

News from the Northwest

May, 2020



Newsletter of the Northwest Suburban Branch

***Our Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls
through research, education and advocacy.***

Our Vision: Equity for all.

STAY HOME – STAY SAFE!

We had several things scheduled for March, beginning with the showing of the film *Iron Jawed Angels* at the Des Plaines Library on March 14, but it was not to be. By that date, the library had decided to close due to the virus and then, just a couple of days later, our state went on lockdown, cancelling all gatherings. That determined the course of events for all of our other meetings that month and now, continuing at least through the end of May. We know that even if our part of the state moves into the next phase of the pandemic precautions at the end of May, face-to-face gatherings will be limited and we will still not be permitted to have gatherings of more than a few people. The AAUW Regional Conference and the state convention, which were to be held in June, have been cancelled.

And so, for the time being, we are sheltering-in-place, making every effort to remain healthy and to inhibit the further spread of the dreadful coronavirus. For most of us in our branch, it is an inconvenience, but for many people it is a complete disruption of life since they are unable to work and have had their entire economic structure changed. Our food pantries are almost without food to provide for the many who are, perhaps for the first time in their lives, in need and asking for help. Although we can't do much else, we can help our local agencies, and we hope that our members will do that.

While we are, for the most part, confined to our homes, we are trying to find ways to connect. One way is, of course, through virtual meetings, and we are going to try some of those. (Your board has already had one such meeting and plans to have subsequent ones the same way.) In order to participate in such events, though, you must have Internet connection and we know that a few of our members do not have that, but we hope that many will be able to participate and we will make every effort to reach out in other ways with any who cannot do so.

SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR MAY AND JUNE – MRS. AMERICA!

We're going to have virtual branch meetings! We are asking you to watch this series on Hulu (free thirty-day trial available), and then we will have online Zoom chats for discussion. There are nine episodes of about an hour each. You will watch the first three episodes and we will come together on Wednesday, May 20 via Zoom for our chat; you'll watch segments 4,5,6 and we will have our online discussion on Wednesday, June 3. The last three will be discussed in our online chat on Wednesday, June 17. *Mrs. America* is a fictionalized account of the 1970's struggle, in which many of us were active, to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. In it you will see personifications of people we remember – Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Shirley Chisholm, Bella Abzug and, of course, Illinois's own Phyllis Schlafly.

If you have questions about this, please contact Cindy Grau who will be able to help you. She will also be making the arrangements for our Zoom chat and will send information on the link for that.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Happy May,

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and safe. It is such a trying time for so many people, and the uncertainty just exacerbates it.

The branch board met on Sunday, May 3 and came up with a plan for the 2020-21 year for leadership. Thanks to Elaine Fisher and Wendi Thourson for stepping up to be Co-Presidents next year. Elaine was the branch president from 1990-92. Sometime after that she moved to Naperville, which has a thriving AAUW branch. After her retirement, she joined our board again as Membership VP last year. She has put a lot of energy into membership and promoting our programs. Wendi is a newer member who came back to AAUW after a hiatus while working. She has been our Secretary for two years and has done a lot of work on the website. She has recently retired. I am thankful for their willingness to step up and accept leadership positions. Laurie Mallin, a newer member, has agreed to fill the secretary's position for the remaining year of the term.

We are planning to have our elections virtually. Please look for more info in the newsletter.

The branch's biggest commitment is a yearly \$1000 scholarship to an Oakton student who is returning to school after a break in her education. We raised over \$200 for this scholarship at our December social meeting. We have approximately \$3000 in our treasury right now, so that is something we will have to focus on going forward.

It is time to pay your dues to renew your membership. You should have received a link in your email. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to AAUW so they can continue the work of promoting equity for women. There are some excellent articles on AAUW's new website about how the pandemic is affecting women. "Women hold a majority of part-time jobs and make up the majority of the low-wage workforce. They lack basic benefits like paid sick leave, family leave and workplace health and retirement plans" reports AAUW CEO Kim Churches. These things need to be taken into consideration when rebuilding from this crisis.

The board will start planning for next year in June. We hope to have a full slate of opportunities to promote equity for women. We will work around the pandemic if we need to. We will connect with you anyway we can. Please let us know if there is any way we or I can support you at this time.

Stay safe,

Cindy Grau

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IT'S ELECTION TIME

It is the time of year when our branch elects new officers. We will vote on co-presidents, and a secretary to fill the unexpired term. At the present time, there is no nominee for Membership Vice-president. The nominees at this time are Co-president: Elaine Fisher and Wendi Thourson; Secretary: Laurie Mallin. Continuing in their positions are Fran Stott Kampwirth, Program Vice-president, and Megan McGaughey, Treasurer.

If you have suggestions for any of the offices, please contact Elaine Fisher, Nominations Chair, at 630-335-4917 or edanassoc@hotmail.com. You will receive more information about our "virtual annual meeting" and election.

OAKTON SCHOLARSHIP

For many years, our branch has funded a scholarship at Oakton Community College for a woman returning to school after a break in her education. The scholarship of \$1,000 does not quite pay for a semester, but it is a great help to the recipient. At our December meeting we received about \$200, so we need \$800 more. For several years we have sold mum plants to help fund the scholarship, but we do not know if that will be possible this year, so we are asking our members for help. If you would like to contribute to this project, please send your gift to our treasurer, Megan McGaughey, 153 N. Babcock Dr., Palatine IL 60074, designated for the Oakton Scholarship. It would certainly be of great help to the branch since we would not have to take so much from our rather limited treasury.

NEWS FROM AAUW

Our Work to Ensure Women's Financial Futures

As part of our 2020 Gender Policy Agenda, AAUW is pushing for policies that will protect women and their families, including paid leave, access to high-quality health care and stronger Social Security benefits. In the wake of the coronavirus crisis, those priorities are even more urgent. That's why we're partnering with other organizations to advocate for paid sick leave for public health emergencies. It's critical for women to be able to take care of themselves and their loved ones without worrying about a lost paycheck or retaliation from their boss.

Every Voice, Every Vote

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the 55th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act – two critical milestones in ensuring women's right to vote. It's an important time to remember that many individuals, particularly people of color, still face voting suppression. This year, AAUW will strongly advocate for policies that expand and protect people's voting rights. We encourage branches to integrate this priority into their work too. For example, the AAUW Boise Area Branch has an ongoing voter registration project called **What the Vote!** which is targeted to high school and college students. The project's aim is to teach students how to research candidates and register those of voting age. Since the project's inception in 2018, the branch has registered 5,084 students.

Congrats, New 2020-21 Fellows!

AAUW is excited to announce more than 200 awards and \$3.5 million in funding for fellows and grantees in the 2020-21 award year. These exceptional recipients will pursue academic work and lead innovative community projects to empower women and girls.

Thank You!

Thank you for being a part of the AAUW community as we continue to fight for equity through uncertain times. Please take a moment to ensure AAUW has strong leaders to guide us into the future by voting in the AAUW National Election. This year, we're asking members to vote on four candidates to join AAUW's 15-person board of directors. You can read more about them and the election on the National Election page of our newly redesigned website.

. . . and an Appeal

Equal pay isn't only about the size of a paycheck, and COVID-19 is giving us an up-close-and-personal view as to why the issues we advocate for at AAUW are so very relevant and critical now. **That's why, from now through May 30, our board of directors and national committee leaders will provide a 100% match for all gifts to AAUW up to \$23,000.**

DUES ARE DUE

AAUW's fiscal year begins on July 1, so that means that membership dues should be paid very soon. Many of you will already have received an invoice online; it is easy to pay online with a credit or debit card. If you wish to pay by check, you should send dues to our treasurer using the form below. For regular members, total dues are \$81 which includes national, state and branch. National dues are \$59.00, of which \$56 is considered deductible as a contribution for those who itemize for federal taxes; \$3 supports lobbying and election activities. You may also include a tax-deductible contribution for AAUW which helps support AAUW's mission and outreach.

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ Cell _____
_____ E-mail _____

Send your check to Megan McGaughey, 153 N. Babcock Dr., Palatine IL 60074-5561

WE HAVE A LEG-UP!

Northwest Suburban Branch received a grant from AAUW-IL to pilot our *Drinks and Dialogue* program, three programs focusing on young women and economic security. Two of the meetings were held at the Harp and Fiddle in Park Ridge, with speakers on such topics as saving, purchasing a home, avoiding unnecessary debt, etc. events. The grant of \$500, one of the Local Engagement Grants given by the state organization, helped pay for advertising and program costs. Unfortunately, the pandemic made it necessary to cancel the third meeting, but the first two were well received. Thanks to Cindy Grau, Elaine Fisher and Ellen Yearwood for their work in getting the grant and planning the programs.

A MUCH BELATED AWARD

At the beginning of May, Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to outstanding journalists. This year a citation was given to Ida B. Wells, suffragist, civil rights crusader, and Chicago journalist; the award came eighty-eight years after her death in 1931. In February, in conjunction with the Des Plaines Public Library, we heard a wonderful presentation by Michelle Duster, great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, about the work and writings of her great-grandmother. The second edition of Wells' autobiography is to be released this month. There is a monetary grant of over \$50,000 with the award; this should certainly help with the work being done by Wells' family to achieve the recognition for her that she deserves.

BRANCH NEWS

The board of Northwest Suburban Branch acted to send a contribution from our branch to AAUW in memory of Anne Evans and Carolyn Miller, both of whom were fifty-year honorary life members of AAUW and Northwest Suburban Branch.

Barbara Pfaff, longtime member of the branch, is now living at The Summit in Park Ridge, 10 N. Summit Ave., Park Ridge. Merna Folkers is at Church Creek in Mt. Prospect but is receiving mail at her home address.

We have two new members! Both joined as a result of our outreach at the February meeting at the Des Plaines Library. We welcome them to the branch and hope that we will soon be able to have face-to-face meetings so that we can become acquainted!

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SPECIAL: ADDED INFORMATION

The *Chicago Tribune* of Sunday, May 10, 2020 had an article in the BOOKS portion of the "A & E" section about some of the books that were used by the creator of the "Mrs. America" series in researching the material for the program. It's a very interesting list of books, with a short synopsis of each given. You might find something there that would interest you for your reading pleasure.