

January 2026

Subject: St. Mary's County Commission for Women Annual Report for 2025

Background: The St. Mary's County Commission for Women (CFW) was established in July 1976 as a result of legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly to address matters of specific concern to women. The St. Mary's County Commissioners appoint members.

Mission: To celebrate and support St. Mary's County women through outreach, advocacy and service to secure an equitable community for all.

Meetings and Membership: The meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 pm. Changes in the schedule are sometimes made for holidays and to accommodate the needs of the group and activities.

Elected Officers—July 2025-July 2026

Catherine Stewart, Chair

Tracey Shivers, Vice Chair

Callie King, Secretary

CFW Membership as of 4/17/25

Kimberly Bannister

Kate Rocheteau

Kim Belvin

Tracey Shivers

Kristina Howansky

Taylor Spencer-Davis

Callie King

Emily Stagner

Elizabeth Mildenstein

Catherine Stewart

Melissa Rodriguez

The Commission for Women (CFW) is a very active group. The group strives to stay informed of current issues and trends and shares that information with county leaders. A priority for our members is recognizing women of St. Mary's County who make significant contributions to our County through volunteer work. The Commission continues to support the Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship through funds raised at the Annual Women's History event. The Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship Endowment currently stands at \$65,740 and generated \$1,172 for the 2025-2026 academic year. Two \$1,000 scholarships were awarded for the 2024-2025 academic year to Jasmine King, with a 3.5 GPA in Arts & Sciences and Samantha Knopp with a 3.6 GPA in Cybersecurity. For the 2025-2026 current academic year Miranda Cook with a 3.6 GPA in Business Management. Thirty-three scholarships have been awarded since its inception in 2010.

This scholarship differs from most as it is designed to help returning students over the age of 25 and can be used for part-time enrollment.

The issue of violence against women remains a top priority and is a complex topic that requires multiple partnerships and coordinated efforts. We have member agencies serving on the Family Violence Coordinating Council who represent the citizens of St. Mary's County and inform the Commission for Women of the ongoing work to provide services and any gaps in the system.

We have members who serve on St. Mary's Homeless Prevention Board, the Violence, Trauma & Injury Committee, and a representative on the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women, (MLAW), which are other areas of interest to us. The CFW members provide updates and knowledge enabling us to continue fulfilling our mission. Members of the Commission for Women are community minded women who serve throughout our county in a variety of roles. Their involvement allows us to have a broad view of current efforts, successes, and needs.

January 2025

January 8: Meeting

January 8: A motion was made and carried to raise the price of the ticket for the annual event to \$35 per person.

February 2025

February 6: Dating Violence Prevention Proclamation

February 10: Meeting

March 2025

March 4: Proclamation for Women's History Month

March 17: Meeting

March 22: CFW Members Catherine Stewart and Kim Belvin attended the Wellness Fair sponsored by Med Start St. Mary's Hospital and the Delicados of St. Mary's. We displayed information/resources materials and provided visitors with momentos from the Commission for Women.

March 29: A Women's History Month Brunch was held on March 29, at the White Rose in Callaway, MD. The theme for 2025 was "***Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations***". Our keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Yolonda Wilson, President, College of Southern Maryland, who superbly supported the theme with a powerful speech for all in attendance. Mrs. Charlottis Woodley, an educator and community advocate, was recognized and awarded the Ruth Bader Ginsberg Lifetime Achievement Award. Her current position of Director of Parent and Family Engagement, in the St. Mary's County Public Schools, along with her years of experience in the teaching and education field, was a testament of the theme too.

Two former CFW Members were recognized as Hometown Heroines. Ms. Marta Kelsey and Ms. Norma Pipkin both have significant experience in education and teaching careers, with an outstanding background that ties into this year's theme. Ms. Kelsey and Ms. Pipkin delivered excellent speeches. Ms. Jane Hale Sypher spoke about the college fund and presented a check at the event. The event recognized one Tomorrow's Women and recognized eight nominees for the Woman of the Year. All nominees were recognized as true volunteers in the St. Mary's County Community. Each nominee and awardee received flowers, a gift bag of CFW items, and a plaque. Moving comments were given by several attendees. A thank you note was given to the speakers. Acknowledgement was given to our sponsors listed in our brochure. The CFW Members were thrilled with another outstanding event held to honor our community leaders and volunteers.

April 2025

April 21: Meeting

April 10: CFW Member Catherine Stewart tabled Take Back the Night at the St. Mary's College of Maryland. This event was well received by the college students, information and giveaway items were shared for all who stopped by to inquire about our mission.

May 2025

May 19: Meeting

June 2025

June 16: Meeting

June CFW Members Kim Belvin and Liz Mildenstein tabled the Wellness Fair at St. Mary's College of Maryland. This event was well received by the many attendees. This was a great opportunity to provide the community with information about the work of the CFW.

July 2025

July 21: Meeting

July 21 Election of Officers—Catherine Stewart, Chair, Tracey Shivers, Vice Chair, and Callie King Secretary

July 30 Meeting with Charles County CFW members to explore options for an event together.

August 2025

August 18: Meeting

August 26-Proclamation-Women's Equality Day

August 1 – New Member Orientation/Retreat-Ten members participated and were given the opportunity to provide agenda items. The session focused on welcoming new members, ice breaker exercises to get better acquainted, a discussion about proclamations, previous community engagements events, and a list of new items/events to incorporate into our year ahead along with a calendar. At the end of the retreat, all agreed a goal for 2026 was to be more transparent and more visible within our community.

September 2025

September 15: Meeting

October 2025

October No Meeting

October 20-Why Don't You Just Leave Panel Discussion at the St. Mary's County Library in Lexington Park, MD. CFW Member Taylor Spencer-Davis planned this event for recognition of Domestic Violence (DV) Awareness Month. The panel members included the Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy staff members, law enforcement members, Family Peer Support Specialist, a licensed social worker, lawyer, and a member of the community who shared her domestic violence experience that occurred in her life for over 27 years. The question and answer session was very helpful to all. Attendees were given an opportunity to help pack bags for DV survivors. This event was opened to the public and was well attended. The Center provided literature on domestic violence and services to support survivors. An art show to spotlight local artists was also included and the winners were announced at the beginning of the program. The National Coalition of 100 Black Women Southern Maryland Chapter were first time partners for this event. This session was the best with reference to attendance and the CFW members were proud to say this was a huge success.

October 21-Proclamation-National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

November 2025

November 17: Meeting held by Zoom

Guardianship Program-Gifts due December 15, 2025

December 2025

December 15 Meeting-Not official-no quorum

December 15-Members delivered Guardianship Program Gift Bags for 10 persons

December 15-Photo Opportunity-Guardianship Program-CFW Members Catherine Stewart and Tracey Shivers

Looking forward: We will continue to advocate for procedures, programs and legislation for women's equality. We will offer a forum to discuss local issues relevant to St. Mary's County

women. Finally, we are committed to our mission, to building partnerships and strengthening our community.

Respectfully Submitted

Catherine Stewart