



## **Atlanta Mayor holds roundtable on “Women Surviving in Tough Times”**

### **Siegel Institute representatives learn of options to deal with the impact of current economic turbulence on women and families**

(Atlanta, GA – May 26, 2009) The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce auditorium teemed with more than 150 Atlanta-area women who converged this morning for a panel discussion on “Women Surviving in Tough Times,” organized by the Atlanta Women’s Agenda (AWA). Two representatives from Kennesaw State University’s Siegel Institute, program coordinator Joann Trodahl, and writer, Karen Pressley, were among the attendees.

Stephanie Davis, Policy Advisor to Mayor Franklin on women’s issues, moderated the panel. Panel speakers included Elizabeth Appley, Atlanta attorney at law, Women’s Policy Group member and lobbyist focusing on worker’s rights; Lisa Boone, Vice President for Smith Barney and certified financial planner; and Rhea Gordon, a Georgia psychologist specializing in women’s health.

Mayor Franklin shared a few thoughts before the panel began. “It’s even more important than ever that we be educated about our environment and the city,” Franklin said. “Women know what it’s like to take the hit when city services are cut, it impacts their children, and they deal with the emotional as well as financial aspects of the impact.”

Gordon commented that domestic violence is on the rise with numerous Atlanta families now dealing with two spouses at home, out of work. “The stress level is rising and the emotions are flying.” Noting that family management falls largely on women’s shoulders, she acknowledged that women are coping with a multitude of issues including: working hard for less pay than men; dealing with hopelessness regarding child care, health care, and transportation, knowing things could get worse; and unpredictability in how to make ends meet much less save for retirement. She encouraged women to focus on the present and future, and to realize that recovery requires support systems. “Learn coping strategies like reaching out—receive help from others and give help to others. Communicating about the realities of today is an excellent coping strategy.”

Davis and the panel members acknowledged that women have been showing up for a long time in civics and business, but emphasized that as capable as women are, many more women need to speak up on issues that matter. “While Atlanta is viewed as a place of progressive thought and action, women still don’t speak up enough,” Davis said.

Boone emphasized the importance of women taking charge over their financial destiny, since the reasons for our current economic troubles are unprecedented but the consequences are not. “Women should be the household CFO, every home needs one.” She suggested that women formulate a budget and determine living expenses based on 70 cents to the dollar. “Then put 10 cents in short term savings, 10 cents into 401K or some retirement plan, and give 10 cents to others through church or charity.” Boone said that the idea of “protecting your assets and paying yourself first” is foreign to most women. Women must have six months of reserves--in savings, in money market funds, or nine-month CDs—to live on if you lose your job. “Take these difficult times as a wake-up call. Don’t have a lifestyle you can’t afford. Become your own CFO.”

Responding to her passion for the Women’s Policy Group, a think tank and advocacy center on women’s issues in Georgia, Appley said, “This is a call to action for women. We need to make changes now that affect future generations.” She stressed that while women comprise 50 percent of the work force, they are not as effective because many live below the poverty level and more of their labor is uncompensated, including family duties, volunteer work and unequal labor compensation. She pointed out that all seats are up for election in 2010, so now is the time to study candidates and policies and to express one’s voice through voting or community/political activism. She urged women to seek “teachable moments” through her “AVC” approach: “Act up and advocate; Vote; Communicate. Speak to officials and candidates.”

Mayor Shirley Franklin established the AWA as an initiative to highlight issues affecting women and to bring together new energy for change. AWA coordinates quarterly roundtables on women’s issues, seeks to gain women’s full participation in civil society and develops strategies to end child prostitution. The Women’s Policy Group invited women to attend the June 23 meeting and participate in advocacy training. Information is available at [www.womenspolicygroup.org](http://www.womenspolicygroup.org) or email [Stephanie.davis@earthlink.net](mailto:Stephanie.davis@earthlink.net) to make your voice heard.

Joann Trodahl noted several leaders at the event who have been guest speakers at the Siegel Institute’s recent Phenomenal Women’s Conference—including Stephanie Davis, who participated on the ‘Combating Slavery in our Backyard: Today’s Abolitionist Movement’ panel; Stacy Chavis from The White House Project, who headed up the ‘Add Women, Change Everything’ panel; and representatives from mayoral candidate Lisa Borders’ office, who gave a keynote speech on being an effective leader. “One of the Siegel Institute’s roles is to be a bridge between KSU and the greater Atlanta community to connect leader’s expertise with faculty, staff and students,” Trodahl said.