



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

April 2017

News from the Office on the Status of Women

Coffee with a Commissioner

Join us every month for an interview with one of the commissioners of the [Iowa Commission on the Status of Women](#) (ICSW) to learn more about how and why they got involved in women's advocacy. Each month we will focus on a different commissioner.



This month, I had the pleasure of interviewing [Sherill Whisenand](#), commissioner and chair of the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Selection Committee to talk about herself, her work, and the "why" behind the work that she does with the Commission.

Sherill Whisenand

Commissioner, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
(Chair, 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Selection Committee)



How long have you served on the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women?

I was confirmed to the Commission in 2015 and will complete my first term at the end of 2018.

What was one of the things that called you to serve on this specific Commission?

I usually avoid organizations which promote one sector of the public based on gender, ethnicity, polarization and such. I view the world's citizens as global—the same, but different—and not to be segregated by any category. This Commission is an advocate much larger than its title implies. It has a mission and quest to benefit, nurture, empower and promote women. However, this Commission, sanctioned by the Iowa Legislature, encompasses issues for children, justice, equality issues, parity in the community. This Commission serves as a beacon to help Iowa families. How can you

not be drawn to such a wonderful mission for Iowans? I knew Commissioners back when I was in high school and admired them, telling myself that one day I would be honored to serve on this Commission.

What is one accomplishment you've been proud of since your start on the Commission?

I have been honored to serve on the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Committee which annually honors outstanding Iowans statewide for their commitment to the community, professionally and personally. The caliber of citizens who impact their Iowa communities is humbling. The underlying theme as we review the possible nominees is that they do not give back because it is expected of them—they give back because it is just what Iowans do. This year, I am chairman of the Committee and am excited to incorporate some new aspects into the event on Saturday, August 19 in Des Moines. We are on the lookout for great Iowans from Keokuk to Sheldon, Clinton and Council Bluffs.

What is an issue that affects women and girls that you are passionate about?

I have a passion for empowering women to become more active in government—local, state and federal. No matter what the media says about women's advancement, we will never be at parity in the political and governmental world until we quit seeing stories which start with, "She is the first woman to..." I strive to move beyond the day when women in service is an anomaly and not the norm. I want to work with our Commission to speak publicly about women getting on local boards, commissions, county supervisors, city councils, state house and statewide office. It ignites the passion for service and the ability to do good works for the good of all. Many women lament, "I can't." But in reality, it is, "I have no idea how to start." That is where my passion comes: to give them the tools to build a better community while building self-esteem.

What do you do in your spare time (if you have any)?

I am active in my local parish, St. Augustin Catholic Church in Des Moines, where I serve on a variety of committees and sing in the choir. I volunteer at the Des Moines Community Playhouse as an Ambassador and usher. My passion is politics where I have served at the local, county, state and federal level, most recently on the Republican Party of Iowa State Central Committee and four years as the co-chairman of the Republican Party of Polk County. I spend much-needed family time with my parents and sister, always in search of Mom's fried chicken or a piece of homemade chocolate cake.

To connect with commissioner Sherill Whisenand, find her on [LinkedIn](#).

News from the Office

New publications

Women in Iowa: 2017 Report

The Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office on the Status of Women and the State Data Center of Iowa recently released the [Women in Iowa: 2017 report](#). This is an annual report with facts and statistics on women in Iowa.

2017 Iowa Women's History Month Brochure

In celebration of Women's History Month in 2017, the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office on the Status of Women released an Iowa Women's History Month brochure (2017). To view the brochure, visit our [website](#).

Announcing the winners of the 2017 Women's History Month Video Contest

We are honored to announce the winners of our 2nd annual Women's History Month Video Contest!

First place award recipients are:

Grades 5-8: Baxter CSD

"Time Travel News"

Teacher: Sonya Gunderson

Students: Morgan Hansen, Trenton Colyn, Beau Brummel, Julie Damman and Ben Richardson

Link: <https://youtu.be/RtCAFGLMVQg>

Grades 9-12: Treynor High School

"Corn Born"

Teacher: Jennifer Anderson

Students: Brooklyn Houser, Caitlyn VanRiper, Jessica Vohs, and Konnor Sudmann

Link: <https://youtu.be/m0uZVtuvXjU>



All of the first place students from this contest will receive a \$50 prize and the classrooms/organizations who sponsored the students will receive a \$250 prize to be used toward supplies. These prizes were made possible by the [Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women](#).

Questions?

Contact Kristen Corey at women@iowa.gov or 515-281-4470/800-558-4427 or visit the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office on the Status of Women's website at: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw>.

We need you!

Volunteer your time on the Iowa Task Force for Young Women

The [Iowa Task Force for Young Women](#) (ITFYW) was formed in 1995, as a subcommittee of the [Juvenile Justice Advisory Council](#) (JJAC). The JJAC serves as Iowa's State Advisory Group for administration of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The ITFYW serves to address the issue of females and juvenile justice and to advise the JJAC.

The goal of the ITFYW has been, and continues to be, to facilitate a comprehensive fundamental change in the juvenile justice system that will enhance the understanding and utilization of innovative gender-responsive approaches in all programs and services that serve the adolescent female population of Iowa's juvenile justice system.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the ITFYW or attending a meeting, please visit our [website](#) or contact Kathy Nesteby at 515-281-6915 or Kathy.Nesteby@iowa.gov.

In the News: Women and girls in Iowa, the nation & the world

Perceptions of Women and Discrimination

- The Washington Post: [Her daughter was taught to think her afro wasn't "normal"; she created a billboard to change that](#)
- The Washington Post: [Want to run for office as a mom? Be prepared to address voters' concerns about it](#)
- Iowa Public Radio: [#BlackWomenAtWork: women speak out after criticism of journalist, congresswoman](#)
- Iowa Public Radio: [Afghan women say no to the dress](#)
- CNNMoney: [Women financial advisers at Wells Fargo 27% more likely to lose their job: study](#)
- Reuters: [Older women get the brush-off from potential employers](#)
- Business Insider: [Women are riding bikes in public to challenge gender norms in Pakistan](#)
- BBC: [Meet the Hunter Troop: Norway's tough-as-nails female soldiers](#)

Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Violence

- Iowa Public Radio: [Fear of deportation spurs four women to drop domestic abuse cases in Denver](#)
- Reuters: [Women-only pink taxis set to hit Pakistani streets](#)
- Reuters: [Despite murderous attacks, Tanzania's 'witches' fight for land](#)
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence: [Reproductive justice & violence against women: understanding the intersections](#)
- New York Times: [Japan envoy, recalled over 'comfort woman' statue, is returning to Seoul](#)
- Iowa Public Radio: [Shot by her boyfriend and now using a wheelchair, she found a "new me"](#)

Upcoming Events/Seminars

- April 8: [Ladylike: An African-American Women's Power Brunch](#) in Des Moines
- April 26: [Iowa Women Lead Change Annual Eastern Iowa Conference](#) in Cedar Rapids
- April 28: [Ready to Run Workshop - Communicating with Voters & Winning Internet Strategies](#) (registration opened March 31)
- April 29-30: [AAUW Iowa conference](#) in Cedar Rapids
- May 22-26: [Iowa N.E.W. Leadership program](#) in Iowa City
- May 31: Grant applications for 2018 due to the [Iowa Women's Foundation](#)
- June 1: [Applications due](#) for the Latina Leadership Initiative

- June 9-10: [League of Women Voters of Iowa](#) convention in Grinnell
- August 26: [Iowa Women's Hall of Fame](#) ceremony in Des Moines; Women's Equality Day

Note: If you have an event taking place for women in Iowa that you would like to see added, please send it to women@iowa.gov.



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