

Cerulli finds relevance in Susan B's work for Women's History Month

By NORA A. JONES

If Susan B. Anthony was alive today, what would she think about our society and the treatment of women in the 21st century?

Catherine Cerulli, director of the Susan B. Anthony Center for Women's Leadership at the University of Rochester, presented a lunch time program on March 21 called From Petticoats to Pantsuits. The program was a joint effort by the Seventh Judicial District Gender Fairness Committee, the Susan B. Anthony Center, the Laboratory of Interpersonal Violence and Victimization, and the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys.

Susan B. Anthony Center

Appointed as director in 2012, Cerulli is responsible for creating and implementing programs to celebrate women's achievements, and helping to overcome barriers that still thwart equal opportunities for women.

She has engaged students, faculty and members of the community in conversations, surveys, and focus groups to identify key social justice issues that will lead to "creating a better community."



From left, Judy Dipaola, principal court stenographer and member of the Gender Fairness Committee, Seventh Judicial District Commissioner of Jurors Charles Perraud, and Gender Fairness Committee members Judge Teresa Johnson and Josie Sheppard.

"Anthony's mission was timeless," Cerulli said. "Her work focused on creating a better community."

Having been in the Anthony Center post

for nearly four years, Cerulli said, "It has been the funnest four years of working with

See **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH** on page 1

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Susan B's work for women's history month

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH from page 1

students who are passionate, insightful, and smart."

Despite the caliber of students, post-graduation pay equity continues to be an issue in many professions, as is equal representation in the workplace. There continues to be a work/life balance issue as well. The Center is involved in a number of projects including helping human trafficking victims from the Rochester area, and participating in the Mount Hope PEACE project.

The Center is also a resource for gender sensitivity training and leadership programs. Cerulli created a leadership series for faculty, staff, and students that is comprised of workshops and six-week programs, and she co-founded a four-day seminar for associate professors.

One program focuses specifically on helping new female graduates negotiate their first job.

Susan B., the person

Cerulli and her team are learning all they can about Anthony by reviewing hundreds of letters written by the late feminist and collected in the Rush Rhees Library archives. Since starting the Letters Project, they have discovered 50-some boxes of Susan B. correspondence housed at a New York City library under the stewardship of the National Coalition of Women.

Seeking to understand the multi-dimensional woman, researchers have systematically coded the Anthony letters for themes like family, relationships, and race as a way to develop a greater understanding of her personal opinions on various social issues. Her letters also reveal her spirituality and it is clear that she regularly attended church.

The Susan B. Anthony Letters Project launched a Twitter campaign last fall aimed at connecting social media users with Anthony's opinions on a range of social issues under the #SueBSays hashtag.

Quotes from Susan B's letters are shared on Twitter twice a week, including topics on education, voting and race relations. The Center's Twitter handle is @UofR_SBAC. The posts will also appear on the Center's Facebook page.

21st century statistics

It is true, women have come a long way in the 100 years since Susan B. Anthony campaigned for equality. But if you take a look at a few facts, you'll see that women are not represented equally in many arenas:

- U.S. Senate: 20 women out of 100 members
- U.S. House of Representatives: 84 women out of 435
- 6 female state governors among 50 states
- Only 4% of CEOs in the top 500 companies are women
- The federal bench has about 33% women
- State courts have about 25% female judges
- Pay equity: consult a booklet available at the American Association of University Women
- Advertisers of mainstream products still often put women down
- One in four women will be abused by her partner

Gender fairness committee

Rochester City Court Judge Teresa Johnson is chair of the Seventh Judicial District's Gender Fairness Committee. There are similar committees throughout the New York Unified Court system.

The local committee is comprised of at-



The Hon. Teresa Johnson introduced the Petticoats to Pantsuits presentation wearing her hat as the Chair of the Seventh Judicial District Gender Fairness Committee.

orneys and court employees: Sara Ashcraft, Catherine Cerulli, Richard DeValk, Judy L. Dipaola, Monroe Family Court Judge Gail Donofrio, Adele Fine, Christiana Herman, Susan Maleski, Sharon Rivaldo, Deborah Robillard, Jaime Saunders, Sharon Kelly Sayers, Josie Sheppard, Geneva City Court Judge Elisabeth Toole, Roberta Williams, Carol Winslow and Kelly Wolford.

The committee has recently focused on human trafficking in Western New York, seeking to raise awareness of the sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and trafficking of children that occurs within our region.

Catherine Cerulli

In addition to her role as director of the Center, Cerulli is an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Rochester, and also the director of the Laboratory of Interpersonal Violence and Victimization.

She is a founding member of the Crisis Nursery of Greater Rochester, Inc. and serves on the board at the Center for Youth.



Catherine Cerulli sharing her insights about Susan B. Anthony at the Women's History Month program: From Petticoats to Pantsuits.

While at the Monroe County District Attorney's office in the early 1990s, she created a special misdemeanor domestic violence unit. While still a student at the University at Buffalo School of Law, she used a grant to study the local government's response to cases of domestic violence in Buffalo. Before earning her JD in 1992, she helped establish the SUNY Buffalo Law School's Women, Children & Social Justice Clinic.

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Pages 1 and 8