

The Women's Program News

**FALL
2005**

WOMEN'S PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Women's Program is to provide an educational environment where women are empowered to improve their lives.



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FISHING WITH A BUTTON WIRE: Achieving Purpose and Resilience through Transitions

Barbara Sullivan graduated from the Transitions Program in Spring 2003. One year later, after becoming a part-time writing instructor at Lane, she was the keynote speaker at the Spring 2004 Transitions graduation ceremony. This fall term, Barbara will teach a college writing class which is directly linked to our evening Transitions class, in a learning community. Her powerful and inspiring keynote address from Spring 2004 follows:

Last spring, I was sitting where you are, listening to the graduation speaker, a young woman who was going off to South America to work with women in transition there. Her plans were inspiring, but disheartening at the same time because I thought I was headed for a fast food minimum wage job. I was fifty-six years old, and I hadn't had a real job since 1976; I had been a stay-at-home mom and caretaker through the long terminal illnesses of both my first husband and my mother, and had just been through a bloody divorce and custody nightmare—suddenly, I had been tossed out of a privileged life into the reality that I was a single mom with no certain means of support.

I had been a secretary back in the days when you had to know how to make coffee and use a Dictaphone. I had been to college in the sixties, where I wasted my mother's money and got a degree in art, about which I still know absolutely nothing except how to throw an off-center ceramic bowl, and sketch a pretty basket of fruit. I had later gone to graduate school and gotten an even less practical degree in

fiction writing, a field known mainly for opportunities in careers like waitressing, hitchhiking, and alcoholism. I thought I would be lucky to get on at Burger King, but worried because with my menopausal mind, I knew I wouldn't be able to remember an order long enough to get it entered, let alone make change.

I spent a lot of time studying the pink sheet that Transitions instructor Linda Gonzalves supplied us with, the one that shows The Pit as just one stage of transition, the one that claims The Pit is a good place to be, because it's where you get to know yourself.

All I knew about myself on graduation day was that I had to shed the tendency of my generation of women to devalue myself, live on crumbs, and sit in the back of the bus, bracing myself against attack and hoping I could be a good enough girl to achieve invisibility.

It took the example of strong women to make me think that I might be strong too—to make me think that maybe it was even okay to be powerful, and unashamed. Part of my transition was to listen and learn from women who said things to me like "You have to push—don't be afraid you're nagging, just call up and make the appointment! It's not that they don't want you, they don't even know you! Go in person! Keep trying!" It was the women in my life who supported me once I was desperate enough to accept their support. And it is because of the combined efforts of this women's network that I am now teaching English Composition here at Lane.

WOMEN'S PROGRAM STAFF

Kate Barry
Program Director

Paula Sena
Administrative Specialist

Jill Bradley
Women's Center Coordinator

Marci Parker
Women's Center Receptionist

Patsy Raney
Transitions Coordinator

Cara DiMarco
Transitions Instructor/Counselor

Marge Barnhart
Transitions Advisor

Theresa Arriaga
Transitions Admin Support Spec

Linda Gonzalves
Transitions Instructor

Gayle Townsend
Transitions Instructor

Michelle Maher
Transitions 2 Instructor

Rosa Chávez
Transiciones Advisor

Donna (LaRosa) Rose
ACCESS Advisor

**WOMEN'S CENTER
HOURS****Fall Term**

Monday 8 am - 3 pm & 4 - 6 pm

Tuesday 8 am - 6:30 pm

Wednesday 8 am - 5 pm

Thursday 8 am - 6:30 pm

Friday 8 am - 4 pm

The Women's Center is a resource and referral center available to campus and community members. For more information about the services available, contact the Women's Center at 463-5353 or come by Building 1 (Students Services Bldg.) room 202, Main Campus.

*To those who can dream there
is no such place as faraway.*

—Anonymous

Mark Your Calendars

Brown Bag talks:***Health Insurance for
Low Income Oregonians***

with Jeanne Campos from the Riverstone Clinic

This information will be presented twice.

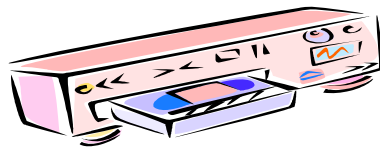
Thursday, October 27, 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, November 16, Noon–12:50 p.m.

Do you need help paying health insurance premiums? What is the Oregon Health Plan and how do I apply? What health coverage is available for non-citizens? Get help filling out the application forms.

OPEN HOUSE:

Halloween, October 31st
10 am–2 pm... refreshments etc

**Video Presentations:**

**Women's Center, Building 1,
room 202**
Lane Community College
4000 E. 30th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon
All videos will be shown at Noon

October 7, 2005

Spousal Abuse—A Global Perspective

October 14, 2005

*Secrets, Lies and Apologies—
America's Domestic Violence Crisis*

October 21, 2005

*Tough Guise: violence, media,
and the crisis in masculinity*

**Women Starting
College Workshops**

Wednesday, Oct 5
5:30–7:30 p.m.

Monday, September 19
10:00–12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct 12 & Nov 9 &
Nov 30

12:30–2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct 25 & Nov 1
9:30–11:30 a.m.

Women who want information and help in getting started at Lane can choose one of these free workshops. This is the first step for those who want to take the Transitions to Success classes. For information or to sign up, call the Women's Center, 463-5353.

**New linked optional
class for Transitions
To Success students:**

Writing 115 (WR115)
Taught by Transitions graduate Barbara Sullivan

Fall term 2005 is the first term we've offered this writing class as an option for the Transitions program. WR115 offers students the opportunity to explore issues of women's identity and insight through writing assignments which are directly linked to the curriculum of our evening Life Transitions class. Students will learn to develop analytic skills in order to become critical thinkers, readers and writers.



Fishing with a button wire cont.

Every day I walk down the hill from the parking lot, I feel like I'm coming home again for the first time. I love this place. And, I discovered, I loved teaching.

It's a long way from Burger King. (Fortunately, here at LCC if I forget what the heck I'm supposed to be doing, it just means I'm an absent-minded professor—a label that I think men invented so their lapses could be disguised as preoccupation with weighty intellectual matters.)

Now, I was very privileged before I came into the transitions program—the fact that I had two degrees, no matter how useless they seemed, is what eventually qualified me to become a teacher here. But the truth is that education doesn't guarantee wisdom—so if you're thinking you blew it back when you stopped after high school, or dropped out, or put your education on hold to take care of somebody else—you're wrong. The thing about women who are going through a transition of the magnitude that put most of us here, together, in this room, is that we have been educated in the hard school of life—a school that requires of its graduates not only wisdom, but determination, grit and the ability to survive against all odds.

A friend of mine was born into a well-off family in Cambodia—she was nine years old when Pol Pot's agrarian revolution killed two million people, including 28 members of her family, who were murdered with shovels, or thrown alive into wells, or starved in forced labor camps. My friend survived starvation by fishing with a button wire cut from her uniform. She survived emotionally on the love of her older sister, who said, on her deathbed, that evil can only float on the surface of life's waters for so long; like broken glass, eventually it will sink under its own weight. My friend survived spiritually by sustaining herself with a vision of the future in which she would live to tell her family's story. She eventually made it to the refugee camps in Thailand, and then to this country, where she began her memoir in a freshman English class. It went on to win the Oregon book award, and she is now working with other survivors of Cambodia's holocaust.

I'm guessing that most of you fall somewhere between my kind of transition and hers, but what I know about all of you is

that you are stronger than you may think. Your presence here proves it. You have more resources than you are aware of—probably all you really need is a little confidence. Surround yourself with people who promote that, because powerful women like you can not only reshape your own lives—you are the best leverage this world has on reshaping its future.

Let me tell you a little story about the power of women, reported by the Indian writer, Amitav Ghosh. This was in Delhi, in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination, when thousands of Sikhs were burned alive in retribution, and tens of thousands were left homeless. Ghosh was part of a small group who marched to confront the rioters. Coming upon a mob of men who were brandishing knives and steel rods, the marchers braced themselves to be attacked. But then, he says, "...something happened that I have never completely understood. Nothing was said; there was no signal, nor was there any break in the rhythm of our chanting. But suddenly all the women in our group—and the women made up more than half of the group's numbers—stepped out and surrounded the men; their saris and *kameezes* became a thin, fluttering barrier, a wall around us. They turned to face the approaching men, challenging them, daring them to attack. The thugs took a few more steps toward us and then faltered, confused. A moment later, they were gone."

When women step out in front, all kinds of things are possible. When women take charge of the education of their families and themselves, the world can be different in just one generation—and this generation, by most accounts, is the one that matters. Women's literacy, for example, is the best predictor of birth rates, regardless of cultural or religious

norms—so women's literacy is the best leverage we have on the fact that world population will double in the next thirty years, to an unsustainable twelve billion people. Women know what it takes to sustain a child, or a family, or a world. Women know that people have to listen to each other, respect each other, take each other's beliefs into account—because that's what we have always done.

When we take the power seriously, and wield it, we can disarm whatever "mobs" stand in the way of reason. And we don't have to be presidents, or congresswomen, or CEO's, or PhDs to do it either. Small, individual efforts can have a massive ripple effect. One empowered woman is a formidable force in the world—Rosa Parks decided to sit in the front of the bus one day, and in her lifetime, segregation became history.

So what I want to say to you is: keep fishing with your button wires. You will survive these hard times—and believe me, I know that for most of you, they *are* hard right now. Tape that pink sheet about The Pit on your wall, and believe what it says. You *will* get to know yourself—and by that I mean you will get to know what you are capable of. Make it a point to also get to know other women. Together, we can step out in front of life and change what has seemed inevitable.

We can do it now.





Women's Program

4000 East 30th Ave
Eugene, OR 97405

Phone: 541-463-5353
Fax: 541-463-4173

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We're on the WEB!
Go to the Women's Program
under College Departments
at www.lanecc.edu



FALL 2005 Calendar

Wednesday, Sept 14 & Oct 5 Monday, September 19	5:30—7:30 p.m. 10:00 — 12:00 p.m.	Women Starting College Workshops
Fridays	12:00—1:00 p.m.	Women's Center Video Series:
Thursday, October 27	3:00—4:00 p.m.	Brown Bag: Health Insurance for Low Income Oregonians
Wednesday, November 16	12:00—1:00 p.m.	Brown Bag: Health Insurance for Low Income Oregonians
Monday, October 31	10:00—2:00 p.m.	Women's Center OPEN HOUSE
Thursday, December 8	5:30 — 7:00 p.m.	Transitions to Success Graduation Conference Center, 1st floor Building 19—Workforce Building

For more information about any of these events, contact the Women's Center at 463-5353 or
drop by Building 1 (Students Services) room 202, Main Campus.

Lane Community College is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution