



REPORTS

WINTER 2008

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From The Executive Director

It would not be appropriate for me to share with you my thinking about the candidates in the upcoming election. It is, however, very appropriate for me to urge you to exercise your right as an American to cast your vote based on a careful analysis of candidates and measures.

At the risk of repeating what has become cliché, this feels like the most important election in my lifetime. Not only does the presidential race offer widely divergent perspectives about how to create the best possible future for our country but there are also very important races at the city, county, state and congressional level. Additionally, there will be a number of state ballot measures (including two related to education that deserve very careful examination) that could have profound effects on Oregon and our schools.

While it's fashionable for some to describe voting as an empty act that won't meaningfully affect the status quo, many elections between very different candidates are narrowly decided with the outcome having far-reaching consequences. Fewer than 60% of registered voters cast ballots in the last two presidential elections. A change in turnout of 1% might have led to very different results. In the 2000 presidential election, Florida's Electoral College votes (and the presidency) went to George W. Bush based on a margin of 537 votes. In 1974, John Durkin was elected to the US Senate by two votes. In 2004, Christine

Gregoire won the election to be Washington's Governor by 129 votes. Analysts are predicting that many of this fall's races will be extremely close. These are races in which your vote, and your active involvement in supporting the candidates and measures you believe in, can make a crucial difference.

If you haven't already, I hope that you will take the time to carefully consider the upcoming election and how you believe you can best ensure a bright future for our community, state and nation. Visit candidate websites, talk with people you trust, be sure that your vote is well-informed.

For me, the filter that ends up being the most helpful in my decision-making process is the effect my choices are likely to have on children, now and in the future. How will our votes and the conduct of our leaders be viewed by our children, their children and the children of the world? Have we protected and enhanced their futures or will they spend their lives cleaning up our messes and paying for our indulgences?

The stakes in this election are enormous.

Be sure that you do everything you can to ensure the best possible outcomes. *Vote as if your children's lives depended on it... they do.*

Marshall Peter

Friendship: Real Women, Real Challenges, Real Solutions

By Debra Whiting Alexander, Ph.D., LMFT

If you're a woman, I know something important about you without even knowing you. I know that having friends in your life is good for you and important to your overall happiness. Research confirms that women live longer and better in the company of friends. But sometimes friendships change fast; they can unravel in unpredictable and painful ways.

Co-Author, Judy Dippel and I surveyed and interviewed women between the ages of thirty and eighty-five for our book, *The Art of Authentic Friendship: Real Women, Real Challenges, Real Solutions*. We asked women to list and describe the top ten challenges they've faced with friends and how they handled each situation. Participants told us firsthand how difficult it can be to cope with broken, lost, or difficult friendships. In fact, women from all walks of life confirmed to us the fact that friendship is not a trivial subject. It's a highly charged emotional one, especially when things go wrong.

The Art of Authentic Friendship not only addresses the problems that put valued friendships to the test but also the solutions to these challenges. We combined professional counseling strategies with faith based guidance to help women build strong, lasting, authentic relationships with one another.

What did women say was the number one friendship challenge? Time. For most women in our culture, days come and go and weeks seem to fly by. Time presses forward, unyielding. To-do lists and appointments fill up day planners with little or no time scheduled in for meaningful relationships. Trying to manage time is the ultimate stressor and finding time to be with friends is the number one challenge women face. Marianne (age 48), told us, *"It's difficult to just be together, relax, and let friend-stuff happen. As women, we expect so much of ourselves in today's world. We wear so many different hats, and have so many responsibilities. I honestly think the number one challenge we all face is finding time for each other."*

In the 1950s and 60s, women frequently dropped in on friends for a leisurely cup of coffee and mid-morning visits. Today's world looks and feels much different, but women still have a fundamental need for one another. Even though access to one another seems easier, technology has both connected and disconnected our relationships. Although

its different today than in generations past, bonding together like women used to do in the "old days" is critical to your overall happiness and health. Research has proven it — not having close friends or confidants is as detrimental to health as smoking or carrying extra weight (Nurses' Health Study, Harvard Medical School; reported in timeforbalance.com, "Women's Friendships Vital to Health," the Loudon Network, Inc., 2004).

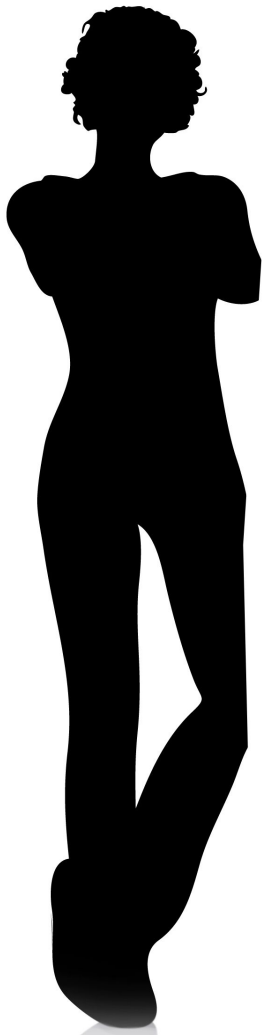
Clearly, friendship has the potential to counteract the effects of stress and reduce the risk of disease. Good friends then are de-stressors, and should be considered as vital as nutritious food, rest, and exercise. Women can learn to be intentional when making plans — it's important to schedule time with friends as you would any critical appointment. Make friends a priority.

Varying lifestyles and differing beliefs between friends represent obstacles that women tell us are also significant challenges in some relationships. Diverse viewpoints on politics, religion, marriage and children are not uncommon among friends. Geographical distance and chronic illness also represent major challenges for many women and experiences of hurt, jealousy, anger and conflicts interrupt friendships far too frequently. And sometimes the sting of grief and loss interrupt relationships permanently.

Not every challenge in friendship can be resolved, but there are real solutions to most. It may not always be easy, but finding help for the problems women face is too important to neglect. Life can be expanded and affirmed in immeasurable ways by friendships that remain beneficial for the heart, mind, body, and soul. Positive self-worth and personal growth are inspired by healthy friendships. Simply put, friends are good for women! In a culture that is increasingly complex and confusing, true friends — the soul mates in women's lives — are lifelines to overall well-being. George Eliot said, *"It is never too late to be what you might have been"*. It is never too late to overcome challenges and find greater joy in your friendships, beginning today.

Debra Whiting Alexander, Ph.D. has been on staff at Direction Service Counseling Center for four years. She is the author of numerous books including, Children Changed by Trauma and Loving Your Teenage Daughter (Whether She Likes It Or Not). To purchase signed copies of any of her books, contact Debra directly at: drdeba2003@yahoo.com or: dalexander@directionservice.org.

Excerpts from *The Art of Authentic Friendship* Evergreen Press, 2008—ISBN# 978158169-2839
Judy Dippel can be contacted at www.judydippel.com



People at Direction Service

We're delighted to welcome **Rhonda Busek** to the Direction Service Board of Directors. Rhonda is Senior Vice-President of Agate Resources, Inc. and Chief Operations Officer at Lane Individual Practice Association (LIPA). Rhonda's contagious enthusiasm for Direction Service and its mission is a terrific asset to the organization.

Kelly Murray recently joined the staff at the Direction Service Counseling Center. She received Ph.D. in psychology from Northern Illinois University with a dual concentration of developmental and school psychology. Her professional interests include working with adults, children and families using a cognitive behavioral approach that is culturally sensitive, ecologically valid and developmentally appropriate. This includes targeting interventions to the multiple contexts within which individuals function including home, work, school and the community. In her free time she enjoys going on adventures with her family, knitting and falling asleep in the sun.

The staff at Direction Service extends best wishes to former Family Service Coordinator, **Kristi Benz**. We greatly appreciate her efforts on behalf of families with children with disabilities and wish her the best in all her future endeavors.

Special thanks to **Kelsey Hoard** who is a high school student-volunteer. We very much appreciate her efforts assisting the FSSC program with Latino Hispanic outreach.

Family Support and Service Coordination Program

Back to School Advice from Aimee Taylor, Program Director of the Family Support and Service Coordination program.

Support Team: Building A Positive Relationship With Your Child's Teacher

Building a positive, proactive relationship with your child's teacher or teachers can be critical to a successful school year. Here are a few suggestions for ways in which you can begin building such a relationship.

- Establish a mutually acceptable method of regular communication. Many teachers have established methods of communication for parents. Some may use communication notebooks, email or voicemail. As you partner with the teacher in deciding how to communicate, you should also determine the frequency of communication. Keep in mind

that even though it might be very helpful to have daily input from your child's teacher, this may not be a reasonable or even feasible task for every student.

- Be sure your communications are clear and concise. It can be tempting to send long explanatory emails to teachers or other staff about things that have happened in the past or current issues. Remember that there may be thirty other parents emailing the teacher and that your email is more likely to be read thoroughly if it is brief and to the point.

- Some things are better said in person. Email is frequently misinterpreted and not the place for difficult or critical conversations. It is also an easy place to vent emotions that may be regretted later. If you are feeling upset it is great to write down your concerns, but wait until you've had a chance to calm down or talk to your support system (partners, family, friends or advocates) before sending.

- Use written communication as a method of confirmation or follow-up. Having written email or notes after a meeting can be a helpful way to confirm and/or follow-up on decisions made. For example: *"Thank you so much for meeting with me yesterday. It is my understanding that you will speak with the bus driver and let me know by Thursday about his response."*

- Don't ambush the teacher. It is better to set up a time to talk with the teacher ahead of time rather than grab them in the hall after school to talk about concerns. It may, however, be a good time to ask if you could have a bit of their time later. Teachers often have after school meetings or duties they are trying to get to and there is typically a lot happening when children are released from school. You and the teacher both benefit when they can give you their undivided attention.

- Be pro-active. Parents can sometimes be hesitant to bring smaller issues up with school staff. Remember small problems are often more easily resolved than big ones. It is also important to be thinking of potential solutions to issues that you are bringing to the teacher. Parents have crucial knowledge of their child and often have ideas and solutions that teachers appreciate hearing and adapting for their classroom environment.

- Remember to say *"Thank You"* or offer praise. Everyone enjoys hearing when they are doing a good job or feeling appreciated for their efforts. Letting teachers or other school staff know when they are doing a good job is very important. If appropriate you may let administrators know of specific instances.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Save this Date!

We are proud to announce the next Celebrities to get cooked at our Seventh Annual Celebrity Roast are none other than . . .

Bob Bury (*Euphoria Chocolate*)

&

Stephanie Pearl Kimmel (*Marché*)

2009 CELEBRITY ROAST!



Don't miss this unforgettable evening of food and laughter. Come and share an elegant dinner followed by hilarious fun as our distinguished Celebrities get roasted and lambasted by our surprise All-Star Roasters.

Thursday, April 2nd, 2009

Lane Community College
Center For Meeting and Learning
5:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Tickets: *Individual - \$85 / Corporate Table \$900 (seats 8)*

For reservations or information regarding auction or sponsorship opportunities, please call (541) 686-5060 or log on to www.directionservice.org. Due to limited seating, advance reservations are strongly encouraged.

Direction Service

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Please let us know if you would prefer not to receive this newsletter.

MOVING?

Please give us your new address.
The post office will not forward.

Information Services

Join the more than 200,000 people who have visited www.211Lane.org this summer! www.211Lane.org is Lane County's one-stop resource for social services and volunteer opportunities. 211Lane.org links people seeking to find help with over 900 social services and those wishing to give help with over 300 community opportunities.

If you can't find what you are looking for on the website, call Direction Service directly. Direction Service acts as an information clearinghouse on a broad range of disability related topics, which include legal issues, resources, parenting, barrier-free design, disabling conditions, and controversial treatments.

Thanks to all of those who gave generously to help support the important work we do throughout Lane County! An additional Thanks to all who contribute through eScrip, iGive.com and the Albertson's Community Partners Program

(For more information on these programs or if you are interested in how you or your company can support the work of Direction Service, please contact: Roger G. Durant, Director of Development (541) 284-4737)

Special thanks to these businesses and individuals for their contributions to this newsletter:

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