Women’s March: Honoring Paula Schonauer, Meadow Hazelhoff, and Deborah Johnson

On January 21, 2017, two current social work students and one former student helped shape history. Per the National Association of Social Workers, social workers are ethically bound to engage politically and advocate for justice. Paula Schonauer, Meadow Hazelhoff, and Deborah Johnson led an outstanding, political, social justice movement in the state of Oklahoma, and the School is proud to share their story of activism for positive social change.

Paula, Meadow, and Deborah believe in women’s choice, and also actively encourage women empowerment and acceptance for peoples of all ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations and identities.

Following the November presidential election, Deborah began to wonder how she could help the Women’s March spread its message of acceptance throughout the state of Oklahoma. After research, Deborah recognized the need for a Women’s March group in Oklahoma, so she ignited the movement in Oklahoma. Calling on Meadow for assistance, Deborah and Meadow co-coordinated the Women’s March group in Oklahoma.

As Deborah and Meadow joined with the Women’s March movement and invited women and advocates throughout Oklahoma to join them, they recognized the need for funding in order to get these advocates transportation to the Capitol in Oklahoma City. When this need surfaced, Meadow knew just who to contact: Paula. Throughout her career, Paula has advocated for equal rights throughout the state, and also had experience with acquiring funding. As this team prepared for the march, Paula gained sponsorship from Freedom Oklahoma and the National Association of Social Worker’s Oklahoma chapter. With this funding, Paula, Deborah, and Meadow were able to provide transportation for Oklahoma advocates to the Capitol. Deborah had the opportunity to march at Washington, DC.

During their interview, each of these women credited each other for igniting this grassroots movement. When asked what the Women’s March means to them, they unitedly responded, “Empowerment.”

Deborah, Meadow, and Paula are social workers who stand up for advocacy of marginalized people. These women are a testament to the School, to the state of Oklahoma, and to the helping profession. Together, the School celebrates these remarkable women, and together we say, “Thank you!”
**Biographies:**

**Meadow Hazelhoff, LMSW**

Meadow served as the state co-coordinator for the Women’s March on Washington-Oklahoma. Meadow graduated from OU with her MSW in 2016. She represents the Southeast branch of Oklahoma on the board of NASW-OK and is currently the chair of the PACE committee. Meadow works in a primary care clinic that serves the uninsured and under insured as a SBIRT Behavioral Health Consultant.

**Deborah Johnson**

Deborah is a MSW student at OU-Tulsa. She returned to school to pursue a second master’s degree after achieving a doctorate in Industrial/organizational psychology early in her life. She is passionate about women having choices in their lives and recognizes the untenable position that women are put in to choose between work or family. She is a champion of women’s workplace rights such as paid family leave, paid sick leave, equal pay, and reducing barriers to women’s upward mobility and spent two decades working on these issues before retiring to focus on raising children. Now in this new season of life, she is combining these workplace passions with women’s mental health and advocacy in order to change things on a broader stage than individual organizations.
Paula Sophia Schonauer

Paula is a candidate for a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Oklahoma, due to graduate in May 2017. She is a retired Oklahoma City Police Officer, a former legislative candidate, an author, and an English Composition professor. She has two grown children and happily married to her wife, Pam. On Saturday mornings, you might catch her and Pam riding a bicycle built for two in downtown Oklahoma City.

Written by: Abby Boehning, MSW Student