

December Program

Inclusion Infusion

Presenter: AAUW La Crosse
DEI Committee

When: Saturday, Dec. 9

Time: 9:30 Registration
9:45 Brunch
10:15 Meeting 10:45 Program

Where: Viterbo University
School of Nursing, Rm 195
10th and Jackson Streets, La Crosse
Parking available in the lot next to the building

Brunch: Cost \$12; pay with cash or check
Menu: Build Your Own Breakfast Taco.
Includes Flour and Corn Tortillas, Scrambled Eggs, Sautéed peppers and onions, Diced Hash Browns, Shredded Cheddar Cheese, Guacamole, Sour Cream and choice of 2 salsas. Water, Coffee, and Tea.

Please RSVP to email from Robert.

Our Branch appointed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee to set goals for vision & direction for diversifying our membership and implementing the national AAUW lead. This committee is comprised of: June Reinert, Carlene Roberts, Diana Moran Thundercloud, and Erica Koonmen. We are in our third year of integrating diversity issues in our monthly newsletter, speaker presentations, panel discussions, collaborating with local diversity organizations, and the awarding of scholarships and grants to marginalized groups in our community.

Our presentation will be a review of the terms and ideas that surround diversity. We will examine the progression from our first steps of looking at our hidden biases to our progressing to making our diverse members feel accepted and belonging. This is an effort to help our branch grow and learn. It will be a time of conversation and engagement. As AAUW members, we need to not only value the importance of intersectionality, diversity, and equity, we must do the work — and it is lifelong work, core to our mission and vision.

AAUW

LA CROSSE (WI)

The Current

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

Stepping Up

by Andrea Hansen, Branch President

Here's the short story of how I became the AAUW-La Crosse Branch president: Someone asked me. I said yes.

On one level, any story of stepping up is essentially that simple. Being asked is the most common reason for volunteer involvements, as I understand. I think my quick "yes" surprised the Branch's nomination committee. In sharing these reflections, as unremarkable as they are, I want to encourage you to say "yes" when your AAUW colleague asks you to join a committee or help with a project.

At the point of the ask, I hadn't been long a member nor had I been active in committees. In my position as SSP director, I had partnered with AAUW for three WINGS programs, an AAUW La Crosse community program for women interested in going to school. I also knew how to apply for SSP grants and encouraged SSP students to apply for scholarships. I didn't know much beyond these activities. I certainly didn't know how things were done in AAUW. I did know that things got done.

A year as President-elect was helpful in filling in some gaps. I showed up more regularly for our Saturday meetings. I stepped up my involvement at AIA committee meetings. My understanding and appreciation of our

Branch's mission, work and reach grew. My anxiety about taking on an expanded leadership role did, as well. This wasn't "the best time" in my life to add anything to my very full plate.

Getting to know our members helped quiet some of my fears. Our membership represents a wide range of skills and experiences that contribute to the success of our projects. We have creative and productive committees. It appears that that most members have stepped up to serve on committees and hold leadership positions at some point or another, too. I count at least 11 past presidents from the past 20 years currently involved in AAUW-La Crosse.

The many generous and kind promises of assistance and support took care of the remaining anxieties. Despite their work demands and caregiving responsibilities, health concerns, moves and other uncertainties, I saw individual members hold space for AAUW and leadership

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NEXT BOARD MEETING

Monday, December 4

via Zoom at 5:00pm
Zoom link available from Andrea

Meetings are open to all members.
To place items on the agenda or confirm your attendance, contact
Andrea at 608-487-5571 or
ahansen@uwlax.edu

Get all the CURRENT news at our website: www.aauwlacrosse.org

STEM

by Annie Allen-Wyman, Chair

STEM Gender Gap

An old myth maintains that boys are better at math, and girls are better at verbal skills. But research shows no cognitive biological difference between men and women in math. Some researchers have called this one of the most self-destructive misconceptions in America today. Teachers often underestimate girls' math abilities and these lower expectations and biases are estimated to contribute to about half of the documented GENDER GAP in math test scores. Early education teachers with math anxiety may pass their anxiety and gendered stereotypes onto their students. By grades 2 or 3, many girls lose confidence in their math skills.



In contrast, boys are more likely to say they are strong in math by second grade, before test scores show measurable gendered differences. Nationally, fourth grade boys outperformed girls in math

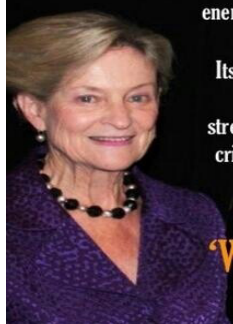
scores by only three points, and by eighth grade the scores were the same for boys and girls. The fact is that anyone can learn math skills, and in the United States, 59% of combined boys and girls 4th graders and 66% of collective 8th graders do not achieve proficient levels in math.

By middle school, more than 90% of girls rate themselves as creative, but less than 37% of them rate STEM jobs as being creative. By ages 13 to 17, only 11% of girls say they plan to pursue a STEM career, compared to 35% of boys (according to a survey by Junior Achievement). By 12th grade, girls are less likely than boys to have taken any classes in computer science (18% vs. 27%), and girls account for only 27% of students taking the AP computer science exam.

AAUW-La Crosse hopes to change those statistics in our city through partnerships with UW-La Crosse, Viterbo, and Western Technical College – and our scholarships. Watch your calendar for AAUW STEM events in 2024, and give generously to the scholarship funds at next year's Art Fair On The Green! Together, we can close the STEM Gender Gap here, in Wisconsin, and – as "our girls" travel outside of the state – around the country.

Feminism has fought no wars.

It has killed no opponents. It has set up no concentration camps, starved no enemies, practiced no cruelties.



Its battles have been for education, for the vote, for better working conditions... for safety on the streets... for child care, for social welfare... for rape crisis centers, women's refuges, reforms in the law.

If someone says 'Oh, I'm not a feminist,' I ask
'Why? What's your problem?'

-Dale Spender

Small Group Contacts

AAUW IN ACTION (AIA)

See this page for meeting info

Contact: Erica Koonmen, moogs56@hotmail.com

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

Contact: June Reinert, 608-461-1109

reinert.june@eagle.uwlax.edu

CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS

3rd Tuesday of the month at 2pm

Contact: Alice Ross, 788-4206

SCHOLARSHIP BRIDGE/CARD GAMES

Contact: Sharon DeCicco, 608-452-4571

sharon.decicco@gmail.com

STEM

Contact: Annie Allen-Wyman 608-514-2871

therosyorb@gmail.com

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN GLOBALLY

Joint partnership group with Viterbo and UWL

Contact: Erica Koonmen, moogs56@hotmail.co

AAUW IN ACTION (AIA)

AAUW in Action (AIA) is a study group that serves as a spring-board for community service activities for our branch that promote AAUW's mission.

Next meeting: ZOOM, Wed, Dec 13, 7pm.

New Collection

In collaboration with the La Crosse school district and Stacey Everson, Director of Secondary Education, we'll be collecting menstrual products at the December general meeting. These products are provided free to middle and high school students. The supplies are low so we'd like to help them re-stock the cabinets as a branch service project! **Please bring pads and tampons to the meeting.**

After some discussion at our November meeting, we decided that we didn't have enough information about the changes to the **Miss America organization** contests to initiate any action at this time. We'll keep it on the back burner!

YWCA LaX will be hosting "Empower Women Summit" next March. Thank you if you were able to take their survey about what's important to include as part of it.

We have 3 DVD's of the movie "Equal Means Equal" that we'd like to donate to organizations that would be able to use them in a meaningful way. We have donated one to YWCA, UWL RGSS, Hope Restores and Brighter Tomorrows. If you have a suggestion, please let Erica know.

Rebecca Mormann-Krieger would still appreciate your help with the **Enduring Families Project Children's Books**. Please refer to last month's newsletter for complete info.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

by Diana Elena Moran Sanchez Thundercloud,
DEI Committee and Public Policy Chair

Reflections of Immigration, Migration, Refugees, and Asylum seekers on the US/Borderlands Region. La Frontera. Summer 2023

For the past three years, I have lived between Western Wisconsin and Mexico City. I also lived in the state of Chihuahua (Cuahtemoc) for three months last year. Cuahtemoc was deemed as one of the highest regions for violence against women in Mexico through a report by the United Nations. It is also a route for many on their journey to try to seek asylum in the United States. I began to hear many families and children's stories of grief and loss over that period. I have experienced firsthand the migration stories of women and children. I was also born on the US/Mexican border to a Mexican mother from Chihuahua. I was born in El Paso. Segundo Barrio. I consider La Frontera—the USA borderlands region to be my other home too. There is always movement.

Mexico has been a corridor for migration for thousands fleeing issues of violence from Latin America into the United States for the past few years. Why do people leave their countries? It is a good question to ask ourselves.

Many in migration are from Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. With the war in Ukraine, many are reporting living within Mexico seeking asylum to the USA. Many from Chihuahua have seen a flood of Russians and Ukrainians on the border too. There are also a high number of Brazilians seeking entrance into the USA. The impact on children and schools in both Mexico and the United States is historic. As of May of 2023, the areas on the border—El Paso, Texas and along Texas and Arizona reported up to 17,000 moving Northwards since the post-pandemic asylum phase Article 72 closed as of May 11th, 2023.

In Mexico City, the group that many are now seeing are Haitians. Their journey is marked heavily with issues of racism as they migrate throughout Latin America seeking a better life. Haitians who I have met in both Chihuahua and Mexico City have shared many issues regarding racism. Those who enter the USA have also shared stories of racism. There are also many from Colombia in Mexico City; Mexico City has had new arrivals from many countries and that has changed the demographics of the city. For many, Mexico may be the destination where they may live or go back to find a place in another country. Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world. There is always movement.

The Biden Administration has offered up a transitional phase of immigration reform that has caused alarm for many. The immigration system is broken and within high inflation, war zones, poverty, and violence globally there has been historic migration of women and children moving through Mexico to the USA Borderlands and beyond.

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Historian's Corner

by Marilyn Hempstead (33 yr member), Branch Historian

Celebrate!

Our December branch meetings have been festive and celebratory over the years. Perhaps you happily remember being involved in the planning of and the participating in some.



Sister Malinda

Often wearing holiday garb for the occasion, we enjoyed choral music from high school, college and community vocal groups. Sister Malinda played her harp and high school string students performed. In 2006 a UW-L theater group acted excerpts from "Little House on the Prairie." We also enjoyed storytellers with heartwarming and humorous tales. One meeting we just shared our own memories of Christmas past.

We couldn't let the opportunity go by without raising funds in creative ways. In 2008 there was a sale of nuts. In 2011 through 2014, members donated gift items and gently used art (some of which had been purchased at the art fair) for an auction or raffle.

Extra projects during the season were having a gift-wrapping booth at the Valley View Mall for a couple of years. Herberger's in the mall paid AAUW volunteers to help with merchandise unpacking and stocking.

The cookie walks, which began in 2017 and continued for the next two years, were pure enjoyment. With the baking talents of members on full display we went along the tables arrayed with goodies, choosing a variety to fill a carton and then paying for them based on weight.



In remembering the recent past of the last three years, a shift had occurred. Because of COVID, the 2020 meeting was virtual with a branch history slide show. In 2021 no meeting was held, but we still celebrated. Cookies were again a theme as members who chose to baked a batch, dropped them off at Megan's house. They were then arranged on plates and hand delivered to members who requested them.



Last year there was another "walk" with a book exchange. We'll be doing an exchange this year too; see page 2 for more info.

As we gather this year, we'll be celebrating DEI bringing peace and good will with the inclusion of all people.

And the tables will be festive with Jo Anne Revel's decorations.

FROM THE TREASURER

Ann Brice

Financial Report as of
November 22, 2023

Checking Account.....\$8,177.42

Scholarship Bridge.....\$321.00

Leave a Legacy



By making a planned gift to AAUW National, you become a member of the AAUW Legacy Circle and affirm your commitment to equity. These gifts — or bequests — are donations that you designate in your will, estate or trust.

There is no minimum gift requirement to join the Legacy Circle, and the benefits are many. For example:

- Planned gifts afford you flexibility to provide for your family and support AAUW.
- Certain planned gifts may reduce estate or capital gains taxes.
- Planned gifts need not affect your cash flow during your lifetime.
- Certain types of planned gifts allow you to support AAUW while also providing income for the rest of your life — or a fixed income for a loved one.
- The joy of knowing that your legacy gift will sustain AAUW's programs for years to come is the ultimate benefit!

You can get more details from the brochure: click [HERE](#) to read it.

To get more information from AAUW WI, contact Lucy Harvey: lois3545@aol.com or Bonnie Diehl: bdiehl81@gmail.com

On The Web

by Barb Fischer, Branch Web Manager <https://aauwlacrosse.org>

Please contact me if you need help on the Internet. 608-780-1601 or fischerba@live.com

Check out Fast Facts regarding Barriers to Girls & Women in STEM: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/fast-facts-stem/>

Check out a recently recorded webinar regarding Youth Voices for Global Gender Equity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWkSBV3mBwQ&t=1528s>

AAUW United Nations youth representatives Zahra Hassan and Kyra Szabo, and Assistant Director of Fellowship Advising and UN Programs at Lehigh University Elena Reiss, joined CEO Gloria Blackwell for an informative discussion on the AAUW UN Youth Representative Program and the importance of youth voices in the future of global gender equity.



Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership

Members Betty and George Kruck Receive Recognition

Betty and George Kruck received recognition for philanthropy and support of education by Western Technical College Foundation. Both believe that one doesn't make it alone, and their own stories exemplify the power of mentorship and support in achieving success. They also firmly believe in the transformational power of education.

Betty and George were also honored recently as Outstanding Philanthropists at the National Philanthropy Day Awards Luncheon. This award was sponsored by the Upper Mississippi Valley Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

They share a passion for community involvement, primarily through education and volunteerism. Read about it [HERE](#)

**Welcome to Our New Member****Leanna Olson-Taunt**N2325 Willow Way West, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601
olsontaunt@yahoo.com, 608-780-4097

Leanna taught psychology at Western Technical College for many years. For 25 years, she has been on the Region Board of Directors for the National Ski Patrol.

**Email Address Change****Raghad Al-khazraji's** new email is: r.alkhazraji@outlook.com**DEI Survey****TAKE THE SURVEY**

"We Are Strong, But We Are Stronger Together" was a theme often used at the 2023 AAUW Regional Conference in St. Louis. When we team up with other organizations who have similar interests and concerns we can accomplish more because our numbers become greater. Different organizations should be communicating and that is one of the many reasons why our DEI Survey is so important. Together we can accomplish more. The survey was sent to all members last month and will be on our branch website soon for downloading.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion... *(continued from page 4)*

The shifts of terms and understanding change too quickly at times. As educators and community members, it is critical to understand the terms and legal process involved in this quest to migrate. To seek safety. To many times seek a better life. Sometimes to flee. To begin to understand why people come to the United States. We talked about the differences in the terms of immigrant, refugee, migrant, or those seeking asylum in last month's column. What happens on the US/Mexican borderlands region impacts the Midwest and Western Wisconsin too. It is important to have a perspective from that region.

Many times, for those seeking an education and a life in our community, the climate may not always be welcoming. It is critical for our community members to understand the global and political implications of why people move to another country. The deep impact that that movements affect families for generations too. The wealth of culture and love that people bring to their new communities. The US/Borderlands region is a place where there is always movement.

Children of families who have migrated or immigrated or have fled due to safety issues see the world differently. I have spent my entire life between Mexico and Wisconsin. My mother is from Mexico. During a critical time of anti-immigration rhetoric, racism, and hate in the USA, it is important to know the context of family stories too. It is a good place to begin. To know the context of the countries that were left behind. To begin to ask ourselves why families move is critical to having empathy and compassion for the Greater Good.

AAUW La Crosse Board Meeting Minutes

by JoAnne Revels, Secretary

Monday November 6, 2023 From 5-6 p.m. Via Zoom

Members present: Andrea Hansen, Erica Koonmen, Silvana Richardson, June Reinert, Jan Eriksen, Ann Brice, Diana Morn-Thundercloud, and JoAnne Revels.

BOD Minutes were approved from last month. Reviewed draft published in the November Current.

Treasurer's report stated that we currently have a balance of \$6,265.76, deposits of \$656.00, withdrawals of \$680.00, and some checks are coming in from Scholarship Bridge. Andrea will consult with Ann to propose a budget for last half of 2023-24. Ann needs help on Saturday. June volunteered to sit in for Ann.

Committee Reports:

1. Program: Silvana stated that we have 28 for brunch, 4 program only and 3 guests for 11/11/23
2. AIA: Erica stated that they have tabled the Miss WI seemingly problematic changes in pageant criteria. There are plans being made for International Woman's Day.
3. DEI: June stated that she was disappointed with the survey responses, only 5 came back. She was open to recommendations. Andrea recommend the survey be sent out again and have time for paper completion.
4. Public Policy: Diana stated that women of color have the most debt, and Immigration, transgender issues and affirmative action were a priority.
5. Scholarship/Grants: Issues will be discussed in work session.

Old Business:

Erica reports some tentative interest in taking over editor position of The Current.

New Business:

1. Letter of Support for The Enduring Family Children's Book project's grant to AAUW-National. Erica and Jan met with Rebecca Mormann-Krieger. A letter of support is required from our local Branch BOD. Commitment for the following types of support include:

Time: A 3-year commitment for the project is needed, from development to printing.

Personnel: Support roles for delivery of programs (1-hour/program in La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon co.

Monetary support: she is asking only for "in kind"--as volunteers. No financial commitment is needed.

Motion made by Jan and seconded by June to authorize this letter of support. Motion passed.

No further business. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by JoAnne Revels, Secretary

AAUW Board of Directors Special Work Session

by JoAnne Revels, Secretary

November 11, 2023 12:15pm-2:15pm Viterbo Nursing Bldg.

Goal: Thoughtful discussion and action to arrive at answers, approaches and solutions to “dangling questions” identified by committee and board members. Identify the types of support and help needed to accomplish goals.

Present: Andrea Hansen, June Reinhart, Erica Koonmen, Carol Robertson, Silvana Richardson, Diana Moran Thundercloud, Lema Kabashi, Annie Allen-Wyman, Sharon DeCicco, Jan Eriksen, Barb Fischer.

Andrea called the meeting to order.

Compilation of the “dangling questions” identified and submitted by Board members was distributed. Members were asked to prioritize each of the items on each page. It was noted official action could be taken as proper notice was given. Note: Unfinished business will become agenda items for Board.

I. Dangling Questions from Committees & Appointed Coordinators

· *Distribution Plan for Membership Directory* (Robert). Adopted the recommendation that any remaining directories will be mailed to individual members after the September meeting (as opposed to waiting for October meeting).

· *Ideas for raising RSVP response rate* (Robert). Recognition of difficulty of obtaining 100% response, the need for accurate count for cost-containment, and value of hospitality and welcome. Affirmed: Continue to send reminders. Direction offered: Analyze data on RSVPs, actual attendance, and any unreimbursed food costs over a set period to arrive at average net cost to the Branch. This information could underscore the importance of RSVPs, include in new membership information, reduce our meal count order by the average, and/or set a small allocation in our budget to cover overruns for meals.

· *Janet Isler Scholarship* (S&G). Helpful background information was provided. Decision: With a balance remaining, the Janet Isler Scholarship will continue to be awarded until it is depleted.

· *Karen Wilson Memorial Scholarship* (S&G). Decision: As Karen Wilson was not a member of AAUW and the original scholarship fund is now depleted, a motion was made and passed to discontinue the Karen Wilson Scholarship (Annie made motion, Jan seconded). Direction: Sharon will write a letter of appreciation to family.

· *Joan Koonmen Scholarship Award* (S&G). Decision: To establish the new Joan Koonmen Scholarship with the same criteria of the discontinued Karen Wilson Scholarship (ie: for students 30 years or older). Motion made by Annie, Jan seconded and carried. Erica expressed that Joan’s family was honored. Direction: The S&G Committee should write up a description of this new scholarship giving information on Joan and her years of involvement in AAUW leadership.

· *Info and New Actions on Little Library* (DEI). Committee identified the challenges of not having a location that made it easier to have a library. Affirmed: Value of library and exchange of books and ideas of book reviews/feedbacks to travel with the book exchanges. Direction: Silvana has found a dedicated storage space.

II. Dangling Questions from Board/Branch

1. *Saturday Program Meeting Schedule* (Program Chair and All). Affirmed: the value of community building, member engagement, updates and information of the Business part of our Saturday meeting. Recognition that our programs often require more time than our format allows. Format affirmed: 9:30 Registration; 9:45 Breakfast; 10:15-10:45 Meeting with Committee Reports and Other business; 10:45-11:20 Program; 11:20-11:30 Q&A; 11:30 Adjournment.

2. *Publicity Committee* (June). Discussion: Establishing a point person for publicity is a critical priority. Membership growth and diversity, profile of AAUW mission, and social media/print/and press are all needed. Direction: President assemble workgroup to update job description, establish annual publicity plan for general information, membership drive, needs, events and advocacy projects. Note: Art Fair on the Green publicity plan developed separately.

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AAUW Board of Directors Special Work Session

(continued from page 7)

II. Dangling Questions from Board/Branch...continued

3. *Honoraria for Speakers* (June). Discussion: Silvana provided standard approach of offering \$50 and paying for breakfast for speaker. Andrea gave example of fees based on speakers' affiliations as a starting point for discussion. June underscored the equity issues inherent in white organizations asking people from underrepresented groups to shoulder the work of educating "us" (ie: dominant groups). Direction: Best practices research from other AAUW branches and state DEI contacts would be helpful. Concerns about tax implications on payments and the possibility of gift cards being one solution. Direction: 2024-25 Budget should have honoraria line item.

4. *2023-2024 Budget*: The last budget was adopted 2019-20. For December meeting, Andrea and Ann B will propose revised budget based on actual/expected spending in first 6 months and anticipated budget for 1/1/24-6/30/24. Andrea, Lema and Ann will meet spring to establish proposed 2024-25 budget Carol will provide a framework that she used.

5. *Succession Planning & Recruiting for Officers*. (Andrea) Affirmed: Important to recruit individuals for positions. Recommended: Include designation as committee chair on name badges and include committee updates in Saturdays' agendas. Nomination committee begins planning in March.

III. Parking Lot and Vision/Ideas, New and Emerging Opportunities & Relationships

1. *Joint Projects with other organizations* (Andrea) Convene joint projects and events with organizations with related missions - gender, education, equity and democracy

2. *Youth apprenticeship in high school* for civic organizations (Andrea)

3. *Refine and describe the distinctions between groups vs. committee* for more clarity (Annie)

4. *Proposed committees and/or study groups* – process and ideas (June)

5. *Membership support for leadership development*, attendance at workshops and conferences (June)

6. Need and opportunity to develop *policies/practices on scholarships*, naming, and developing and/or growing funds with equity and diversity lens. Would AAUW-National and/or the Women's Fund or Community Foundation have some resources or guidance on the common practices for these gifts? (Andrea and S&G)

Meeting adjourned at 2:15p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by JoAnne revels, Board Secretary (Reviewed by AGH)

