



Eastern Mass Chapter Newsletter

The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

OWL Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 2

March/April 2007

JOIN US on Tuesday May 8th at UMass Boston for a special Eastern Mass OWL event to hear **Suzanne Bump, Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development**, speak about *Women, Work and Family Across the Lifespan*. We look forward to seeing you there!

in this issue

- Notes from the Chairs
- Secretary Bump to Speak
- Legislative Update
- From National OWL
- Book Review: *The Denial of Aging*
- Calendar

Notes from the Chairs

In recent weeks, Eastern Mass OWL members have started a discussion about how to focus and prioritize the work of the chapter in the coming year or two. It has been a challenging discussion because we are a committed and passionate group, and many urgent issues claim our interest and attention. With so many possibilities, how should we focus our energies and resources so as to be most effective, and to make a real difference in the lives of midlife and older women?

These initial discussions have been stimulating even if they have not yet produced consensus. Many important issues have been named, about which at least one member (and often many of us) feels very strongly: adequate pay for caregivers, gender equity in wages, employer supports for work-family balance, heading off Social Security reforms that would disadvantage women, universal health insurance, affordable long-term care.... In these discussions, we quickly arrive at the truth of that old saying: Everything is connected.

Nevertheless, two clear principles have emerged from our discussion so far, and will guide us as we continue defining Eastern Mass OWL's program priorities. One is intergenerational solidarity. Midlife and older women must not fall into the trap of competing with younger generations for a share of ever-shrinking public dollars.

Second, we need to keep in perspective the larger context in which these many legitimate and urgent needs clamor for our attention: This is in fact a wealthy society, and it can find dollars for wars and ever more lethal weapons systems, and for astronomical CEO salaries and other priorities of the rich and powerful. It only thinks there isn't enough money to assure older adults that their rising health-care needs will not bankrupt them, or to see that all children have a healthy start in life and a promising future.

Thus, as our deliberations continue, we must remember that young women's issues are middle-aged women's issues are older women's issues. We're all in this together, and we must work together, not compete, to solve our interconnected problems, so many of which have a common root.

Your contributions to this ongoing discussion are welcomed. The next priorities group meeting is set for Tuesday, April 24, from 11:00 a.m. to noon, in Wheatley Hall, room

3-98. Contact Eastern Mass OWL co-chair Elizabeth Johns (elizabeth.johns@umb.edu) for more information.

Elizabeth Johns and Kim Johnson

Secretary Bump to Speak



At a presentation on May 8th, Suzanne M. Bump, [Secretary of Labor and Work Force Development](#) will address work issues of midlife and older women in Massachusetts, and the new administration's agenda for women. She will be at the University of Massachusetts Healey Library (11th floor conference room) from 2 to 3 p.m. This will be an opportunity to meet with her and others and talk about these important topics.

Secretary Bump brings more than two decades of leadership experience in government, non-profits and business to her position. She is a member of the Governor's Cabinet, and is also one of the five members of Governor Patrick's "development cabinet," which works across agency and department lines to spur economic and job growth.

Bump represented Braintree from 1985 to 1993 in the House of Representatives, and co-chaired the Committee on Commerce and Labor. Responsible for passing laws on a variety of labor and economic issues, Chairman Bump sponsored many bills on wages, hours, working conditions and job creation. Her most notable success there was the reform of the state's industrial accidents program with the Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 1991. She held other leadership positions, including chairing the Caucus of Women Legislators. She also served on the MassJobs Council, the principal advisory board to the governor on workforce investment.

Since then, Bump has served on the boards of a wide range of non-profit and civic organizations. She has had many roles in the non-profit and business arenas, including president of a non-profit providing language and skills training to workers in the hotel industry for a labor-management trust fund and more recently regional vice president and general counsel at Citigroup. Prior to that she was a partner in a law firm providing legal services to small businesses and non-profits. She earned an A.B. in English from Boston College and a J.D. from Suffolk University Law School.

Come join us for this interesting informative afternoon of presentation, conversation and refreshments. For more information and to register, call Eastern Mass OWL at (617)287-7300. If leaving a message please include name, address and email.

Legislative Update



[The Paid Sick Leave Bill](#) has been filed and assigned to the Labor and Workforce Committee, chaired by Rep. David Torrisi. A hearing will take place in May or June. It is a critical piece of legislation since more than one half of all employees in the private sector do not receive a single paid sick day. The bill will provide all employees 7 paid sick days per year. The Paid Sick Leave Coalition would appreciate your calling Rep. Torrisi at 617-722-2014 and asking him to support the bill.

Also Megan Shannon, 617 - 722-1578 , aide to Senator Pat Jehlen (the Senate bill sponsor) and Sarah Blumenthal , 617-722-2140, aide to Representative Kay Khan (the House bill sponsor) are collecting testimony. If you have any stories illustrating the need for a Paid Sick Leave Bill call the aides. If you do so please contact Joan Ditzion (617-864-9305 or jditzion@comcast.net) , OWL representative to the coalition so she can keep track of OWL contacts to the coalition.

Joan Ditzion

The Legislative Caucus of Older Citizens' Concerns - At the last meeting on March 22, 2007 at the State House Brian Lynch of the Department of Revenue presented an in-depth view of the DOR [Circuit Breaker](#). The Caucus priority budget recommendations for 2008 were announced as follows: Elder Enhanced Home Care Services Program (9110-1630, requesting \$52.503 M), Homemaker Wage Increase (9910-1635, requesting \$2M), Elder Health Protective Services (9110-1636, requesting \$18.842M), Geriatric Mental Health Services (9110-1640, requesting \$1.325M), Mental Health Geriatric Care (5046-1000, requesting \$1M), Local Council on Aging Grants (9110-9002, requesting \$9M), and Medicare Part D Safety Net (Outside Section, requesting \$8M). The next meeting of the Caucus will be held on May 3, 2007 at the State House and will give an overview of the 2008 budget.
Kay Maguire

A letter to the Mass Health Insurance Connector Board was sent on behalf of Eastern Mass OWL expressing our concern about the affordability of health policies that will be mandated to be purchased by every citizen not otherwise covered. OWL is especially concerned about the affordability of policies for persons not subsidized who must pay more than 10% of their income for the policies.

From National OWL

National OWL's Executive Director, Laurie Young, will be speaking in Brookline on May 19th, 2007. See Calendar below for details.

As Mother's Day approaches, OWL is continuing its tradition of bringing to national attention an issue that is of vital concern to the mother's of our country and the families who rely on them. This year we are revisiting the OWL Mother's Day campaign of 20 years ago: "Give 'Em Health," a campaign for universal health care coverage. The 2007 Mother's Day Report will be a discussion of national universal health care coverage proposals. The report concludes that extending Medicare to all provides the best route to universal coverage. As OWL members and supporters, you can help the drive to universal coverage by bringing women's health coverage concerns to light. We are collecting stories for the media of women who have experienced problems getting coverage, getting access to care, and/or amassing medical debt because of lack of coverage or insufficient coverage. If you are willing to share your stories or stories of your friends or family, please send them to me at ellen.bruce@umb.edu and I will forward them to our national office. Remember, the personal is political.

Ellen Bruce, National OWL President

Book Review: The Denial of Aging



The Denial of Aging: Perpetual Youth, Eternal Life, and Other Dangerous Fantasies, by Muriel R. Gillick, M.D., presents a series of vivid and distinct portraits of families confronting the medical dilemmas that people typically face at the end of life. Thus, this book is meant to spark a rethinking of current medical practice as Dr. Gillick proposes an 'intermediate' standard of care as an appropriate model for providing health services to frail elders. As this author resists the momentum impelling doctors working within the American health care system to 'over-treat' dying patients and to mount 'heroic' rescue efforts, she posits as an alternative to these practices a 'disease management' mode of care for elders: an intermediate standard aimed at sustaining quality of life, spearheaded by nurses who stay abreast of patient needs, and directly involving both patients and their families as active participants in the

planning process.

Dr. Gillick, a boomer herself as well as a practicing physician and Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School has written this good-natured polemic of a book to prod boomers to action based on a realistic assessment of what awaits us all at the close of our lives. Noting that not even the most assiduous efforts at modifying diet, exercise routines, and lifestyle can stave off the inevitability of dying, Gillick argues that a preoccupation with the "myths of perpetual youth" have increased the burdens of end-of-life care on the US health care system while simultaneously preventing our society from preparing realistically to cope with the deluge of aging that awaits us.

The Denial of Aging proposes a broad range of solutions to the gap between large needs and limited resources that Gillick frankly acknowledges, and in this shortfall she actually sees opportunity: for without a comprehensive effort to address the needs of an aging population -- spanning not only health care standards but also new types of housing and long-term care options, a rethinking of both employment and volunteer work opportunities, and a strengthening of the bonds of community which are especially important as we age -- the boomers will simply overwhelm the existing system.

One of Gillick's strengths is her comprehensive vision of the needed policy changes toward which she proposes Americans might work. In contrast, a minor quibble that this reviewer had with the book is that Gillick appears to overestimate to what extent families are actually available to provide care for their own elders: while many families do indeed shoulder a large responsibility for caring for aging relatives, nowhere in the book does Gillick acknowledge to what extent both mobility and women's commitments to the workforce have impacted family care. Finally, this adult educator found intriguing Gillick's suggestion that "a multitude of [educational] programs" should be offered to provide Americans with both the incentives and the tools they need in order to act responsibly to maintain their own health as long as possible.

Linda Moussouris

Calendar

April 23, 2007 - *Equal Pay Day* sponsored by the MA Commission on the Status of Women, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the MA State House, Great Hall. Keynote speaker, Evelyn Murphy. Free admission & box lunch. Registration required. Call (617) 626-6520.

April 26, 2007 - *Delivering Mental Services to the Elderly: Policy and Clinical Issues*, co-sponsored by Mass Assoc. of Older Americans and Mass Dept. of Mental Health, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Boston University Corporate Education Center, 72 Tyng Road, Tyngsboro MA. For information call MAOA (617) 426-0804.

May 3, 2007 - *Uniting for Quality Care Lobby Day*, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Gather at Paulist Center (5 Park Street) at 10:30 for lobby training, then to State House at 12:30 to meet with legislators, then reconvene at the State House. For more information call Becca Guttman of 1199 SEIU at (617) 989-8033.

May 8, 2007 - *Suzanne Bump, Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development*, will speak on *Women, Work and Family Across the Lifespan*, and the new administration's agenda, at UMass Boston, in Room 11-0011 on the 11th floor of the Healey Library at 2 p.m. For information and to register call (617) 287-7300. If leaving a message please include name, address and email.

May 11, 2007 - *NERO Meeting (NorthEast Regional OWL) and discussion of the National OWL's Mother's Day Report* sponsored by Hudson Valley OWL, from 12 Noon to 3 p.m. at Cappucino's on Route 9 in Poughkeepsie NY. To register call

(845)473-2169.

May 19, 2007 - *Laurie Young, Executive Director of National OWL* will speak about this year's *Mother's Day Report* that addresses the need for "healthcare for all," proposing expanding traditional Medicare to provide comprehensive medical insurance for all, at 1:30 p.m. at the Brookline Senior Center, 39 Winchester Street, Brookline MA. For information, call (617) 524-7126.

email: info@massowl.org

web: www.massowl.org

Eastern Massachusetts OWL | c/o Ellen A. Bruce, Gerontology Department | University of Massachusetts Boston |
100 Morrissey Blvd | Boston | MA | 02125