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## Rutgers seminar preps young women for politics



Written by SUZANNE MARINO

Tuesday, 15 February 2011 15:50

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NEW BRUNSWICK – While New Jersey ranks 11th nationally in the number of women elected to the state Legislature, the Center for American Women and Politics is hoping to increase that number.

A seminar is being offered on the Douglas Campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick March 18 and 19 to train young women for the campaign trail. Whether they are hoping to be elected to public office or just want to be part of the support network for another candidate, Ready to Run will address issues that are pertinent to getting a campaign off the ground.

High school and college age women anxious to learn more about political office and public service will have a chance to hear from and speak with seasoned professionals that have knowledge of the political landscape as they see it in New Jersey for women.

The two-day workshop is geared toward understanding party politics and providing “how to” instructions on starting and maintaining a political campaign.

A special early session on Friday afternoon will address issues that are unique to women of color seeking office. Political analyst Leslie Sanchez, author of “You’ve Come a Long Way, Maybe,” will speak with the attendees Friday afternoon. On Saturday afternoon, Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners will give her tips on what women candidates need to know.

The seminar offers two different tracks to explore. The first will address the key elements of a campaign, including assessing and establishing oneself as a candidate, developing a campaign plan, structuring a campaign organization and understanding the importance of voter contact. Those more interested in being an advocate for a cause or who might not yet be ready to run themselves will find a lot of useful information in the second seminar track.

An interactive media training session is designed to help potential candidates successfully navigate being interviewed on tough topics while looking poised and professional on camera. They will drill on staying on message and public speaking techniques that have worked for others. Mock interviews and on-camera practice sessions are scheduled.

State Sens. Diane Allen and Loretta Weinberg are slated to discuss how to navigate the political parties as a potential candidate. A session planned on laying the groundwork for public life is scheduled to have as panelists state Sen. Barbara Buona discussing the nuts and bolts of New Jersey politics, Assemblywoman Caroline Cassagrande and other women who are part of the New Jersey political landscape who will share their advice and best practices that work for them.

There are sessions dedicated to being an effective campaign fundraiser and working with the media. Internet strategies and finding the inspiration necessary to launch a campaign will also be discussed.

Atlantic County Freeholder at large Alisa Cooper called the Ready to Run program at Rutgers University a great opportunity for young women in New Jersey who think they might have an interest in pursuing a political office.

“We need more women to consider running for public office and the Ready to Run program will give them the tools they could use to launch and run a successful campaign,” said Cooper.

The seminar is open to all New Jersey women who might be considering public office. The cost is \$125 until Feb. 21 and \$150 after; scholarships are available.

The Ready to Run program begins Friday, March 18 and finishes the following day at 6 p.m. For details or to register see [www.cawp.rutgers.edu/education\\_training/ReadytoRun](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/education_training/ReadytoRun).

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