



# EXECUTIVE FORUM

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## Member Perspective

### Keeping Connected with WHA

By Nina Niu-Ok

Last year I made the difficult decision to leave the health care administration profession to become the primary caregiver to my then one year old daughter. After the birth of my daughter, I found that working long hours out of the house no longer matched my current priorities, making it even tougher to find that ever elusive work-life balance. My framework in approaching this decision to leave: I would be taking a break from a career path that I would return to sometime in the future in order to pursue a new “project”—caring for my child—full time. As part of my planning for my eventual return to the health care profession, I decided to maintain my membership in WHA and continue with my involvement on the WHA Board.

I was surprised to find that my decision to take a prolonged break from career building fit into a recent trend of young professional women who are opting to leave the workplace to raise their children fulltime, with every intention of returning. The March 10, 2004 issue of *Time Magazine* spotlighted this development in its report, “The Case for Staying Home: Why more young moms are opting out of the rat race.” According to the article, more women in professional and managerial positions, where higher incomes may allow for more options, are taking a nonlinear approach to career building and finding a work-life balance. The article cited U.S. Census data revealing an increase in stay-at-home moms who hold graduate or professional degrees, supported by independent surveys and expert observations.

This “you can have it all, but not at the same time” outlook may have a possibly regressive tone, especially to the older group of female professionals who had pioneered their way into high-powered jobs and may be dismayed at seeing the younger group of professional women leaving the workplace for family life. There does appear to be a generational factor in this movement: Gen Xers, defined as those people born from 1965 to 1979, rate personal and family goals higher than career goals, and generally have greater expectations about the work-life balance than their Boomer (born from 1945 to 1964) counterparts.

A mother’s support organization founder observed that younger women “feel more entitled to ask for changes and advocate for themselves.” Another marketing survey found that younger stay-at-home moms were much more likely to state an intent to return to work than their Boomer equivalents (46% of Gen Xers vs. 34% of Boomers).

Many times the impetus for leaving the workplace isn’t so much that fulltime caregiving is that much more rewarding than work, but that the professional workplace still inflexible despite all the work-life balance rhetoric. The result: the current professional women “stopping out” (versus “dropping out”) trend. Women who are looking for flexible work situations but do not find them are forging their own paths.

Being on the vanguard of creating “on and off ramps” on the career highway is risky, as the “stop out” period may be several years long and re-entering the workforce after a long hiatus would be no easy matter. Staying connected via professional organizations such as Women in Health Administration is critical. Bridget Cole, another WHA member who has modified her career-life balance with the birth of her first child, has noted that WHA has been a “terrific resource” in keeping her connected to the world outside of child caregiving. She states that it is “well worth continuing my membership [in WHA] regardless of where my current work/life balancing act takes me.”

As for myself, staying connected with the “outside world” via WHA has been extremely rewarding: my WHA membership and activities help me maintain my pre-baby identity as a professional with a thriving career, and the support and friendship of this group of talented and successful women bolster my resolve to return to the health care profession when I am ready to do so. ❖

**Next Event**  
Wednesday, May 26, 2004

## WHA MARCH EVENT

# Independent Consulting: Is It For You?

By Kimberly Enard

With more than 50 years of collective healthcare experience, independent consultants Susan Funk, Nancy Reaven and Mary Jo Ginty, presented a host of women healthcare professionals with a glimpse of the life of an independent healthcare consultant during WHA's March 2004 event, "Independent Consulting: Is It For You?" Each of the women provided a unique perspective of the pros of cons of pursuing a career in independent consulting, and detailed the characteristics required to give an independent consultant staying power.

Susan Funk, founder and president of the Kailos Group, Inc., initially planned to be a hospital CEO. Nancy Reaven, founder and president of Strategic Health Resources, spent the early part of her career developing managed care when it was still a fledgling industry. Mary Jo Ginty, owner of MJG and Associates, methodically climbed the corporate healthcare ladder until she found herself in the stairwell of her company, crying. While each of the women initially pursued different career paths, a desire for more control over their professional and personal lives eventually led them to independent consulting careers – careers that come with pros and cons.

According to the presenters, clear benefits of independent consulting include being able to choose your colleagues and clients; being able to develop and control business strategy; and the flexibility to maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, Funk, Reaven and Ginty note that risks and challenges include uncertain cash flow that could range from \$15-\$500 thousand per year; working alone in the office without support; and the necessity to continuously find new business, while minding business for current clients.

For those willing to pursue the benefits of independent consulting, despite the risks, the presenters recommended the following—

- **Have a passion for what you do.** Clearly understand what you're doing and why you're doing it.
- **Be persistent.** People will say no. Keep coming back.
- **Clearly identify your niche.** Based on your previous professional experience, identify what qualifies you as an expert, and think about a way

to spin it. Promote your unique selling proposition.

- **Stay focused.** Write a business plan, stick to it, and revise it constantly. Don't stray too far from your core competencies. Act "big", but operate frugally.
- **Under promise and over deliver.** Structure a deliverable that is something of significant value, and be sure to deliver more than is expected.
- **Network.** Meetings and conferences with relevant professionals may result in new clients and collaborations. Find venues for speaking engagements.
- **Take calculated risks.** Some endeavors will pay off – other will not.

Funk, Reaven and Ginty also recommend establishing physical home/office boundaries, maintaining a resource network, and developing professional marketing materials, including a web site. They recommend the SBA or a bank line of credit as potential financing sources for new consulting ventures.

And, finally, the presenters urge new consultants to develop a strong compass with regard to ethical issues: it may be necessary to walk away from a situation that is not right.



## DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!

Featuring

Gail Margolis, Esq.

*Vice President for Government & Public Policy  
Childrens Hospital Los Angeles*

**"Are There any Dollar\$ Left in  
Sacramento or D.C.  
for Health Care?"**

Wednesday, May 26, 2004  
Maggiano's Little Italy Restaurant  
The Grove Shopping Center

## WHA APRIL FIRESIDE CHAT

# Achieving Your Goals: 'Take Charge of Your Future, Today'

By Peggy Frank

### Life Coach and Financial Planner Provide High-Octane Advice For Harnessing the Power Inside Each of Us

The morning rain that fell steadily did little to dampen the warmly received advice dispensed by WHA's Fireside Chat speakers -- Life Coach Eva Bowman and Financial Planner Denise Carter at Janice Frates Newport Beach home, Saturday, April 17.

It was Albert Einstein who said that in the face of chaos, there is opportunity. This no doubt was the common force that brought together women in healthcare administration members from near and far -- to unlock and unleash the opportunities that rest within ourselves so that we can reach our maximum potential. And the key to unlocking this starts with knowing your goals and then making them actionable.

With the theme of "Achieving Your Goals: Prosperity and Fulfillment" as the common thread uniting the speakers, Eva Bowman kicked off the morning by introducing the participants to the benefits of Personal Coaching, also called Life Coaching. For many in attendance, the Life Coach concept was indeed new. Quickly, the audience was very engaged in this new way of navigating life.

Explained, Bowman, "A life coach helps you focus your energy on your desire for increased personal effectiveness, in line with your core values, goals, and standards of performance."

This is very important, she explained, because we tend to be so caught up in our lives that we do not stop and assess what we truly want to accomplish. She quoted Aristotle, who said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Bowman added to this a Scott Peck quote, "The examined life is no picnic either!"

Responding to a question from the audience, Bowman told the group that the biggest barrier to personal effectiveness and a life effectively lived that she sees in her female clients is their need for having higher self-esteem **before** taking action toward a new goal and their mistaken beliefs about where higher self-esteem comes from.

"Be concerned about being a failure, or about consistently ignoring your core values and standards of performance. But never be concerned about failing. Everyone fails. It's a fact of life. Fail early and often!"

Here's a quick check list Bowman calls "habits of mind for personal effectiveness" to help women meet the myriad challenges of living out their goals to their fullest:

- Don't become stuck in your own status quo

- Know what you stand for and esteem the job you've done
- Persevere in doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do
- Focus on your deeply-held, core values, standards of performance, and effective actions
- Remember that you can seldom control outcomes, but you can always control why and how you do a thing.
- Do those things that are in conformance with your core principles.

Financial planner Denise Carter followed Bowman's discussion. Carter's entire presentation was well tailored to fit the experience of an all-female audience.

"My presentation is geared precisely for women. As women we need to sit up and take charge of our financial present and future," said Carter.

Carter stated that women fail to take charge in part because we "are not living our mother's lives." Carter went on to explain that our mothers, for the most part, relied on their husbands to make all the financial decisions for the family, including providing for the couple's financial security and retirement. Today, with women outliving men, and so many women choosing an independent lifestyle, women must take the responsibility for their own financial viability.

Carter offered a few steps to get started:

- Set clear goals -- a clearly definable goal makes it easier to work towards your goals
- Seek out reliable resources for information
  - Some of this is available at no charge via the Internet
  - Two authors that speak directly to women: Susy Orman and Vanessa Somers
- Use financial programs to track your income, debits, debts, assets -- both short-and long-term
  - Quicken offers a good program.
- Get organized
- Get smarter
- Start now to build up your personal savings
- Get educated on investment strategies

The two speakers, united in purpose to help all attendees leave the session more prepared to reach their ultimate potential, both encouraged the audience to continually reevaluate their goals, whether they are life goals or financial goals, as they are your goals to embrace and make real.

For more information about the speakers, please contact WHA's Michelle Tuimauluga at [mtui@comcast.net](mailto:mtui@comcast.net), or at (909) 272-8101. ☒



## What Members Are Reading



### *Death by Meeting*

by Patrick Lencioni

Submitted by Doria Hai

*Death by Meeting* is a work of fiction--written by a management consultant who's also written: *The Leadership Fables of Patrick Lencioni*, a Box Set, containing: *The Five Temptations of a CEO*; *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*; *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

Patrick M. Lencioni (Emeryville, CA) is President of The Table Group, a management consulting firm specializing in executive team development and organizational effectiveness. As a consultant and executive coach, he has worked with hundreds of senior executives in organizations ranging from Fortune 500 companies and high tech start-ups to universities and nonprofits.

Each book combines an engaging fictional story with insightful analysis to address some of the major obstacles facing leaders today. All three of the stories are aimed at helping readers build healthy organizations. Though his books focus on business problems, Lencioni's practical advice can benefit leaders in any daily situation.

Lencioni's most recent leadership fable enlightens us when his pivotal character Will ponders how the movie "When Harry Met Sally" can summarize 10 years of life, while at work we take longer to summarize a few weeks' work of business activity and never seem to resolve anything. In this management consulting sleuthing thriller, Will has only 3 months to save Casey, an executive slated for a horrific end, ----from a death by meeting.

In this quick read for the harried executive, Will, an artful film student, assumes a role that many of us, including external consultants, cannot take on without fear of retribution. He becomes the fearless leader who tackles corporate indifference, mediocrity, and ageism by doing a candid analysis of what entertains us and its relevance to real life meetings.

In the end, the lesson emphasized by the management consultant author is that leaders and members alike must celebrate interactions that are integral to our companies' success. We must support well-defined decisions, lest we fall victim to comatose mediocrity and hostile takeovers. We need to foster conflict and build drama to create urgency, and construct vehicles for idea growth. By lending us Will's fresh set of eyes and outspoken tongue, Lencioni exemplifies proactivity in determining what will happen rather than pondering "What happened?"

This book is highly recommended for any organizational self-help list, and may be particularly relevant for nonprofit organizations. ✕

*Read a good book recently that you'd like to share with your colleagues in WHA? Write up a summary and submit it to: [nina@theoks.com](mailto:nina@theoks.com).*

### Useful Healthcare Websites

Submitted by Debby Chanen

1. [www.hasc.org](http://www.hasc.org)  
Hospital Assoc of SoCal
2. [www.advisoryboardcompany.com](http://www.advisoryboardcompany.com)
3. [www.chcf.org](http://www.chcf.org)  
The California healthcare Foundation
4. [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov)  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid services
5. [www.dmhc.ca.gov](http://www.dmhc.ca.gov)  
CA Dep't of Managed Health Care

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**Editor:**  
Nina Niu-Ok  
(818) 368-4917  
[nina@theoks.com](mailto:nina@theoks.com)

## Member Announcements

### Remembering a Former WHA Member:

#### **Rebecca Bridgeman**

*Submitted by Kim Oka and Sherri Thompson*

Rebecca Bridgeman-Ferhat, a former WHA member, whose long-time dream of returning to overseas service was recently fulfilled by her work as a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development, died May 3 following an automobile accident in the Republic of Kazakhstan. She was 47.

Rebecca served as the deputy controller of the USAID mission for central Asia since 2003. Her work in financial management was lauded by the U.S. Ambassador, who wrote to her "You and your team have worked miracles." Her international experience included a stint with the Peace Corps in Mauritania, West Africa. Rebecca earned MBA and MPH degrees from UCLA. She worked several years for Health Net. She also worked at Kaiser Permanente and at a start-up Internet contract management company. Rebecca leaves her husband, Dahman Ferhat, two daughters Hadiyah and Sakinah and a step daughter Nasema.

Rebecca attended several WHA events including a flower mart/dim sum Saturday event with her daughter Hadiyah. A fund has been established for her daughters. Donations can be sent to: Hope Lutheran Church, 6720 Melrose Ave., Hollywood, CA 90038. Please mark "Rebecca Bridgeman" on the check.

Those who had the privilege of working and playing with Rebecca will always remember her incredible zest for life. She inspired people to work hard, have fun, and dare to reach for their dreams. ☒



### Birth Announcement

WHA Member **Bridget Cole** recently give birth to a healthy baby boy—her first child!

*Benjamin Thomas Cole*

March 19, 2004

8 lbs 2 ounces

20.5 inches long

Congratulations to Bridget and her husband!



*WHA would love to hear from you! Please let us know of any important news in your lives, ideas for events and activities, book reviews, articles, etc. Better yet, get involved and lend your talent and ideas by joining one of the WHA committees!*

**WHA 2004 BOARD**President

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Jan Frates (562) 985-5394

Immediate Past President

Sherri Thompson (301) 464-4649

**MEMBERS ON THE MOVE & NEW MEMBERS****New Members**

**Simone Erskine, JD, MPH** is self employed and a current UCLA MPH student.

**Krista Callaghan** is an attorney with Foley & Lardner.

**Members on the Move**

**Kimberly Yang** is now a Research and Program Grant Development Coordinator at UCLA Center for Health Policy Research