

## Project aims to get more women to run for office

By Lois Wilson • November 14, 2010, 12:00 am

An initiative of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University has me and many others excited.

It's called the 2012 Project and its aim is to increase the number of women seeking political office, specifically running for Congress, through a three-fold process: educate, inspire, connect.

Last Sunday, I got to see the second and third parts of the process in action at the Chemung County Council of Women's 2010 Election Tea. The event was held at the Zonta House in the Near Westside of Elmira to honor the women in Chemung County who chose to run for public office this election cycle. I was the speaker for the event and I focused on the 2012 Project.

Each of the female candidates in the room obliged my curiosity and told the gathering what or who inspired them to run. For Chemung County Legislator Peggy Woodard, R-8th District, it was her late husband, Daniel, who died of cancer at age 51 in 2005. She learned about the how the Legislature operated and its role from attending meetings with Daniel and was initially appointed to fill out his term. She has gone on to be re-elected twice.

For the newly elected members of the Chemung County Library District board, each of three women was inspired by another woman. Georgia Reynolds, Margaret Kappanadze and Ann Cady were quick to credit other women, with Cady tipping her hat to Reynolds.

Those experiences are exactly what the 2012 Project is trying to share with other women: educate, inspire and connect. Specifically, the project is keying in on women who are 45 and older and may have fewer family responsibilities than younger women. The project also is specifically looking for women in underrepresented field such as health, environment, science and technology as well as small business owners.

Why 2012? All House of Representative seats will be reapportioned, creating new and open seats and, as the project's website points out, opportunities for women.

While the 2012 Project is focused on the House of Representatives, those in attendance at Sunday's gathering could immediately see the value in helping women in this area who might be interested in seeking any political office. Deciding to run for office takes planning, commitment — not only from the candidate but also from their family and friends — and financial support. It's a serious undertaking.

It needs a champion.

Only seven women sought office in Chemung County in 2010. But the tools are in place, through all the member organizations that make up the Chemung Council of Women, and through the 2012 Project, to see that number grow in the future.

I hope it does.

To learn more about the 2012 Project, visit [www.cawp.rutgers.edu](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu) and click on the 2012 Project icon or the "Ready to Run Campaign Training for Women" icon.

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