Marshfield National Organization for Women (NOW) History

By

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The Marshfield NOW Chapter began as Consciousness Raising groups held in our homes. Following a national trend the groups were started by Janet Feenstra Schultz and Eileen Kelz in the fall of 1972. Marlene Travis Mclroy soon joined our ranks with loads of literature and experience in the women's movement.

In January the CR groups moved to the meeting rooms in the library and the local bowling alley and announced to the public that the Marshfield Women's Liberation Group was holding public meetings.

Our ranks grew to a solid core group of: Janet Schultz, Eileen Kelz, Marlene McClroy, Carol Farber, Pat Zager, Trudy Fink, Mary Rein, Suzanne Neve, and Linda Capra.

In February 0f 1973, it was decided to affiliate with the National Organization for Women so letters were written and contacts were made with Margo House, then State Coordinator. The wheels were set in motion to become an official chapter.

At the same time the state legislature voted to put to referendum an Equal Rights amendment to the Wisconsin Constitution. This is the time when we learned the conservative political climate in Marshfield and decided to fight for this amendment. Out of that need grew the Marshfield Equal Rights Coalition. This coalition was composed of NOW, AAUW, BPW and the League of Women Voters although the feminists of NOW were the driving force in action. Everyone worked hard on an informational campaign to the voters while Janet and Eileen sought speaking engagements with diverse community groups. Both women also spoke on engagements with the media.

-We continued our work on the ERA. Sue Neve a NOW member and student set up a symposium on the ERA and feminism at the local university center. Speakers were Margo House, Attorney Ronald Kissinger, Professor Doug Hoesler and Eileen Kelz.

-Activities continued as we attended our first state council meeting. Eileen and Janet presented a workshop on programming for chapters.

-August 26 was officially chosen as National Women's Equality Day so a celebration was planned. Janet and Representative John Oestricher were speakers on the ERA. The highlight of the day was a suffragist skit by Betty Schloesser and a parade march up
Central Avenue. It was the first event we were shown some community support by an attendance of well over 50 people.

Other events of 1973-74:

- Carol Farber and Janet Schultz spoke at history classes at Senior High
- We held a demonstration on self-defense techniques.
- Carol and Eileen gave a presentation about NOW at the Women's Political Caucus in Wausau
- Carol and Eileen attended hearings on day care at Wisconsin Rapids
- Eileen participated in a debate on abortion sponsored by the Unitarian Church in March
- We attended a program on women's health presented by the California Health Group with Carol Downer
- Eileen was appointed State Task Force Coordinator on Women's Health
- In the Spring we received our provisional chapter charter
- Janet, Rose Mary and Eileen started training for the Wisconsin Feminist Project Fund for Wisconsin State Employment Service employees. Eileen and Janet took part in the pilot project training in LaCrosse
- We met with Senator Gaylord Nelson on NOW issues

Events and Accomplishments of 1974-75

- Sexism in Education In-service training for Marshfield Public School District by Carol and Mary
- Rose Mary presented programs on Women and Retail Credit in Wausau for the Women's Action Council and Business and Professional Women's Club
- We presented a program in November on Reproductive Rights with guest speaker Suzan Hester. Because of this program we were no longer allowed to use the community Room of the Bank. This program launched the birth of the Coalition for the Right to Choice.
- Brenda and Eileen did a debate on abortion for the Newcomers club and zapped the oppositions slide show tactics.
- Rose Mary assisted two women employed by Citizens National Bank to file charges of discrimination against the bank for forcing them to take a leave in the 7th. Month of pregnancy
- Eileen was appointed by Governor Patrick Lucey to the Freedom for Individual Development Task Force for the Department of Public Instruction.
- In May we set up teams to help women with referral from the Intervention Crises Line.
- Carol Hartnett presented a program on rape to the Crises Line
- The NOW group continued it's commitment to equality for years to come and took part in actions toward accomplishing:
- Title 9
- Women and credit laws
- A 4 step state law defining Sexual Assault
- Operation Dial that allowed women's names to be listed in the phone book, not just the husbands.

Pamela Anderson was the final president for the group.

The NOW group eventually disbanded a victim of our own success. Women no longer had the time and flexibility to participate now that the world of employment was more open to them. Many thought we were done fighting for our rights. History would prove us wrong. We are just beginning again.