

2009 Annual Report



Covering Women's Issues | Changing Women's Lives

February 10, 2010

Dear Collaborator and Friend,

January 2009 opened with a demonstration of Women's eNews enormous success and indications that Women's eNews might be forced to shut down within days.

On January 20, Allison Stevens, then our Washington bureau chief, covered the inauguration of President Barack Obama from a coveted seat on the stage where he made his historic address to an extremely hopeful nation. A day later, Women's eNews president Rita Henley Jensen received a call indicating that pledges of financial support that failed to materialize in December 2008 and January 2009 could cause Women's eNews to default on operating debt and be compelled to end all operations.

Now, Women's eNews has moved into its new space in downtown Manhattan, is enjoying the benefits of a completely redesigned Web site launched in September 2009, and has little debt.



Women's eNews survived the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression while investing in its news product and creating a space that not only houses the production of award-winning daily news, commentary and videos, but also where women can tell their stories through panel discussions, book parties, documentary screenings and art.

The Power of the Women's eNews Journalism

Late in 2008, Women's eNews featured in several stories Chou Chou Namegabe, a leader of radio journalists in the Congo fighting sexual violence. Vital Voices, an international organization founded by Madeline Albright and Hillary Clinton, honored Namegabe in March 2009; Ben Affleck handed her the award. In August, the Knight Foundation also recognized Namegabe with its prestigious international journalism prize. Hillary Clinton also stopped in the Congo during her trip to Africa and promised Namegabe's organization the equipment and training they deeply desired.

Over the summer, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn cited Women's eNews in their best-seller "Half the Sky," and linked to Women's eNews on the book's Web site.

In December 2009, Women's eNews uncovered that the undocumented workers--all women--who were arrested in the high-profile immigration raid of a meat-packing plant in Postville, Iowa, were still required to wear electronic shackles even after the criminal charges against their former boss were dropped. The shackles were removed two weeks after the story ran.

New Resources to Tell Women's Stories

Women's eNews has received a two-year grant from the Sister Fund to further develop our women's history walking tour of the area near our new offices—across from the Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth



Cady Stanton corner--where the two published the weekly *Revolution*. The original researchers and writers of the first walking tours, New York Times retired travel columnist Betsy Wade and her spouse, founder of the *Columbia Journalism Review* James Boylan, have now developed a new, much more detailed script with such exciting additions as Margaret Sanger and the female first responders on 9/11/2001. The plans include cellphone access to the tour's narration, a related Web site and book providing more complete biographies of the women featured on the tour, with excerpts of their writings.

Women's eNews will also redesign the Arabic version to be as up-to-date as our English version. In addition, we are making plans to establish a bureau in Cairo, with a possible collaboration with the American University of Cairo and another nonprofit media company based there.

New Staff Join with Experienced Crew Members

Three staff members remained after the separation from the Fund for the City of New York: Rita Henley Jensen, founder and editor in chief; Corinna Barnard, editor; Ariel Jensen-Vargas, director of Web operations—all very key to our operations. In addition, Kimberly Seal-Allers has stayed on as our editor of the African American maternal health series. Dominique Soguel, our Arabic site editor, began working as a consultant from Damascus. We also have five new staff members.

New director of operations: Rosemary King, joined us in August 2009. Rosemary comes to us from the office Anthony Weiner, a member of Congress and, for a brief time, a mayoral candidate in New York City.

New Office Manager: Rona Jacobi joined us in January 2010. Rona joins is a highly experienced bookkeeper and accounts manager who is taking night school classes at Manhattan Community College for a degree in health care administration.

New Contributing Editor: Juhie Bhatia. Juhie is a former intern—2004—who returned April 2009 after working in the for-profit new media world.

New position: Director of Marketing: Charlotte Cooper joins us from England officially some time in February. Cooper will be working full-time and has been volunteering for us since March 2009.

New position: Event Coordinator: Andrea O'Hare is taking on the job of coordinating all of our events, from screenings in our new space to 21 Leaders. She joins us after extensive experience planning events for real estate firms.

New Position: Member Services: A recent college graduate, Linh Lanh is a certified Google analytics analyst, which means she has been trained to how to implement various strategies to increase visibility on the Web. She is in charge of subscriber management and maximizing our Web traffic.

New Partnerships Expanding Our Reach

Women's eNews has begun to regularly contribute to 51%, a radio show produced by public radio station WAMC and heard across the country and on Armed Forces Radio, reaching listeners of 175 radio stations.

Women's eNews is now also a member of the New York Community Media Alliance, a member-driver organization that promotes and advocates for the more than 350 ethnic and community media in New York and its metropolitan area. The alliance is promoting our immigration series to its members on its Web site.

The Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation moved into our back room as of January 15, 2010, and will hold events and meetings in the Women's eNews space as well.



New Recognition of the Quality of Our Work

Women's eNews won two additional awards this year: One, an Ippie, for the best feature story on education (written by a former office manager who ended up going to CUNY Journalism School) and a Sexies Award for Sex-Positive Journalism (about growth in number of plastic surgeries to restore hymens).

Building New Readership

Alongside changes in the Web site and daily mail to make our site more attractive, user-friendly and interactive, our combined Google analytics team meets each Friday to brainstorm how best to use Adwords provided free of charge by Google to nonprofits.

Our understanding of Women's eNews Google analytics have led to several successes:

- Visitors are now finding Women's eNews through our effective use of Google ads. This is reducing what is referred to as a "bounce rate"—a high bounce rate on Google Analytics can signify unsatisfied visitors;
- Visitors are increasing their page views per visit, vital in knowing our news is being accessed and increasing our attractiveness to advertisers;
- The majority of our visitors are returning visitors indicating brand loyalty and adding worth to our content.

Major Financial Events in 2009

Five major financial events occurred during the year that played a significant role in the transformation of Women's eNews.

1) A major donor was unable to live up to a commitment of several hundred thousand dollars to defray construction costs on our new space; 2) A foundation restructured a \$400,000 grant to be paid over two years, rather than one; 3) The Fund for the City of New York, our fiscal sponsor, and Women's eNews ended its relationship as of midnight May 8, 2009, leaving unresolved the amount Women's eNews owed the fund for cash-flow loans. In December, Women's eNews and the Fund closed on a financial agreement that satisfied both parties; 4) Glenwood, the developer for our new space, agreed to accept a payment plan for the \$175,000 cost of construction of the Women's eNews space. Women's eNews is now making monthly payments at the rate of 5 percent interest, amortized over a period of ten years; 5) As of early June, Women's eNews had more than \$100,000 in vendor debt for everything from the photography at our gala to the desks in our new space. Women's eNews focused on paying its debts first to the small vendors. As of January 2010, Women's eNews owes a total of \$30,000 to its vendors and all payments are current.

To achieve this remarkable turn-around, board members made extraordinary contributions during the year totaling \$100,000.

Rita Henley Jensen voluntarily reduced her compensation by 75 percent for six months; her compensation is currently 50 percent of her 2008 level.

The board and president asked several staff members to reduce their hours and laid off two staff members; a third resigned rather than experience a reduction in hours.

Board chair Betsy Chandler created Women's eNews Philadelphia Leaders and Elizabeth A. Sackler hosted an event at her center at the Brooklyn Museum. Combined, they raised \$55,000.

Women's eNews received much welcomed support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to cover African American health disparities; the Ford Foundation to cover women and poverty; and the Open Society Institute to cover the issues faced by immigrant women. Hyde and Watson Foundation also came through with a grant to help pay for capital expenditures, the Sister Fund decided to support our women's history walking tour, the Charles L. Keith & Clara Miller Foundation once again supported our marketing internship and the Ms. Foundation and the Bydale Foundation continued their gifts for general support.

And, in a show of enormous support from our readers, donations from the end of the year campaign totaled \$50,000—the highest ever.

In sum, the year was one in which Women's eNews made tough decisions and found new supporters, enough to see us through in a way that could never been imagined in January. We have all of you to thank and, on behalf of the board and the staff, know each day that our successes are yours to claim.

Copies of the Women's eNews audited financial statements will be available after March 30. To request your copy, please e-mail Rosemary King at rosemary@womensenews.org or phone 212-244-1720.



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