

# Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

## Reclaiming Our Movement: The MCBW Statewide Conference

How is it even possible to sum up how amazing the 2002 MCBW Statewide Conference? On November 6-8, over 150 members of the battered women's movement in Minnesota and other states gathered at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd to energize, organize, and discuss how to best reclaim our movement.

It was a challenging time for the movement to meet: Sheila and Paul Wellstone had been tragically killed in a plane crash less than two weeks before and just after the November 5th election. Ironically, though, perhaps it was the right time to meet, for MCBW member programs and everyone in our movement to celebrate our accomplishments and discuss how to best meet our future challenges.

The conference began on Wednesday afternoon with the Annual Meeting for Voting Member Programs. At the meeting, new Board members were elected (see page 4 for details) and emerging issues and the upcoming MCBW legislative agenda were discussed. After a pizza dinner, caucuses met for women of color, LGBT issues, youth and children's advocate, and the Gender Think Tank.

We began bright and early on Thursday morning with the Opening Ceremony and Keynote Speaker, which were presented by Tillie Blackbear of the White Buffalo Calf Women's Shelter in South Dakota and Ellen Pence of Duluth's Praxis International.

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## Remembering Sheila and Paul Wellstone

*Delrita Rudnitski, Interim Executive Director*

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women grieves the loss of Senator Paul Wellstone and Sheila Wellstone. Sheila and Paul Wellstone brought the issue of violence against women and their children to national attention. Their work on behalf of battered women and their children was instrumental in passing legislation that protected victims/survivors and strove to improve the lives of battered women. Senator Paul Wellstone co-authored the Violence Against Women Act I and II, he authored

bills on Women and Economic Security, Child Witnesses of Domestic Violence, and supported each and every piece of legislation to increase safety and security for victim/survivors of domestic violence.

In addition to his work legislatively on behalf of battered women and their children, Paul Wellstone donated his entire salary increase each year to battered women's programs across the state.

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"Women have to join their voices with those of others to define what kind of society they want to live in here in the U.S. and with our sisters around the globe."

~Prema Mathai-Davis

## Fall 2002

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## Remembering Sheila and Paul Wellstone

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Senator Wellstone and Sheila Wellstone worked tirelessly on behalf of battered women and their children and for the individuals working in programs providing services to battered women. However, when we tried to thank them for their work on our behalf and for battered women and their children, they would thank us instead. We loved them and they loved us.

Every year, Sheila and Paul made a personal visit to many battered women's programs across the state of Minnesota, and Sheila Wellstone spoke each year at the Violence Against Women Action Day at the Minnesota Capitol. Every battered woman's program in Minnesota has personal stories to tell about Sheila and Paul Wellstone and their dedication to ending violence against women and their children.

We are deeply saddened by their loss on behalf of the women and children they cared so deeply for and for Minnesota and the Nation. Senator Paul Wellstone and Sheila Wellstone were incredible role models for ending violence in the home and in the world. They made us proud of our work in the field of domestic violence and gave us hope that one day our dreams of ending violence against women would come true.

We will miss them in our movement and in our hearts. We wish to extend our deepest sympathy to their families and friends, and we will never forget the love and support they gave so graciously to our programs serving battered women and their children.

## Remembrance and Mourning: The Wellstone Memorial Service on October 25, 2002

*Danielle Kluz, Communications Coordinator*

It was a day of shock and horror at the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women when our staff found out that Sheila and Paul Wellstone, along with six others, had been killed in a plane crash on October 25. There aren't adequate words to describe how we felt to lose the two greatest champions of the battered women's movement, both in Minnesota and nationally.

Our staff wanted to somehow pay tribute to the commitment Sheila and Paul showed towards ending violence against women. We decided to make a banner that thanked the Wellstones for the incredible work they did. After much deliberation, we went with a simple message: PAUL AND SHEILA: THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. On the day of the memorial service we spent several hours stenciling letters and filling them in with marker on a large piece of lavender cloth to make the banner.

We got to the memorial service early, since huge crowds were expected at Williams Arena. It was a good decision since the lines to get in were already stretching around the block. It was touching to see the diversity of the people waiting in line, how the Wellstones had touched the lives of so many people in our state.

After waiting in line for a bit, we decided to unfurl our banner and let those around us sign the banner in

tribute to the Wellstones. We were joined by staff members of the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition. Many MCBW members stopped by to commiserate and share memories of Paul and Sheila.

The memorial service itself was in turns touching, mournful, funny, and inspirational. It was a true celebration of the life and work of the Wellstones. I suspect there were very few dry eyes in Williams Arena after the short film that highlighted the lives of Paul and Sheila Wellstone. For me, the memorial was a cathartic experience, where I was able to fully express the multitude of emotions I was experiencing about this tragedy.

What was particularly pleasing was how Paul and Sheila's domestic violence work was highlighted by many of the speakers at the service. It's important that we not forget all they did for our movement and how they inspired us to do our work. Now the challenge is going on without them. I hope that everyone working to end domestic violence can take the spark that the Wellstones gave them and keep it alive. It's time for us to work together as a movement, face our upcoming legislative challenges, and most importantly—protect women and children in Minnesota from violence and abuse.

## Reclaiming Our Movement: The MCBW Statewide Conference

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Both women motivated the attendees with stories of the early days of the battered women's movement and advice on how to move forward in difficult times.

Thursday sped by with three sessions of workshops on everything from Women Who Use Violence to Art for Healing. At lunch, Sandy Davidson of MCBW presented a plenary session on The Effects of the Batterer on Children. Another plenary session was held in the late afternoon, with a panel on men's role in the battered women's movement, with Chuck Derry and Mark Wynn speaking.

At the Banquet Dinner, MCBW recognized departing Board members Tamara Buffalo and Ida Sutherland, and also five women who have made incredible contributions to the battered women's movement: Jennie Hevern of Listening Ear Crisis Center, Sandy Davidson of MCBW, Nicole Matthews of the MN Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, and the late Maxine Kruschke, founder of the Southern Valley Alliance for Battered Women. A special award was given posthumously to Cheri Thomas, an advocate for Fairview WomanKind who was tragically murdered in October of this year.

The highlight of the MCBW Statewide Conference for many was the performance of the *How Far is Home* tour, which featured amazing musicians, in-

cluding Annie Humphreys and Keith Secola. The performance was personal, meaningful, bittersweet, hilarious and inspirational to the audience.

Perhaps it's more accurate to say that for many at the conference, the highlight was simply getting to see old friends who live far away and meeting new people. At meals and in the lobby bar, it was neat to see groups sitting together who comprised programs from all over Minnesota.

On Friday we had another session of great workshops followed by a performance of *Will You Hold My Child*, an interactive play presented by the staff of Praxis International. At the closing lunch, Debbie Tucker of the National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence spoke about our movement's need to come together to face the upcoming legislative challenges.

And then it was Friday afternoon and time to say goodbye. Many of us were exhausted from all the activities but exhilarated from learning new things, making new friends, and the wonderful energy of the member programs of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. Most of all, we came away ready to continue to work for the safety of our state's women and children.

## Save the Date: The MCBW 25th Anniversary Gala and Fundraiser

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women will celebrate its 25th Anniversary on **Friday, April 25th, 2003** at the St. Paul University Club downtown club. The goal of this event is to raise money for the Minnesota Coalition so it can help underwrite programs and services that aid the thousands of battered women and children throughout the state of Minnesota. This will be an opportunity for the wonderful people in the Minnesota battered women's movement to celebrate our many accomplishments since MCBW was founded in 1978. There will be dinner, dancing, a silent auction, and recognition of the many women and MCBW member programs who have done so much to work to end violence against women and children.

If you are interested in helping MCBW with the many tasks that will be required to make the 25th Anniversary Gala a success, or you know of corporations or sponsors who would be interested in sponsoring this fundraising event, please contact Delrita Rudnitski at (651) 646-6177 or [drudnitski@mcbw.org](mailto:drudnitski@mcbw.org).

## The Contact Your Legislators Challenge

*Danielle Kluz, Communications Coordinator*

As you know, funding for battered women's programs is at grave risk with the new Governor and Legislature. Now is the time to take action and contact your local legislators, both new and incumbents **You are a far more effective lobbyist for the battered women's movement than any paid lobbyist or MCBW staff member. You can educate your local legislators about our issues.**

### MCBW CHALLENGES ITS MEMBER PROGRAMS TO DO THE FOLLOWING BEFORE THE NEW SESSION BEGINS IN JANUARY:

1. Call your local Representatives and Senators, both incumbents and new legislators.
2. Tell them about your program—what you do for your community and who you serve.
3. Ask legislators where they stand on domestic violence issues and the disparities in the state for women and children of color. You can use the Legislators Response Forum as a guide for what to ask them. If a legislator doesn't understand an issue, this is an excellent opportunity to educate her or him.
4. Invite the legislator to visit your program to learn more. This is a wonderful time to build relationships

with members of the House and Senate. Let the legislator know that you are a Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women member program and you'll be keeping touch in during the session. If your program is having any activities, invite legislators to come.

5. Fill out the Legislator Response Form on **page 5** and mail or fax it to MCBW.

6. Let's reclaim our political grassroots movement. **Empower battered women in your program** to contact legislators, too. Get support groups you work with, shelter residents, every survivor you know to get involved with getting to know legislators. Help their voices to be heard!

**Do you not know who your legislators are in your service area? Either go to <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/election/index.html> or call MCBW and we'll find out for you.**

**Take the challenge! It's free, it's easy, and it's the best way to insure that funding is NOT CUT in this coming session.**

**If you'd like to participate, let Danielle know at [dkluz@mcbw.org](mailto:dkluz@mcbw.org) or (651) 646-6177. We challenge EVERY PROGRAM to participate!**

## New MCBW Board Members elected at Annual Meeting

At the 2002 MCBW Statewide Conference at Cragun's Resort in Bemidji, the MCBW Voting Members met and elected new members of the Board of Directors. We would like to welcome the following four people to the MCBW Board:

**Edwina Baskin-Bey**, *Mayo Clinic*, Rochester, MN

**Nicole Matthews**, *Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition*, Minneapolis, MN

**Deborah Nathanson**, *CSD-MN Domestic Abuse Program*, St. Paul, MN

**Bruce Reeves**, *Violence Intervention Project*, Thief River Falls, MN

We would also like to honor Tamara Buffalo and Ida Sutherland, who have ended their Board terms, for their hard work and dedication to MCBW. Thank you so much for your time and energy!

## The Contact the Legislators Challenge Response Form

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Program \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date Called \_\_\_\_\_

Legislator Name \_\_\_\_\_

Office \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

Legislator Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Party \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where does the legislator stand on restoring the over \$5 million in cuts made last legislative session to state crime victim services?

2. Where does the legislator stand on returning to the per diem system for funding battered women's shelters and safe homes instead of the new grant funding system for these programs? This is an opportunity to educate legislators on the difference between the per diem and grant funding systems.

3. What does the legislator feel is the best manner in which to address the disparities in Minnesota for women and children of color and Native American women and children? Does the legislator support funding for culturally specific programs to ensure the safety and security of women and children of color?

4. Did you invite the legislator to visit your program to learn more? Was the legislator responsive to this? Did you invite the legislator to any of your program's events? Let the legislator know you are an MCBW member program and you will be keeping in touch with her or him.

*Thanks for participating in the Call the Legislators Challenge! Please return your forms to MCBW by faxing to (651) 646-1527 or mailing to:  
MCBW, 1821 University Ave. W, Suite S-112, St. Paul, MN 55104.*

## The Women of Color and Native American Women's Network Legislative Committee

*Lonna Stevens, Program Coordinator*

The WOCNAN joined forces this election with the Women of Color Committee of the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault to focus on voter participation/education, pre-session legislative organizing planning, and other skills building activities geared toward the understanding of public policy. Emily Chen of MCASA and I are going to host meetings for the upcoming legislative session and throughout the summer and are focusing on legislation and public policy that affect communities of color as it pertains to safety around domestic violence and sexual assault.

We identified the focused trainings around a legislative issues list that was compiled by our joint meetings that were held statewide in preparation for the elections on November 5, 2002. We will be bringing in legislators/trainers and public policy analysts to assist us in educating the WOC on how to advocate legislatively and to stay current on issues that affect our communities.

We will be hosting a series of trainings and opportunities to learn more about the issues that were identified on the legislative agenda developed by WOC statewide. Below is a list of upcoming opportunities to learn more about public policy and current issues.

**January**~The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Immigration Project with Centro Legal Inc., hosted by MCASA.

**February**~Child Protection Services with an emphasis on termination of parental rights at six-months with the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, hosted by MCBW.

**March**~Affordable Housing/Access to Housing: Landlord/Management sexual harassment/assault of tenants with Nicole Lindmeyer of the Law Project Legal Aid Society, hosted by MCASA.

**April**~Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)/Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), hosted by MCBW.

**May**~MCCVS Strategic Plan Report 2002-2005- Implications for Communities of Color and other traditionally underserved communities-Paula Weber/MCCVS, hosted by MCASA.

**June**~Affordable/Accessible Housing: Felony Expungement and rental application fee for battered women, hosted by MCBW.

**July**~Delayed Discovery Bill with Rhonda Hoepfer of the Sexual Violence and Abuse Crisis Center, hosted by MCASA.

**August**~Homelessness Panel (Project Off Streets, Breaking Free, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless), hosted by MCBW.

We will also be working with the Women and Girls Come to the Capitol with Mercy Olson-Ward, Public Policy director for the YWCA and the Minnesota Women's Consortium to host a woman of color component to the capitol day. We hope to have our legislative agenda finalized by August 2003 and we will then focus our meetings from September-November 2003 for emerging issues.

Please contact Lonna Stevens, Program Coordinator for MCBW at 651-646-6177 or email at [lstevens@mcbw.org](mailto:lstevens@mcbw.org) for more information or if you have any questions or would like to host a meeting at your site.

### Learning Our Work, Loving Our Work: Training for New Advocates and Continuing Education for Experienced Advocates

**The Advocacy Training has been rescheduled for January 15 and 16, 2003. Please make the change in your calendars!**

**The location is still to be announced, but will be in the Twin Cities.**

**Registration forms will be mailed and faxed shortly.**

**Please join us for this 2 day training session!**

## **Eight MCBW/MCASA Forums educate candidates and the public**

*Danielle Kluz, Communications Coordinator*

We came, we traveled, we educated. From August to October of this year, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault traveled all over the state to hold forums for State Legislature candidates.

The forums focused on domestic violence and sexual assault issues. Five questions were asked of candidates, including restoring the \$5.12 million in cuts to crime victim programs, restoring the over \$1 million in cuts to shelter per diem, extending the statute of limitations for sexual abuse victims to bring their abusers to justice, disparities in Minnesota for women and children of color, and the possibility of creating a Violence Against Women Office in State government.

Our candidate forums were held in Lanesboro, Tower, Detroit Lakes, Hutchinson, Montevideo, Minneapolis and St. Paul, in conjunction with BWLAP's New Laws trainings. In addition, we held a Gubernatorial can-

didate forum in Bloomington.

We found that, in general, candidates of all parties were concerned about domestic violence/sexual assault issues and were in favor of no further state budget cuts. In addition, most candidates seemed in favor of extending the sexual assault statute of limitations. The forums were an excellent opportunity to educate candidates on our many issues, including the lack of domestic violence and sexual assault programs in many counties, the difference between per diem and grant funding, and the need for continued State support of our programs.

In addition to the MCBW/MCASA forums, many of our member programs held their own forums and we salute these programs for doing this work. The candidate forums were a great way to begin building relationships with legislators and increasing their knowledge of domestic violence and sexual assault.

## **Thank you for making the MCBW Statewide Conference amazing!**

*Delrita Rudnitski, Interim Executive Director*

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to making MCBW's Annual Conference so memorable.

I am so grateful for all the hard work of the staff at MCBW in organizing and carrying out the details of preparing for the conference. I would especially like to thank Danielle Kluz, whose work behind the scenes too often goes unnoticed. Her work is invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge Delia Ruiz who was unable to attend the conference due to illness. She too contributed to the organizing of this event and ensuring its success. I am so appreciative of Lonna Stevens who worked so hard on making this conference a success. And I cannot forget Sandy Davidson, who provides inspiration to our staff every day. I am so grateful that we have such committed and remarkable women at MCBW.

I also want to express my gratitude to the wonderful presenters who taught us so much at the conference, who traveled far, and who exemplified the dedication of the battered women's movement. Thanks, too, to Sharonna Lee and Kristine Lizdas of the Battered Women's Justice Project for aiding our staff at the conference in innumerable ways.

Somehow, somehow, our conference, which immediately followed the election, symbolized that spirit of surviving and thriving in the midst of the most insurmountable circumstances. We mixed tears with laughter and renewed our dedication to continue this important work to end the violence against women and their children.

We were mourning, but we weren't giving up. We were deeply saddened by the loss of Paul and Sheila Wellstone, the elections, the impending war, but we carried on. We held our conference, advocates came, caucuses were held, presenters informed, speakers inspired, entertainers made us laugh, and we vowed to keep the issue of domestic violence alive in the State of Minnesota, in our Congress, in our communities, in the media, in our hearts, in our actions, and in memory of Paul and Sheila Wellstone.

MCBW will carry on its work to end domestic violence, in times of war, in times of peace, with funding for our programs, and without funding, it doesn't matter. What matters is that we won't stop until all women and their children can live without the fear of being beaten and killed.

My deepest thanks to all the women, children, and men too, who made this a freakin' great conference!

## Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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Solutions fund™



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Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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We thank you for your generous support of MCBW.