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**League of Woman Voters & YWCA March 14, 2009 Event
“Celebrating History Through Her Story”**

Introductory concept & guest speaker bio sketches

As we commemorate for the first time, Women’s History Month Celebration in Cobb County, we are here to honor the courage and determination of women’s efforts to improve women’s rights and the quality of life. We are greatly blessed and excited to honor six specific women who are with us today as our featured guests. But we also want to acknowledge the importance of *all* women’s contributions, however great or small, so that the present generation and generations to come might remember that women have had a powerful impact and helped to make a difference in all of our lives.

We know many women have left their mark on the growth and shaping of Cobb County, on the betterment of women and the quality of life for them and their families, but until we began to list the many women who could be acknowledged for their contributions, we didn’t realize just how vast the names and numbers actually were.

So, in our first commemoration of Women’s History Month, we are focusing on six exemplary women who have the distinction of being elected “firsts” in Cobb County, who have improved women’s rights and quality of life in our beloved Cobb County.

Their accomplishments have been extraordinary; their lives match up with the ideologies shared by the League of Women Voters and the YWCA, supporting our commitment to peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all, where we work to influence public policy through education and advocacy, and where we draw together members who create opportunities for women’s growth, leadership, and empowerment.

A common thread runs through their stories—an intertwining of common purposes, resulting in what we envision as the woven tapestry of public service: commitment to civic organizations for community betterment, a desire to create better futures for our children, and efforts to create or support public policy that protects or improves the safety and rights of all of us.

It is in this tapestry that we can get a glimpse of the qualities of leaders, and what makes them succeed in business, education, and politics. It is because of their legacies that we are enriched, educated, inspired, and protected.

Bio of moderator, Dr. Betty Siegel

Dr. Betty L. Siegel is heralded as one of Georgia’s most influential people who has broken more than one glass ceiling for women in higher education and business. She is known to often quote Ethel Barrymore: “A good life is like a good play – it ought to have a satisfying third act.”

She calls Act Two *Breaking the Barriers*, a highly productive chapter of her life from 1953-2006 when she pursued her education followed by her achievement of a series of “firsts:” She received her Ph.D. from Florida State University, a M.Ed. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a B.A. in English and History from Wake Forest University. She went on to serve as the **first female Dean** at Western Carolina University and the **first woman Dean** of Academic Affairs for Continuing Education at the University of Florida.

In 1981, she became the **first woman president** of Kennesaw State University, now the third-largest university in Georgia. Her presidential role made history as the **first woman university president in the nation** to serve a leadership term of two and a half decades.

Dr. Siegel began her Act Three of *Wintering into Wisdom* in 2006 as she transitioned in “retirement” from President Siegel to President Emeritus, and Distinguished Chair of the Siegel Institute for Ethics, Leadership and Character. Viewing retirement as an activity which set her free to pursue her passions, Dr. Siegel is tirelessly joyful in her work on social responsibility and excellence in leadership education.

Her signature program is The Oxford Conclave on Global Ethics launched in Oxford, England, 2005. The Conclave serves as a catalyst for a movement to renew higher education's commitment to the development of ethical leadership and to explore its role as a change agent for social responsibility. In 2008, her Oxford Conclave at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, engaged participation from African and international leaders including the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu and Frances Hesselbein of the Peter Drucker Institute.

As an internationally and nationally-known lecturer and motivational speaker on leadership, educational issues, and the concerns of women, Dr. Siegel has delivered keynote addresses at hundreds of national, regional and state conferences throughout the U.S. and ten foreign countries. She has also served as a consultant to educational, business, not-for-profit organizations, health services, government and civic groups. She became the **first female President** of the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. Betty Siegel is the recipient of countless community service awards, recognitions from the Governor, and from civic and educational institutions across the state and the nation.

Drs. Betty and Joel Siegel, long time Cobb residents, have two sons, both carrying on the college tradition, and are the proud grandparents of two boys.

Panelist Bios

Victoria Chastain

Victoria Chastain’s leadership and organizational skills have become legendary among Cobb County and Atlanta residents. The first woman elected to the Marietta City Council, where she served two terms from 1978 – 1985, Victoria went on to be the first woman elected to serve as the Mayor of Marietta from 1986 – 1989.

Her contributions through countless hours of volunteer work, from the after-school program to her church, to the Juvenile Court of Cobb, the Judicial Citizen Review Panel, the Cobb Landmarks Advisory Board, President of the Cobb Municipal Association, President of Cobb Executive Women, and as a member of the Board of Advisors for the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, have earned her respect, admiration and deep appreciation.

She is proud to reflect on just a few of the things which happened during her leadership years in Marietta, including: The completion of the Marietta 120 Loop; the square was brought back to life with the restoration of Glover Park; the YWCA had the City’s support for the battered women’s shelter; and her personal spearheading of the effort to pass the first ever sign ordinance in Marietta.

Victoria and her husband Joe have two grown daughters and four grandchildren.

Lynda Coker

Getting to know Lynda Coker is getting to know a woman of tremendous resilience, perseverance, and courage, and we are all the better and safer for having her in our community, our county, and our state. Lynda began her career as a public servant with the Cobb County Sheriff’s Office in 1986. In 1990, she was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives, the **first female** to hold this elected position. During her second term, she served as Chairman of the Cobb Delegation. In 1996, she was appointed Chief Investigator in Cobb County, and in 2004 Cobb County Sheriff Neil Warrant appointed Lynda as his Chief Deputy Sheriff.

A resident of East Cobb for more than 30 years, Chief Coker’s participation in numerous community organizations reflect a huge heart dedicated to community betterment, from Domestic Violence Task Forces to women’s advancements and community safety. She was appointed by Lt. Governor Cagle to serve on the GA. Department of Driver Services Board. She serves on the U.S. Marshal’s Southeast Regional Fugitive Task Force, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and the Fulton County Sheriff’s Office Court Security Review Committee. She’s a member of Cobb Executive Women, Leadership Cobb Alumni Association, East Cobb Business Association, and Cobb Chamber of Commerce.

Lynda completed her Master’s Degree at Georgia State University and her Bachelor’s from Florida State. She and her husband Gene have two children and three grandchildren.

Alisha Thomas Morgan

As we watch Alisha Thomas Morgan’s personal legacy unfolding, we see a champion for justice, equality and empowering communities, and a woman making history from an early age. Alisha decided before she was a teenager in Miami that she would be the change she wanted to see in the world. By age 14, she began initiating change through the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Her hunger for change drove her to become President of the Spelman College chapter, and ultimately President of the Georgia NAACP State Youth and College Division.

In 2002, she became the **first African American female** to serve in the Georgia House of Representatives from Cobb County. At age 30, she remains the youngest female member of

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the entire Georgia General Assembly, and is serving her 4th term. Alisha’s goal is to bring “real people” into the political process and ensure their voices are heard. An advocate for youth, quality public education, access to affordable healthcare, voting rights, and juvenile justice, she has earned the reputation as a voice for the underrepresented in Georgia.

Just how noticed and appreciated her work is, has been acknowledged by numerous awards and recognitions, including: The “2008 Legislator of the Year” by the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus for her work on children and youth issues; the Joe Mack Wilson “People’s Champion Award” from the Cobb Democratic Party; the “Excellence in Service” Award by MALDEF; “Friend of Education” by the Cobb County Association of Educators, and the “Unsung Heroine” Award by the Anti-Defamation League. Local and national publications have recognized her achievements including Ebony Magazine who named her as one of the nation’s “30 Leaders Under 30” and Georgia Trend Magazine named her “One of Georgia’s Brightest 40 Under 40.” .

Alisha earned her Bachelor of Arts degree at Spelman College in Sociology and Drama. She and her husband reside in Cobb County and are proud parents of their 1 ½ year old daughter Lailah Camille.

Dorothy Robinson

To meet Dorothy Robinson is to sense a woman of integrity, accomplishment, and fortitude, working in a historically predominantly male field. The Honorable Judge Robinson has served as a trial judge for thirty-five years. She began the practice of law in December of 1967 in Marietta after completing her law degree at St. Louis University in Missouri. Dorothy went on to become the **first woman** to serve as judge of a court of record in the history of the State of Georgia when appointed in 1972 to the State Court of Cobb County.

In 1979, she graduated from the University of Nevada National Judicial College. In 1980, she was the first woman to be elected as a Superior Court Judge in the Cobb Judicial Circuit. In 1985, Judge Robinson was the **first woman** in the 140 year history of the Supreme Court of Georgia to be invited to sit as a Justice Pro Hac Vice in that Court.

Her contributions to the betterment of public life are reflected by the many offices she has held, including: the Executive Committee of the Georgia Council of Superior Court Judges, Superior Court Representative on the Judicial Council of Georgia, and served eight years as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education in Georgia, serving as Chairman of the Board in 1991; President of the Georgia Association of Women Lawyers; and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Cobb County Symposium. She was also the **first woman** to serve as President of the State Trial Judges and Solicitors Association of Georgia. The YWCA was proud to award her with the Woman of Achievement Award.

Dorothy has been married for 44 years to Hugh Robinson, Jr. She also enjoys running (completed 13 Peachtree Road Races) and tennis (ALTA and USTA Business Women’s Team), and completed the 1993 through 2007 Bicycle Rides Across Georgia.

Barbara Williams

A glimpse into the life of Barbara Williams shows a woman leader who has broken through routines of organizational hierarchies and created new paths of leadership, helping to level the playing field for women. A Cobb County resident for five decades, Barbara Williams has served as an agent for change through her life in entrepreneurial business, public service and community betterment.

In 1975, Barbara became the **first woman** to start her own State Farm Insurance agency in the Southeast, which she conducted into 1998. She went on to harness the spirit of change for women to become elevated in positions of local government as she broke a glass ceiling and became the **first woman** elected to the position of Cobb County Commissioner, where she served from 1983 – 1987.

As President of League of Women Voters of Cobb County, she has been part of the progress of the Equal Rights Amendment ratification. She has served as President of several other community organizations including the Cobb General Hospital Authority, the YMCA, the Cobb-Marietta Coliseum and Exhibit Hall Authority, and the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre Foundation, where she was President until 2008.

Barbara graduated from Georgia State University with a Political Science degree. She and her husband Yardy have two children and five grandchildren.