

DECEMBER MEETING

Workplace Futures for Women

Speakers: Melissa Klein,
CEO of Thinking Leaders Collective Level Up
C. Mehrkens & T. Bailey
of the La Crosse Area Builders Association

When: Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024

Time: 9:30am Registration
9:45 Brunch 10:00 Meeting
10:15am Program

Where: Viterbo University
School of Nursing, Rm 195

Brunch: Cost \$12; pay with cash or check
Menu: eggs, selection of pastries,
potatoes, fruit, water, coffee, tea

Please RSVP to email message from Robert

Join us to meet three women driven business success stories, from consulting to building.

“Women have made significant strides in the entrepreneurial space in recent years. Currently, 43.1% of small business owners are women, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. With women-led small businesses employing 10.1 million U.S. workers in 2019, it’s unsurprising that in 2021 the U.S. Small Business Administration launched 20 new Women’s Business Centers nationwide.”

“Wisconsin: Number of small businesses: 461,525 (99.4% of all businesses) ...with the number of women-owned small businesses: 152,951 (33.1% of small businesses)”
<https://www.simplybusiness.com/resource/businesses-owned-by-women-by-state/>



Melissa Klein

We believe in the power of strong relationships, effective communication, and unwavering trust as the foundation of successful organizations. Specializing in HR-focused business consulting, we empower companies to foster thriving workplace cultures. Our approach goes beyond consulting; we partner with organizations to build resilient teams rooted in trust, communication, and authentic human connection.



Tena Bailey

They are the “office cheerleaders” who plan large public and private events for the organization. They help raise over \$10,000 each year to give local high school trade classes the power tools and equipment they need for their students.



Christina Mehrkens



LA CROSSE (WI)

The Current

a publication of the La Crosse, WI AAUW Branch



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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

Supporting Women Entrepreneurs

by Lema Kabashi, Branch President

As the year draws to a close, I am particularly excited about our December meeting, where we will spotlight the inspiring stories of local women entrepreneurs. These women exemplify the determination and creativity that drive progress in our communities. This month, as we celebrate their achievements, I want to emphasize the importance of ensuring that all women—including those with disabilities—are included in this success.

Women entrepreneurs contribute to innovation, economic growth, and social change, often breaking barriers in industries where they are underrepresented. For women with disabilities, the entrepreneurial journey can be even more challenging. Many face societal biases, inaccessible resources, and additional hurdles that make their successes even more remarkable. Yet, these women demonstrate the incredible power of resilience and adaptability, showing that inclusion strengthens our workforce and society as a whole.

Highlighting their contributions aligns with AAUW’s commitment to equity and inclusion. Women with disabilities who succeed in business remind us that diversity is not just a goal but an

essential ingredient for innovation and progress. They bring unique perspectives and skills to the table, enriching our community in ways that benefit everyone.

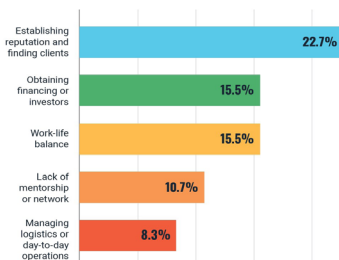
As we hear from our guest speakers this month, let’s consider how we can actively support women entrepreneurs, especially those navigating additional challenges. Whether it’s advocating for accessible resources, mentoring emerging entrepreneurs, or celebrating their

achievements within our networks, our collective efforts can help break down barriers and create a world where all women have the opportunity to succeed.

This month’s focus isn’t just about celebrating successes; it’s about

Continued on Page 2 »

Top challenges faced by female entrepreneurs



NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, Dec. 3

via Zoom at 5:30pm
Zoom link available from Lema

Meetings are open to all members
To place items on the agenda or confirm your attendance, contact Lema at LKabashi@uwlax.edu

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

Supporting Women Entrepreneurs ... *(continued from page 1)*

recognizing the potential for even greater empowerment in the year ahead. I look forward to seeing you all and sharing this empowering experience together. Let’s continue to support, uplift, and celebrate women of all abilities—today and every day.

Changes Coming for NCCWSL

The La Crosse Branch has been sponsoring, for a number of years, local college students to attend NCCWSL (National Conference for College Women Student Leaders). The conference has been held annually in Washington, DC and occurs at the end of the school year in late May and early June. We have heard glowing comments from students who have attended. They talk about the great networking opportunities and the presentations on issues such as job hunting and career advice, women’s rights, and reproductive freedom.

We were recently notified by Shannon Wolfe, Managing Director and Chief of Staff at AAUW’s national office, that NCCWSL as we know it will cease to exist. NCCWSL will subsumed by NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Beginning with the 2025 NASPA conference NCCWSL and AAUW will have a presence. There will be AAUW speakers, exhibitors, and presenters. NASPA will be responsible for planning and organizing the conference, including registration. Here is a link to more information about the changes on AAUW.org: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/events/nccwsl/>

AAUW Speaks Out Forcefully Against the Attacks on DEI

AAUW publicly denounced efforts to restrict diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at colleges and universities in Iowa and Florida. The association took aim at state laws which have aggressively sought to dismantle DEI programs at institutions of higher learning.

“Universities are where students go to expand their knowledge and experiences,” said Gloria L. Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer of AAUW. “But politicians in Iowa and Florida are forcing their agenda on higher education, policing what students see and learn and how universities manage their affairs. These cowardly attacks by right-wing state legislatures are a direct response to the progress made by women and people of color.”

Increasingly, more states are cracking down on providing funding to their public institutions that embrace DEI initiatives. That, says, Blackwell, is reason for concern. “Diversity, equity, and inclusion gave us the 15th and 19th Amendments, expanding the political process to include voices across racial and gender lines by giving people of color and women the right to vote,” she said. “The need for equity and inclusion gave us Title IX, which prohibited sex-based discrimination in educational settings. While many want to make ‘DEI’ into a slur, the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion make us a stronger and more equitable nation.”

“Despite progress, there is still much work needed to break down barriers to full access, opportunity and participation in higher education for all,” she said. “Iowa and Florida’s hostility toward women and people of color is part of a larger trend that reaches all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. AAUW remains committed to our mission of advancing gender equity for women — especially women of color — through education and advocacy.”

Convention Corner

April 25-26, 2025

As you recall, the 2025 AAUW-Wisconsin Convention will be held April 25 and 26 at the Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Onalaska.

This will be the 104th state convention. The planning committee has been hard at work lining up speakers, planning meals, and all of the other tasks that go into organizing a large convention.

Keynote speakers have not yet been finalized, but there will be break-out session presentations on a variety of interesting topics, including persons with disabilities, science education using artificial intelligence, big money and political corruption, “Uncovering the Lost Histories of Women,” the Holocaust, and women’s health.

Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information in upcoming newsletters.

There is a logo design contest, open to all, to create the convention logo. The logo will be used in all appropriate convention documents. The convention theme – “Forward AAUW: Bridges to the Future” -- must be included in the logo. For complete info, and a form, please contact Jan Eriksen: [at jperiksen@viterbo.edu](mailto:jperiksen@viterbo.edu)

Save the Date

The AAUW Winona branch takes turns hosting a March meeting with our branch; they will be hosting us in 2025. Date: March 8, 2025 Location: Kashubian Cultural Institute & Polish Museum.

The Kashubian Cultural Institute and Polish Museum is a dedicated organization that strives to preserve and promote Polish and Kashubian heritage. Located in Winona, the museum offers a vibrant and immersive experience into the rich traditions, history, and cultural contributions of the Polish and Kashubian communities.

Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members



Barb Schultz

blynnschultz@gmail.com

227 Liberty Street, Apt. 8, La Crosse, WI 54603

Barb was already an AAUW National Member and has now joined our La Crosse Branch. For 46 years, Barb was a La Crosse School District Teacher and Guidance Counselor. She is now retired.

Lil Silha

laxsenora@yahoo.com

1303 Adams Street, La Crosse, WI 54601

Home: 608-782-1943 Cell: 608-797-8444

Lil is currently helping Latino children at Hamilton and has done volunteer work at Centro Latino.

Kari Reyburn

reyburnk@westerntc.edu Cell: 608-487-7180

N3077 Crystal Lane, La Crosse, WI 54601

Kari is an administrator at Western Technical College and is our branch's student and employee connection with Western.

Karena Norton joined in July and her information is in our Directory. However, I want to share that she is presently a Material Analyst at Celestial Manufacturing Company.

Get Well Wishes



Roz Schnick is keeping busy during her recovery. She has been continuing to do a wonderful job of increasing the butterfly population. Be sure to ask about her butterfly puzzle if you talk with her.

Catherine Roraff is recovering well from her knee replacement surgery.

Thank you to all who attended the "New Member Gathering".

Lisa Mitby, Lin Rauch, Jan Fischer, and Lil Silha attended the first "New Member Gathering". We thank them for sharing with us. The presenters, Marilyn Hempstead, Betty Kruck, Robert Richardson, Silvana Richardson, and Carol Robertson gave us an abundance of useful information.

I think we all learned a lot and we appreciated getting to know each other better. I also want to thank the people who brought food and items to help make it a great event. Our next "New Member Gathering" will most likely be scheduled after our April or May meeting.

Membership Committee Meeting

The next Membership Committee meeting will be in mid-January. The plan at that meeting will be to finalize the Membership Survey results.

If you are interested in joining the committee, please contact Barb Fischer at fischerba@live.com or 608-780-1601

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.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: Wed, January 15, 2025; Zoom



Planning has started for the 13th Annual International Women's Day event. It will be Tuesday, March 4, 5-7pm, UWL Bluffs Room. The Theme is **#AccelerateAction**. You are welcome to join the committee! Next meeting is Mon, Dec. 9, Noon-12:30, via Zoom.

Thank you for the wonderful outpouring of period product and diaper donations last month! These were gratefully received by Centro Latino, CouleeCap, REACH and Brighter Tomorrows.

The Enduring Families Project will be celebrating the launch of the first book in December! Their website is up and running: www.efpcs.org. [Check it out!](#)

Hearth & Home

On Saturday Dec.14th, we will drive to Sparta to explore this year's Kristkindlmarkt, an outdoor Christmas market. There are many booths selling food, beverages and crafts. We will meet in the parking lot of Wendy's, across the street from Penneys at 10am. We will have lunch at Ginny's restaurant in downtown Sparta after our stop at the Christmas market. We may also stop into Sparta's history room after lunch to see the 1980's Christmas display. If you would like to join us, contact Sharon DeCicco at 608-452-4571 or sharon.decicco@gmail.com.



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

by June Reinert, DEI Chair

There is a DEI tool that I would like to introduce you to, and it is called the [Diversity Calendar](#). December hosts many diversity days, international days advocating for different communities, and religious holidays. Every month, they publish a blog summarizing some of the diversity events featured on and can be an essential DEI tool, to see all the events featured in 2025, try a free trial of our inclusive scheduling tool that helps you and your staff learn about those dates and what diversity events are celebrated.

December Diversity Calendar 2024 Highlights

World AIDS Day – December 1

World AIDS Day is observed annually to unite people worldwide in the fight against HIV, show support for those living with HIV, and commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, it was the first ever global health day. Participate in local events or wear a red ribbon to show your support.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery – December 2

Slavery isn't just something from the past. Nearly 40 million people across the world are in modern slavery and live in forced labor and marriages or human trafficking. The UN created this diversity day to raise awareness on how to work to eradicate this modern slavery form.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – December 3

Today, we promote the well-being and equal rights of people with disabilities. This call-to-action day aims to improve their living conditions and raise awareness about how to work toward accessibility in every aspect of society. We hope to better understand the challenges they face while focusing on breaking down barriers and building a more inclusive world for everyone.

International Human Solidarity Day – December 20

Today is dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of solidarity to help advance the eradication of poverty. The first day featured a keynote address from Lech Walesa, the former president of Poland and the cofounder of the labor union Solidarity, which inspired this movement.

Christmas – December 25

Christmas is one of the most cherished Christian holidays commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Observed by millions around the world, both religiously and culturally, this day is marked by attending church services, exchanging gifts, and festive family gatherings. Decorations include Christmas trees, lights, and nativity scenes that symbolize joy and peace.

Kwanzaa – December 26 – January 1, 2025

The week-long celebration celebrates African American heritage and culture. Each day features a different principle including unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

DEI Thoughts

The 2024 US election has left many women grappling with concerns about the future. From potential shifts in reproductive rights to fears about economic inequality, the political climate feels uncertain. While these concerns are valid, it's important to separate actionable challenges from overblown fears. Businesses, through DEI initiatives, have the power to offer stability and support for women during times of change.

1. Reproductive Rights Concerns: What's Next? The election has heightened anxieties about potential restrictions on reproductive healthcare. However, while federal actions might shape policies, many states continue to uphold protections for women's reproductive rights.

How DEI Can Help: Workplaces can support women by ensuring comprehensive healthcare benefits that include reproductive services, counseling, and family planning resources. Employers can also create environments where women feel safe discussing healthcare needs without stigma.

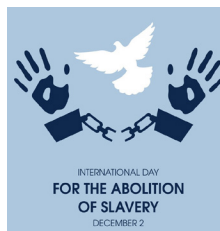
2. Workplace Equality: Progress Will Not Stall Some fear that the election signals a halt to progress on workplace equality, but that's not necessarily the case. Many organizations have already adopted DEI strategies that prioritize pay equity, leadership opportunities for women, and bias reduction. These efforts are driven by business goals and consumer expectations, not just politics.

How DEI Can Help: Organizations can double down on equitable hiring practices, mentorship programs, and leadership development initiatives. By continuing these efforts, they send a clear message that progress for women remains a priority, regardless of political climates.

How AAUW La Crosse DEI Committee can Help:

Remember DEI initiatives that our DEI committee has been working on for the last three years. Hopefully this ties in with the programs brought to you this year: voting, persons with disabilities and women in business. AAUW has been exposing all of members in our branches to DEI initiatives.

If interested in joining us: Please call June Reinert at 461-1109 or e-mail at reinert.june@eagle.uwlax.edu.



FROM THE TREASURERS

Andrea Hansen & Noreen Holmes

Financial Report as of November 24, 2024

Checking Account.....\$9,474.30

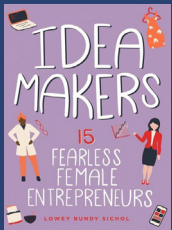
Scholarship Bridge.....\$700.00



Recommended Reading

Idea Makers: 15 Fearless Female Entrepreneurs

By Lowey Bundy Sichol



Entrepreneurship can change your life — and even the world! Idea Makers shares the incredible stories of 15 women who changed the world through

their entrepreneurship. Author Lowey Bundy Sichol presents five industries that women are leading in recent years: food, fashion and clothing, health and beauty, science and technology, and education. Jenn Hyman brought couture fashion to everyday women with her idea to Rent the Runway. Morgan DeBaun supports Black journalists through Blavity. And Sandra Oh Lin is inspiring kids everywhere with KiwiCo activity boxes.

Readers learn about how the women featured risked their early careers, gave up their salaries, and sometimes even went against the approval of their families to follow their passions and start their own businesses. Today, these women are modern leaders worth billions of dollars and employing tens of thousands of individuals.

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

AAUW National - <https://aauw.org>

Here is a direct link to a panel recording - "Securing the Future: A Post-Election Conversation on Women's Economic Security".

<https://youtu.be/ku1D3t6g1Lg>

This is a webinar exploring the path forward for women's economic security under the next U.S. President and the 119th Congress.

AAUW Wisconsin - <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/>

Link to AAUW WI State Convention 2025 information -

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

District 4 (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, La Crosse, River Falls, and Tomah) will be the hosts at Stoney Creek Hotel and Convention Center, La Crosse/Onalaska, from April 25 to 26, 2025.

AAUW La Crosse - <https://aauwlacrosse.org>

Link to back issues of our "Current" Newsletters -

<https://lacrosse-wi.aauw.net/newsletter/>



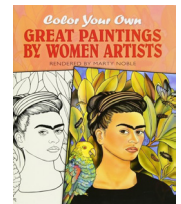
Holiday Gift Guide

www.amightygirl.com has the world's largest collection of books, toys and movies for smart, confident, and courageous girls and women. Here are a few gift ideas for empowering women in your life.



These printed socks from Good Luck Sock feature four inspiring women scientists: chemist and X-ray crystallographer Rosalind Franklin; primatologist and conservationist Jane Goodall; mathematician and pioneer of computer programming Ada Lovelace; and neurobiologist Rita Levi-Montalcini. Find them [HERE](#).

Color your own great paintings. Thirty works by female artists appear in this collection, which ranges from conventional portraits, such as Vanessa Bell's depiction of her sister, Virginia Woolf, to a pioneering abstract painting by Sonia Delaunay. Other landscapes, still lifes, and portraits include works by Frida Kahlo, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, and others. [HERE](#).



The Eagle Huntress DVD. This follows Aisholpan, a 13 yr old girl, as she trains to become the first female in twelve generations of her Kazakh family to become an eagle hunter, and rises to the pinnacle of a tradition that has been handed down from father to son for centuries. Set against the breathtaking expanse of the Mongolian steppe, it features some of the most awe-inspiring cinematography ever captured in a documentary. Find it [HERE](#).

Ruth Bader Ginsburg Pins. Wear your heart on your sleeve and inspiration your lapel with these enamel pins from The Unemployed Philosophers Guild! This pair features the inimitable Ruth Bader Ginsburg; one pin depicts face, while the other boldly declares, "I dissent." These brass, nickel-plated, enamel pins are built to last, and come with rubber backs that will ensure your pins stay put. They're the perfect way to pay tribute to a groundbreaking lawyer and an American icon! Click [HERE](#).



I dissent.

AAUW La Crosse Board Meeting Minutes

by Ann Brice, Secretary

Date: November 4, 2024

Time: 5:30-6:30pm

Location: Zoom

Present: Ann Brice, Jan Eriksen, Noreen Homes, Lema Kabashi, Erica Koonmen, Lin Rauch,,Silvana Richardson

Welcome by Lema at 5:30 pm

Updates

- NCCWSL will not be part of AAUW anymore – it will be part of another organization(NASPA). Jan recommends our branch does the same thing the state does. Discussion about what we should do. Jan will ry to get the latest NCCWSL person to speak at our December meeting.
- Report from Robert saying there is a concern about people not replying to the meeting notifications. Ann will get a copy of Constant Contact for next month’s communication.
- Discussion about how to re-award grant money. SGC asks if the Board wants to make it an annual grant to Eduring Families Project (EFP)? After discussion, Erica made a **motion**: The board endorses giving a grant to EFP again this year if they meet all the requirements set by the SGC. Silvana 2nd. All agreed; **motion passed**. Is this to be an annual expectation? No. Board suggests SGC look at creating an application form for grants.
- Organizing November Meeting: Lema will not be there; Silvana & Lin will do welcome & announcements o
Agenda : reviewed power point slides.

9:30 - Registration

9:45 - Brunch

10:15 - Welcome & Announcements

1. Jan E.:NCCWSL announcement

2. Robert: Koonmen scholarship application

3. Barb: New member gathering after meeting

4. Ann: Hixon House Open house 12/7 after meeting. Ann providing tickets.

10:25 - Introduction of Guests

10:30 – Presentation

11:20 – Q & A

11:30 - Adjourn

Next meeting: Dec 3, 2024 05:30 PM. Next general monthly meeting: December 7, 2024

Meeting adjourned 6:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Brice & Erica Koonmen