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Women lobby for fair pay

AAUW-sponsored panel discusses pay equity in Delaware

By Molly MacMillan
mollymacmillan@capegazette.com

On average, a woman in Sussex County makes 74 cents for every \$1 a man makes.

What's more shocking about this statistic may be the fact that

at 74 cents on the dollar, women in Sussex County actually make the highest percentage of the average male's income, although they are the lowest-paid workers in the state. Nationwide, women can expect to average 77 cents for every dollar a man makes, up

from 60 cents in 1971.

When the Coastal-Georgetown Branch of the American Association of University Women gathered for an open panel discussion at Epworth UMC, equal pay for equal work was the message, but after reviewing statistics in-state and nationwide, it became clear that achieving equal pay is going to require a lot of extra work.

"We fight an uphill battle when we talk about pay equity because it is such a complex issue. Misinformation, misunderstanding, confusion - it is a challenge," AAUW Grassroots Coordinator Sam Lehman said, advocating blogs, letters to the editor and meetings with legislators as ways to fight ongoing wage discrimination. "You all are here experiencing an event that helps close pay disparity. You all have a story, you all have an op-ed."

The pay gap starts one year into a career, when pay rates for women drop by 5 percent when compared with men, even for college-educated women with similar skills and education, he said. After five years, females can expect to make 12 percent less than their equally qualified male



OLGA USOVA PHOTO

Panelists (l-r) Samuel Lehman, Rebecca Moscoso and Judith Taggart addressed citizens at a panel discussion on pay equity sponsored by the Coastal-Georgetown Branch of the American Association for University Women.



MOLLY MACMILLAN PHOTO

DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN Chairwoman Judith Taggart addresses concerned citizens at a panel meeting to promote awareness and legislation regarding pay equity. Sam Lehman and Rebecca Moscoso, both of the American Association of University Women, also provided statistics on pay inequity in Delaware.

counterparts, the lobbyist said, so women often start their careers behind in the wage-scale and often remain at the low end of the scale for the duration of their careers.

"Why are we so concerned?" Lehman asked. "Lost wages is one reason. Just one year out of school, the wage gap is already happening. Even conservatively, we are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost

wages, and we are talking about retirement insecurity. Ultimately, Social Security is so critical to women in large part because of the wage gap."

County Councilwoman Joanne Deaver attended the panel discussion, as did a representative from Sen. Tom Carper's office. Deaver assured the group this issue was on her radar.

"We women need to support
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Wine, women... and a parade!

