



Michele Volonino is known to most as Mish. The Lake Grove resident is a yoga teacher in Suffolk County. Her classes were nicknamed "Mish Yoga" by her students, and that eventually turned into "Mishoga." She says, "When I am driving around town, my students know it's me from my license plate. I will hear honks constantly with big smiles on the drivers and waving hands. The license plate helps me connect with people even while I'm driving."

If you have a creative license, send us a note about what inspired it, along with a photo of the plate, and maybe we'll use it in an upcoming LI Life. E-mail your name, phone number, hometown and the photo to iris.quigley@newsday.com or mail them to Iris Quigley, Library, Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747-4250.



Take me home

Rebecca and her sister, Emmy, were abandoned at a local animal hospital. Emmy already has been adopted, but 4-year-old Rebecca is still in the shelter, awaiting a safe, comfortable home. Contact the Smithtown Animal Shelter & Adoption Center at 631-360-7575.

Inside

Cover Story	G6
Gardens	G12
Dining Out	G18
Who's Cooking	G19
Natural World	G24
Weddings	G62
Anniversaries	G63
The Guide	G68
Schools Notebook	G74
Police Beat	G78
Town Agenda	G78
Winners	G78
Local News	Back Page

Real estate classified
After G40

WHAT A LIFE

On the job for equal treatment

Although she's celebrating her 25th anniversary of co-founding the employment advocacy group Women on the Job, Lillian McCormick has been on the job of promoting rights and justice for women and children for more than 50 years. Whether it's mobilizing for pay equity for women and minorities or seeking a group home for children in suburbia, McCormick has been in the thick of social action — often in conflict with the established order — on Long Island. At 79, she's pleasant, persuasive and unstoppable. At her Port Washington headquarters, she talked with Newsday's Rhoda Amon about a just workplace.

What inspired you to start Women on the Job?

Let's go back to my early years, when I graduated from high school. I knew I wanted to make a difference. I grew up in Florida in the '30s, when black people were called the n-word and I didn't even know a Jewish person. There was a right side of the tracks and a wrong side, and there really was a railroad track that separated those who had it and those who didn't. I thought something's got to be better than this.

Did it get better in college?

Well, I organized the first sit-in at Stephens College in Missouri in the '40s because they wouldn't admit blacks. Then, I came north and got my masters in social work and community organization. I got married and started a family. My first job here was with the United Neighborhood Activities Center in Great Neck, which helped maids on their day off. The primary purpose was social, but a lot of important issues came out of that. I went on to the Nassau Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and we founded the first safe house. I started a women's center in Port Washington. . . . I also started the first Head Start and a group home for children who couldn't live at home. I took that program to the Family and Children's Association, where we also started a scholarship fund with \$17,000 for youths who couldn't otherwise get to col-



Lillian McCormick is co-founder of the advocacy group Women on the Job and a lifelong crusader for just treatment of minorities, women and children.

lege. It's grown into millions, and we've helped thousands of young people.

Did you start Women on the Job with other women who saw a need?

I worked with Charlotte Shapiro, then from Rockville Centre, who had joined me as a volunteer. Since Women on the Job was to promote equality in employment, we needed a feasibility study to determine what we could do. Was our goal to get women into political positions and on corporate boards? Could we move women into the trades, which would double or triple their pay? We also thought it was important that women know their rights, because so many women didn't know their rights.

Was it a big jump from defending abused women to fighting for women in employment?

No. We found that women

who were abused in the home were similar to women behind closed doors in the office, in what was happening to them, whether it was sexual harassment or being underpaid or overworked.

What did you find were the big issues?

We had enough women calling when we opened to know that money was a No. 1 issue. Women were making 59 cents to a dollar earned by men, which was a terrible wage gap. It's now up to 76 cents to a dollar. Sexual harassment was an issue, too. At cocktail parties when I would mention sexual harassment, the men would laugh and say women like it.

So what remains to be done?

We need to put more women into political office and into the corporate board rooms, where the policies are made.

Do you think women at the top will concern themselves with women at the bottom?

Carol Bellamy [former state senator, city council president and UNICEF executive director] used to say, "Whatever you do, don't pull up the ladder after you." Women need support at all levels, especially those at the bottom.

Are you seeing any success in getting women into the construction trades?

When we first started, I never saw a woman climb a telephone pole. Now, little by little, they're getting into construction. Often, they're only handed a flag to wave the cars on.

What can you really do for women on the job?

Women need to know their rights and speak up. We are the advocates who give them the data and research to empower them. From the start, we established a Women on the Job task force, a coalition of 55 organizations and unions who meet monthly to address the issues. We also established the New York State Pay Equity Coalition to push for pay equity laws. We want to meet with the

new governor and legislators to get a Fair Pay Bill passed.

What does pay equity actually mean?

Equal pay laws cover only jobs with exactly the same title, and even that's not being observed. We want to expand the law to jobs with comparable job requirements such as education and level of responsibility. We're concerned about sex-segregated jobs such as school clerks and public health nurses which have a high concentration of women and minorities and are underpaid. . . . National Equal Pay Day is coming up April 24, and we are going to give out thousands of pay equity candy bars to bring attention to the issue.

How can people contact you if they want to help or be helped?

Visit our Web site, www.womenonthejob.org, or call us at 516-883-1691.