

**SEWALL-BELMONT HOUSE AND MUSEUM
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
FY2008**

The Sewall-Belmont House and Museum (SBHM) is an Affiliated Area of the National Park System, and the National Woman's Party (NWP) is a nonprofit 501(c) (3) educational organization, preserving and operating this Historic Landmark in a public-private partnership with the National Park Service (NPS).

This Annual Performance Report presents the highlights of the past year, summarizing our activities in four principal areas: preservation and maintenance, interpretation and education, development and marketing, and administration.

BACKGROUND

The Sewall-Belmont House is one of the oldest structures in Washington, D.C. Built by Robert Sewall in 1799-1800, the house remained in the Sewall family for 123 years until it was purchased by Senator Porter Dale of Vermont. In 1929, when Congress demolished the National Woman's Party's headquarters in the Old Brick Capitol to make way for construction of the Supreme Court of the United States, the NWP purchased the property from Senator Dale and made the Sewall-Belmont House its new headquarters.

From this house, Alice Paul, author of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), led the fight for the ERA passage in Congress. It was her leadership in suffrage and equal rights activities that culminated in the designation of this house as a National Historic Landmark on December 5, 1972, as it was the only site in the United States dedicated to the contemporary women's movement. In 1974 Congress passed a bill to restore the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, declaring it a National Historic Site, and authorized a Cooperative Agreement between the NWP and the Secretary of the Interior for restoration, maintenance, and interpretation of the museum by the NPS.

Today, the site is open to the public five days a week for visitors to see the memorabilia of the suffrage and equal rights campaigns and learn about the history of women's fight for equality.

Under our Cooperative Agreement with NPS, we continue to work closely with local and regional Park Service officers in a very productive partnership to ensure preservation and interpretation of the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum. We would like to thank NPS for making it possible for us to achieve our goals for FY 2008.

PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE

SEWALL-BELMONT HOUSE:

Preservation and Maintenance: We had several major preservation issues in summer, 2008. On June 16, 2008, a 6 ft x 8 ft area of plaster high on the South wall on the arch above the library door came apart from the board underneath and fell to the ground. Although there was no major damage to collections, the plaster covered the bookshelves, closet, desk and floor at the entrance to the library. The library was closed to staff and researchers for several weeks to allow time for the Eight Brothers Plaster Company to do the survey of the ceiling and to perform the necessary cleaning. The survey was completed and the decision was made to begin by replacing the library roof. The work was completed by R.W. Kibler, Inc. under the supervision of Leonardo Varone, of EEK Architects. The next step will be to repair and/or replace the plaster inside the library, but we will need to wait until we have the necessary funds to move forward.

In August, we hired Joe Reid, of JR Home Improvement, Inc. to perform several repairs to the house and grounds. He repaired and painted several shutters on the building, the front door, the second floor hallway and stairwell, the President's Room, and the floor outside of the handicapped bathroom. He also repaired several broken rungs on the staircase.

COLLECTIONS:

Permanent Exhibit: We installed new exhibits in the house, in the Lobby Room and the International Room. The exhibit in the Lobby Room presents photographs and information on "The Portrait Monument," the statue created by Adelaide Johnson that resides in the U.S. Capitol. The exhibit in the International Room provides visitors with images and information on the World Woman's Party, the international arm of the National Woman's Party, complete with a comprehensive timeline of international activities from 1920 until the 1950's.

Temporary Exhibits: We installed three temporary exhibits on the second floor of the museum, continuing to utilize the space for temporary exhibitions.

Proactive Women: The Photographs of Sharon Farmer. Sharon Farmer is a prominent photographer in the country. Among her many roles, she served as Director of the White House Photography Office from 1998-2001; was A White House photographer since 1993, documenting the Clinton-Gore Administration; and was the campaign photographer for Senator John Kerry's presidential election campaign in 2004. Over the years she has photographed for *The Washington Post*, the Smithsonian Institution, and The American Association for the Advancement of Science. The exhibit featured a variety of Farmer's work, including photographs taken during the Kerry campaign, some of her work in South Africa, and work featuring the relationships between women both politically and personally. The exhibit was on display from February through early May, 2008.

Project 3: Empowered by Artistry: This exhibit was a new collaboration of arts organizations, including Arts for Global Development, Authentic Art Consulting, The ThickArt Collaborative, and Girls Gotta Run. These organizations, dedicated to social justice issues, are making a difference, both locally and globally, through individual creativity and fine arts.

The exhibit featured work from artists across the globe expressing the strength and power of women. The exhibit ran from early June until September.

Women by Women. Partnering with the Women Photojournalists of Washington (WPOW), the exhibit featured photographs from the members of WPOW concerning the lives of women and girls around the world. The opening reception brought over 100 people through the house. In addition to the opening, the Museum also participated in the first annual FotoWeek DC held November 15-22 and cosponsored a second opening for the WPOW exhibit. The exhibit ran from early September until the end of January.

Collections Management: This year, we focused on evaluating the long-term preservation and storage needs of our collection. First, we contracted with Merritt Appraisals, LLC to complete an appraisal of the furniture collection. Our goal is to evaluate those pieces within the collection that are applicable to our mission and interpretation and ultimately to de-accession pieces from the collection that are not. The appraisal will be completed in early FY 2009 at which time we will determine next steps in this process.

In addition, we received two grants this year for improving collections management.

National Endowment for the Humanities We The People Grant: This was a \$5,000 planning grant focused on collections storage. We contracted with Wendy Jessup of Wendy Jessup and Associates, Inc. (WJ&A) to conduct a preservation assessment of the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum's existing and potential collections storage areas and make recommendations for improvements. We monitored the environmental conditions in five primary areas of the house for one year to more accurately determine the best possible storage areas for historic collections. The monitoring will continue until February, 2009 at which time we will receive a collections storage plan to be used by the NWP to identify and select a space or spaces for use as collections storage and plan funding for implementation of the improvements. This is a great step forward for the Museum since it will help us raise future money to support long-term collections preservation initiatives.

Institute of Museum and Library Services Museums for America Grant: This \$80,000 matching grant concentrates on collections stewardship for the museum. The focus of the grant is to improve intellectual access to the NWP collection by cataloguing a cross-section of it. At this time, we have only cataloged about 20% of the collection, including the books and the Nina Allender political cartoon collection. During this two-year project, we will work with an advisory committee to help us make decisions on cataloging priorities. Then, we will take multiple items from each collection type (photographs, cartoons, scrapbooks, textiles, furniture, etc.), establish cataloging guidelines and models, and have interns catalog the chosen materials. This grant will provide us the opportunity to catalog enough items to place the catalog on the web and make it accessible to researchers, visitors, local school programs and universities. The grant will also make it possible to apply for additional funding to build on this project so that we might potentially catalog our entire collection in 10 to 12 years.

IBM Digital Imaging Project and Digital Collection Website: In June, 2008, the decision was made by the Executive Director to terminate the project due to economic necessity. The NWP collection database on our website will remain; however, new images

will not be loaded onto the site for the foreseeable future. There are currently over 1,000 images loaded onto the NWP Digital Collection website.

Research: Researchers continue to use the Florence Bayard Hilles Feminist Library and NWP Collection for their scholarly pursuits. Approximately twenty researchers have come in person to the museum to use the library, while approximately 75 have submitted requests for information via phone and email.

Loan Agreements: This year was a great year for collection loans to institutions throughout the country.

In December, 2007 we loaned several items to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, including 2 banners, a “Votes for Women” sash, and the marble bust of Susan B. Anthony. These items are being featured in an exhibit entitled *Votes for Women*, from February, 2008 until November 30, 2008. The exhibit focuses on Susan B. Anthony and depicts the lives and activities of nine other women considered significant influences in the American suffrage movement. The bust of Susan B. Anthony is being used as the signature image of the exhibit. Additionally, the Brooklyn Museum’s conservation department cleaned the bust as a part of the loan agreement.

We are also happy to report that with the opening of the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center we have now deposited a tricolor sash and an early issue of “The Suffragist.” The items are on long-term loan to the Visitor Center and will be switched out once a year to ensure the preservation of the artifacts. We are currently seeking opportunities to partner with the Visitor Center to increase the exposure of the Museum.

Several pieces from the NWP collection are now on exhibit at Through the Flower, in Belen, New Mexico, including a banner and a tricolor sash. The items are featured in an exhibit entitled “Your Vote Your Power” and will be up June 28th until October 24th.

We also loaned banners to the Mills College Art Museum in Oakland, California, and the Washington State Historical Museum in Tacoma, Washington. We are now receiving a lot of interest from small organizations who would like to borrow collection items which will be great exposure for the Museum and our outstanding collection as we move forward with fundraising and strategic planning.

Finally, in August we loaned nine Nina Allender cartoons to The Women’s Museum: An Institute for the Future in Dallas, Texas. The cartoons were on exhibit for the month of August in honor of Equality Day and were returned to the Sewall-Belmont House in September.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

The total number of visitors at the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum in FY 2008 was over 9,500 which is down from 12,000 in 2007. The decrease in visitation is directly related to the decrease in the number of hours that the house is open to the public. The public schedule

change was necessary due to the loss of the full-time program staff member and the subsequent replacement by a temporary/part-time Lead Docent position due to lack of funding. Due to this, public hours are “appointment only” opening on weekdays and extended hours on Saturdays. These visitors reflect attendance at museum public tours, group tours, special exhibits, educational programs, outreach activities and rental events.

TOURS:

Four tours were either introduced or reintroduced in FY08. Carmen Votaw requested a Latina focused tour when she scheduled the tour for Pan American Liaison Committee of Women’s Organizations. Summer intern Arina researched and developed a *Latina Tour* to accommodate. The Art & Architecture Tour was developed by docent Barbara Bates. The tour was reformatted and is now the *Art Tour*. The *Controversies Within the NWP Tour* and the *Alva Belmont Tour* were also added and will be included in all future docent training.

These additions are very exciting; not only will they help encourage repeat visitation, but they also provide docents with additional information that will allow them to customize their tours for the visitors.

HISTORIC HOUSE TOURS:

In FY 2008, SBHM hosted over 2,100 museum visitors. This included 1,795 adults and 331 children. This is a drop in visitation compared to FY07.

This year, we conducted 25 group tours. Visiting groups included Pan American Liaison Committee of Women’s Organizations (PLCWO), WREI, Northern Virginia Community College, University of Southern Mississippi, University of North Carolina, Women and Social Justice – Gallaudet University, Menlo school of California, Institute to Educate Afghan Women, University of Chicago Club, PLEN, College Park Scholars Alumni Association, Best Buy, AAUW, Phelps Senior Center, National Park Service, Blue Ridge Community College, Anne Arundel Community College, Friends of the Vale School House, Greencastle High School, Luke C. Moore Academy High School, Susan B. Anthony House. Alpha Kappa Alpha c/o Capitol Services Inc., defense Reduction, Vintage Ladies and Bell Multicultural High School.

We currently have 6 docents to give museum tours and an additional 8 that work events and programs.

OUTREACH:

Museums on the Road

In FY08, SBHM visited eight organizations: University of Maryland, Rachael’s Women’s Center, University of Delaware, Close-Up Foundation, Friendship Terrace, American University’s Vision of Feminism, St. Mary’s College, and Marymount University’s public history program.

Additionally, we were invited to attend the Equality Day celebration at The Women’s Museum: An Institute for the Future in Dallas, Texas. We sent Jennifer Krafchik, the

Collections Manager, to give a talk entitled “Redefining the Disfranchised: The Political Cartoons of Nina Allender.”

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING:

In FY08, SBHM built upon the successful educational programming initiatives from the previous year and continued our efforts to build our presence in area schools; diversify the museum’s audience; strengthen the educational components of the website; create lesson plans that integrate the story of the National Woman's Party and Alice Paul into the classroom.

Educational Forum Series, *The Changing Faces of Power: Women in Politics*

A three-part series of Educational forums exploring women’s increasing political activism and leadership. *The Changing Faces of Power: Women in Politics Series* was hosted by the League of Women Voters and Sewall-Belmont House & Museum.

Women as Candidates (11/14/07)

Eleanor Clift moderated with Amy Conroy, Executive Director, Sewall-Belmont House & Museum; Mary G. Wilson, President, League of Women Voters; Karen O'Connor, Founder and Director, Women in Politics Institute, American University; Ilana Goldman, President, Women’s Campaign Forum; The Honorable Connie Morella, former member of U.S. Congress (MD); and Marcia Dyson, Advisor to 2008 Hillary Clinton for President Campaign

Women as Office Holders (2/13/08)

Eleanor Clift returned as moderator with Robin Carnahan, Secretary of State of Missouri; Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, President, Baltimore City Council; and Jeannemarie Devolites Davis, Former Virginia State Senator.

Women as Voters and Activists (3/25/08)

Eleanor Clift moderated with Sue Carroll, Senior Scholar, Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP); Rutgers University; Maren Hesla, Director, WOMEN VOTE!, EMILY’s List; Leslie Sanchez; Founder and CEO, Impacto Group LLC; and Ilana Goldman, President, Women’s Campaign Forum.

Book Signing: *Pearls, Politics, & Power: How Women Can Win and Lead* (4/10/08)

A lecture and book signing by Madeleine Kunin, former US Ambassador to Switzerland, the first woman governor of Vermont and the fourth women to be elected governor in her own right. This event was co-sponsored with the Jewish Women’s Archive.

Women’s History Month:

Women’s History Open House (3/20/08)

Visitors were invited to view rarely displayed artifacts of the National Woman’s Party such as the card files the NWP kept on Congress as they were lobbying for the passage of the 19th Amendment and the ERA, scrapbooks former President Alva Belmont made chronicling the suffrage movement, and banners carried during suffrage parades. The Museum was open for extended hours with tours on the hour.

Family Day: “Activism through Folk Art” (3/15/08)

Our annual Family Day was open to both Girl Scouts and non-Girl Scouts. Girl Scout registration occurred through the Girl Scouts of the Nation’s Capitol website (with fifty-three girls and twenty-two adults registered). Additionally, thirty-four kids registered who were not Girl Scouts. With minimal advertising, we reached a point where we had to turn people away from the program. Approximately sixty kids, with thirty-five adults, participated in the program. Participants were sent to different stations set up throughout the Museum where they could decorate their own suffrage sash, design a Valentine to send to their congress members, make a protest banner, and visit with a suffragist in Story Time in the Corner. An impromptu station had to be established to accommodate participants, where kids were led outside for discussions about Amelia Earhart and African American women’s participation in the woman’s suffrage movement. All who visited the Museum for the program also took a tour of the house.

14 Women: Film Showing and Discussion (3/1/08)

The *14 Women* discussion was only open to Girl Scouts, with registration available through the Girl Scouts of the Nation’s Capitol website. Forty-nine individuals registered for this program (we capped participation at fifty): thirty-five kids and fourteen adults. Twenty-five kids and twenty-one adults, in the end, participated in the program. Mary Lambert, director of *14 Women*, and Nicole Boxer (Senator Boxer’s daughter, as well as one of the producers of the film), led an engaging discussion with the Girl Scouts about women in politics.

Girl Scouts and Kids Programs:

The Sewall-Belmont House & Museum continued its strong relationship with the Girl Scouts by offering a number of programs and tours. In addition to the above mentioned, seven Girl Scout troops scheduled tours of the museum. The troops selected programs from a list of offerings depending on age and interest.

VIP (Vital, Important, Personal) Valentines (2/16/08)

Thirteen adults and two children participated in the “Warm-Up to a Museum” celebration organized through Cultural Tourism D.C. This program was very low-cost, and helped to get the word out about the Museum as it was featured in all Cultural Tourism D.C. marketing materials as well as in DCist.com. Participants could make their own Valentines to send to their Congress members, an act reminiscent of the historic lobbying activities of the National Woman’s Party.

Museum Outreach:

Walking Tour: Launched 3/5/08

Produced in conjunction with TailoredTours.com, the walking tour is a self-guided tour that highlights significant sites to the women’s suffrage movement. A link was placed on the homepage and provided free of charge. The tour was developed as a way to encourage visitors to explore sites in Washington, D.C. that were significant to the women’s suffrage and equal rights movement. Tailored Tours offered to create the map free of charge if we provided the historical context for all of the sites along the tour.

DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

DEVELOPMENT:

In February 2008 we submitted an appropriations request to the Interior Appropriations committee requesting \$400,000 for Fire & Life Safety upgrades to the house. We met with every female Senator's office and asked them to sign a letter of support for our request. Senator Mikulski's office took the lead on circulating the support letter. We were unable to get every one to sign the support letter but we did get most of them. We made a big push for membership this year and have increased our current members, though by a small percentage. We celebrate WHM in March and this past year launched a children's art contest which was partly due to the theme of the month (from the National Women's History Project). Target gift cards were given as prizes and the entries were displayed in the interior terrace during the month of March.

Alice Award: We presented the 2008 Alice Award at a luncheon on Tuesday, June 10th, to Katie Couric in recognition for her remarkable career in news media, culminating in her rise to solo anchor of a weekday network evening news broadcast – the first woman to do so. Her personal efforts as an advocate for cancer research and prevention have resulted in national gains in reducing the stigma associated with cancer screening. She is a role model for young women through her activism and professional accomplishments. Over 200 people attended the event, raising \$172,000.

Grants: SBHM received a \$5,000 grant from the Clark-Winchole Foundation and a \$25,000 grant from the Barbara Lee Family Foundation.

MARKETING:

SBHM used a number of methods to reach a variety of audiences in the Washington DC area, including print, electronic media, and the internet.

Events: We hosted 48 rental events, including 26 non-profit events, 12 private events, and 10 weddings. Over 7200 guests attended these events.

In terms of wedding-related advertising, we had monthly advertising on theknot.com, and a half page, 4-color ad in *Brides Washington*, which is on news stands for a full year with the new edition coming out in January. This also has a complimentary ad on-line at brides.com. We had free listings on gatheringguide.com, mydcweddings.com, onewed.com, and weddingwire.com.

For corporate event advertising, we relied on free listings on agendaonline.com, uniquevenues.com, and bazbash.com, as well as word of mouth.

In addition to the advertising in place, we'll continue the "grassroots" efforts of marketing. We're at the tail end of a fax letter campaign to all 535 members of Congress. The letter reminds them that we are within walking distance of their office and that we can be rented for interviews, press conferences and fundraisers. Additionally, we mailed 315 letters to associations, meeting planners, organizations that have rented, etc., reminding them that we are available for their holiday party and inaugural events.

Publicity: The Sewall Belmont House received a great deal of press related to the Alice Award this year, including articles by the Alexandria Times (print and online), the Women's Media Center, and the Examiner. The event was also written up in Washington Life magazine.

Website & E-Newsletter: The SBHM web site continued to provide visitors with a comprehensive overview of the history of the NWP, the museum collection, and the history of the Sewall Belmont House. It also provided information related to educational tours, exhibits, and programs offered by the museum. We continue to utilize the e-Newsletter to disseminate information about upcoming programs and our history to over 2400 people each month.

ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director Amy Conroy left the Sewall-Belmont House in February and Patricia Williams stepped in as Interim Executive Director in March. Ms. Williams' primary tasks include the day to day oversight of the property and to conduct the search for the new Executive Director. The search committee began interviewing candidates in June and hired Page Harrington who began her tenure on August 26, 2008.

Respectfully submitted by:

A. Page Harrington
Executive Director
Sewall-Belmont House & Museum
July 13, 2009