

Heritage center honors women in state history

Exhibit gets home in Baltimore; first of its kind in the country

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Henrietta Szold came up with the idea of a night school for immigrants, launching the concept of adult education. Helen Brooke Taussig founded the field of pediatric cardiology. Margaret Brent was the first to ask for women to have the right to vote — in 1648.

They are all part of a diverse group of Maryland women that Jill Moss Greenberg, founder and executive director of the Maryland Women's Heritage Center, hopes residents can soon learn about in a more official setting.

While the Maryland Women's Heritage Project has traveled around the state with various educational programs since 1980, the initiative now has a 2,500-square-foot space of its own in downtown Baltimore at Liberty and Lexington streets and Greenberg expects to get a permanent, 25,000-square-foot center within the next few years.

"It's the first (such center for women's heritage) in the nation and we are conscious of the fact that we are a national model, and we hope other states will look at what we have done and create other models," said Greenberg, a Hyattsville resident who helped found several political caucuses and commissions for women in Maryland.

The women's heritage project is supported by an array of Maryland women.

The executive board is headed by former Maryland first lady Frances Hughes Glendening, while its honor-



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have an amazing number of women who make national and international impact," Greenberg said.

In addition to providing information on prominent women, the center would also be a permanent home for the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, which currently consists of a simple plaque at the State Law Library in Annapolis, and would have a program devoted to "unsung heroines."

Although the current center will not be open to the public until this summer, the organization is partnering with Maryland Public Television to encourage the network to have more programs that feature women. The center will also be promoted on MPT.

Joanne T. Goldsmith, an Owings Mills resident and a member of the center's board of directors, said having a space for the center is "fabulous" and noted that many people are unaware that many nationally recognized women, such as Rachel Carson and Harriet Tubman, are from Maryland.

"We have been missing in the textbooks, missing in the leadership for a long time," said Goldsmith, who is now retired but served on the state board of education in the 1970s and 1980s. "I am very excited about (the new property). I think it is a great space. It is a great start for us."

Greenberg said she wants the center to be "a place of action and deliberation," not a static museum, where a variety of people can learn about the contributions of women and girls.

She remains committed to her original project, created at a time when she said a typical social studies textbook only mentioned a handful of women, as well as other minorities, or devoted a sidebar to women and blacks in history.

"What we are working for ultimately is that none of our groups would be in the margin or sidebar, but that we would all be included in the mainstream of history," she said.

To learn more about the center, go to www.mdwomensheritagecenter.org.