# [***Starting point Staff at CLC's new Women's Center seek tomake path easier for others***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47MK-5620-007M-40R3-00000-00&context=1516831)

Chicago Daily Herald

January 2, 2003, Thursday Lake

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**Section:** NEIGHBOR;

**Length:** 1023 words

**Byline:** Abby Scalf Daily Herald Staff Writer

**Body**

From a feminist discussion group to a resource area featuring items on gender myths, the College of Lake County Women's Center offers many resources to female and male students, faculty and those off campus.

Employee Georgette Miller said the center also offers counseling, but she hopes people will forget the stereotype that it is only for women in crisis.

"The center focuses on the woman as a whole, including academics, health and arts," she said.

The CLC women's center was started by Teresa Aguinaldo, a member of the communication arts faculty. She first discovered a women's center when she pursued her undergraduate degree at the University of Missouri at Columbia. It offered her solace while she was going through a divorce and raising a child.

"Talking about the issues, I felt safe so I could go on with my schooling," she said.

As a faculty member at CLC, Aguinaldo, 36, saw students facing similar challenges and wanted to help them.

The women's center, which opened in September, targets special populations such as returning students, single mothers and victims of sexual assault.

"The women's center is the nucleus. You come here and we can guide you," Aguinaldo said.

To run the center, Aguinaldo receives support from aides Kymm Dorward and Mary Hudson as well as a group of 30 volunteers.

Dorward, 46, who took her first class in 1990 at Texas Woman's University and earned 97 credits, said she couldn't afford to return to school after a divorce. Now living in Island Lake and receiving financial help, she is taking her first full semester at CLC.

Doward grew up on the West Coast where women's centers are common. She also worked at one in Texas, so she was surprised there was no center when she came to CLC. After meeting Aguinaldo and hearing she was going to open a center, Dorward joined the effort.

"So many women are coming back to academics after being out 10, 20, 30 years. How do they know where to start?" she said. "How do they find out about financial aid, child care?"

Among the volunteers who support the center are Candice Marquette of Round Lake Heights. Marquette, 33, said she wants to meet women who, like herself, are not afraid to go back to school. She returned to school two years ago and is majoring in sociology.

"Women are afraid to fail. I say do it anyway," she said. "I like to see strength in women, supporting one another."

Miller, 36, said she wants to help other women complete their education. She took classes part time since she was 18 years old. With the support of counselors, she went back to school full time and earned an associate's degree at CLC.

Miller, who will receive her bachelor's degree at Roosevelt University in counseling Jan. 11 and plans to pursue a master's degree, said she wants to summarize information she collects working at the center to help others.

"I can consolidate the checklist to save them time and money," Miller said.

The center is also open to men. Dorward recalled two men who came to seek help for a female friend regarding a personal crisis. Three men serve on the planning committee, and a feminist discussion group called Reclaiming Eve was started by a male philosophy teacher and his students. They can do research.

"Men are a part of the women's center in many ways. We do not want to alienate them in any way," Aguinaldo said.

To offer support to students, Aguinaldo said the center uses staff with expertise in personal and crisis counseling and advocates from area women's organizations. It also refers students to county support services. The center also offers literature on local organizations.

In February, Aguinaldo said the center will plan a fair where the public can learn about community resources such as the YWCA, the Staben House and Lake County Council Against Sexual Assault.

The center also provides a variety of resources including magazines, journals, CDs and DVDs on topics such as women in business, gender myths, sexual harassment, relationships and women in literature. Aguinaldo said there is information on international issues related to women.

"Another population the center is geared to is women in cultural transition, people coming to college who are new to the culture," she said.

The women's center often collaborates with CLC faculty and other groups to offer workshops. Among other programs, the women's center has hosted a fund-raiser for breast cancer research and a women's suffrage month program titled Founding Mothers of Illinois that notes female achievers in Illinois.

Aguinaldo said she is working with college groups to celebrate Women's History Month in March. Also, a gender conference is planned in April and a program on masculinity is planned for spring.

An advisory board, made up of students and administrators, discusses how to add programs and resources. Aguinaldo adds she often receives calls from students and instructors who want to discuss future programs.

Aguinaldo hopes to create a women's publication and open a Web site next semester to feature information on the women's center and local, national and international news pertaining to women. Miller added they also hope to organize a support group for returning female students.

Dorward added she is working to start a campus watch group. Future goals may be offering self-defense classes and collecting ***cell phones*** for emergency use.

"We are fortunate that crime is low at CLC but as the population grows, the risk of crime can increase," Aguinaldo said. "It is part of the big picture, women being aware."

Aguinaldo said services are limited. The center operates from a one-person office and has no budget its first year. Eventually she wants to bring classes inside the women's center.

Miller added the Grayslake community has been helpful. Businesses have donated food to support public programs.

While the response has been positive, Aguinaldo said some have asked why the college needs a women's center. Someone asked why there is no men's center.

"We should have a men's center. I hope someone starts one. There are issues particular to men. They need their place, too," she said.

**Graphic**

clcwomen-2na120402gb Teresa Aguinaldo opened the College of Lake County Women's Center last September to offer counseling, support groups, gender-specific resources and more on women's and gender issues. The center is open to male and female students, staff and the community. Gilbert R. Boucher II/Daily Herald

**Load-Date:** January 7, 2003

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