

Artifacts of Region Women

Tina Rongers¹

Congratulations on the launch of *South Shore Journal* and its inaugural issue heralding “*Women-Centered Research and Creativity*”. This is the first regionally-based academic journal—the creation of online institution—forged by region women scholars. This journal will explore a myriad of topics examining qualitative and quantitative conditions along the southern shore of Lake Michigan through the multidisciplinary lenses of local scholars and students. Region Women Initiative applauds the bold step to unveil women-centered research and creativity from the onset. Coupled with leadership, region women will be a mainstay to the Journal’s success.

Special acknowledgements in recognition of their outstanding work and time go to the Editor of this first issue, Dr. Cynthia O’Dell, as well as the Editorial Board, comprised of faculty members from Calumet College of St. Joseph, Purdue University Calumet, Purdue North Central, Indiana University Northwest and Valparaiso University as well as representatives from the Center for Regional Excellence at IU Northwest, The Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council and Region Women Initiative. I extend a special thank you to Dr. Karen Evans, IU Northwest, and Dr. Daniel Lowery, Calumet College of St. Joseph for their vision of an academic regional journal.

The launch of the *South Shore Journal* is the third component of the Region Women Initiative’s research series. It also complements the creative expression captured in our cultural series. Our purpose is to equip decision makers with women-centered research and creativity for implementation into policymaking and program design. In March 2005, we began an independent regional project to examine the status of women in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties and honor the multifaceted contributions women make to northwest Indiana.

On June 2, 2006, Region Women Initiative along with the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council convened 300 people interested in public dialogue on the status of region women. A distinguished panel included nationally-recognized economist/author/CEO Dr. Julianne Malveux, Dr. Vicky Lovell with Washington DC-based Institute of Women’s Policy Research which releases annual report cards on women’s status by state, Cherokee elder Momfeather Erickson of Mantle Rock Native Education and Cultural Center, Sharon Langlotz of the Indiana Commission on Women, the Honorable Linda Buzenic of the City of Hobart, Ms. Denise Dillard Vice-President of Human Resources and Community Development at Methodist Hospitals, Inc., Dr. Ruth Needleman and Dr. Cynthia O’Dell from the Labor and Women’s Studies Programs at

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Indiana University Northwest, with Maggi Spartz, President of Unity Foundation of La Porte presiding as Mistress of Ceremony. The culmination of this regional process and dialogue was the release of three economic development goals aimed at increasing access to capital, promoting the value of women's work and maximizing women-centered leadership.

Two objectives germane to readers of this journal are the development of a regional women's studies program whereby we coordinate efforts occurring at the area's six institutions of higher learning. The second is the leadership summit to be held on June 22, 2007 for the continuation of regional dialogue and action for elevating the quality of life in Northwest Indiana.

More importantly, we encourage academic, creative and active women of all ages to become more engaged in the Region Women Initiative. Please see <http://www.regionwomen.com> for more information. This synergy creates the much needed space for intellectual and creative exchange between generations. Mentoring is vital catalyst for personal and social change as well as long-term regional sustainability.

We know that cultural shifts away from a patriarchal paradigm to a structurally open system, more accepting of women-centered perceptions and approaches, cannot happen without forward-thinking and supportive institutions as incepted through this journal and Region Women Initiative. Advancements in the status of women in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties will elevate quality of life for everyone here. It is not enough for us to stand shoulder to shoulder and say here are the problems; we must do so equipped with objective quantitative and qualitative data and offering innovative remedies for self-actualization and collective gains for the benefit of future generations. If women don't lead and value ending oppression by transecting the stratified society for self interest and mutual benefit then why do we continue to expect men to do so? Conversely, by efforts such as this journal and Region Women Initiative, we invite men to play key roles in the paradigm shift to improve the well-being of all in Northwest Indiana.