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Time for fun and celebration: Annual conference celebrates women's roles in two Virginias

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The Four Seasons Women's Conference threw a party on Tuesday, complete with colorful masks and Mardi Gras favors, to celebrate the roles of women in the two Virginias. More than 200 participants attended the 12th annual conference, which was held at David's at the Club in Bluefield.

Lana Pentasuglia, chair of the women's conference committee, said the event was a success.

"The speeches have been wonderful," Pentasuglia said. "We have really good diverse speakers."

Pentasuglia said the committee chose a Mardi Gras theme for 2012 to help women celebrate life. She said one reason women do not take time for themselves is because they feel things in life — work, home, emotions — are not organized. She hopes the information at the day-long conference helps women emotionally, financially and spiritually.

"Women should take time to have fun and celebrate," Pentasuglia said.

Pam Carter from CBS-Fox 59, Barbara Fuller from Southwest Virginia Community College, Dr. Toni Muncy and Dr. Jeanne Taylor from Bluefield Regional Medical Center and Paige Flanigan from Sanders, Austin, Flanigan and Flanigan and Beth White from West Virginia Association for Justice, all spoke at the conference.

Julie Mills, president of All Squared Away, LLC, in Morgantown, was the keynote speaker. Mills helps businesses and individuals with organizational goals. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and the Institute for Challenging Disorganization. A former elementary education teacher, Mills said she felt need to help others with organization.

"I have always been organized, even in my younger years," she said. "I knew I had the skills set to meet the need. It was a unique service."

She opened her business in 2006.

In the morning session at the conference, Mills talked to participants about finding ways to organize based on style and personality. She said what system works for one person, might not work for another. In the afternoon, Mills focused on empowering women and reminded the audience to embrace all opportunities.

Two common reasons why women struggle with organization is the lack of time and energy, Mills said.

"Often we are so busy keeping up with time, we are playing catch up instead of keep up. We put our needs on the back burner," she said.

Darlene Gilley, assistant to the provost at Bluefield State College, attended the conference for the first time. She had heard about the conference but didn't know what to expect.

"I am really enjoying myself. Barbara Fuller, the lady who did a session on Balancing your Life, was very entertaining and gave insightful info," Gilley said.

She said it was nice to learn about how to be organized and fight stress.

"I can use both of those," she said.

The Four Seasons Women's Conference is sponsored by the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce. In addition to the speakers, participants were able to shop from local vendors, participate in demonstrations and win prizes.

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