



Our History 2004 - 2009

2004 - Pat Obstarczyk, President

From January to April, Gwen Kleper continued in her role as Interim Executive Director, focusing on completing the Directory, obtaining underwriting, and planning the Gala. The Board focused on updating the responsibilities and expectations of various RWN positions and the hiring of a regular Executive Director. The Executive Director Search Committee presented its recommendations to the Board, which resulted in the hiring of Mary Peters as RWN's new Executive Director beginning April 7. Mary brought with her experience managing in not-for-profit organizations as well as in fundraising. She immediately began improving on RWN's operations.

The Gala Luncheon was held on May 5 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The theme was *"Relighting the Candles of Excellence"* and the speaker, Marva Collins, explained to the luncheon audience how she achieved this goal in the field of education. Ms. Collins also held a special discussion session for local educators after the luncheon. At the Gala, we also celebrated Cynthia Herriott's selection as the *"W" Award* recipient.

A student membership rate was adopted for full-time, matriculated college students.

The membership cycle change (from July 1 through June 30 to a calendar year) was implemented with the 2004 renewal cycle. Members were asked to renew their memberships for 18 months. In addition the annual membership fee was raised from \$75 to \$100. The 9th Annual Businesswomen's Conference, *Women's Work... Redefining the Balance Between Home, Work and Community*, was held on October 29 at the Riverside Convention Center. Conference sessions provided insights into the different aspects of making changes that enable use to be more effective, get the most out of what they do and balance their personal and professional lives. Fifteen local women were recognized with Rochester Women's Network's Up and Coming Businesswomen's Award.

The Board developed and adopted a new strategic plan, building on the mission and vision developed the previous year. Implementation teams were formed to implement the strategic initiatives. A major decision was made by the Board to discontinue the Gala, starting with the 2005 year, but to keep the *"W" Award*. Key considerations were that the attendance and sponsorship of the Gala had been decreasing over the years, the Gala required extensive RWN resources, and many Rochester organizations now hosted *"galas"* making the event less significant within the Rochester community.

The Gala would be replaced by a member recognition event called *"Splash!"* where the *"W" Award* winner would be announced. Changes were also made to the *"W" Award* selection process. Starting in 2005, the five *"W" Award* finalists will be selected by a panel of judges; the *"W" Award* recipient will be selected by a vote of the membership.

The focus of the Underwriting Committee was changed to actively solicit support for RWN and its programs and events. The Committee works closely with the Executive Director, who chairs the committee, and is responsible to meet and exceed the annual underwriting goals.

2005 - Sheree Usiatynski, President

The Board's focus was to continue implementation of the strategic initiatives developed late in the previous year. The first quarter of the year was focused on the creation of committee operational manuals to bring consistency to committees and events. The First Annual RWN SPLASH! held on March 9, 2005, at PAETEC Communications, received rave reviews. The sold out event provided an opportunity to meet the RWN leadership and learn more about RWN committees and Small Interest Groups. The accomplishments of the *"W" Award* finalists were celebrated and long time members and underwriters were recognized. Elaine Gallina Spaul received the 2005 RWN *"W" Award*.

The \$25 Board Connections fee was eliminated. All RWN members now receive notices about not-for-profit board openings. An IT Committee was created to manage RWN's information technology. The committee reports directly to the President of the Board and is responsible for assessing IT needs, making recommendations, determining resources required, obtaining approval for changes and resources, and managing changes. New computers were purchased for the Executive Director and Administrative Assistant, bringing consistency to the office with respect to software versions, and data security.

Canisius College expressed interest in partnering with RWN to expand their presence in Rochester. After much research the proposal was turned down because the offering did not provide the return for RWN compared to the resources required. Also, Canisius College would be competing for the same sponsorship money that RWN sought.



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Corporate Connections decided to break away from RWN. The focus of the organization had changed, with more events planned at locations requiring contracts (for which RWN was liable), and with less support of RWN programs and membership. Although the loss of the relationship is unfortunate, the best interests of RWN were preserved.

The June Board Retreat and July Leadership Meeting focused on identifying strategies to increase awareness of RWN in the community and to increase membership. The Marketing committed conducted a member survey in the fall. Based on the results, the Marketing Committee has begun developing marketing strategies to rebrand RWN. Another key learning was that members were very interested in more networking opportunities that were not available in the current program format. The Program Committee took on the task of creating more networking opportunities for members.

RWN received notice in early summer that the office would have to move by the end of the year. After an exhaustive search, the office relocated to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Building, 249 Highland Avenue, Suite 200, Rochester, at the end of November. The new office is affordable, easily accessible to members and has ample free parking, and has on-site meeting space available for rent. The Finance Committee began work on a Financial Operations (procedures) manual.

The 10th Annual Businesswomen's Conference, Thriving in a Challenging Business Environment, was held on November 1 at the Riverside Convention Center. The all day Conference featured sessions that provided strategies to help us not just survive, but thrive, during difficult financial times. The Exhibitors' Marketplace was sold out and for the first time, the program book featured paid ads. Fifteen local women were honored with Rochester Women's Network's Up and Coming Businesswomen's Award.

2006 - Ellie Cope, President

The Board continued to focus on implementation of the strategic plan adopted in 2004. The Executive Committee retreat, held in February, took an in depth look at the progress made in relation to the strategic initiatives, evaluated the validity of the initiatives, and set the direction for the rest of the year.

An overview of RWN's infrastructure was presented at the August Leadership Retreat after which participants brainstormed three key

topics: ideas and/or recommendations for fundraising opportunities relating to our 30th Anniversary, ideas and/or recommendations for freeing up the office administrative resources related to committee support, and strengths, challenges, and creative ideas for implementing an Annual *"Every Member Campaign"* which will be an outreach to RWN members for financial support. The October Board Retreat focused on examining the RWN infrastructure to look for ways to increase efficiencies, increase revenue, and decrease expense.

The Future RWN Task Force, an outgrowth of the retreat, was created to take a closer look at the infrastructure and to make recommendations and identify strategies for increasing revenues and cutting costs.

The Second Annual RWN Splash! and "W" Award Presentation was held on March 8, 2006, at Memorial Art Gallery. This very popular event is the largest RWN networking event of the year and an excellent opportunity to meet RWN leadership. The Splash! included a Chinese Auction which added to the fun and the financial success of the evening. The accomplishments of the "W" Award finalists were celebrated and long time members and underwriters were recognized. Germaine Knapp, President of Sojourner House, received the 2006 RWN "W" Award.

The Board approved a new logo for RWN. RWN, under the direction of the IT Committee, continued to expand its use of technology. My Digital Office, a Web-based document and content management tool, was rolled out. RWN began using Constant Contact to manage and send e-mails and joined LinkedIn. Significant progress was made on updating the look and feel of the Web site, as well as re-mapping the Web site.

The Membership Committee focused on identifying strategies to attract and retain members and an ad hoc Membership Retention Committee was formed to develop retention strategies. The first networking reception for enhanced level members was held in November. Additional benefits were added to the enhanced membership levels. Honorary Memberships were added to RWN Policy Manual.

RWN received many requests to help promote other organizations programs and events. Historically, all such requests were denied because it was virtually impossible to honor all of them. Recogniz-



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ing the need to be more responsive to such requests, collaboration guidelines were adopted by the Board to be implemented by the Program Committee. During 2006, RWN supported WXXI's Speaking of Women's Health Program and the Susan B. Anthony Center for Women's Leadership's retrospective on the progress women have made since Susan B. Anthony's death 100 years ago.

For the first time the annual conference was marketed to men, as well as women, and the name was changed to the Business Conference. The 11th Annual Business Conference, Powering The Economy Through Leadership And Innovation: Discovering What You Have That The Regional Economy Needs, was held on November 3 at the Riverside Convention Center. The all day Conference dovetailed with the local WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) initiative that was designed to revitalize the local economy. The day featured panel discussions that enabled participants to learn where the regional economy is headed and how to take advantage of the emerging opportunities. Maggie Brooks, Monroe County Executive, helped kickoff the day during the plenary session and Robert Duffy, Mayor of Rochester, presented the wrap-up session to a standing room only crowd. The Exhibitors' Marketplace was sold out with a waiting list, and there was an increase in the number of ads in the program book. Fifteen local women were honored with Rochester Women's Network's Up and Coming Businesswomen's Award. For the first time, the Conference ended with a Networking Reception.

RWN will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2008. An ad hoc committee was created to begin planning the year long celebration.

2007 - Donna Rawady, President

Late in the year of 2006, our Board of Directors engaged a group of RWN leaders and board members to participate on the Future Task Force (FTF). The charge of the FTF was to make recommendations to the RWN Board of Directors that would ensure the organization's longevity and financial stability, while maintaining a value-added, member-focused future for our current & future, young & seasoned RWN members. The beginning of 2007 was focused on fine tuning the recommendations of the Future Task Force.

After many months of assessment, research and strategic planning by the Future Task Force and RWN Board, some significant changes were implemented, and 2007 had the Board of Directors and Committee leadership focused on collaborating to implement those recommendations and successfully lead the changes.

We moved into a new technology-based environment. We launched the RunMyClub member management system and updated the RWN website which allowed us to continue to provide quality events and programs, and opportunities for on-line resources, information & registration. This system was chosen and designed to help RWN move into a more volunteer-based organization, and provide expanded access to the Network 24/7.

Based on all the above, we also set a goal to transition from two paid staff positions to one part time staff position by January 1, 2008. Mary Peters, our full-time Executive Director left the organization in August, 2007 and Barbara Capiersheo, our full time Administrative Assistant was with us until the end of December, 2007. RWN will be forever grateful for the invaluable support both women offered to our assessment, discovery process and the transition period efforts.

In November of 2007, RWN hired our first part-time Executive Director, Crista Deniz, who brought a great balance of business/for-profit, not-for-profit, and technical experience.

Additional accomplishments of 2007 included: a collaboration with the Democrat and Chronicle for RWN to provide the Women at Work column on the Sunday business page; the recruitment and retention of young professionals as members and RWN leaders (new SIGs such as Young Professional and Balancing Babies and Business formed); Esther Denaro Maltese and Bonnie Wetzel established our 30th year Anniversary GALA Committee (to be held in Fall, 2008); and the creation of the Job Posting Task Force, designed to provide job postings as a profit center for RWN.

Our technology and resources allowed RWN to begin to more readily notify members of opportunities inside & outside RWN. Our committees continued to thrive and take ownership, as our committee leadership and membership stepped up to the plate to support the transition and best serve our members and community.

2008: RWN 30th Anniversary - Dr. Esther Denaro Maltese, President

During the RWN 30th Anniversary Gala Year, we RWN members reaffirmed the following theme:

- WE ARE RWN when we collaborate, become problem solvers,



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integrate our experiences and provide our "personal voice".

- WE ARE RWN when we support each other, celebrate each other's strengths and respect each other's differences and opinions.
- WE ARE RWN when we are truly colleagues and mentors.
- YES, We ARE THE NETWORK !

With the industrious work accomplished by the Board of Directors, the Committees and the Membership, the following highlights represent the many successful projects initiated during the 2008 RWN Board Year:

The 30th Anniversary Gala-Co-Chairs: Bonnie Wetzel and Esther Denaro Maltese

RWN is proud of its heritage, its members and the women of Greater Rochester who continue to contribute to the economic development of the region. On October 15, 2008 at the Bausch & Lomb Winter Garden, the Network presented twelve outstanding women with the first Vital Women, Vital Roles Honor. These stellar individuals have infused the region with million of dollars of revenue, thousands of new jobs, innovative technologies and significant cultural and educational contributions.

The Network was part of RWN'S history as the event also honored the RWN Founding Mothers and introduced new programs for women leaders of tomorrow. In addition, press releases, a major article with pictures in the Democrat and Chronicle, television interviews, radio interviews including an historical discussion on "*Women and Work*" with Bob Smith and the RWN Calendar were opportunities to wave the RWN Banner—sharing the vision of the Network circa 1978 to its current status in 2008.

The 30th Anniversary Gala was a mashing success via attendance, new memberships and financially.

A new 2008 Board position was instituted to oversee and create an innovative committee structure that will expand and energize a multi-revenue development plan; increasing revenue in a timely and more sophisticated manner. Dawn Hempsey is the First Board VP for Revenue Development.

Presently, attention is given to the continuation of the Job Postings' structure and RWN'S 1st Annual Appeal.

RWN'S 1st Annual Appeal

At the 30th Anniversary Gala , Board President Maltese announced that RWN launched its First Annual Appeal: The Women for All Seasons Initiative: Dedicated to the Advancement of Women throughout their Lives. President-Elect Cynthia McGill chaired the Silent Phase of the committee work. Dawn Hempsey, Board VP- Revenue Development is in the process of appointing a committee chair to oversee the Open Phase of the Annual Appeal.

RWN Global Initiative: Connecting Women Around the World- E. D. Maltese and 2008-09 Chair, Emily Carpenter

On March 4, 2008 twenty-three distinguished women from various countries around the world participated in RWN'S First Annual Symposium: Networking and the Advancement of Women. The women were part of the Leadership Program which is under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. A bond was formed with a promise from President Maltese to develop a simple and workable IT process that would continue the productive networking experience and promote citizen diplomacy. A committee was formed and a proposal was written. The proposal was reviewed positively by representatives from the U.S. Department of State and then approved by the RWN Board for implementation in 2008-09.

RWN Office Review and Search Committee-Chair, Dr. Cynthia McGill

The purpose of this committee was three-fold: (1.) Review the RWN Office in regard to position title(s), part-time hours and designated work responsibilities, (2.) Conduct a Job Search and (3.) Keep the RWN Board of Directors informed at each step of this initiative. It was confirmed by the Board that the RWN Office would have two part-time positions: Director of Operations and Administrative Assistant. The Search Committee decided that Sandy Richardson had the credentials, experience, positive personality and team spirit that would be a continuous asset for every phase of the RWN organization and was selected for the position of RWN Director of Operations with a confirmation from the Board.

RWN Website- E. D. Maltese and Roseland Walker

In order to effectively market the magic of RWN as a multifaceted forum where women make connections to ride the wave of change, moving forward and upward in their personal and professional



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lives, the RWN Website must be engaging, proactive, state-of-the-art, user friendly and informative. Several new web pages have been recently developed to showcase RWN : the Home Page, RWN'S 1st Annual Appeal, RWN'S 30th Anniversary Gala and The RWN Global Initiative: Connecting Women Around the World. The RWN History is in the works.

RWN IT Issues- E. D. Maltese and Roseland Walker

In order to function cohesively within an RWN IT world and beyond, it was important to review the IT processes continually— including RMC. Roseland Walker's expertise discovered many inconsistencies in the RWN IT processes and remedied each one brilliantly.

2008-09 Strategic Plan-Wendy Heppel, RWN Board Member and Committee Chair

It was deemed vital for RWN to develop a new Strategic Plan that would advance the organization. The process included all RWN stakeholders. The Board reviewed the mission and high level priorities and conducted a membership survey. A general membership meeting was held to review the results and identify potential action areas. The Board studied the issues relating to diversity as well as priority action areas. These areas were reviewed with key committees. A Strategic Plan Draft has been developed which is currently under review.

Membership- Lisa Powers, VP Membership

The Board approved an increase of the Basic Membership cost to \$115.00 as of January 1, 2009. Higher level memberships remained the same. The Community Service Committee chaired by Lin Czop has accomplished extraordinary out-reach initiatives. Amy Varel worked with her team and the Marketing Committee to produce a new booklet and power point presentation for use at the O&R'S. Leanne Reed continues to work with women who want to establish new SIGS and consistently provides needed information to those interested in joining the existing SIGS.

Programs-Holly Hewins, VP Programs

In addition to the monthly free early bird networking and O&R meetings, there were eleven programs. Programs included such areas as technology, women and philanthropy, resume development, confidence building, city walks, music fun, wine-tasting, holiday networking and an RWN joint program with NAWBO.

As a May 08 Major Event, the successful 12th Annual RWN Business Conference included Keynote Speaker Diane Creel, Chief

Executive Officer, Ecovation, Inc.; The Honorable Maggie Brooks, Monroe County Executive and Patricia Malgieri, Deputy Mayor, City of Rochester, who shared their expertise and insights. In addition, the business /community representatives worked at the Exhibitor's Marketplace and the Up & Coming Businesswomen's Awards were presented at a special luncheon.

Volunteer Management Position- Brigid Ryan, RWN Board Member and Chair

Volunteer Management is a new 2008 Board position. The Volunteer Management Chair continues to meet new and current RWN members at O&R'S, RWN events, SIG meetings promoting RWN volunteerism while also sharing pointers to committee chairs on the supervision of volunteers. In addition, the establishment of a database to monitor involvement and help increase volunteer engagement is on her drawing board.

Marketing- Donna DeClemente- Chair, Newsletter and Gretchen VanDerMeid –Chair, Marketing Committee

The Marketing Committee prioritized their goals and focused on two main areas with stellar success: (1.) Launch a monthly Newsletter via e-mail that provides information that integrates the RWN website and drives more members to the site. It also helps position RWN to its members as being progressive and up-to-date with technology and today's communication tools; (2.) Continue to manage and fulfill the D&C's Women at Work Column which generates \$50.00 in revenue for RWN each week it publishes. The total 2008 revenue generated was \$2000.00. This opportunity remains with the D&C to continue the column though 2009 as long as RWN can successfully produce contributing writers.

Currently, the Marketing Committee is working on a RWN logo usage guide. With the assistance of the Strategic Plan Chair, the Marketing Committee is looking forward to establishing a new Committee Structure and a 2009 Marketing Plan.

The Mural - Chair, Lin Czop and Volunteers

Approved by the RWN Board, a mural on the back wall of the Board Room will bring the beauty of the next door park to RWN. Scheduled for Winter/Spring 2009.

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Annual Meeting- Chair, Esther Denaro Maltese

On December 9, 2008, The RWN Board of Directors invited the membership to be their guests at a Breakfast Meeting at the historical Medaille Dining Room on the Nazareth College Campus. Specific presentations were made by Board members regarding the 2008 initiatives followed by a collegial exchange of ideas with additional questions/answers. The President Elect, Dr. Cynthia McGill was also introduced to the membership as the 2009 RWN Board President by President Maltese. Over 60 RWN members attended the Breakfast Meeting. From the response of the membership attendance, it is strongly recommended that The Annual Meeting become an important event.

2009: Dr. Cynthia L. McGill, President

"Women Connecting With Women"

2009 was an exciting and unique year for the Rochester Women's Network (RWN)! It was my vision to foster connections between corporate and professional women of color* with the women of RWN. At our January 2009 Board Retreat, the Board of Directors wholeheartedly endorsed my vision and our initiative for the year, *"Women Connecting With Women"*.

To be successful, the Board and I worked as a team. "The truth is that teamwork is at the heart of great achievement," writes John Maxwell in his book, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*.

The purpose of the initiative was to connect women of color with women of RWN. By connecting and working together on common interests, bonds formed and women of color joined, worked and became an integral part of RWN.

The goals of the initiative were:

- 1) To increase awareness of RWN, specially for women of color professionals.
- 2) To increase the enrollment of women of color professionals in RWN.
- 3) To increase the participation of women of color professionals in RWN.
- 4) To establish mentoring/working and transcultural opportunities for all women in the network.

We accomplished these goals by hosting Connecting Breakfasts, which were held at the Century Club, and inviting women of color to connect with our Board members. Over 60 women of color joined RWN in 2009 and many co-chaired and worked on various committees in the network.

To ensure bi-racial connections would be implemented throughout the network, our Splash! and The Summit co-chairs were bi-racial partners. This bi-racial pairing strategy was woven into every fabric of the network: co-chairs, speakers, co-facilitators of the roundtables and the individuals represented in our videos. The Summit was the most diverse conference, in every aspect, ever held in Rochester!

Other 2009 accomplishments:

- 1) I proposed and the Board voted in agreement that our professional women's conference would be entitled "The Summit" each year.
- 2) Connections were made with our own leaders by hosting "Conversations with the President and Board". We met with our Committee Chairs; SIG Chairs; advocates, mentors and patrons; and our members. These connections were not only beneficial but fun.
- 3) "Corporate Memberships" were developed to encourage businesses and companies to join the network and receive numerous benefits.
- 4) Over 200 women of color were introduced to the network and over 60 joined.
- 5) We have printed our first Annual Report for our members. The Annual Report was underwritten by Priceless Vessels, Inc.
- 6) Because of the generosity of these people, I was able to secure \$8,500 in underwriting to support RWN's Splash! and The Summit: Edward Jones Investments (Kelly Olczak), Upper Cut Hair Fashions (Maria Colon), Lin Czop Interiors (Lin Czop), Priceless Vessels, Inc. (Dr. Cynthia McGill), Eastman Kodak Company (Essie Calhoun), Mary Worboys-Turner, Brown and Hutchinson Law Firm (Michelle Hutchinson, Esq.) and the Powers Law Firm (Lisa Powers, Esq.). I thank you all for your support!

I also want to thank our Board of Directors for their support and hard work: Cynthia Herriott, Jaclyn Mellone, Esther Maltese, Dawn Hampsey, Hollis Hewins, Christine Surette, Brigid Ryan, Alfreda Brown, Tamu Brown-Hutchinson, Lin Czop, Jillian Dart, Wendy Hephell, Donna Pritchard and Stephanie Wilson.

Last but not least, I want to thank our hard-working staff: Mary Janick and Sandra Richardson. Sandy is truly our "Rock Star"!

*Women of Color is defined by EEOC as African-American, Latino, Native-American and Asian-American/Pacific Islander.