

Empowering Women Through Art and Wetland Education

The U.S. Geological Survey
National Wetlands Research Center
invites you to participate in our
2012 Women's History Month celebration.

March 19–23, 2012

We will be hosting a gallery showcasing the talent of women artists March 19–23 at the National Wetlands Research Center, 700 Cajundome Boulevard, in Lafayette.

All visual art media are welcome. We are particularly interested in pieces that reflect nature; however, this is not a requirement for submission.

The exhibit will be open to the public from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. from Monday, March 19, through Friday, March 23. An opening reception will be held on Monday, March 19, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

To receive additional information and participation forms, please visit www.nwrc.usgs.gov or contact Gabrielle Bodin at 337-266-8655 or boding@usgs.gov. Deadline for submission of participation forms is March 12.

Although women now outnumber men in American colleges nationwide, the reversal of the gender gap is a very recent phenomenon. The fight to learn was a valiant struggle waged by many tenacious women—across years and across cultures—in our country. After the American Revolution, the notion of education as a safeguard for democracy created opportunities for girls to gain a basic education—based largely on the premise that, as mothers, they would nurture not only the bodies but also the minds of (male) citizens and leaders. The concept that educating women meant educating mothers endured in America for many years, at all levels of education.

Pioneers of secondary education for young women faced arguments from physicians and other “experts” who claimed either that females were incapable of intellectual development equal to men, or that they would be harmed by striving for it. Women’s supposed intellectual and

moral weakness was also used to argue against coeducation, which would surely be an assault on purity and femininity. Emma Willard, in her 1819 Plan for Improving Female Education, noted with derision the focus of women’s “education” on fostering the display of youth and beauty, and asserted that women are “the companions, not the satellites of men”—“primary existences” whose education must prepare them to be full partners in life’s journey.

While Harvard, the first college chartered in America, was founded in 1636, it would be almost two centuries before the founding of the first college to admit women—Oberlin, which was chartered in 1833. And even as “coeducation” grew, women’s courses of study were often different from men’s, and women’s role models were few, as most faculty members were male. Harvard itself opened its “Annex” (Radcliffe) for women in 1879 rather than admit women to the men’s college—and single-sex

education remained the elite norm in the U.S. until the early 1970s. As coeducation took hold in the Ivy League, the number of women’s colleges decreased steadily; those that remain still answer the need of young women to find their voices, and today’s women’s colleges enroll a far more diverse cross-section of the country than did the original Seven Sisters.

The equal opportunity to learn, taken for granted by most young women today, owes much to Title IX of the Education Codes of the Higher Education Act Amendments. This legislation, passed in 1972 and enacted in 1977, prohibited gender discrimination by federally funded institutions. It has become the primary tool for women’s fuller participation in all aspects of education from scholarships, to facilities, to classes formerly closed to women. Indeed, it transformed the educational landscape of the United States within the span of a generation. (From <http://nwrc.usgs.gov/whm/2012theme.php>)