

FEW Notes

February 2008
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From the President...

Reflections & Highlights

By Debbie L. Miller

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**Greater Oklahoma City
Chapter #30**

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I would like to commend the FEW Three Crosses Chapter for hosting a successful 2008 SW Regional Training Program (RTP) in Las Cruces, New Mexico, January 29th – February 1st. The RTP committee members did a fantastic job—the RTP was beneficial, informative, and provided a great networking opportunity for its participants. I am proud to state that the GOKC chapter had eight members that attended the training conference, along with several individuals from the VA Medical Center. Our chapter wants to encourage these individuals to become members of FEW and make plans to attend the National Training Program scheduled during the month of July in Anaheim, California.

February is Black History Month and many programs are scheduled throughout Oklahoma City to commemorate the outstanding contributions made by African-Americans. I highly encourage everyone to make plans to participate in these community events. The GOKC chapter has scheduled an excellent program during February. Ms. Mary Pinkston, Tinker Air Force Base Lead Equal Opportunity Counselor, will present the necessary procedures to process an EEO complaint. I hope many individuals mark their calendars and attend our upcoming program.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

February 20, 2008

VA Medical Center Learning Resource Center (LRC), 1A-116
5:15 – 6:15 p.m.

NEXT PROGRAM

PROCESSING EEO COMPLAINTS

February 20, 2008

VA Medical Center LRC, 1A-116
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

RTP Experience

By Linda Burdick

When I first found out that the Regional Training Program was going to be held in Las Cruces, NM, I wanted to attend. I haven't been to New Mexico since I was a child and don't remember anything other than looking @ white sand as far as I could see. When I found out I was indeed able to attend the RTP, I asked my husband, David, to come with me. He agreed and we left OKC on 1-27.

We arrived in Las Cruces the next day ready to explore. We visited the old Mesilla Village and visited the site where Billy The Kid was killed by Pat Garrett. That same evening, we attended a networking session in the Hotel Encanto where the FEW members stayed.

The rest of the week flew by as I attended various training sessions including: Networking Etiquette, Order From Chaos, Web Page Design, Planning For Retirement, Utilizing Individual Development Plans, Interviewing Techniques and a Virtual Tour of White Sands, NM.

Liz Davenport taught the class on 'Order From Chaos.' I learned a lot about organizational skills and have already begun to apply her tips both personally and professionally. I plan to present an in-service on this topic to my coworkers, in the near future.

This is the second RTP I have attended. The one I attended last year in OKC impressed me so much that I joined the FEW organization. I noticed a camaraderie among the members that is unrivaled. The women are very approachable knowledgeable and helpful. There is always something being planned by the organization for the betterment of women.

Some of the regional and state officers including Ms' Debbie Miller, Tammie Kierstead and Al Miles conduct themselves as paragons of FEW. The Oklahoma City chapter won five awards at the awards luncheon and I was extremely pleased to be a member of FEW.

Thank you Clare, Tammie, Donna and Debbie for helping me to attend this event.

FEW Washington Update January 1, 2008

Happy New Year! Hope you all had a nice holiday. Activities in Washington, DC remain quiet as Congress is still in recess this week. The House of Representatives is scheduled to return to work on January 15th, and the Senate on January 22nd, 2008. However, in a flurry of activity just prior to the recess, Congress completed much action on a number of fronts.

Among the items completed were the enactment of a major energy bill; a temporary fix to the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) provision that threatened to negatively impact numerous taxpayers; passage of an omnibus fiscal year 2008 appropriations bill that funded 15 federal agencies through the end of the fiscal year; and a defense emergency authorization bill. There were also some developments of importance to federally employed women so read on.

If you have any questions or need more information about any issue, feel free to call Janet Kopenhaver at 703-528-7822 or via email at janetk@eyeonwashington.com.

Tier I Issues

• Employment Benefits:

After two months of work and negotiations, Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA-8) floated a draft bill that would pay up to \$5,000 to federal workers for their unused sick leave. The benefit would help only those in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) who currently get no compensation for their unused sick leave when they retire. Employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) are compensated for unused sick leave.

However, several management groups criticized the draft bill saying it does not compensate FERS-covered employees enough. They called on Moran to raise the cap to \$10,000 and to pay a higher rate of compensation – 15% of hourly pay instead of the current 10% - for unused sick leave that exceeds 1,000 hours.

The legislation Moran proposed would compensate FERS employees 10% of the hourly rate of their high-three salary – the average of the employee’s highest salaries over three consecutive years – for accumulated sick leave in excess of 500 hours, with a \$5,000 pay cap. As drafted, the benefit would not be retroactive.

The success of this legislation on the Hill will likely depend on the benefit’s final price tag and how it compares with the estimated costs of sick leave abuse. However, the Congressional Budget Office, that calculates cost estimates for pending legislation, will not study the bill before it is officially introduced. Moran plans to introduce the bill this year.

Tier II Issues

• Whistleblower Protection:

Without any objections, the Senate approved legislation to strengthen protections for federal employees who reveal waste, fraud and abuse, setting up negotiations with the House on the first major expansion of whistleblower rights since 1989.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Susan Collins (R-ME), was approved on a voice vote by the Senate. The House in March approved a similar bill. However, because there are differences between the two bills, negotiators will begin work this year on a compromise piece of legislation that must be passed by both congressional chambers.

For six years, efforts to get whistleblower legislation through Congress have been opposed by the Justice Department, blocked by Senators, and dropped from legislation packages at the last moment.

This bill would protect federal employees who make any disclosure, permit employees to share classified information with Members of Congress and protect whistleblowers whose security clearances are revoked because of retaliation. It also would set up a five-year experiment under which federal employees could take their cases to a nearby federal appeals court when challenging administrative rulings rather than to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit Court as is now required.

Day at the Legislature February 11, 2008

The Greater OKC chapter volunteered to support the 25th Annual Oklahoma Conference of Churches' (OCC) Day at the Legislature (DAL) event. The event is hosted by the OCC and the group is comprised of sixteen communions (denominations) concerned with the needs of people in our state. The OCC's vision and faith are shared in participation ministry as well as providing an influential relationship with the issues of public policy. The annual event provides an excellent venue for chapter members to support FEW's legislative goals, addressing those issues relative to women.



The GOKC FEW participants were Debbie Miller (Chapter President), Carolyn Delong (Treasurer), and Peggy O'Neal (member). The chapter members were responsible for manning the DAL Registration tables and their support provided a community service but, more importantly, added visibility to the FEW organization. Ms. Peggy O'Neal is also a member of the 2008 DAL Committee and attends committee meetings throughout the year.

Lt Governor Jari Askins opened the session and a panel of experts discussed this year's topic, "Voices in the Wilderness: Reclaiming Our Prophetic Role as a People of Faith." Following lunch held at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 10 workshops were held throughout the afternoon. Senator Constance N. Johnson closed the 2008 OCC session.

Any additional information on the status of any legislature bill presented during the DAL may be addressed via www.lsb.state.ok.us. If additional information is required, individuals should contact the OCC Interim Director Joanne Kurklin, email: Joanne.kurklin@okchurches.org.

February Fitness

February is Healthy Heart Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and it affects men and women of every age and race. Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett has challenged the Oklahoma City residents to lose 1 million pounds as its New Year's resolution. Prompted in part by his own struggle to lose weight, Cornett wants to end Oklahoma City's dubious distinction as one of America's fattest cities. As part of the initiative, residents can sign up and track their weight loss on a new Web site, <http://www.thiscityisgoingonadiet.com>. Besides a body mass index calculator, the site includes recipes and links to metro-area fitness centers. There are plans for expanding the site to include the opportunity to blog and network with other weight-loss participants. During Healthy Heart Month, the GOKC FEW chapter would like to encourage you to join the fight against heart disease

A good time for laughing is when you can...

Jessamyn West

Women in Black History Month

Some firsts for Women in Black History

The first Black woman college graduate was Mary Jane Patterson, who received a degree from Oberlin College in 1862.

The first Black woman awarded a Ph.D. degree was Sadie M. Alexander, who received a degree in economics in 1921 from the University of Pennsylvania. Two other Black women received Ph.D. degrees in the same year: Eva B. Dykes, English, Radcliffe and Georgianna R. Simpson, German, the University of Chicago.

The first Black woman lawyer was Charlotte E. Ray, who ~~was~~ graduated from Howard University Law School on February 27, 1872. She was admitted to practice on April 23, 1872. In 1910 there were 777 Black male lawyers and 2 Black women lawyers.

The first Black woman doctors were Rebecca Cole, who practiced in New York from 1872 to 1881. Susan McKinney, who graduated from the New York Medical College in 1870, and Rebecca Lee, who received an M.D. degree from the New England Female Medical College, Boston, on March 1, 1864.

The first Black woman to receive a major appointment from the U.S. government was Mary McLeod Bethune, who was named Director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration on June 24, 1936.

The first Black woman named to the cabinet of a U.S. president was Patricia R. Harris, who was named Secretary of Housing and Urban Development by President Jimmy Carter in 1977.

The first Black woman ambassador was Patricia R. Harris, who was named ambassador to Luxembourg on May 19, 1965, by President Johnson.

The first Black woman in Congress was Rep. Shirley Chisholm, who was elected to the 91st Congress from Brooklyn on November 5, 1968.

The first Black woman general was Hazel Johnson, who was appointed on September 1, 1979.

The first Black judge was Jane Matilda Bolin, who was appointed judge of the court of domestic relations of New York City by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia on July 22, 1939.

The first Black woman to write a Broadway play was Lorraine Hansberry, who created *Raisin In the Sun*, which opened at the Barrymore Theater on March 11, 1959, with Sidney Potier and Claudia McNeil in starring roles. *Raisin* was also the first Broadway drama in more than a half century with a Black director, Lloyd Richards.

The first Black woman to head a bank was Maggie Lena Walker, who was named president of Richmond's St. Luke Bank and Trust Company in 1903.

The first Black woman nominated for president of the U.S. was Rep. Shirley Chisholm, who received 151.95 votes on the first ballot at the 1972 Democratic convention.

The first Black woman to win a gold medal in the Olympics was Alice Coachman of Albany State Teachers College, who won the running high jump in the 1948 games London.

How to Get Out of Your Own Way

5 Strategies for Thinking Outside the Box

Kimberly Wiefeling believes that there are plenty of challenges in our lives, however some of them are of our own making. Undermining ourselves, make assumptions about what's possible that restrict our choices, and let our fears stop us from even trying to reach our goals and dreams. Like a fish that is unaware of the water he is swimming in, being stuck in old ways of thinking keeps us blind to the many opportunities that surround us.

Here are seven strategies for gaining new insights into your situation and opening up new possibilities for your work and your life.

Generous Listening

Most conversations are like two TVs facing one another. Talking seems to be the primary focus of our communication. However listening is even more powerful. Not the kind of listening we normally experience: listening for what's not going to work, listening for what we don't agree with so we can advocate our perspective, listening for a break in the communication so we can begin talking! Generous listening can completely transform the quality of our conversations and our relationships. And it is as simple as the words we choose and the attitude we bring to our conversations.

What is a generous listening attitude? It's the view that we are there to mine the gold in what the other person is saying, and to reflect back their wisdom so they can hear themselves more clearly. It's not merely replying "So what I hear you saying is . . .", and it's not asking a bunch of questions to further clarify what they are saying so we understand perfectly what they mean. It's simply listening to them so they can hear themselves better, with the entire focus on them.

How do we listen generously? First, avoid the questions "How?" and "Why?." These are great questions when appropriate, but they can shut down conversation instantly when you'd rather keep the conversation flowing and growing. There is nothing more futile than asking "How?" when one does not yet know "What," and generous listening is getting at the "What" in the other person's mind. And "Why?" sparks defensiveness, and even when appropriate, it may be better asked as, "Help me understand your thinking on this . . ."

Instead, use the following phrases to listen generously and expand a conversation:

- That's a great idea!
- Say more about that.
- Interesting! What else?
- What would that make possible?
- What would that allow for?
- Tell me more . . .
- What would make that possible?
- Help me understand . . .

When we ask questions such as, "What would make that possible?" instead of, "What could go wrong?" an entirely different conversation results. Try it! You'll be amazed how simply listening for the gold in someone else's speaking and using these simple phrases will completely change the character of your communications.

Survival Fear vs. Stage Fright

One way we get in our own way is to stay stuck due to fear. What fears are stopping you from achieving your dreams and goals? Are they survival fears or stage fright? Survival fears are helpful—

they warn us of dangers that can cause serious or permanent damage to ourselves, whether physical, mental, spiritual, social or other. Respect those fears! Take action to mitigate the chances of these things happening. And then there is stage fright. That's the "butterflies in the stomach" anxiety, with no real risk of serious or permanent damage. What should you do about those fears? Feel the fear and do it anyway! If you wait until there is no fear, you'll miss out on many opportunities. In fact, most people have stage fright over many types of situations. The difference between someone who is taking action and someone who lets stage fright stop them is that the person taking action is probably doing so while being afraid!

Ask yourself, "What's the worst that can happen?" This often shrinks fears down to a manageable size and allows you to prepare for any downside possibilities. Then, make a commitment to act—and do it!

Creative Whack Pack

A great way to find answers is to use Roger von Oech's "Creative Whack Pack." This pack of cards is associated with von Oech's book, *A Whack on the Side of the Head* (Warner Business, 1998). Simply choose a card at random from the Creative Whack Pack and then ask how this card gives you insights into your chosen issue.

Your Commitment

Vision without action is only a hallucination. Until we put our thoughts into action, they remain dreams. What action will you commit to take on behalf of your vision? Rest assured that no confidence is required to move in the direction of your goals, only your commitment. Choose an action that you will take this week, and then take it! Like a boat moving through the water vs. floating adrift, once you create forward momentum in your life you can more easily steer in the direction of your goals.

No one can give you what you deny yourself. Apply these seven simple techniques to transform your life and achieve your goals and dreams. Get out of your own way and be ready to let the universe amaze you.

<http://www.womensmedia.com/new/business-Wiefling-thinking-outside-the-box.shtml>

2008 SW RTP Training Session - HR Panel

**By Debbie L. Miller,
Greater OKC Chapter President**

I selected the HR Panel training session as one of my class selections during the SW RTP held in Las Cruces, NM Jan 29-Feb 1, 2008. The HR panel consisted of Las Cruces residents: Ms. Sally Smoot and Mr. Earl Ware (civil servants), and Mr. Bryn Davis (private contractor).

Ms. Smoot opened the session referencing 2006 employment statistics, Ms. Smoot stated that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 1.8 million workers currently work for the government and 16% of the entire workforce reside in Washington, DC. Based on this data, it was noted that the following statement is actually true....all paths lead to Washington, D.C. Of the 1.8 million workers, 92,000 are foreign nationals. Within the US federal government, the highest occupied positions are associated with two career areas: Management and Business. The Financial positions rank second (33.2%). The smallest category is within the Farming, Fishing & Forestry series (.4%).

Ms. Smoot also stated that OPM is predicting the service-type occupations is expected to see the most significant, overall growth increase (2.9%) while the office and administrative support occupations will experience a 15.5% decrease in job positions based on automated technology. She

advised the classroom attendees to share this information with friends and family members so they can determine if switching career fields would be a positive change for future professional growth.

Mr. Wallace continued the presentation re-emphasizing Ms. Smoot's statistics. He referenced that with the high number of eligible retirees expected by 2010, (Supervisors – 58%; Non-supervisors - 42%), individuals should review their intended career paths to accommodate this prediction of our changing workforce. If the service occupational series meet your requirements, start attending vocational training institutions in order to transition into an applicable job series rather than the traditional business arena.

Mr. Davis provided the private industry perspective of future job growth. By 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 22 million new jobs will require personnel and knowing this fact allows individuals to set a career path. All the panel members recommended the attendees read the book written by Karl Fisch, "Shift Happens," as it emphasizes the importance of staff development and the vision of what is required to be successful in the 21st century.

The panel members provided an excellent presentation. The statistics were somewhat shocking but very relative to the upcoming mass exodus of federal service baby boomers. As a manager, I understand downsizing will directly affect my team's capability to fulfill the business plan objectives required by my organization. I do plan to take the panel's advice and read the suggested reading material.

Overall, the 2008 SW RTP session was successful and enlightening; however, the wonderful memories, friendships, and excellent training will be retained for many years.

Groundhog Day

The legend of Groundhog Day is based on an old Scottish couplet: "If Candlemas Day is bright and clear, there'll be two winters in the year."

Every February 2, people gather at Gobbler's Knob, a wooded knoll just outside of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

Residents contend that the groundhog has never been wrong.

The ceremony in Punxsutawney was held in secret until 1966, and only Phil's prediction was revealed to the public. Since then, Phil's fearless forecast has been a national media event.

The groundhog comes out of his electrically heated burrow, looks for his shadow and utters his prediction to a Groundhog Club representative in "groundhogese." The representative then translates the prediction for the general public.

If Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow, it means six more weeks of winter. If he does not see his shadow, it means spring is just around the corner.

Approximately 90% of the time, Phil sees his shadow.

Phil started making predictions in 1887 and has become an American institution.

When Was Your Last Financial Checkup?

Submitted by Debbie L. Miller

Most individuals are faithful in scheduling their yearly checkups with their physicians. However, we tend to be remiss about reviewing your financial status checkup. Here are a few tips to determine if the time has come for your financial checkup.

Do you have financial goals? If so, have you put them in writing and set deadline dates?

- ❖ Is your debt under control? Do you pay off your credit cards each month?
- ❖ Have you reviewed your investment portfolio recently? Are you comfortable with the level of risk associated with your current investments?
- ❖ Are you satisfied with the rate of return your investments are generating?
- ❖ Have you started a retirement fund yet? If so, will your current rate of savings provide an adequate fund to meet your future retirement needs?
- ❖ Have you started a savings program to meet the cost requirements of your college education or your children's education? If so, will your current savings rate be adequate given the effects of inflation and rising tuition costs?
- ❖ Have you reviewed your life insurance coverage recently? Is your policy providing adequately for your spouse and/or children?

If you are not satisfied with your answers to any of these questions, start working toward getting your finances on track today!

The History of St. Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman gods and goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia, the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II, Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having difficulty getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius canceled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples. For this kind deed, Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the

Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270.

At that time, it was the custom in Rome to host a feast in honor of a heathen god. On these occasions, amidst a variety of pagan ceremonies, the names of young women were placed in a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. The pastors of the early Christian church endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. The pastors chose Saint Valentine's Day for the celebration of this new feast and so it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year arose in this way.

I suppose there is one friend in the life of each of us, who seems not a separate person, however dear and beloved, but an expansion, an interpretation, of one's self, the very meaning of one's soul.

Edith Wharton

Happy Birthday!

Marilyn Hampton – 12th Feb

Edi Cameron – 16th Feb

Debi Talley – 22nd Feb

Susan Arnett - 23rd Feb

Tammie Kierstead – 24th Feb

Elane Essic – 26th Feb

Jo Smith – 28th Feb

**GOKC CHAPTER
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2006-2008**

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If additional information is required, please contact the Chapter President at
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