450.
Children under 6 must be covered by a parent or guardian membership. Membership fees are not refundable or deductible as a charitable contribution. Reduced rates are available in some classes for members 65 and over. All classes and activities are open to both sexes unless otherwise indicated in the class description. A member may use the membership card at all other YWCAs in the USA.

YWCA membership, paid yearly, is required for participation in all programming except as otherwise indicated. Special non-member fees are available for some adult programs. Men and boys are welcome as associates. As a YWCA member, you have access to:

- low cost, innovative programs
- special membership events
- volunteer opportunities
- use of YWCA facilities nationwide
- membership in the oldest, largest women’s movement in the nation

ADVOCACY

National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

May exhibit

YWCA Northern Rhode Island and The Rhode Island Alliance are pleased to present a multimedia exhibit by photographer Michael Nye - Children of Children, Portraits and Stories of Teen Parents. Hosted by The TSETSE Gallery, the exhibit will run from May 8 to June 11, 2012. Viewing hours are Thursday and Friday from 12 to 6pm and Saturday from 12-3pm or by appointment.

YWCA works to eliminate racism and empower women through comprehensive programs and services which promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The Rhode Island Alliance is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing teen pregnancy and empowering pregnant and parenting teens. For more information, contact Deborah Perry at 401-769-7450 or ywcaofnri@aol.com.

Join us for Opening Night: Tuesday, May 8, 2012 from 7 to 9pm
The TSETSE Gallery: 51 Empire Street, Providence
Space is limited. RSVP required: ywcaofnri@aol.com
Suggested contribution: $5

“Parents and schools should make viewing this show mandatory for every teenager . . . These photographs are far more passionate and powerful than any words of wisdom we impart.” - Naples Daily News, Florida
We are mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. With our many roles and responsibilities, it is not surprising that the more we have to get done, the more we value teamwork. Our power is amplified and our reach is broadened when we choose to work together.

The same is true in government, especially in Rhode Island. Our state needs leaders who are willing to put aside divisive rhetoric, and who share a commitment to stepping up and doing the right thing.

Now, it is true that as women we have heard at some point that something is impossible to do. Rather than letting words of discouragement weaken our resolve, we must instead be bolstered and reaffirmed by the truth that every one of us has the power to make a difference. It is important to make sure our unique perspectives are heard as a part of every debate. The more women who decide to step forward to voice an opinion or idea while engaging others, the stronger our families, neighborhoods, schools and state will become.

Rhode Island faces many challenges and there is much work to be done to put us back on a secure path. If you see an opportunity to change something for the better or to right a wrong, have confidence in the power of your efforts, and decide to serve. There is no time to worry about whether others think you are the right woman for the job. You are, and the time to act is now. Let’s work together to accomplish great things for the State of Rhode Island and for each other.

Photo by Agapao Productions.
Why do we need more women holding public office? I think women are well versed in all areas of running and taking part in public office. It’s much like running a home. You’ve got your politics, your money worries, all kinds of different things. If you look at running a city like running a home, then you have to account for all of the same things. I think women are basically more honest than men when it comes to political arenas, there’s no old boys network, and women are more apt to think for themselves and have an objective of what they want to do and accomplish.

I believe women have been afraid to run in the past, because I’m sure they felt they wouldn’t get elected. Men have always been projected as being more capable or intelligent, whereas women held the role of homemaker and were not seen as capable of running the high finances and issues of a city, state or a country. Now we are also seeing more women coming forward and being more aggressive in foreign countries – taking the lead where they’ve been held back in the past.

We need the younger generation of women to believe they can be in leadership roles and not just be “women.” We need to look more to college graduates and groom them to believe they can do this. They have a job to do, and it’s up to the older generation to help them get there.

Photo courtesy of Stevens.
I cannot believe it has been close to thirty years since I decided to run for town clerk in Bristol. Back then only men had held the office and the idea of a woman in the position was met with some resistance. Ironically, though I had a good number of supporters, it was women that came to me during the campaign and asked me if I really thought I could do the job. It makes me think just how difficult it was for Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill in 1922, when her decision to run for office was no doubt looked upon with disapproval by many at a time when there were no women predecessors to reach out to for counsel.

Much has changed in those years, and women have proven to be not only formidable candidates but excellent political leaders. Women tend to be measured and logical in our response to problems and adversities. Women understand the notion that it is sometimes necessary to compromise to further a solution, though we have figured out that we do not have to compromise our principles in the process. And most important, women’s participation in government tends to add an aura of civility in an arena that doesn’t always lend itself to being civilized.

We must continue to encourage women to seek political office, to tell them, “Yes, you can certainly do the job.” We need them to represent all of us, our daughters and granddaughters. Much work has been done, but there is so much more to do to ensure that we have a sufficient number of female voices supporting all of us.

Photo courtesy of Mederos.
The reason we need more women in government is because we need a better world, a better country, a better state and better communities. Women are uniquely qualified to make a difference on all of these fronts. We make up more than half of all voters, yet men hold 75 percent of public office. This disparity is shocking.

Our quest to play a greater role in government must be seen as part of the larger women’s movement, from suffrage to reproductive freedom to the still well-fortified glass ceiling. At a speech conceding her presidential defeat, Hillary Clinton said: “Although we weren’t able to shatter the highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, it’s got about 18 million cracks in it. And the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time.”

We women need to stick together, to speak truth to power, and to hold the bar high for needed reform. We need to work to make everyone’s path a little easier, whether it’s the path to a promotion, to equal marriage or the path to elected office. At a time when our hard fought rights are under attack, it is important, now more than ever, to stand together, defend our progress and work toward a destiny that is light-filled, fair and just. We must work to bridge the divide between those who vote for elected officials and those who become elected officials. Each of us has responsibility: to ourselves, our families, our communities, our state, our country and indeed the very world we live in. The next generation craves women leaders, now more than ever.

Photo courtesy of Nesselbush.
We need more women in Congress . . . now. Let me count the ways!

First, we’re half the population. Yet, today, Congress has only 92 women out of 535 Senate and House seats: a pathetic 17%, which is far less than half of the 42.1% average in Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Worse, the US ranks #69 of 195 globally for women in legislatures.

Now, all that under-representation might not be so awful, if women’s issues were well represented on Capitol Hill. In my first term, I was shocked to learn that only 13% of the health research budget was spent on women’s health! It’s better today, but not 50/50. Much like the issue of equal pay: in 2012, we still only make about 75% of what men do for equal work.

Next: we need many more women in Congress to stand up for all those issues that, traditionally, we care about: e.g., education, the environment and the right to manage our own bodies – all of which are under siege. Women will either move forward . . . or backward.

How about role models for girls and young women? Isn’t it painful to have so few Congresswomen to inspire them?

And, perhaps most importantly, we need more women in Congress because Congress is hovering somewhere between “ineffectual” and “insane”. Congress’ approval ratings range between 5-10%. Research indicates that this Congress and the last one are the most polarized since Reconstruction. Frankly, this is a very dangerous state of affairs – one that I’m addressing in a soon-to-be-released book that details how Congress worked back when I was in it . . . and what we need to do to get it to work again.

Simply put, we need more women in Congress because women typically have less ego; we’re less likely to sling mud; and we’re better at collaborating.

As I said, let me count the ways.

Photo courtesy of Schneider.
Why should women run for public office? Because it’s in our self-interest!

Albert Einstein said: “The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” Solutions to the challenges we face will come only from a diversity of perspectives, different ways of looking at problems, than we have today. Women bring diverse ways of thinking, different problem solving skills along with different conceptions of the problems themselves, to the table. For example, women often have a more community-based approach to life and to its challenges. The current entrenched dichotomies in our society: right – wrong; win – lose; strong – weak, won’t change unless and until more women are part of the solution finding process.

Our politics must be rooted in the values of compassion, community and civility. The questions we need to ask are: how do we treat the poor, the stranger, the outcast, the vulnerable, the children?; do our political policies and processes help build or destroy our community life?; and is the character and quality of our public discourse and decision making based in respect and tolerance for each other? History demonstrates that women are especially well suited to moving us to a politics of values.

Women must run for public office and participate in our political process to ensure the values and issues that disproportionately impact us – poverty, health care, aging and income – will come to the forefront of our policy priorities. Our own interests as well as the interests of our society will be best served when women are full and equal members of public life and that only happens when women run, win and serve, at all levels, as elected officials.

Photo courtesy of York.
It is important that women are elected to public office because women bring a different and important perspective when dealing with issues. Often time women bring a fresh voice to the table. Furthermore, we tend to tackle issues by approaching things from a different angle. Our decision making process tends to be more focused on the well being of the community as a whole; it is almost as if the mothering instinct is always on.

At this time, for a woman to serve effectively in elected office can be challenging; many times we have to work twice as hard as our male colleagues to call attention to an issue of importance. If we had more females voices in elected office this would be different. More women involved in the political process will translate eventually into more women in leadership positions and at the decision making tables.

Regardless of the challenges, women learn to work with what we have, and yes, work harder if need be in order to find the way to ensure that our voices are heard and our points of view are respected. There are always those whom would prefer to take for granted our role; but instead, their actions really make us stronger. Many times, those actions are the catalysts that transform us into becoming more assertive in our discourse in order to defend our point of view.

As you can see, there are several issues involving women in public office. First, we definitely need more women in elected office and we need to continue to encourage other women to run for office. Secondly, we also need to ensure that once in elected office, women feel empowered and have a good understanding of their authority.

Photo courtesy of Matos.
I am probably one of the few proudly calling herself a liberal and a feminist who holds office. Before being elected, I was an activist. I looked to recruit women to run for office. I helped write the questionnaires. I helped interview the candidates. I heard the awesome promise of change. But it wasn’t enough.

We are the women on the ground, fighting the battles for better policies, working to change the hearts and minds of the people we work with and on behalf of. We try our best to educate and moderate and infiltrate. But it has not been enough.

You need to join me, take the next step, run for office. Yes, you, the one with the family, the job, the crushing coursework, the fuller than full plate. You, woman.

I was in denial too. I thought doing my part meant stuffing envelopes, going door to door and phone-banking every two years for someone else. After the primary and the general election, I went back to the normal rhythms of an overflowing life and crossed my fingers that it would work this time. But it wasn’t enough.

All you have to do is look at your neighbors to see it. Families are being crushed by a financial strain from which it will take an entire generation to recover. People are beginning to talk about climate change, but no one is doing anything about it.

Our food is filled with chemicals, our meat and milk with hormones, and girls, little girls, are reaching puberty at ages that should be unheard of. We have employers wanting to tell us whether we can access equal health care, and charging us more for it because we are women. Politicians telling us who we can and cannot marry if we are gay while failing to fund the Violence Against Women Act. It is all too much.

Anything less than full participation will not be enough. Now, can you hear I am talking to you, woman? I need you standing beside me when the doors close and the votes are counted. I need your voice to be the voice of all the women, families and children who are voiceless and invisible. I need you to join me, woman. You. I am talking to you. And I am going to make a prediction. 2012 will be the “Year of the Woman.” Why you ask? Because we can wait no more, and anything less will not be enough.

Photo courtesy of Tanzi.
reforming education

Maryellen Butke is the executive director of RI-CAN. She is also the co-founder of Rhode Island is Ready, a statewide, grassroots education reform campaign that has played a leadership role in pushing for an equitable funding formula for Rhode Island’s public schools.

What is RI-CAN?
“Launched in December 2010, RI-CAN (Rhode Island Campaign for Achievement Now) is an education reform advocacy organization building a movement of Rhode Islanders creating the political will to enact smart public policies to ensure that every Rhode Island child has access to a great public school.

Do you believe it is important for women to get involved in the political process?
“Absolutely, unequivocally yes! Women have a unique perspective on the world, on Rhode Island and on politics. I would love to see our state legislature be represented equally by women and men, and who reflect the diversity of our Rhode Island community, our state and our country. For democracy to truly work, we need a symphony of voices representing our constituencies.”

Women and girls have made tremendous strides in the classroom during the past forty years and since the passage of Title IX. Do you see this progress threatened as budget cuts are taking place at the local, state and federal level?
“It is not a simple yes or no. I believe it is critical to understand how our money in education is spent, and how to keep a laser-like focus on ensuring money is well spent on what matters: supporting and retaining high quality teachers and administrators, and resources in the classroom. Some of what we need to do in education is free. We need to infuse the mindset that all children can learn at high levels when they have a great teacher in a great school. We need parents who are actively engaged in their children’s education lives. And we need children who are held to, and hold themselves to the very highest standard. It will take every single one of us to transform our public education system.”

According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, women now receive only one in four sub-baccalaureate awards in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), down from one in three in 1997. Do you have any thoughts on how we can encourage more girls and women to enter STEM careers?
“My immediate thought is mindset. We have to infuse the mindset of our young women with messages of high expectations and the belief that they can do anything and everything they put their mind to. Increased exposure to STEM, female role models in those professions, and an infusion of opportunities which create these possibilities in our girls is critical.”

Research indicates that teenage parents experience reductions in their educational attainments compared to teenagers who are not parents, and many of these young parents drop out of school. For the past 28 years, YWCA has run an alternative education program to meet the needs of some of these young parents. Do you know of any additional strategies to help reduce the negative consequences of early parenting?
“We need to ensure that our children respect themselves, their bodies and have all available information to make healthy decisions for themselves. Young people who are sexually active need easy access to birth control options paired with counseling that helps them make informed decisions about their sexual health and well being. Once a young woman does become pregnant, we have to relentlessly pursue them, and welcome them into school, ensuring that they do not fall behind on their education. The work of YWCA is instrumental in providing an alternative education system for young women to complete their education after becoming a parent.”

Why did you become an advocate for education reform?
“My background, my MSW and PhD are in social work and I ran my own business, the Angell Street Wellness Collaborative with three other women for many years. In 1995, I met a little girl who was in foster care, and I subsequently adopted her. When I sent her to our local public school in the first grade, my eyes were opened to the world of public education in an urban setting. The fit wasn’t good for Alicia, who cried often, asking to leave school. She had some special needs, that were not well met by the school she attended. As a parent, I felt trapped and completely unprepared to deal with the challenges presented. I read everything I could about education and found a newly opening charter school, Paul Cuffee. Alicia secured a spot for the 2nd grade – and she thrived within their environment of high expectations and a culture and climate that was rigorous and joyful. Alicia is now a high school junior, and we are embarking on our first college journey this month. Advocating for Alicia inspired me to advocate for all of Rhode Island’s children to have access to a high quality public education. I believe that as a community, we are responsible for all of Rhode Island’s children and must be fierce advocates for all of our kids. Having fought to ensure that my own two children had the best possible educational opportunities, I now want to ensure that every Rhode Island child gains access to those same opportunities.”

What are your hopes and dreams?
“I envision a Rhode Island (and a world) of vibrant democracy, equal access to power, and the ability to have fierce, vigorous and civil debates that make our community strong. I see a community that successfully ‘raises all boats’ in the words of JFK – and supports the tradition of reaching back to pull others up when we are risen up. My intention is to see others through a loving lens, believing that in order to truly understand others, we must walk a mile in their shoes. From that perspective, there would be many fewer opportunities to judge. On the education front, I see a day in Rhode Island where a parent can walk into any public school and get goose pimples from the vibrant and dynamic work that they feel as they enter. There are engaged, happy and inspiring (and inspired) teachers, a dynamic, respectful and driven leader, and kids who are being held to high expectations and joyful.”

Interview by Deborah L. Perry.
Photo courtesy of Butke.
Once upon a time in America . . .

The Woman Suffrage Amendment passed.
The Civil Rights Act passed.
The Voting Rights Act passed.

The end? Not hardly!

YWCA is committed to supporting women who hold office, women planning to run for office or becoming involved in campaigns, and encouraging women to become more included in the electoral process.

www.ywcanri.org