

# Chesapeake Women's Network

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Women's networks are as much a part of the 80s as health clubs and day care centers. And the women who start and run them advocate networking as a gold-rimmed press pass to meeting the right people at the right time in the right places.

By the year 2000, 50 percent of all small businesses in America will be owned by women, according to recent studies. Ten years ago only 8 percent of business school enrollments were women. Today 42 percent are women. There is even an international organization to help support this New Girl Network called the National Womens Forum (NWF) — an umbrella organization covering all women's networks.

Local networks, such as the Business and Professional

Women (BPW) and American Association of University Women (AAUW), are not as specialized as the Chesapeake Women's Network (CWN) started by public relations consultant Marcia Burgoon.

"I had been a member of the Annapolis Women's Network and when I moved here I realized we have a lot of professional women tucked off Route 50. We called a meeting together in February 1986 and decided to put a press release in the paper. Twenty people showed up at the next meeting. And after three years we are up to 90 members," Burgoon said.

"Women's networks are a phenomenon of the last decade," Burgoon said, "Men have always had networks such as lions clubs and rotary clubs. Many people think of networks as using other people but if that's

true then you could also say that all the men who join clubs to meet new insurance accounts are using people — but in the process they are having fun and making good friends."

Group members' ages range from the early 30's and up. Burgoon said, "We have child therapists, accountants, artists, restaurant owners and travel agents. We are looking for people who have a lot in common with each other. We would rather have 25 people with a lot in common than 250 people who don't have much in common."

Group members share common problems. "Women still are not taken seriously in the business world," Burgoon said, "Many times people talk over the woman as though she weren't even there."

Guilt is an emotion that most women must deal with. "We all

feel guilty — I feel guilty that I'm not home at 2:30 when my daughter gets home and I'm never sure if it bothers her more than it bothers me. Women are made to feel guilty because we are told that the mother should always be there — but very few mothers today are. Many women don't have a choice.

"We try to encourage and help each other," Burgoon said. "We can really identify with each other because we know what it's like to be a super mom, super career woman, super wife and super community woman — and we know the problems of tossing all these balls in the air at the same time."

She added, "Women will help each other because we like to see each other succeed. I was in a high school and college sorority and this is very similar in that it's a support group."