



# WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

## WWHP

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### A CELEBRATION OF WORCESTER WOMEN IN POLITICS

*By Barbara Kohin*

The Worcester League of Women Voters and the Worcester Women's History Project will cosponsor a "Celebration of Worcester Women in Politics" on October 4, 2006, at 7:30 PM in the Council Chamber in Worcester's City Hall.

The guest of honor and keynote speaker will be Sara Robertson, a former president of the Worcester League of Women Voters, and the first woman to serve as Worcester's mayor (1982-84). Other participants will be the current women in public office in Worcester, along with former councilor Barbara Sinnott, who will represent the first women to be elected to the City Council.

Members of the League will present a brief history of previous women office-holders, starting with Ann B. Earle, who was elected to the School Committee in 1868, and including two women elected to the Common Council from their Wards.

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### ESSAY WINNERS ANNOUNCED

This past spring, the WWHP and the Lamar Soutter Library at UMass Medical School cosponsored an essay contest for school-aged writers in the Worcester area. Winners were announced on May 5 at the opening of a traveling exhibit entitled "Changing the Face of Medicine: Celebrating America's Women Physicians," being hosted at the medical school library. Speakers at the event included Aaron Lazare, Chancellor and Dean of the medical school, Elaine Martin, Director of the Lamar Soutter Library (LSL), Lucy Candib, UMMS faculty and physician, and Heather-Lyn Haley, WWHP President, who presented the awards. The two first place winners each won

\$100 and the opportunity to spend a day with a medical student, which both students were eagerly anticipating. The second place winners received UMMS sweatshirts and third place finalists left with a \$25 gift card



Left to right (front row): Muhammad Xhemali, Afeefa Bhatti, Nguyet Chau, Lindsey Champa, Rebecca Silk.  
(back row): Anthony Panarelli, Heather-Lyn Haley

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**WORCESTER WOMEN'S  
HISTORY PROJECT**

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**PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

*By Heather-Lyn Haley*

Fall approaches and with it we celebrate the early successes of the new initiative affectionately referred to as WWOHP, the Worcester Women's Oral History Project, which you'll find featured on several pages of this newsletter. We're rolling out the new logo, designed by David Paradis, which you can see on page 5, and we're featuring an interview with the Holy Cross masters' student who is helping to spearhead the project, Erin Anderson. Watch in future issues for more developments, as we're working out details with WPI to have even more bright young minds contributing to this exciting work.

The Fall event calendar is shaping up nicely, with major input from two groups. First, the Oral History Project team is offering a series of workshops on oral histories - what they are, how to collect them, and methods for storing them so that all people who are interested have open access. The first few workshops have already happened (members would have received a separate mailing) but new dates are being planned all the time. Keep an eye on our website ([www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org)) for updates between newsletters.

We are also collaborating with the Worcester League of Women Voters to present an evening that focuses on the role of women in Worcester's political arena, past and present. It

seemed fitting to hold the event at City Hall, so if you've ever wanted a good excuse to enter this fine old building, this is your chance! Sara Robertson, Worcester's first female mayor (1982-1984), will be visiting town and spending the evening with us. She'll be joined by Worcester's first city councilor, Barbara Sinnott as well as Barbara Kohin and others who have made their names in the political ring. We hope you'll join us at 7:30 on October 4 in the Council chambers. Those of you who attended our last co-sponsored event with the LWV know that a high-quality event is guaranteed whenever these powerful women put their minds together.

I'd like to take a moment here to remind you that the WWHP is an all-volunteer organization and we rely on your contributions to allow us to provide high-quality programming and initiatives that impact the community in lasting ways, such as the portrait project and now the oral history project. Membership drive doesn't happen until March, but won't you consider an extra donation before year's end? A special non-membership donation envelope is enclosed for your convenience if you're in a position to share a bit more with us financially this year. We're also always looking for people to donate time, so give us a call and let us know if you'd like to get more involved.

Finally, we hope you'll all attend our annual meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 9. At that time, we report on the organization's progress over the last year and ask the membership to vote for new steering committee members. Members will receive a separate notification by mail with the details as they become available.

## THE MILL GIRLS OF LOWELL: A WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT TOUR

By Laura Jehn Menides

Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> dawned grey and cheerless, with rain in the forecast. I was looking forward to the WWHP-sponsored tour of Lowell focusing on the mill girls who worked in textile factories during the early years of the Industrial Revolution. I was not going to let a little rain stand in the way of what promised to be a comprehensive study—not only of the mill girls at work, but also of Lowell's textile mills, and of the rivers, falls, and canals that powered them. Everyone else who had signed up must have had similar intentions because the coach idling in the YWCA lot was full of some 50 eager participants who cheerfully greeted each other and shared food and drink during our journey to Lowell's National Historical Park complex. At its Information Center, we wandered through an inviting gift shop and bookstore and watched a 15-minute film that set the day's tone and mood.



The film traced Lowell's history from its 19<sup>th</sup> century fame as an industrial center with thriving textile mills to its serious decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when southern cities provided severe competition, and finally to its recent rejuvenation by finding innovative uses for its mill buildings, restoring its canals, encouraging tourism and entrepreneurship, and acknowledging its history, thus marrying past and present.

It was drizzling as we left the Information Center. The WWHP participants were divided into two, 25-person groups. Those of us assigned to the group headed by Judy Finkel took one of Lowell's lovely, old, restored trolleys for a short ride and were deposited at the Pawtucket Canal. Here we boarded an open steamboat for a mile ride on the canal, listening as we rode to Park Ranger, R.J., who was a fund of information about the building, history, and use of Lowell's canals and their role in providing power for its textile industry. We passed Pawtucket Falls and learned how the fierce flow of water could be controlled and saved according to the power needs of the mills. When it began to rain hard, R.J. wisely had us leave the boat for a short visit to the Francis Gate House, where we huddled in the dark interior and he regaled us with tales of the gate house and its locks and of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century entrepreneurs and inventors who made Lowell a respected industrial city. Clearly, the rain was not going to stop and so we again boarded the open boat, gamely raised our hoods and umbrellas, and rode to our starting point, now rather wet and eager for lunch. Despite the rain, I found the canal tour one of the day's highlights and was sorry to hear that because of the heavy downpour, the WWHP group headed by Jean Bolz had to cancel its canal tour.

Lunch was "on your own," and Francine D'Alessandro and I, and several others, decided upon a nearby Irish pub, a hearty fish chowder and a local brew. Delicious!

Then off to the Boott Cotton Mill, which employed the mill girls—as many as 80 at a time in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Today it is a museum, restored to the mill's working condition during its heyday. Let me say that the noise of power looms is deafening. In fact, today's visitors are given ear plugs before entering the mill proper—and still, the noise of all the machinery is deafening. One wonders how the mill girls withstood it. Their day was long—from 5 am to 7 pm--and the work of overseeing the power looms monotonous. Most of

*(Continued on page 8)*

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE

By Erin Anderson

The summer has been a whirlwind of activity as we gear up for the kick-off of the Worcester Women's Oral History Project this fall. Aiming to "build community by sharing experiences through the collection of women's stories," the project's components include: a community catalogue of existing Worcester oral histories, a higher education collaboration with local faculty and students, a series of public community workshops on oral history, and an active interviewing initiative to collect women's stories. Here are a few highlights of the exciting progress we've made over the past few months:

- Signing on project consultant Dr. Lisa Krissoff Boehm, Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Worcester State College and Regional Director of the New England branch of the Consortium of Oral History Educators (COHE).
- Feature story in the *Telegram & Gazette*, "Collecting Women's Stories" by Pam Sacks on May 23. If you missed the article and would like a copy, please contact Linda Rosenlund at [oralhistory@wwhp.org](mailto:oralhistory@wwhp.org).
- Solidifying our partnership with the Worcester Public Library, which will serve as the official repository for the tapes and transcripts of the stories we collect. WWHP has purchased a transcribing machine and recording equipment, which can be borrowed by the general public through the library for WWHP interviews.
- Building collaborations with a diverse spectrum of community institutions and groups, from the Worcester Historical Museum to South High School.
- Expanding the reach of our higher education collaboration to include professors and courses from Worcester State College, Holy Cross, Assumption College, and Clark University.

Perhaps our most promising headway is the development of our first community workshops in oral history. These workshops will provide a way for WWHP Members and the general community to learn oral history skills and get involved in actively collecting, preserving, and sharing the stories of Worcester women. Through a mix of lecture and hands-on experience, participants will learn basic interviewing and transcribing skills, enabling them to conduct oral history interviews.

The workshops will be led by professional oral historian and project consultant Dr. Lisa Krissoff Boehm. A workshop such as this usually involves a substantial registration fee, but it will be offered *free* to the Worcester community. The next workshop is scheduled for Saturday, October 14, 10:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Worcester Public Library. Registration is encouraged. For more information, please visit [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org) or contact Linda Rosenlund at 508-767-1852 or [oralhistory@wwhp.org](mailto:oralhistory@wwhp.org).

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**Free OHP Workshop**  
**October 14th, 10:00—3:00**  
**Worcester Public Library**

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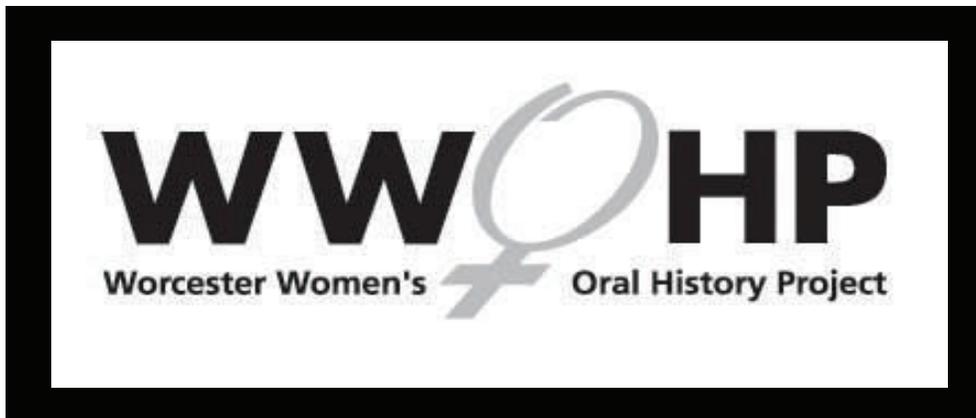
Since the project was highlighted in the *Telegram & Gazette*, we've had a steady stream of inquiries from Worcester women interested in sharing their stories. **But we can't make it happen alone.** Whether you're interested in conducting a single interview with a female family member or in joining our team of community

*(Continued on page 5)*

*Update (Continued from page 4)*

interviewers, the oral history workshop is your chance to get involved.

WWHP is very excited about the potential of the Worcester Women's Oral History Project to broaden our connections with the community and leave a lasting legacy for future generations. It is our hope that together we can build a people's history of Worcester that truly reflects the rich and diverse social fabric of our city. Visit our website at [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org) for more information on how to get involved.



The WWHP would like to thank David Paradis for his work designing the new Oral History Project logo.

## MEET WWHP INTERN ERIN ANDERSON!

*By Linda Rosenlund*

The Worcester Women's Oral History Project has enjoyed working with intern-extraordinaire, Erin Anderson since she contacted WWHP to volunteer her services over a year ago. Erin is currently a master's candidate in the Community Development and Planning program at Clark University, where she is researching participatory oral history as a tool for community development. She also works as a research assistant for a community-based Environmental Justice Project in the Main South and Piedmont neighborhoods of Worcester.

Erin, a native of Seattle, received B.A. degrees in comparative history of ideas and media studies from the University of Washington. Focusing her research on the international street paper movement, she has worked as an editorial intern with *The Big Issue* South Africa. In Glasgow, Scotland, Erin worked with the International Network of Street Papers. Most recently, she worked as the vendor services coordinator for *Real Change* Newspaper in Seattle.

Erin is an integral part of the oral history project team—designing brochures and flyers, helping to develop workshop activities, networking with local organizations, and providing outreach to the Worcester Community.

We are happy to have her. Thank you, Erin, for your commitment to preserving the words of Worcester Women!



## STEERING COMMITTEE

### Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting.

Currently, the list of 2006 Steering Committee candidates includes:

| <u>Three Year Term</u> | <u>Two Year Term</u> |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Judy Freedman Fask     | Fran Langille        |
| Louise Gleason         |                      |
| Beth Harding           |                      |
| Ellen More             |                      |
| Kara Wilson            |                      |

Please let us know at [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org) if you have further nominations. WWHP members will be receiving the Annual Meeting Notice the end of October.



*The WWHP would like to thank WICN Public Radio for including an informational spot about our organization in their annual roster of public service announcements.*

**Reminder**  
**Annual Meeting**  
**November 9th**  
**6:30 pm**



## OUR DEAREST ABBY *By Karen Folkes*

In recognition of WWHP's newest initiative, The Oral History Project, it is with keen interest that we can look back to a time when Abby and those who knew and worked with her realize how important their history is to the future.

As an older woman in 1885, after being repeatedly asked for some autobiographical insight into her life, she did begin to write about her work, her life. As she had never kept many letters, never kept a diary or news articles about the movement she helped create, she needed to work from memory. Abby neither enjoyed this nor completed any substantial record of her decades of pioneering antislavery labor or of her role as an originator within the female sphere.

In 1886 at age 75, a now widowed Abby had an article published in Lucy Stone's newspaper, 'The Liberator', which clearly recalled for the readership the difficulty of literally being one of the first American women to ever lecture, to be held in equal association with men in the Antislavery Movement. She writes of "unsavory eggs, the contents of stables and out-houses" being hurled at her, and the misogynistic attitudes of the time reducing her audience to yelling, "Jezebel" and "fornicator", when Abby was speaking.

As the first wave of Abolitionists began to face or succumb to the end life, those still left and their children began to try to record the testament of their struggle. William Lloyd Garrison's sons were working on a multivolume biography of their father when William Channing called on the Fosters to implore them to "finish the work given to you. Sit down with you daughter and *tell the stories just as* they suggest themselves to preserve your testimony to the grand historic import of the antislavery movement."

With the Oral History Project, what an opportunity we have, with the help of technology, to permanently deliver stories of Worcester women for generations to come. Stories of our Grandmothers, our Mothers, our Sister and Neighbors. Stories of women who made a difference in their families, their towns, their world. Women who made a difference for us.

## CLARA BARTON'S VISIT TO ST. PETERSBURG , RUSSIA

*By Emily Thomas*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Americans viewed Russia as an exotic and strange land. Compared to the United States, Russia was a poor and under-developed country. The city of St. Petersburg, however, was one of Europe's largest and grandest cities. In the spring of 1902, delegates from more than twenty countries gathered in St. Petersburg for the Seventh International Conference of the Red Cross. Among the American delegates present was Clara Barton, founder and president of the American Red Cross.

Traveling to Russia in 1902 was not easy. Miss Barton's voyage began in New York City where she boarded the steamship *La Bretagne*. After eight days at sea, she disembarked at Havre, France. Following a brief stay in Paris, Miss Barton boarded a train for the Russian border. Although Clara Barton did not have to endure our modern-day airport security lines, she did require a passport that had to be presented to Russian officials. Clara might also have been subjected to a luggage check upon arrival at the Russian border.

Miss Barton's days in St. Petersburg were split between conference sessions and various receptions and dinners held at the many royal palaces in the city. The conference delegates were entertained

lavishly by the royal family of Russia. Miss Barton found the Russian people, including Czar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra, warm and welcoming. In her official report to President Theodore Roosevelt, Miss Barton wrote that all the delegates "were received by their majesties, the Czar and Czarina, in a manner so cordial, social, and altogether friendly as to banish from our minds the thought of royalty."

At the end of the conference, Clara Barton was singled out for honor by the Czar. During the Russian famine of 1891-1892, the American Red Cross sent a much needed supply of corn and grain to the starving peasants of eastern Russia. Czar Nicholas II awarded Miss Barton the Silver Cross of Imperial Russia, the country's highest civilian honor.

Clara Barton's visit to Russia is just one of the stories preserved by the Clara Barton Birthplace Museum in North Oxford, Massachusetts. The museum owns several documents relating to Miss Barton's trip, including her passport, several hotel receipts, and a copy of her report to President Roosevelt. An exhibit focusing on Clara's trip will open at the museum early next year. For more information contact the museum at 508-987-5375 or visit the museum's website at [www.clarabartonbirthplace.org](http://www.clarabartonbirthplace.org).

## A PIONEER'S BIRTHDAY

*By Karen Folkes*

On her August birthday WWHP would like to honor Worcester County abolitionist and woman's rights activist, Lucy Stone. (8/13/1818).

Born on a West Brookfield farm, she created a path for herself that included being the first Massachusetts woman to graduate from college, renowned public lecturing, lobbying legislators and legislators; in 1863 she organized for the Union (The Woman's Loyal

League) and eventually published "The Woman's Journal", a leading paper of the time dedicated to woman's rights.

The compelling story of her life as she achieves these and many other accomplishments is none other than extraordinary. Through tremendous political, religious, and social oppression she continued with her work until her death. There are few books about Stone, the latest would be

from Joelle Million, "Woman's Voice, Woman's Place: Lucy Stone and the Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement", published in 2003. There is also a terrific accounting of her from her daughter and only child, Alice Stone Blackwell, "Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights". Both are interesting reads about the inspiring woman who helped shape a nation toward a more equitable society.

*Mill Girls (Continued from page 3)*

the girls (ages from 16 years old to about 25) were from the New England farm country, but some came from Canada and other places in the U.S. What drew them to Lowell was its reputation for hiring girls, for providing a safe and clean work environment as well as housing and supervision, and for paying them a salary. Many sent home what they earned in order to provide school tuition for male siblings. Some returned home after a year or two; others married and stayed on in Lowell. A few worked at the mill for a while and left, becoming prostitutes.

On an upper floor of the Boott Cotton Mill Museum are many displays: samples of the mill's cotton products, diaries and letters from mill girls, and quotations from visitors who saw Lowell as a model for other industrial cities, American and European. In the 1840's, for example, English novelist Charles Dickens enthused about the cleanliness of the Boott factory and the healthy appearance of the girls. Our WWHP group, however, was shortly to learn that, in fact, the Lowell experience was not entirely positive for the mill girls. But first we visited a typical mill girls boarding house.

Mill girls lived a short distance from the mill (and from Congregational, Baptist, and Catholic churches) in attached, narrow, brick, two-storey buildings. The first floor of the house we visited contained only three rooms: first, a dining room, perhaps 9 x 12 feet, with two tables, each set for eight people. This rather tight space was for after-work socializing as well as for dining. Next to it were the kitchen and the keeper's room. Upstairs, the girls slept dormitory-style, two in each double bed. Later, we were able to compare this typical boarding house with the grander houses of the mill owners. Plainly, the mill girls were of a much lower social and economic class.



**Two Women Weavers  
1860**

The final event of our day was an hour walking tour guided by Historical Park ranger, Maria, and conducted, once more, in rain. Actually we walked only four blocks, and the tour was an informal question-answer session, but the amount of information we gleaned from our gracious and talented guide was enormous. Among her responses to our queries: The mill girls were strictly supervised both day and night, but many managed to join protests against their working conditions. In 1832 the mill girls' work day was almost 14 hours, but in 1836 a ten-hour law was passed, the result of the workers' steady protests. Also in 1836 the mill girls staged a dramatic strike against management that wanted to cut wages. Although ultimately unsuccessful, it was the first strike in the U.S.

I came away from the walking tour, and indeed from the day in Lowell, a wet woman. The day was wet—but wonderful! I also came away with contrasting views of the mill girls: At first, it seemed that the girls were pleased to have been recruited to work at the mill, to gain independence and to earn money, and that the management took a rather paternal attitude towards them, at the same time expecting long work hours. Later, however, this paternal attitude changed as the numbers of recruits and the needs of the marketplace increased. The mill girls began to resist the employer's demands for long hours and even went on strike to make their case for higher wages. The one constant was what the mill girls, both the early recruits and the later ones, most desired: independence. The first of the recruits, by being wage-earners, became independent in the eyes of their families and of society in general. Later recruits expanded, and to some extent re-defined, the idea of independence. They wanted independence from the demands of management and this they sought to achieve by democratic petition and protest. Their legacy continues today. I salute and thank them.

## CHANGING THE FACE OF MEDICINE: CELEBRATING AMERICA'S WOMEN PHYSICIANS

*By Rebecca Silk, Tahonto Regional High School, Boylston, Grade 11  
Essay Winner Grade 10-12*

Throughout the past hundred years medical care has drastically improved. Not only has technology become more accurate and specialized, but medical professionals have become more diverse also, strengthening doctor-patient relations. Prior to 1849, women were completely shunned from medical school. Their assimilation into the medical classroom and as practicing physicians was dreadfully slow. Female students and doctors were deemed intellectually inferior, and incapable of handling life as a mother and professional. Thankfully, present day society has accepted women, and people of all backgrounds, into the field of medicine. This variety of professionals has certainly improved the level of care that is available.

In 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910) was the first woman to graduate from medical school. She faced many forms of intolerance, including being rejected from several medical schools. Geneva Medical College in New York finally accepted Elizabeth, partly because the administration and other students felt she was joking. Initially, male professors would exclude Elizabeth from demonstrations that were supposedly unsuitable for females. After receiving her degree she moved to England where she furthered her studies in midwifery. Ms. Blackwell's perseverance and outward thinking paved the way for many women to pursue a medical career. This trend is seen in the fact that in 1970 a mere 7.6% of physicians were female. This number grew to 11.6% in 1980, and 26.6% in 2004.

Even female doctors today faced challenges men practitioners did not. A pediatrician working at UMASS in Worcester spoke of how she, much like Elizabeth Blackwell, was kept from certain classroom experiments and demonstrations. She also said male professors would try to make their female students uncomfortable by displaying the baculum, the penis bone of some mammals, in the classroom. After graduation, this doctor endured further sexist measures when she received substantially lower pay than her male co-worker.

An institution with a diverse group of clinicians offers the patients a choice and better overall care. Many women patients feel vulnerable having a check-up or divulging personal information to a man physician. Women patients also feel more validated explaining feminine problems to an understanding female gynecologist or physician who may have experienced the same gender-specific situation. On the other hand, men are generally more comfortable working with a male clinician. In regards to pediatrics, several studies have shown that adolescents tend to be more comfortable with female doctors. They subconsciously relate the doctor to their maternal figure. Female doctors also tend to have more patience in dealing with mental health. Granted, any doctor has his or her own technique of relating to their patients. Some may be influenced by past experiences, others may be more conservative, while still others may derive their style from cultural beliefs. Such diversity allows the patient to choose whom they would like to trust based on a variety of factors. In addition, when a facility offers a diverse group of physicians, doctors are able collaborate to help patients. They are able to observe symptoms, diagnose the problem and brainstorm a variety treatment routes.

The belief that women are intellectually inferior to men has certainly changed. Dr. Nina Braunwald inventor of the prosthetic heart, Dr. Emily Dunning, founder of the New York City Gouverneur Hospital, and Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, the first woman member of the Academy of Medicine, all refute this theory. Women are just as capable of being doctors. Their care, concern, honesty, experiences, and drive compliment the characteristics of their male associates. The collaboration of men, women and people of all backgrounds creates a delicate balance that works to benefit all.

Being a doctor in today's society means a variety of things. Generally speaking, all doctors perform a ser-

*(Continued on page 11)*

## WOMEN PHYSICIANS: WHERE WOULD WE BE WITHOUT THEM?

*By Anthony Panarelli, Oak Middle School, Shrewsbury, Grade 8*

*Essay Winner, Grade 6-9*

Women physicians have made discoveries, designed amazing medical procedures, and improved the quality of life for every human being in the United States and beyond. The contributions they have made to the medical field have saved countless lives and have probably affected everyone in some way. Medical care is better when it includes men, women, and people of all different backgrounds because it brings diversity to the field that is essential to good care. From the very beginning, women have brought new perspectives to medicine, whether they were completely new ideas or a different approach on already existing treatments. The discoveries they made have drastically improved health care. They strive to advance medicine in a way that brings adequate care to all of those in need.

During the mid-1800s, women campaigned for admission to medical school as a part of the wider movement for women's rights. At that time medical practice was considered a male profession, but women had the potential to succeed in the medical field. The acceptance of women into medical school came slowly, but when they finally were accepted they focused on things that male physicians hadn't previously showed much concern for. Such topics include social and economic costs of illness, new research and treatments for women and children, and the low number of women entering med school and the medical practice.

With the acceptance of women into medical school came great women physicians who made innovative discoveries that improved the quality of life. Dr. Helen Taussig is well known for her work on "blue baby" syndrome. She and two other physicians designed a procedure to correct the congenital heart defect. This was considered a key step to the development of adult open heart surgery, a procedure that has saved many, many lives. Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte was the first American Indian woman to receive her medical degree. She served over 1,300 patients and provided medical service day and night. Her inspiration to become a doctor came from a negative experience with a white doctor. He would not give care to a local Indian woman so she decided to become a doctor, to provide care to all not just to one race. Another incredible woman physician was Dr. Virginia Apgar. She was the first doctor to design a method for evaluating a newborn's transition to life outside the womb- the Apgar Score. This method is used on every newborn, which is a significant contribution to medicine. All of these female physicians have immensely improved medicine for the 20th century as well as the 21st.

Interviewing Dr. Neha Vagadia gave me a new perspective on how the medical field benefits when it includes women. As a second year resident at U-Mass Memorial Hospital, she has made several years of observation. She observed that when a patient is treated by both male and female physicians, there is a better understanding of the patient's problem. She said the understanding is about "personal problems versus medical problems." When I asked her, "Why would a patient prefer one gender over the other?" she responded in an interesting way. "Some patients prefer 'gender to gender'." Having the option of gender in a physician can make a patient feel more comfortable, increasing the likelihood of the patient telling all of the pertinent information about the medical problem. Throughout medical school and early residency, Dr. Vagadia felt as if she was always fighting to prove that she belonged. The "old school" bias accepts men as being smart without question, but getting through medical school and getting an occupation in the field shows that women are equally qualified.

Through the advancements of these women physicians, people can hope to live happier, healthier lives. Women physicians bring comfort to their patients, and the patients smile knowing they're in good hands. Women, particularly women of all different backgrounds, bring diversity and new perspectives to the field that makes it better as a whole. Through discoveries, research and selfless dedication to their patients, women physicians have improved our quality of life. Think about the women who fought vigorously to be allowed into medical school, the women who paved the way for other female physicians, and the women in the field now fighting illness and disease. . . where would we be without them?

*Essay Winners Announced (Continued from page 1)*

for Borders. The winning essays from each age group (grades 6-9, grades 10-12) are published here in this newsletter.

A call for papers was distributed to area teachers of grades 6 through 12, many of whom had their students write and submit essays for consideration. The theme students are asked to examine was what it means to be a doctor today and specifically, what women bring to the field of medicine, then write a 500 word essay answering the question: *How is medical care better when it includes men and women, and people of all different backgrounds?*

All submitted essays were read by a team of judges which included WWHP steering committee members Linda Miller and Sharon Smith-Viles as well as several medical students: Julie Birns, Katherine Callaghan, Amy Daisy, and Deborah Liptzin.

The exhibit included stories of women doctors from the first, Elizabeth Blackwell, to doctors practicing today, including Lucy Candib, MD, a physician at Family Health Center of Worcester (and a supporter of the WWHP!). The exhibit, detailing the history of women in medicine, was co-curated by Ellen More, WWHP member and steering committee nominee, in her role as medical historian working with the National Library of Medicine in Washington, DC. Two copies of the interactive exhibit are touring the country; the LSL competed for a spot on the tour circuit and won the opportunity to show the exhibit for six weeks in May and June. It was a terrific opportunity to bring more of the public into the library, which serves as the consumer health information source for Central Massachusetts, as well as to educate both UMass employees and the community about the accomplishments of women in medicine.

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## And The Winners Are ...

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**Grades 10-12**

|     |                |  |
|-----|----------------|--|
| 1st | Rebecca Silk   | Tahanto Regional High School, Grade 11 |
| 2nd | Lindsey Champa | Leominster High School, Grade 11       |
| 3rd | Nguyet Chau    | North High School, Grade 10            |

**Grades 6-9**

|     |                   |  |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| 1st | Anthony Panarelli | Oak Middle School, Shrewsbury, Grade 8           |
| 2nd | Muhammad Xhemali  | Alhuda Academy, Worcester, Grade 8               |
| 3rd | Afeefa Bhatti     | Sarah W Gibbons Middle School, Westboro, Grade 8 |

*Changing the Face (Continued from page 9)*

vice to better the health of their patients. Medical care has improved drastically over the years due to the great contributions of women and the acceptance of doctors from all backgrounds. Not only have females provided new technologies, but they have also made medicinal treatment more diverse.

In conclusion, there are several benefits when medical care includes men, women and people of all backgrounds. Not only is the patient able to select a professional they work best with, but the doctors are also able to collaborate to provide better care. As women forced their way into the field of medicine, they introduced new ideas and resources that quickly progressed the world's knowledge. Females continue to offer different perspectives, goals and ideas. A diverse field of doctors creates options, for both the patient and doctor, and more insight, leading to better overall and inclusive care.

WORCESTER  
WOMEN'S HISTORY  
PROJECT

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## Calendar of Events

### October 4

**Celebration of Worcester Women in Politics, 7:30 pm,  
Counsel Chamber, Worcester City Hall**

Featuring Sara Robertson, Barbara Sinnott, Oretta McNeil,  
Konstantina Lukes, Kate Toomey, Barbara Haller, Harriet  
Chandler, Barbara Kohin and more.

Parking is available in the public library lot, the garage under  
City Hall, or any of the pay-to-park garages in the downtown  
area.

### October 14

**Oral History Project Community Workshop, 10:00am-  
3:00pm, Worcester Public Library**

Pre-register at [oralhistory@wwhp.org](mailto:oralhistory@wwhp.org) or 508-767-1852.

### October 23-24

Anniversary of the First National Women's Rights Convention,  
held in Brinley Hall, Worcester, MA in 1850.

### November 9

**WWHP Annual Meeting, 6:30pm, location TBA**

Featuring annual reports and election of steering committee  
members

With an additional educational program – members will receive  
updates via mail, or watch the website at [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org)