

**The 89<sup>th</sup> Northwestern Region Conference of SIA Vancouver, WA April 26-29, 2007**

*"You can't change the wind but you can adjust your sails."*

*SIPK Attendees: President Carol Hansen, President-elect Mary Weimer, Delegate Jacque Sonderman, Region Fundraising Chair Suzanne Sullivan, District 3 Fundraising Chair Jo Breneman, District 3 Membership Chair Jane Foreman, Karen Thronson-Stephens, Fran Gabriel, Antoinette Burnside*

And so it was.....

...over four hundred women gathered by the river

...to learn... to laugh... and to be moved to tears.

We learned from dynamic keynote speakers. My favorite? Dr. Rachel Nugent's presentation entitled "Saving Lives and Saving Money: The Benefits of Reducing Maternal Mortality." The problem is especially severe in Africa and Southeast Asia where deaths of young mothers could be prevented. Infection following childbirth is a leading cause and basic sanitation would make a big difference. Dr. Nugent is a senior researcher for Global Health Programs at the Center for Global Development and she did bring words of hope, too. Renewed energy is now coming forward from the World Health Organization and others to address the problem. Factors that can save more mothers are free delivery of health care in developing countries, skilled birth attendants, pre-natal and post partum care.

We learned from workshop presentations. I attended an informative workshop entitled, "Interpreting Women's History" which will be helpful as we gear up to celebrate the centennial of Women's Suffrage in 2010. I also was proud of our own Suzanne Sullivan, assisted by Jo Breneman, in the workshop, "Focus on Fundraising." Likewise, the workshop, "Membership", in which our own Jane Foreman, District 3 Membership Chair participated. The workshop on Heart Health was also very informative.

We laughed! I don't believe I've ever attended a conference where women had so much fun. We had fun Friday night at Tell and Sell, dressed in our sailor hats--and we sold nearly all of the goods we took! Saturday night we played "dress up". In honor of Venture Club's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, we were all to dress in "Roaring 20's Garb".....the music played, we had a parade, and enjoyed a wonderful dinner and program presented by Venture members.

And we were moved to tears. It was SO touching to not only read the stories in our conference booklet of the Women's Opportunity Award Region Recipients, but also to hear Jo Trumbo, \$5000 Federation Winner, speak and express her appreciation. She had many of us reaching for a tissue. Rani Hong, the Region's Making a Difference For Women Winner also brought tears to our eyes. She, along with her husband, has created The Tronie Foundation to "create safe havens for women and children victimized by international slave organizations." It is estimated that up to 17,000 people are smuggled into the U.S. each year; 80% are women and children. Dealing in human beings is much easier, more profitable, and generally safer than trafficking drugs, guns or other contraband. Her story as a victim was compelling.

The most uplifting speakers, to me, were N.W.Region's Violet Richardson Citizenship Award Recipients. Hannah Watkins is the author and illustrator of four disaster preparedness children's books and Dallas Jessup and Catherine Wehage created a self-defense DVD entitled, "Just Yell Fire." We felt proud when Carol Hansen picked up the award for our own 2007 Region Recipient of the Violet Richardson Citizenship Award, Joanna Puryear, who was unable to attend. I also enjoyed the speech given by the 2007 Fellowship Award Winner, Janet Bush.

I was impressed by the leadership—and grace—of our N.W. Region Governor, Jan Martin. Our official visitors, SIA Director Fannie Louie and Fund Development Chair Linda McDonials, provided much information which I will share at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIPK business meeting in May when I give my Delegate's Report. Thanks for sending me to Conference!

—Jacque Sonderman