

Women: Meet the Challenge

by Tina McFarland
The Print Editorial Staff

At about this same time last year, I was sitting at my computer composing an article about the Women's Weekend, from which I had just returned. I shared with readers the wonderful time I had experienced as I met new friends and ventured beyond my safe comfort zone of home and school.

For me, last year's Women's Weekend was a fun time to share experiences and feelings with other women who knew the emotional trials I was going through. I was able to lean on and gain support from women who, despite having never met them before, provided me with a sense of belonging and understanding. A sense that would last me through the entire year.

I found myself counting off the reasons I couldn't attend the Weekend this year: too much homework, not enough time to sleep, need to visit my mom. And the list goes on and on. So, when Linda Vogt came to me after the Weekend suggesting that I do a follow-up article about this year's Weekend, I was glad to 'meet the challenge.'

The theme for this year's Sixth Annual Women's Weekend was "Meeting The Challenge." Seventy-five women gathered at Camp Collins to attend workshops, song-circles and challenge courses, among other things,

April 30-May 1. Motherlode again provided incredible entertainment for the women.

The workshops available to interested women were: "Breast Cancer: After You Cry, Then What?" offered by Marcia Keith, assistant dean; "Stopping Your Life and Starting It Over Again" offered by Marilynne Keyser, former assistant to Governor Barbara Roberts; "Rituals-Celebrating You" by Bernie Nolan, counselor; "Women Who Run With Words," by English Instructor Kate Gray; "Look Who's Talking: Women," by Gisele Tierney, Communications instructor; and "Women's Sexuality: Facts and Fantasies," by Psychology instructor Carolyn Alexander.

Last year, I remember stepping out of my car in the muddy parking lot thinking "What am I doing here by myself? I shouldn't have come." Fortunately, I was not alone in that thought—even this year.

Heather Fisher, student and mom, attended the Women's Weekend this year. She went to

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**How could anyone ever tell you you're anything less than beautiful?
How could anyone ever tell you you're less than whole?
How could anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miracle?
How deeply you're connected to my soul.**

-Lyrics from a song by Libby Roderick, sung in the closing ceremonies

"go out of my comfort zone. It was a stretch to go where I didn't know anybody. I didn't know what to expect. I thought it would be kinda corny, but it was a lot more in depth and personal."

I was glad to know that there were other people who had the same hesitations about venturing into an unfamiliar situation alone. It was also good to hear that other women I talked to were wrong about their first impressions of the weekend.

"My first idea was not very accurate. I was afraid to go into a new situation," Susanna Lundgren, art instructor said.

they had to participate in everything.

"The workshops were so deep and you could choose to participate or not. They (the workshop leaders) made it inviting to share, but it was safe to not share. I think it's an achievement to be able to choose to be completely alone," Susanna said.

Sue Eggleston shared her experiences with me after spending a day and a half at the Women's Weekend.

"Bernie Nolan asked if I was going to go to the retreat, but I said no because I couldn't afford it. Bernie asked if money weren't

an issue if I would go. Really, money wasn't the issue at all.

"I'm disabled. I need a walker to help me walk. I have to use a sleep machine; it's very noisy and I snore. I have Diabetes, so I need to be close to a bathroom. None of these things sounded good for a retreat.

"It was a social situation that I was not comfortable with--I was not in control. But they helped me work it out. But if I hadn't said anything, my needs would not have been met," Sue said.

As I listened to Sue's comments, it occurred to me that I did not know of any other place where one could go and be so

said, "The feeling of empowering was almost palpable. What we come away with, truly are powerful individuals. Not controlling, but in the sense of coming to terms with themselves and who they are and what direction they want to go," she said.

I left that weekend over a year ago feeling empowered. Feeling empowered to be myself, to not let anyone infringe on my individuality, to be self-assured and confident and proud to be a young woman. That's part of how this weekend empowers. Like the women I talked to, I walked away with a sense of accomplishment at having roamed outside of my secure surroundings into a safe place that provided even more comfort than my secure surroundings had.

"Experienced warmth, friendship, women helping women and being supportive of each other. Sometimes you just don't get that same support from your male friends that you get from women because they understand each other. Just like men understand each other," Karri Herrle, teaching assistant, said.

I want to thank all of the women who so openly shared their thoughts and feelings with me as I researched and remembered about this weekend. I had so much more to say, to help share about the power of this weekend but I ran out of room.

Thank you, also to all of the coordinators: Linda Vogt, Rene' Rathburn, Bernie Nolan and Ellen Wolfson for giving of themselves to create a weekend where women could find themselves.



The four coordinators of the Women's Weekend—Linda Vogt, Rene' Rathburn, Ellen Wolfson and Bernie Nolan 'Meet the Challenge' of starting the weekend by 'roping up' for the opening session.



Motherlode, the four-member band, performed for the women at this year's Women's Weekend.

completely and totally safe and accepted. No questions asked. And like Susanna said, the issues addressed at the Women's Weekends are not necessarily women's issues. They are issues that affect everyone.

"It's building for women, but also for everyone. It's an enjoyable process—a journey, not a jail sentence. It's not anti-male. It's pro-female," Susanna said. And she's totally right. The things experienced at the weekends are not only for women. But the coordinators of the weekend allow for a safe time and environment for women to come together and share with each other, no questions asked, no strings attached.

"Everyone values you—something most women don't experience much—total acceptance of who they were and what they were experiencing," Marilynne Keyser said of her experiences at the Women's Weekend.

Marilynne said that she felt being a workshop presenter was easier than just being a camper because it was easier to get to know people. "I had an immediate basis for getting to know people. I was touched by how much they cared about what I shared."

Assistant Dean Marcia Keith, who presented a workshop