



# Society for Menstrual Cycle Research

***Newsletter*** Fall, 2007

WEB ADDRESS: [www.menstruationresearch.org](http://www.menstruationresearch.org)

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**From the Editor**

This is the first issue of the Newsletter that is available both in paper and also on the Web. Initially, everyone will be sent a paper copy and also an e-mail notice that the electronic version is posted on the SMCR website. Some of you have already elected to receive only the paper or the electronic version once the transition time is over. A form to elect one or the other is enclosed in this newsletter—please return it to me, Paula Derry, 4811 Crowson Ave., Baltimore, MD 21212, or [paula.derry@gmail.com](mailto:paula.derry@gmail.com).

It is time to elect new members of the SMCR Board of Directors. There are six candidates for the four available Board positions. The candidates have written statements describing themselves in this issue of the newsletter. A ballot is also included along with information about how to send it in. Please be sure to vote for members of the Board.

Paula Derry

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**SMCR Conference: June 7 to 9, 2007**

By Laura Wershler

Beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, was the scene of the 17th Biennial Conference of [SMCR] June 7-9. This year's conference was co-sponsored by the University of British Columbia's Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research.(CeMCOR) The conference theme was "Ovulation: The Bellwether of Women's Well-being." About 70 attendees came from across Canada, the U.S. (including Hawaii), Mexico, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

The pre-conference event on Wednesday, June 6th, was a public screening of Giovanna Chesler's documentary *Period: End of Menstruation?* The film depicts differing women's voices and opinions about menstruation and menopause. The diverse audience included women of all ages including students, health professionals and the general public. A panel of SMCR members - Giovanna, Jerilynn Prior, Christine Hitchcock and Megan Lalonde - and local women's health activist Caryn Duncan, started a

post-film discussion and responded to audience questions and comments for over an hour and a half.

The conference officially started Thursday afternoon with opening remarks and concurrent sessions. A reception and poster session followed the afternoon program. Poster presentations, from both students and seasoned researchers, covered a range of interesting research projects. The reception also celebrated the fifth anniversary, and five years of tremendous growth, for the Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research.

Friday morning's keynote address was given by Dr. Susan Barr on the topic "*Thinking about food, eating, and body weight: Relationships with ovulation and women's bone health.*" Her research on how "cognitive dietary restraint" impacts ovulation and bone density left the audience with much "food for thought."

Phyllis Mansfield and Peggy Stubbs led a Friday lunch discussion of problems encountered and lessons learned in publishing papers based on SMCR presentations in past years. (See article in this issue of the newsletter.)

Throughout the conference, registrants had a broad array of concurrent sessions, across many topic areas, to choose from. One major topic of interest was Menstrual Suppression. Two concurrent sessions were devoted to the subject, which had just received a barrage of media coverage (with several SMCR members quoted) subsequent to FDA approval of a new menstrual suppression oral contraceptive, Lybrel, the week before the conference. The SMCR

position statement on menstrual suppression was updated and approved by members at the business meeting late Friday afternoon. The statement is now posted on the website. (See article in this issue of the newsletter).

As well, several plenary sessions were presented to the conference audience.

*Teaching the Cycle: A Workshop in Curriculum Design* drew on the experience of presenters David Linton, Christine Bobel and Elizabeth Kissling. In break-out sessions, participants added to a long list of curriculum ideas and examples which the workshop leaders will share with the full SMCR membership. Well-attended symposiums on *Ovulation* and its connection to bone, breast and cardiovascular health (Friday) and *Menstrual Cycle Charting* as a path to body literacy (Saturday) explored the conference theme of ovulation.

A highlight of the conference was the salmon BBQ at UBC's (University of British Columbia) Museum of Anthropology. The museum holds breathtaking and towering displays, as well as over 535,000 artifacts, of past and present indigenous people's culture from around the world, with the main focus on the Pacific North West. There was time to wander leisurely through the museum before dinner. A fabulous meal was served in a large tent just a stone's throw away from the Pacific Ocean. The skies were blue, the wind was cool, and the conversation was boisterous.

The conference closed at noon on Saturday with remarks from incoming SMCR president, Jerilynn Prior, and the presentation of awards. (See article in this issue of the newsletter about the awards.) Amidst a downpour of west

coast rain, conference attendees quickly dispersed wondering where the next conference will be held. Look for that announcement coming soon from the SMCR board of directors.

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**SMCR Conference Awards**

By Alice Dan

Awards for Student Research, Lifetime Achievement, and Service to the Society were presented at the recent Vancouver conference.

The *Ann Voda Lifetime Achievement Award* is given to an individual researcher who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of menstrual cycle research. It is not given every year but at the discretion of the board to a deserving individual. It includes a cash award of \$1,000, and was given this year to Joan Chrisler, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Connecticut College. Dr. Chrisler's work has been presented at many Society conferences, and she served as president of the Society from 2001-2003. Her research contributes especially to understanding the portrayal of menstrual cycle themes in popular media. She has been active in other areas of women's health research as well, and currently serves as president of the Society for the Psychology of Women. She is well-known for her generous mentoring of students and junior colleagues.

The *Mary Anne Friederich Award for Service to the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research* (see article about Mary Anna in this issue) was presented to Margaret (Peggy) Stubbs, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology at Chatham College and a Research

Associate at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Stubbs edited the Society Newsletter for many years, and more recently has actively promoted the publication of conference papers by working with Dr. Phyllis Mansfield on developing special issues for journals. She co-directed the 2003 conference in Pittsburgh and has brought many of her students to Society meetings.

The awards for student research are in memory of two Society members: Esther Rome and Linda McKeever, whose contributions are described below. The Esther Rome Award was presented to Joan Moon, University of Toledo, for her paper, "A Woman's World: Discovering the Dynamic Menstrual Cycle," based on her doctoral research. The Linda McKeever Award went to Emily Snyder, University of Alberta, for her paper, "Smitten With Suppression?: Questions Of Freedom, Regulation, and Sociocultural Implications In A Non-Menstruating Society," based on her master's research.

Esther Rome was a tireless women's health advocate as a member of both the Boston Women's Health Collective and the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research. Among other interests, she was passionate about tampon safety: her testimony before Congress on tampon absorbency was influential in pushing the industry to provide some standardized absorbency information on tampon packaging for consumers. She presented regularly at SMCR conferences and served on the SMCR board of Directors until her untimely death from breast cancer in the mid 1990s.

Linda McKeever, DNC, WHCNP, was a

dedicated women's health advocate. In her doctoral research she described women's models of menopause, portraying the normal perimenopausal process. Before her untimely death from a brain tumor in the early 1990s, Linda was an active participant in the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research.

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**SMCR Publications: Lessons Learned**

By Peggy Stubbs and Phyllis Mansfield

Since its inception, SMCR has been persistent in finding a broader audience for the research presented at its conferences. The Society has arranged to publish papers from the 2003 and 2005 conferences in four different journals (*Women's Health Issues*, *Sex Roles*, *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, and *Women and Health*). We will also be publishing papers from the 2007 conference in *Health Care for Women International*.

At the 2007 conference, co-editors Phyllis Mansfield and Peggy Stubbs facilitated a discussion about lessons learned as well as concerns that have emerged as this work has evolved, towards the goal of maximizing the quality and visibility of Society members' work in this format. Some excellent suggestions were offered to facilitate the process.

First, Society members who present should write up those presentations for inclusion in the special issues. Too many of us stop short of that final piece!

Second, to speed up the process, for the next special issue in *Health Care for Women International* (HCWI), Peggy and Phyllis will not pre-read and comment on submissions. In the past, in

working with journal editors, they offered their own editorial comments to submitters in an effort to maximize the chances of an acceptance during the formal review process. But they have found that depending on the journal editor, they often have little say about the formal review. Journal editors will ask them for suggestions of people from the society with expertise to act as reviewers for a paper, and Phyllis and Peggy serve in this capacity along with many Society members. But the editors also send out the papers to their own reviewers. So one of the lessons learned has been that although their early review may have been helpful to individual authors, it did not guarantee acceptance and may have made the process a more lengthy one than necessary. This time, we are fortunate that HCWI is interested in a very quick turn around (which is not always the case!). If we get manuscripts to them by September 1<sup>st</sup>, we will be published by April or May. If this timetable works well, then perhaps we can build September 1<sup>st</sup> as a manuscript deadline into our conference experience.

Third, *your* role as a potential reviewer is crucial. As a menstrual cycle researcher, you may have more content expertise than another reviewer, and it is crucial for you to lend that expertise to the process! Our discussion prompted the following guidelines for potential reviewers:

Do accept the invitation to review – our presenters need Society members who have more familiarity with menstrual cycle research to comment on their work, alongside the commentary of researchers from other fields who may be asked by the editor-in-chief. But...

Be sure you can follow through. If you are too busy, say so and decline. Editors are put off if you agree, but then are not available for the second review, which is often required since it is rare for a manuscript to be accepted as is after a first review. So anticipate re-review as a part of the job.

Please be thoughtful and courteous in your commentary. The goal of the review should be to improve the paper. This may mean pointing out a flaw in logic or methodology or pointing the author to an important aspect of the literature that may have been missed in the introduction or discussion of the paper. Do offer an honest critique, but tactfully.

Finally, although you will be selected as a reviewer because of your expertise, there is a fine line between offering what you know as a way to improve the paper, and using the review as a platform for discussing your own work. The latter is not helpful to the editor in making a final decision and comes across instead as filler.

The review process for manuscripts submitted for the special issue of HCWI will be underway in as soon after the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline as possible. Thanks to those who have submitted their manuscripts for consideration, and thanks in advance to potential reviewers.

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**SMCR Updates Its Position Statement on Extended Cycle OCs**

By Ingrid Johnston-Robledo

As many of you already know, the first Society position statement on continuous oral contraceptive (OC) use (e.g.,

menstrual suppression) was drafted and released in June of 2003. This occurred after several papers were presented on the topic at the Society meeting in Pittsburgh but before the FDA approval of Seasonale in September of 2003. In addition to a description of these papers, the statement outlined the Society's position on this controversial practice. The arguments put forward were that: a) additional information about the safety of continuous oral contraceptive use was necessary before women could make informed decisions; and b) members of the Society did not agree with the widespread prescription of continuous OC use out of rejection of a normal, health menstrual cycle. As a result of this advocacy, views of members of the Society have appeared in various media outlets, primarily throughout North America and Europe, for the last 4 years. Since this statement was released, other cycle-stopping contraceptives have been approved (e.g., Lybrel, Seasonique) and considerably more data are available about bleeding patterns and the impact of these contraceptives on endometrial safety. In an effort to update the statement to reflect this new information, a call went out on the electronic mailing list for those members who wanted to contribute to the statement. I compiled members' contributions and comments into a list of talking points that were then presented to the Board by Christine Hitchcock. After some discussion at the Board meeting, Chris, with input by Paula Derry, drafted a summary statement that was presented at the general Business Meeting and unanimously supported. Another group of individuals refined the position statement at and following the conference, which was finally sent out to the original distribution list for feedback.

As a result of these efforts, our final updated position statement is on the Society website. The statement now uses the phrase cycle-stopping contraception as opposed to menstrual suppression to reflect both the prevalence of unexpected bleeding on many of these OCs, and to broaden the effects to include the menstrual cycle, not just menstrual flow. In this statement, Society members acknowledge that cycle-stopping contraception may not have a harmful impact on uterine health, but that gaps remain in the safety data (e.g., breast, bone, and cardiovascular health). The statement calls for more medical and psychosocial research both to understand this complex, multifaceted issue and to allow women to make more informed choices about the use of these contraceptives. Finally, the statement expresses concern regarding the perpetuation of negative messages about menstruation to market cycle stopping contraception, and cautions against the use of these contraceptives as a lifestyle choice. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who provided invaluable input and worked on this position statement. I have enjoyed contributing to the advocacy mission of the Society and am hopeful that our statement will add in a significant way to the dialogue on this issue among journalists, scholars, health care providers, and consumers.

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**Mary Anna Friederich Retires From SMCR Board After 26 Years**

By Ann Voda, Alice Dan, Tracy Quinn

Dr. Mary Anna Friederich, our long-time treasurer and secretary, has retired from

her duties as SMCR Board Member. She was secretary/treasurer of the Board for 26 years, from 1981-2007. Mary Anna was one of the founding mothers of SMCR. After attending a St. Louis conference in 1978, she volunteered to serve on the original Steering Committee (or whatever we called the group) that followed this conference to form the Society. It was important for our Society to have Mary Anna's support as a physician; she gave an interdisciplinary perspective on women's health. Mary Anna presented a paper at the third conference in 1979 in Tucson discussing her caring views as a clinician, struggling with issues of hormone therapy. She was a leader for women at a time when most Obstetricians and Gynecologists were men. Her stalwart support for the society over the years really sustained us--she was always faithful in fulfilling her duties as secretary/treasurer, learning new technologies, and presenting papers. We wish her health and happiness in her retirement in Arizona. We are all blessed to have Mary Anna's friendship and unparalleled support.

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**From the New Secretary/Treasurer**  
Margaret (Peggy) Moloney

I've been a member of SMCR for about 10 years, enjoying all the benefits--mentoring, networking, interesting discussions and stimulating new ideas. I am an associate professor in the Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing at Georgia State University in downtown Atlanta, and teach in the nursing doctoral program and the family nurse practitioner program. I also practice as a nurse practitioner in women's health, and

am currently conducting an Internet-based research study examining the experience of women with migraine headaches.

Mary Anna has done this job well for a long time, and I hope that I can become as comfortable with the job as she is and as good as she is at managing our money and records. I will also continue to keep the membership list, so please send any changes to your contact information, name/title, or interests to me either by email, [mmoloney@gsu.edu](mailto:mmoloney@gsu.edu), or by snailmail to me at 2351 Doreen Ct., N.E. Atlanta, GA 30345.

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**Member News**

“In the Flow: Embracing the Cycles of Womanhood” is the Red Web Foundation’s first public educational day, to be held Sept. 29 in San Francisco. It offers girls/teens, women, mothers, and grandmothers workshops in tracks including Observing Cycles — Yours and Nature’s, Taking Care of Yourself, Mother/Daughter, Celebrate Your Body, Cultural Experiences, Menopause. The keynote speaker is author Carol Lee Flinders. Her book *At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst* (Harper San Francisco, 1998) is a profound exploration of the collision between feminism and spirituality. She finds that this conflict can be reconciled through nurturing a voice, celebrating rites of passage and honoring the menstrual cycle. As part of the day, two new films by RWF member Roberta Cantow will be premiered. *Moontime*, which honors girls’ first menses, and *Dreamtime*, which embraces the many alternative and creative ways that

women are celebrating a variety of transition points in their lives using art making and ritual. For more information about “In the Flow” and to register go to <https://www.acteva.com/go/redweb>  
If you have any questions, contact Anna Yang [a.yang@redwebfoundation.org](mailto:a.yang@redwebfoundation.org)

Jessica S. Gunson of the University of Adelaide, an international member of SMCR, has recently had her PhD thesis on menstrual suppression accepted. The thesis is a sociological study of the debates about extended cycle oral contraception (ECOC) since the publishing of Elsimar Coutinho's book "Is Menstruation Obsolete?" in 1999 and particularly around the release of *Seasonale* in the USA in 2003. Jessie would like to extend heartfelt thanks to members of SMCR for their support and encouragement over the last 4 years. The thesis is titled "The Trouble With White Pants: medicalisation and agency in the context of menstrual suppression" and will soon be made available for online access through the Australasian Digital Theses Program <http://adt.caul.edu.au>. Originally from the UK, Jessie has spent the last 4 years living in Adelaide working alongside her supervisor and fellow SMCR member Margie Ripper, whom she is grateful to for introducing her to the SMCR community and whose energy and enthusiasm for menstrual related sociological research has been boundless. Jessie is now expecting her first child and is currently relocating with her partner to Edinburgh, Scotland, where she hopes to commence a postdoctoral position in 2008.

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## SMCR HT Statement Update

The Board decided last spring to review the SMCR position statement on hormone therapy and long-term disease prevention. (The current statement is posted on the Society's website.) To this end, a committee was formed and opinions of Society members solicited. An updated position statement is currently being worked on and will be considered.

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## Candidates for SMCR Board of Directors

We are fortunate to have so many competent women willing to be members of the SMCR Board. Please vote for four on the accompanying ballot and return to Peggy Moloney 2351 Doreen Ct., N.E. Atlanta, GA 30345. We don't have a mechanism for anonymous e-mail voting, but if you wish to vote by e-mail and don't mind a non-anonymous vote, you can send your choices to Peggy at [mmoloney@gsu.edu](mailto:mmoloney@gsu.edu). Ballots are due in by Sept. 30.

**MA. LUISA MARVÁN:** I am a psychologist with a Ph D in Biomedical Sciences. I am a Professor of Psychology at the University of Americas-Puebla (Mexico). I belong to the Mexican Research Association, where I have been National Researcher since 1992. My broad research interest is in Health Psychology. Specifically, my specialties include sociocultural aspects of menstruation, PMS, and attitudes toward menarche, menstruation, and menopause. I have published 23 articles about these issues and I have just finished writing the first book about

psychosocial aspects of menstrual cycle, from menarche to menopause, in Mexico. I have been a member of the SMCR since 1999. I became a member because it is a well-recognized organization; an interdisciplinary group that has a constant and enriching exchange of ideas and serious discussions, both in person and through e-mails, about our work, other menstrual cycle related subjects, and the Society's issues. I would like to be on the board because I could provide a link among the SMCR, Mexican, and other Latin American researchers, students, health care providers, and people who are interested in menstrual cycle or related issues. It is important that other Latin Americans share their experiences and join the SMCR.

**JUDITH BERG, PhD, RNC, WHNP, FAAN, FAANP** is an Associate Professor at the University of Arizona College of Nursing. She has been a member of SMCR since 1994 and has been active with the organization since then. In 1999, Dr. Berg planned and coordinated the conference held in Tucson, Arizona in conjunction with the Southwest Institute for Research on Women at the University of Arizona. Following the successful conference, Dr. Berg became president of SMCR. During her tenure, the Board of Directors drafted two position statements that were confirmed by membership on hormone therapy and on the use of antidepressants for premenstrual syndrome. Both position statements were widely acclaimed by feminist leaders and cited in media reports. Dr. Berg has been an active elected member of the Board of Directors of SMCR since 2002. Her research focuses on women's menstrual-cycle related symptom



management strategies, particularly alternatives to hormone therapy during the menopause transition. Her association with SMCR has led to research collaborations and contributions to scientific knowledge of symptom management utilized by women across the lifespan. She is dedicated to the mission of SMCR and looks forward to assisting the organization to achieve even greater recognition as an international leader of interdisciplinary research that enlightens women about their health.

**HEATHER DILLAWAY, Ph.D.:** I am an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. I teach graduate and undergraduate courses on women's health, sex & gender, race/class/gender, family, qualitative methods, and research methods. I became interested in menopause research when, as a birth control counselor at Planned Parenthood, I realized that many middle-aged women came to clinics thinking they were pregnant only to find out they were perimenopausal. My dissertation, on women's menopause experiences in everyday life, generated articles in five journals. I am currently engaging in a second interview study to explore: how different racial/ethnic and economic groups characterize and experience menopause, how women compare menopause to earlier reproductive events, what we can learn about midlife identity when asking women about menopause, and whether women really understand menopausal symptoms (e.g., hot flashes) as they experience them. I have only been an active member of SMCR since 2004, but this organization has definitely helped me understand how my research fits within academic, health

care, and lay worlds. I am eager to become an even more active member of SMCR by becoming a member of the Board. In this position, I would hope to help facilitate connections between the different types of Society members (i.e., medical vs. social science faculty, students, health care providers, cultural analysts, etc.) and increase membership. I would also hope to help create more dialogue between those of us who study the menstrual cycle and those who study particular reproductive transitions such as menarche or menopause.

**NANCY KING REAME** is Mary Dickey Lindsay Professor of Nursing at Columbia University. She is also Professor of Nursing Emerita/Research Scientist Emerita in Obstetrics-Gynecology at the University of Michigan. She is a nurse-physiologist who studies the neuroendocrinology of the menstrual cycle, infertility, and menopause. She has been a long-standing member of SMCR since the late 70's, a frequent board member over the years, and is a past-president of SMCR. She credits the society with bringing research-based balance to the conversation of the role of hormone therapies in women's health, and pledges to stay involved in this dialogue as it continues to escalate and shape health care and lifestyle trends for women across the lifespan.

**MARIANNE MCPHERSON:** I'm a third-year doctoral student in social policy at the Heller School at Brandeis. I'm just embarking on the (exciting and terrifying) process of my dissertation, which is about adolescent reproductive health policy. I have a long-standing interest in teens' sexual and reproductive health, an interest that crescendoed (I'm

a recreational flutist) when I wrote my undergraduate thesis. In that project, I asked whether college women's experiences of menarche were associated with current menstrual experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Through that project, I learned about SMCR and joined in 2003 at the Pittsburgh conference. Since then, I've continued to be a full-time student (MS in public health in 2005, MA in women's and gender studies en route to my Ph.D.) as well as mixing in some work experience at Our Bodies Ourselves, where I had the privilege of writing the chapter on menstruation for the 2005 edition of OBOS. I currently also work in a Boston-area program evaluation firm. SMCR has an important (and I hope, increasingly loud) voice at the table of women's reproductive health, particularly in the face of debates about menstrual suppression, and what is "normal." To the SMCR board, I would bring my passion for combining scientific research alongside girls' and women's lived experiences, particularly in the face of public debates. Thank you for considering me.

**GIOVANNA CHESLER, MFA:** I am a filmmaker committed to producing work around the body, gender, sexuality and women's health. My recent film, *Period: The End of Menstruation* (2006, Cinema Guild) profiled the trend of menstrual

suppression and explored various understandings of menstruation and the menstrual cycle throughout the United States. I joined the society after screening the film at the Denver conference in 2005 but have been interested in and involved with questions around menstruation since 1994. I have an MFA in Cinema and am an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of California San Diego and a Visiting Professor Film & Media Arts at American University (for the 2007/2008 academic year.) I am interested in the intersections of art and menstruation and the potential offered by merging alternative forms of communication and expression within a research society. It is my goal to bring the work of artists engaged in thinking about menstruation and the cycle to SMCR.

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**Submissions for Next Newsletter**

Submissions to the newsletter are always welcome. Please send news about your publications, presentations, activities; news of other members; commentaries on topics of interest; book reviews; announcements of conferences; queries about whether to write an article. Please send material in the body of an e-mail or in a Word attachment to my new e-mail address [paula.derry@gmail.com](mailto:paula.derry@gmail.com).  
Paula Derry, Editor

**BALLOT FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Please vote for four candidates, and send your ballot to: Peggy Moloney 2351 Doreen Ct., N.E. Atlanta, GA 30345, USA. We don't have a mechanism for anonymous e-mail voting, but if you wish to vote by e-mail and don't mind a non-anonymous vote, you can send your choices to Peggy at [mmoloney@gsu.edu](mailto:mmoloney@gsu.edu). Ballots are due in by Sept. 30.

\_\_\_\_\_ **MA. LUISA MARVÁN**

\_\_\_\_\_ **JUDITH BERG**

\_\_\_\_\_ **HEATHER DILLAWAY**

\_\_\_\_\_ **NANCY KING REAME**

\_\_\_\_\_ **MARIANNE MCPHERSON**

\_\_\_\_\_ **GIOVANNA CHESLER**

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**Newsletter Preference:**

Send newsletter preference to Paula Derry, 4811 Crowson Ave., Baltimore, MD 21212, [paula.derry@gmail.com](mailto:paula.derry@gmail.com).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

a) \_\_\_ Website access ONLY: I elect to access the newsletter on the SMCR website.  
My current email address is: \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_ Snail Mail access ONLY: Please send me the newsletter via snail mail.  
My current address is :  
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c) \_\_\_ BOTH: I would like to access the newsletter via the SMCR website (my email address is \_\_\_\_\_) and still receive a snail mail copy (my mailing address is: \_\_\_\_\_)