

Presidents' Seminar, New York, March 2009

What a great opportunity – while we have the Executive Board in New York for CSW and so many members from around the world accredited to attend, why not bring all the Presidents from all the affiliates together to share their experiences and learn from each other and from the Executive Board and Past Presidents? This was our BPW International President's vision.

And so XX Presidents or their nominees gathered in the beautiful Harmonie Club in New York for two days of learning and sharing. President Liz Benham welcomed participants and set the objectives for the seminar.

Past President Dr Antoinette Ruegg made us all think with an insightful presentation on the strengths, strategies and goal of BPW and how BPW is a 'university' that develops know-how by experience and emotional intelligence. She helped us draft a 'mind map' of our successes and challenges to guide our discussions.

Vice President Gabriella Canonica presented her communication strategy and the plans for the new BPW International website, and explained her vision for increasing membership through her 1+1, Open Eyes and Face Lifting initiatives.

Vice President Freda Miriklis enthused us all with the history of our involvement with the United Nations, and the BPW pioneers who prepared the way for the great contributions our representatives and members continue to make to international forums.

Executive Secretary Jean Murray provided coaching on managing Executive Boards and conflict resolution, and later on explained the Constitutional requirements for submitting nominations, Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments and the importance of early planning.

Finance Director Suje Albert provided an explanation of BPW International financial arrangements and funding sources.

And through the whole seminar, Regional Coordinator for Europe, Amélie Leclercq, translated every word in French for her members who did not understand English.

Regional Coordinators organised displays from their regions, and on the second day participants gathered in their regions for a discussion about regional matters.

There were many friendships made and strengthened, including over dinner at the restaurant in the evening. The evaluations completed by participants were overwhelmingly positive about the learning experience and the usefulness and relevance of the seminar. Another Presidents' Seminar is projected for 2010, and Regional Coordinators are planning to hold similar seminars in their regions. The presentations from the seminar are all available online.