

**Newsletter Volume 5**

**Vision:** To be the preeminent women's organization of well recognized, respected and empowered women in Connecticut, who are committed to supporting each other and impacting others

**Mission:** The International Women's Forum Connecticut (IWFCT) brings together accomplished and professional women leaders of significant and diverse achievement and provides them with unique and innovative experiences for their support and advancement

**A Message from IWFCT President Roberta Prescott**



Greetings to all.

This has been a great year for IWFCT. At my inauguration last June, I set these goals: to **GROW** our membership, to **CONNECT** our members with programs, dine-arounds, networking with your peers and members of other forums; and to **ENGAGE** you in recruiting new members and participating in our North American and Cornerstone conferences. In fact, 11 of you arrived in Chicago last fall to help honor our own Valarie Gelb as one of 12 women around the globe who make a difference – the largest number of attendees from CT in a long time. For those of you who were not able to attend our annual meeting, you can read Marie Meliksetians' column in this newsletter.

I've always felt that you can evaluate a leader by the effectiveness of her team. I want to tell you about some of IWFCT's teams' remarkable accomplishments this year. But before I begin I must tell you that beyond their specific responsibilities, they freely contributed their time and talent in three meetings to develop a new Strategic Plan to bring IWFCT into today. Numerous thanks to – Denise Stevens, Marie Meliksetian, Michele Etzel, Valarie Gelb and Kate Larson, led by Sheryl Sleeva. The strategy deck will be available soon for distribution.

First, PROGRAMS. Our Secretary and Program Chair, Marie Meliksetian shared with you, not only the tremendous success of the programs she's provided, but also her outreach to other organizations and regions, plus one outstanding Value Added. IWFCT on March 17<sup>th</sup>, hosted a panel on Economic Empowerment for Women at the Parallel UN meeting in New York. We represented all of IWF. It was very well attended and we were featured on IWF's home page. Valarie Gelb moderated the panel and IWFCT member, Carolyn Miles, CEO of Save the Children was one of the panelists.

MEMBERSHIP is always a challenge as members often drop out through retirement or because of job transfers. Yet our Vice President and Membership Chair, Michele Etzel, not only exceeded her one year recruitment goal in 6 months, but is still bringing outstanding women on board. And she asks all of you to let her know of any potential new members who might be excellent potential for IWFCT.

All organizations need to be fiscally responsible, and holding our feet to the fire is our TREASURER, Denise Stevens, whose creativity and oversight kept our budget focused and working. And finally Immediate Past President, Valarie Gelb, is responsible for OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE, especially, this year, the by-laws. I would be remiss not to introduce you to the secret treasure of IWFCT, our EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR, Kate Larson.

One of our most popular features in IWFCT is our dine-arounds. I was honored to host one this year in West Hartford, and thank you to **Joanne Firstenberg** and **Ann Gray** who hosted in Greenwich and Stamford. All were well attended and we got to know and enjoy each other in new and fun ways.

IWFCT is your organization and we welcome your ideas for speakers and programs. Let us know and we'll respond immediately. And finally, you all have so many wonderful accomplishments. Make sure to let us know so that we can honor you in our new upcoming "Member News and Announcements" column. I look forward to seeing many of you in Houston

**Roberta Prescott**

*I encourage you to reach out to me or any of our Executive Team:*

Roberta Prescott: [Roberta@theprescottgroup.com](mailto:Roberta@theprescottgroup.com), Michele Etzel: [michelemetzel@gmail.com](mailto:michelemetzel@gmail.com) Marie Meliksetian: [kasmarie@gmail.com](mailto:kasmarie@gmail.com) Denise Stevens: [denise.stevens@matrixphs.com](mailto:denise.stevens@matrixphs.com) Sheryl Sleeva: [Sheryl\\_Sleeva@yahoo.com](mailto:Sheryl_Sleeva@yahoo.com) and Valarie Gelb: [valarie@gelbglobal.com](mailto:valarie@gelbglobal.com)

## IWF Upcoming Conferences



We hope that you have marked your calendars for the Houston Conference, which will be held **October 25-27, 2017**



Hold **May 2-4, 2018** for the Melbourne, Australia Conference. More details to be shared when made available

## Upcoming IWFCT Events

### **Marie Meliksetian, Secretary and Program Chair**

Summer get together? Yes. Yes. Yes!  
We are indeed planning an August summer gathering. Be on the look-out for the date and location soon to come!

Our Year 2017/2018 Programs will reconvene in September with various events and topics that you've requested. A select few are included below

- Economic Development
- International Affairs
- Women on Boards
- Caregiving Landscape
- Site visits
- A retreat to indulge ourselves

In the coming weeks, I will be in touch with you for a one-on-one discussion to seek your individual thoughts and additional program opportunities.

Talk to you all soon, enjoy the summer and see you in August

## Member News

2

### Welcome our newest members

**Robin Smith** is the Vice President and General Counsel, Americas for LEGO Systems, Inc., based in Enfield, CT.



**Dr. Prathibha Varkey** is the President and CEO of Northeast and the Senior Vice President of Yale New Haven Health.

### Congratulate our members

**Dolores Ennico**, Corporate Vice President, HR at Olin Corporation was recently honored by the University of New Haven with an honorary doctorate in Business Administration at the 94<sup>th</sup> commencement of the University of New Haven. In announcing the award, Steven H. Kaplan, president of UNH, said "[Ms. Ennico's] journey from the research lab to the executive suite is a testament to the limitless potential of following your passion and especially, the extraordinary power of being a lifelong learner."



**Sheryl Sleeva**, CMO & Head of New Ventures and IWFCT Board Member has been accepted into the Ph.D. program at Columbia University.

**Diane Smith**, President, Diane Smith Media was recently inducted into the Connecticut Journalism Hall of Fame. In his induction remarks, Jerry Dunklee, Journalism Professor at Southern Connecticut State University and Past President, CT Society of Professional Journalists, detailed Diane's many accomplishments in print, television and radio, noting that Diane "has been on the air, and in our collective minds, since 1982."



# Cornerstone Conference Report – Sweden, May 2017

## STOCKHOLM AND THE CORNERSTONE CONFERENCE

by Roberta Prescott with input from Maura Carley, Wendy Stahl and Karen Scappaticci

On May 17-19<sup>th</sup>, 700 women from 40 countries arrived in Stockholm, Europe's first green city, for the IWF Cornerstone Conference. Stockholm also had the world's first open fiber network, is the fastest growing city in Europe, and has more refugees per capita than any other country—25 million. It plans to be carbon neutral by 2050.

This year's theme was "A More Sustainable World: Movements and Markets." The focus was not just on what is, but also what could be possible. This illustrates the value of strategic partnerships to enable change.

The meeting provided interesting and challenging sessions, networking opportunities and time for fun. IWF's Value Proposition of peer to peer networking, support and advancement of leadership was much in evidence as new friendships were forged from around the world.



Vasa Museum



Maura Carley and Roberta Prescott at the IWF Gala

In a session on private security, Michele Dennedy, Vice President of Cisco provided us with memorable and fun advice about passwords. *"Treat them like panties – keep them to yourself, keep them exotic and change them frequently"*.

Abba's music imitators provided lively entertainment in the opening and closing sessions. A highlight of the conference was the final Gala held in the extraordinary Vasa Museum. In 1628 the Vikings built an enormous warship which sank on its maiden voyage. 100 years ago it was discovered and raised intact. It was so large they didn't know where to move it. Instead they built a museum around it and the result is astonishing. (Photo attached above). Few other highlights included below. Details at [iwforum.org](http://iwforum.org)

### TECH STARTUPS

In business, the Unicorn is no longer a mythical figure. There are over 230 Unicorn startups globally such as Uber, Airbnb and Pinterest; and Stockholm is the birthplace of Spotify and Skype. It has more Unicorns per capita than any other country and nearly 20% of the labor force works in tech. One Swedish startup even has an app that tells women when they can get pregnant.

### WATER

A major problem in the world, and this summer more than half of Sweden will have drought.

**Singapore** recycles all the water they use – local catchment water/imported water/new water/desalinated water. They have deep tunnels for water 20-30 stories below the surface and a Marine reservoir from the sea which is one of the largest in the world

### MIGRATION

Jan Eliasson, former Deputy Secretary General of the U.N. spoke about the dilemmas associated with migration trends in Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. "Because the world population is on the move we need to create hope for young people.

Without migrants there would be less economic growth in Europe and North America. Migrants send money home and bring wealth to the developing world. People are on the move to cities, which starts a trend of 80% commercial food versus farms. They are seeking safety, opportunity and prosperity. He discussed *"what is the outlook and how do we try to ensure that societies remain inclusive, cohesive and resilient"*

### GIRLS

- 600 million girls suffer domestic violence which, in many countries, is not against the law.
- Freed girls from Boko Haram are faced with the choice of going to school = danger, or staying home and alive. Yet a girl educated is a woman with incredible power.
- If a father validates a girl child no one can invalidate her
- What to do? IWF has challenged our 6,500 members to use their resources and collective influence to lead change. Do something. We only become voiceless by choice. Be fearless and raise boys who respect women

### PRIVATE CAPITAL

Partnership is the new leadership. A robust business environment provides employment and improves lives. Example: Swedfund Managing Director, Anna Ryott uses partnerships to channel millions into the developing world. In Ethiopia, H&M created a textile factory that will create 4,000 jobs with an emphasis on employing women. Investing in women is the smartest investment you can make. Warren Buffet has convinced 156 billionaires to give ½ of their income while alive to needy causes around the world

- The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation provides women in third world countries with contraceptives which gives them a chance for a productive life.
- Pfizer provides self-injection vaccines to eradicate polio – a major problem in many countries

## Annual Meeting June 2017

### IWFCT'S ANNUAL MEETING AND STRATEGIC PLAN

by Marie Meliksetian and Sheryl Sleeva



The IWFCT annual meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup> at the Aspetuck Valley Country Club in Weston, CT was a Sensational success. We were warmly greeted by our own IWFCT member host and sponsor **Julie Johnson** and the Club's renowned [Chef Gerard Clinton](#), a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) and rated as 3 Stars Chef by The New York Times and Best New Restaurant in Fairfield

The event was kicked-off with a special interactive cooking demonstration led by Chef Gerard preparing our farm-to-table dinner. Following the demonstration, the board presented an overview of the year's accomplishments including a sneak peek of our newly developed strategy.

Roberta Prescott led off with an executive summary highlighting the year's accomplishments and thanking board members for their achievements.

Following Roberta, Michelle Etzel, Marie Meliksetian, Valarie Gelb and Kate Larson (presenting for Denise Stevens) shared a summary level of the year's accomplishments:

1. **Membership:** Reached 10% target growth, streamlined process and introduced an ambassador program
2. **Programs:** Attendance and feedback to all 9 local events and 2 IWF events were overwhelmingly positive with the highest attendance topping at 97%. Star events ranged anywhere from the Quinnipiac University Polling Center, Yale New Haven Hospital "Innovation in Healthcare" and IBM Watson Research Center "Innovation in Technology" visits to the UN NGO collaborative event with the NY and NJ Affiliates. Not to forget the dinner event at the Aspetuck Valley Country Club.
3. **Financial:** Positive results as of June 2017
4. **Governance:** Targeting reviews and revisions to the By-Laws aligned with legal and membership feedback

#### STRATEGIC PLAN

A big thank you to Sheryl Sleeva for her leadership in the development of the strategy. The outcome was, no doubt, the Board's group effort, but Sheryl led the board to develop the final output. Coupled with Marie Meliksetian's support and in a consultative way, Sheryl probed, shared thoughts/ideas and developed content options. Kate Larson's data was critical in developing the analytics to support the strategic goals and direction.

Marie Meliksetian (presenting for Sheryl) highlighted the strategy work and our objective which was to develop a vision and a growth strategy that would enable IWFCT capture new opportunities and chart a course for future success

Marie summarized a high level view of the team's work which included data analytics, assessing the external market environment and our internal environment (i.e., membership profile distribution by industry, roles, geo distribution, diversity, turnover, attendance and more). This coupled with a SWOT analysis and a competitive landscape assessment furthered our discussion on the identification of the strategic issues and the development of our strategic goals and priorities. We revised our Mission, developed a Vision and a Value Proposition. The value proposition was key, as we focused on why women choose to join IWFCT and what we can do to meet and exceed their expectations.

#### NEXT STEPS

Implementing the plan and Communicating it effectively will be the Board's focus.

A copy of the key slides will be shared soon by the Board. Happy summer and here's to another great year for IWFCT