

## MARCH PROGRAM

### Enduring Families Project: Black Women's Literary and Debating Society in the 19th Century

#### Presenters:

Rebecca Mormann  
Krieger  
and Denise Christy  
Moss



**When:** Saturday, March 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:** Hosted by Mia's Kitchen  
and Hope Restores

**Cost:** \$12; pay with cash or check

**Menu:** egg bake, roasted potatoes, meat, coffee,  
tea

**Please RSVP to email from Robert  
by March 1st.**

Rebecca and Denise will share the history of the African American Women's Literary and Debating Society in La Crosse, WI and of their current work with the Enduring Families Project.

Literary and Debate Societies were popular among free people of color in northern states. Many women in La Crosse that founded the society came from New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. They brought the society idea with them.

Starting in the 1850's the African American Women's Literary and Debating Society began to organize the Emancipation Day celebration for the liberation of enslaved people in Haiti. African American settlements had appeared in Grant and Vernon Counties. The black population from around the state traveled to La Crosse to celebrate what was yet to happen in this country. It was a way for people to meet and share their stories, traditions and find marriage partners.

The Barbers, Women's Societies, and Black Churches supported African American Communities. They educated, fed, and clothed, found jobs and housing.

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# AAUW

LA CROSSE (WI)

# The Current

a publication of the La Crosse, WI AAUW Branch



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MARCH 2024



### GUEST PERSPECTIVE: **Reflections of Working Together: Civility and Why Voting Matters**

*by Diana Elena Moran Sanchez Thundercloud, Public Policy Chair*

We are in critical times for our AAUW members to reflect on civility in working together regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion at the branch, state, and national level.

While attending an AAUW online seminar this past month on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the national level, what truly struck me was the many viewpoints that were shared by individuals. In these times of tense political climate-- emotions are often invoked. During the online seminar, a few women gave personal "testimonials." (I have shared my own "testimonial" below.) Difficult conversations regarding "diversity of ideas" is a hallmark of growth in our advocacy as AAUW members.

**After the webinar--I thought about these issues:** How we may discuss the VOTE about membership—the possibility of opening membership to individuals without college degrees? What does it mean to be civil? Do we support an atmosphere to agree to disagree too? How do we support or discuss "diversity of ideas"? How do we handle conflict in discussions? Can we work through difficult conversations as AAUW members too? Are we civil to each other? A good place to begin is through reflection and dialogue.

My own "testimonial" about the college degree requirement: I would like to share my thoughts on the voting of opening membership to all women and men without college degrees.

\* NOTE: AAUW will be holding a VOTE regarding opening membership for individuals without college degrees.

The voice of women must be inclusive and diverse. The barriers for education within society are historic. We cannot work for empowering women when we do not allow ALL women-- to the table! Men also can join AAUW. We should welcome all to AAUW— regardless of college degree. The work of empowering women and girls must be inclusive.

We all have reasons why we joined AAUW. I can only share with you, my reason. I know our work through AAUW is important and to work together is critical.

The history of the United States was influenced by various oppressive laws, policies, and practices that impacted women of color and the right to entrances into educational institutions. Women and women of color were

*Continued on Page 2 »*

### NEXT BOARD MEETING

**Monday, March 4**

**via Zoom at 6:45pm**

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](http://www.aauwlacrosse.org)

### Reflections of Working Together... (continued from page 1)

many times not treated equally. The road to enter a college and graduate is another story. Representation matters. The deep well of racism in the United States has impacted and hindered education for many for generations. Education is still denied for many.

In the United States, our institutions of K-12 education and higher education were not built on equity. They were not built on foundations of diversity, equity, or inclusion. The topic of social class is important. For many women it may take generations to pull out of intergenerational poverty. What I have learned through my Public Policy work is that women of color in the USA have the highest rates of student loan debt. It is crushing debt. When a person grows up in poverty, they experience the world differently.

I am the first generation to go to college. I also know that my mother’s second grade education (rural Mexico) would prevent her from joining AAUW today. She had to go to work in the agricultural fields as a young girl due to poverty. She does not have a college degree. She is one of the smartest women that I know. I ask myself—would my Mexican mother have access to this organization? We must open membership to all.

Native Americans are one percent of those graduating college at this time in Wisconsin. Latinas earn some of the most unequal amounts of pay for work in USA society. We have some of the highest levels of poverty and violence against us as women and girls. It is not an even playing field in society. Many disparities create the ability to obtain a college degree elusive. We cannot ask for college requirements when the empowerment of women and girls through educational systems was NOT equal historically. Everyone must have a “seat at the table” for that transformational change.

I found out that only 25 percent of our members vote within AAUW. This vote on opening membership to all women regardless of college degrees is critical.

Voting will take place online starting April 3. AAUW is utilizing an independent, third-party voting system for this year’s vote. Most members will receive emails from **vote@simplyvoting.com** with their unique Elector ID and Password to vote. Please make sure this address is in your contacts so the email doesn't go to your junk folder.

Voting will close on Wednesday, May 15 at 11:00 pm CT. If the amendment passes, changes to the bylaws take place immediately.

I encourage everyone to vote.

### 2024-2025 Branch Officer Slate

The Nomination Committee is pleased to introduce the following nominations for the AAUW La Crosse Branch Board of Director officers.

**President: Lema Kabashi**

**Secretary: Ann Brice**

**Program Co-VP: Linda Rauch** (overlaps with the 2nd year of Silvana’s term as Programming VP)

**Open position: Finance V-P** (2- yr)

**March 9:** Vote on slate of officers at Saturday membership meeting (Nominations for VP Finance taken through 3/9.)

**April 13:** Installation of new officers at Annual Meeting

### March program

(continued from page 1)

In La Crosse barbers and women in the Literary and Debating Society were called “Swells.”

They were the informal bankers in the community because people on the fringes of society could not enter a bank for financial services. But your barber or neighbor did have the ability to help you buy your home or business. Trust was more than a signature on a piece of paper, it was a place at the table and a seat next to you in church.

How do these stories influence our lives today? What does it mean for our work as people advocating for the good of all in our community?

*Denise Christy Moss and Rebecca Mormann Krieger taught at the Milwaukee High School of the Arts in Milwaukee, WI before moving to La Crosse, WI. Both were actively involved in the English, Social Studies, and Theatre Departments at MHSA. Each directed several theatre productions, Madrigal Dinners, and one-act play competitions, as well as Forensics. They retired, being “Out-Standing-Teachers”, after teaching for 24 and 20 years with Milwaukee Public Schools.*

*Denise and Rebecca formed the Enduring Families Project out of research started by Dr. Bruce Mouser at UW-La Crosse; Black La Crosse 1850-1906. This research can be located in the Murphy Library Special Collections ARC.\* It became a companion piece to a project started at MHSA for the Sesquicentennial of Wisconsin in 1998 “Called Faces of Wisconsin” in Spoon River; a two hour play about the history of Wisconsin told through biographical monologues by women. Rebecca Mormann received a Sesquicentennial Grant for artists and musicians to work with students to write their stories.*

*\* [https://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc\\_id=fa666b01-389e-4944-9eda-fb2e683e69e9/wlacu000/00000010/00000033](https://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=fa666b01-389e-4944-9eda-fb2e683e69e9/wlacu000/00000010/00000033)*

### OPEN BRANCH POSITION

#### Internship Coordinator

Contact: Erica Koonmen

**Duties:**

Working with UWL, Viterbo and WTC to post 3 internships. The internships are: Social Media, Public Policy and Diversity. Each internship has its own branch mentor who works with the intern; the coordinator works with the mentors to find the best candidate for the internship.

**I'll help:**

I will share how we post the intern position, what the job description is and the suggested activities for an intern file we have developed.

## Hearth & Home

Hearth & Home meets on the third Friday of each month. The next meeting will be **Friday March 15 at 1pm**. We will have lunch at Kramer Bar (known to have fabulous burgers). It is located at 1123-3rd St .S. (The corner of 3rd and Jackson with parking in the back off of Jackson). After lunch we will go to Dahl Ford's car museum to learn about the history of cars. There is a \$4 admission fee for seniors, more for those younger. Everyone is invited to join us. Let Sharon DeCicco know if you plan to attend. Email [sharon.decicco@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.decicco@gmail.com) or call 608-452-4571.



## YWCA EMPOWER WOMEN SUMMIT



### EMPOWER WOMEN SUMMIT 2024:

*Women Empowering Women*

MARCH 8, 2024, INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
8:30 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.  
FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY CENTER  
920 MARKET STREET, LA CROSSE, WI

Join us for a day of inspiring keynote speakers, interactive workshops, and panel discussions with multiple ticket options to participate!



TICKETS GO ON SALE  
**JANUARY 26**



EARLY BIRD VIP TICKETS  
THROUGH **FEBRUARY 15**  
GROUP RATES AVAILABLE.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER:  
**SARAH GODLEWSKI**  
WISCONSIN  
SECRETARY OF STATE

Register Now



## Name Grant Nominations Sought

By Jan Eriksen, Chair



AAUW-La Crosse has been awarding Name Grants annually since 1960. The honor recognizes a member whose work has advanced AAUW's mission at the branch, state, or national levels. Funds are donated, in the honoree's name, from the La Crosse Branch to AAUW National. The monies are used for a variety of activities, such as scholarships and STEM projects. A list of names of previous Name Grant recipients appears near the end of AAUW-La Crosse Branch's 2023-2024 Membership Directory.

If you know of a member who is deserving and has not previously received a Name Grant, please nominate her or him. To make a nomination, e-mail me at [jperiksen@viterbo.edu](mailto:jperiksen@viterbo.edu) or send it via US Mail to my address in the directory. I'll need the nominee's name plus a few sentences about why you think that the individual is worthy of the 2024 Name Grant.

**The deadline for nominations is April 5.** Recipient(s) of the Name Grant will be announced at the April meeting.

## Small Group Contacts

**AAUW IN ACTION (AIA)**  
See this page for meeting info  
Contact: Erica Koonmen, [moogs56@hotmail.com](mailto:moogs56@hotmail.com)

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)**  
Contact: June Reinert, 608-461-1109  
[reinert.june@eagle.uwlax.edu](mailto: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](mailto:sharon.decicco@gmail.com)

**STEM**  
Contact: Annie Allen-Wyman 608-514-2871  
[therosyorb@gmail.com](mailto:therosyorb@gmail.com)

**WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN GLOBALLY**  
Joint partnership group with Viterbo and UWL  
Contact: Erica Koonmen, [moogs56@hotmail.com](mailto:moogs56@hotmail.com)

## 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, Wednesday, Mar. 13, 5:00pm.**  
Please contact Erica for the link.

**Reminder:** International Women's Day Celebration  
Tuesday, March 5th. 5-7pm UWL Student Union  
Menstrual products collection at the door!

Free Event!





DR. YUKO IWAI

GIFTY AMEDODA

YI-ANN THAM

**PANELISTS FOR  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S  
DAY 2024**

Tues, Mar. 5, 2024. 5-7pm. UWL Student Union

**PERIOD PRODUCT COLLECTION!**  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT  
TUES, MARCH 5. 5PM-7PM  
UWL STUDENT UNION BLUFFS ROOM




\*Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare. - Audre Lorde

## March is Women's History Month

by Lois Gilbert

### TIME TO CELEBRATE!

The 2024 theme for Women's History Month, as set by the National Women's History Alliance, [www.nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org](http://www.nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org), is, "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion".



This theme celebrates women throughout the country who understand that, for a positive future, we need to eliminate bias and discrimination from our lives and institutions. What an appropriate theme for this program year in AAUW La Crosse Branch!

My daughter Liza and I have enjoyed researching and writing the 31 mini biographies for this year and we have met some very inspiring women!

Women chosen this year are from all walks of life and have worked to help others in life, from a woman in Phoebus, Virginia, who dedicated her life to teaching slaves how to read when it was against the law for black people to assemble for the purpose of being educated, to a woman with spinal muscular atrophy who founded the Disability Visibility Project which encourages people with disabilities to vote and engage in politics, to an actress you might be familiar with who was the first to go public with allegations of sexual misconduct against movie producer Harvey Weinstein, and to a Navajo woman who treated victims of the Spanish Flu Epidemic and created a Navajo to English dictionary of medical terms to make healthcare more accessible and less intimidating to Navajo patients.

We hope you will enjoy reading these biographies, and maybe we can be more conscious than ever this month of supporting women-owned businesses, reading books by and about women, thanking women we know who are actively helping other women, and holding our heads a little bit higher this month because our collective history is our strength!

Look for the biographies in the La Crosse Tribune on the 3 days a week it is now published and also on our branch website:

You'll also find them posted daily on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/aauwlacrosse>

and our Instagram account:

<https://www.instagram.com/aauw.lacrosse/>

Oh yes, and make no mistake, in 2024, women are under attack, in our own country and around the world.



Who are these women?  
Read the daily bios to find out!

## Historian's Corner

by Marilyn Hempstead, Branch Historian

### Our Foremothers

As a celebration of Women's History Month we honor members from those first days when AAUW went by its original name - the American Collegiate Association.

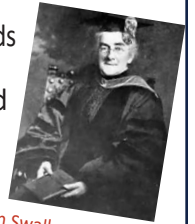
The founders of the national organization were 17 young women who had graduated from Eastern and Midwestern colleges and universities. In 1881 they met in Boston to form an organization dedicated to promote opportunities for women to pursue higher education and to use their training and talents to benefit society.



Marion Talbot

Prominent among the founders was Marion Talbot who served at the University of Chicago as Dean of the College of Women and was a leader in higher education.

Another was Ellen Swallow Richards who was the first woman to earn a degree in chemistry and helped develop the field of home economics.



Ellen Swallow Richards

In 1888 the first fellowship was awarded. It went to an historian of early American Indian history, member Ida Street.

Early herstory can boast of other illustrious members. There were Jane Addams co-founder of Hull House and Carrie Chapman Catt the suffragist who founded the League of Women Voters. Several trailblazers were the first woman dean of a graduate school Edith Abbott, the first woman elected to congress even before women could vote nationally Jeannette Rankin and the first Jewish woman elected to congress Florence Pragh Kahn. Julia Lathrop was the first woman to head a U.S. federal agency, the U.S. Children's Bureau.



Marie Curie

Famed scientist Marie Curie received contributions from ACA members in 1920 to help purchase one gram of radium for her research. In her honor AAUW established the Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship.



Mary Church Terrell  
First Black member AAUW 1905

The list could go on with numerous AAUW members including the first cabinet appointee Frances Perkins and others serving in governmental positions and those using their training and talents to benefit society. It's a wonderful legacy.

Source: AAUW website

<https://www.aauw.org/about/history/>

# FROM THE TREASURER

Ann Brice

## Financial Report as of February 6, 2024

Checking Account.....\$8,792.83

Scholarship Bridge.....\$321.00

### There's still time to register for the state convention!

#### REGISTRATION:

- Friday only: \$100 (includes dinner)
  - Saturday only: \$85 (includes lunch)
  - Friday and Saturday: \$120
- Late registration charge of \$10 after March 26

Complete information, including hotel reservations, can be found at: <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention-2024/>

You can view the Silent Auction items here but can only bid on the at the convention. <https://www.32auctions.com/AAUW-WI-2024silentauction>

# 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

## Program Year Timeline

For our AAUW branch "Program Year Timeline" visit:

<https://lacrosse-wi.aauw.net/programs-events/program-year-timeline/>

You will be able to see the condensed version and also click a link to open the full version of "Program Year Major Dates". Although many members contributed to creating these documents, we owe a special "Thank You" to Jan Eriksen for putting it together.

## Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership



### Welcome to our Newest Members

**Philomena Adah** is a new Graduate Student member. She is attending Xavier University in Louisiana. Her email address is [padah@xula.edu](mailto:padah@xula.edu) and her address is 602 Quincy St., Onalaska, WI 54650. Philomena joined online and we hope to meet her at a future meeting.

**Amy Studden** joined at our February meeting while attending as Annie's guest. She lives in Onalaska at N5336 State Road 35, Onalaska, WI 54650. She can be reached at [amyjostudden@gmail.com](mailto:amyjostudden@gmail.com) or 608-397-3177. She has a BS degree in Community Health Education from UW-La Crosse.

**Kristie Lonsdorf** also joined at our February meeting as Annie's guest. Her address is 3333 East Avenue, South, Apt. 105, La Crosse, WI 54601. She can also be reached at [KristieL.Lonsdorf@gmail.com](mailto:KristieL.Lonsdorf@gmail.com) or 715-225-8889. Kristie has a degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling & Vocational Education from UW-Stout.

## NCCWSL 2024 Scholarship Application Process Begins

by Jan Eriksen, Chair

Once again this year the La Crosse Branch will sponsor a local student to attend the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL). AAUW-WI is also offering five NCCWSL scholarships, so the chances for a local applicant to receive a scholarship are good. **The deadline to apply for branch and state scholarships is March 8.** In addition, women students can apply for national scholarships through the NCCSWL page of [AAUW.org](http://AAUW.org).



NCCWSL is AAUW's annual conference. It brings together more than 800 young women from around the country for two and a half days of leadership training, networking and inspiration. The 2024 conference will be held at the University of Maryland, College Park (Washington, DC, area) Thurs, May 30 through Sat, June 1, 2024. Conference theme for 2024 is **"Dare to Be."** Any college woman who attends school or lives in the greater La Crosse area is eligible to apply for a scholarship; however, junior or senior students will gain the most benefit from the conference. Students can apply for both the branch and state NCCWSL scholarships using one application form. The form and additional information can be found on our branch's website <https://lacrosse-wi.aauw.net/nccwsl-info-and-application/>

## STATE CONVENTION 2024



April 26-27  
At Delta Hotel  
In Mt. Pleasant

### Among speakers



**PARDEEP SING KALEKA**

Author of "The Gift of Our Wounds: A Sikh and a Former White Supremacist Find Forgiveness After Hate"



**MEGHAN KISSELL**

"ERA - Equality is Overdue"  
National AAUW Senior Director of Policy and Membership



**MELISSA LADUKE**

"Influence the Evolution: The Push for Inclusion"  
National AAUW Chair of Inclusion and Equity Committee

#### INFO AND REGISTRATION:



<https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention-2024/>

1:00 pm - 9:00 pm Friday  
9:00 am - 3:30 pm Saturday

Delta Hotels  
by Marriott Racine  
7111 Washington Ave  
Hwy 20, Racine

Contact  
262-496-2298  
Denise Anastasio  
[denise.anastasio@gmail.com](mailto:denise.anastasio@gmail.com)

### INSIGHTFUL DISCUSSION

From all of you after previous conventions:  
"Spirit of other women and atmosphere." "Just being together in person!"  
"Conversations with individuals who were all friendly and helpful. We had AAUW in common." "I really enjoyed the in-person contact and meeting new people."

And the Sweet Suite with treats Friday night will be available to all...

# AAUW La Crosse Board Meeting Minutes

by JoAnne Revels, Secretary

February 6, 2024 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Via Zoom

**Members present:** Andrea Hansen, Annie Allen-Wyman, Ann Brice, Erica Koonmen, Silvana Richardson, Barb Fischer, Jan Eriksen, June Reinert, Lema Kabashi, Diana Moran Sanchez Thundercloud and JoAnne Revels.

Andrea opened the meeting at 5:32.

Silvana stated that we have 41 people and 2 guests attending on Saturday. Will Vanroosenbeek can do the April program (from cancelled 1/13 meeting). Scholarship Committee will be spotlighted.

Ann reported 2 checks written: Will's check and P.O. Box renewal. \$7570.83 (checking); \$1222.00 (public funds). Erica reported \$20.19 due to renew our branch domain name.

March BOD meeting is rescheduled for Monday 3/4 at 6:45 p.m. as our new Tuesday BOD meeting conflicts with our International Women's Day on 3/5, 5-7 pm, The Bluffs, UWL. There will be 2 AAUW tables at event.

## **New Business:**

1. Annie (District 4 coordinator) reported La Crosse is designated to host 2025 State Convention. After discussion, consensus was to use our 2020 convention plan that was stopped by COVID. Jan and Erica will forward their extensive work to Annie.
2. The Nomination Committee has filled the slate except for Finance VP. Slate will be presented at Saturday's meeting and a call for volunteers will be issued. The slate will be posted in the March Current. Annie proposed that short bios of the candidates be listed and given to the membership

## **Old Business:**

1. The March program is set.
2. Members were thanked for revisions on Branch timeline.
3. Follow up with Winona AAUW branch who will attend March meeting.
4. New members will have stars on nametags.
5. BOD Work Session follows the membership meeting (12-2).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32

Respectfully Submitted by JoAnne Revels, Secretary