

FEBRUARY MEETING

Room for All, Room to Grow

Speaker: Michelle Pinzl, PhD
Associate professor, Viterbo University

When: Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025

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: vegetarian egg bake, muffins,
potatoes, fruit, water, coffee, tea

Please RSVP to email message from Robert

Join us to learn more about migratory experiences in our region, including major dilemmas that often come up between Spanish-speaking communities and mainstream communities. Laws that protect immigrant rights under the Constitution and current concerns regarding those rights will be discussed. Language access and other places (i.e. Centro Latino) to support Spanish speaking populations in La Crosse and surrounding areas will be highlighted.

Michelle Pinzl (she/her/ella) is an Associate Professor at Viterbo University, where she directs the Community Interpreting Certificate program and teaches courses in Spanish, French, and Interpreting Studies.

She holds a PhD in Translation and Intercultural Communication from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain and an MA in Foreign Languages and Intercultural Management from the Université de Limoges in France.



Dr. Pinzl has devoted over 20 years of service to help those in need. She will discuss the challenges facing displaced populations as they settle into new communities. She focuses primarily on assisting those with language translation complications, which includes school enrollment, healthcare concerns, court appearances, and social service needs. She will be traveling to Spain this upcoming summer to enhance her work.

AAUW

LA CROSSE (WI)

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

The Value of Immigration in Our Communities

by Lema Kabashi, Branch President

As we embark on another year of advocacy and empowerment, I want to reflect on a topic that is deeply personal to me—immigration. In November 2020, I became a naturalized U.S. citizen after a long and challenging journey. I was fortunate to have the support of my workplace at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse, which valued my contributions. Yet I know that many immigrants face this path without such crucial support systems.

The road to citizenship presents numerous obstacles. Application fees can be prohibitively expensive, especially for low-income immigrants. Language barriers make it difficult to pass required tests, while complex paperwork demands countless hours of attention to detail. The process often stretches across years, making it challenging to plan for the future. Beyond these practical hurdles, immigrants must navigate strict eligibility requirements, combat misinformation, and handle potential legal complications from their home countries. Many face nerve-racking interviews without adequate preparation, struggle to find reliable assistance, and some fall prey to fraudulent service providers promising easy solutions.

Recent research reveals troubling disparities in the naturalization process. According to "Barriers to Naturalization: A Review of Literature" (Seward, 2023), a 2022 study found that approval rates vary significantly based on demographics.

Black or African American applicants, Hispanic applicants, male applicants, and those from Muslim-majority countries face lower odds of naturalization compared to non-Hispanic White applicants, female applicants, and those from non-Muslim-majority countries. These findings underscore the urgent need

for more equitable immigration policies and support systems.

Yet despite these challenges, immigrants continue to enrich our communities in countless ways. They drive economic growth by starting businesses and creating jobs. Their diverse perspectives

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NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 4

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

The Value of Immigration in Our Communities... (continued from page 1)

spark innovation across industries, while their specialized skills strengthen our workforce. Immigrants enhance community life through their cultural traditions and languages, and many demonstrate deep civic engagement through volunteerism and community involvement.

There is room for all in this country. The United States has long stood as a land of opportunity, where dreams can be realized through perseverance and hard work. We must continue fostering an environment that welcomes and supports immigrants, ensuring our communities can thrive and grow. Let us embrace the talents and potential of all individuals who call this country home and build a stronger, more inclusive future together.

SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS COMMITTEE

by Robert Richardson, Co-Chair

Final call for Joan Koonmen Memorial Scholarship applications! Yes, we need **YOU** to nominate a woman 30 years of age and older who could benefit from AAUW support at any level of education. **YOU** would need to write a letter of support; the letter can be short and to the point or long and to the point. **YOU** or your nominee can download the application from our AAUW-La Crosse Branch website: <https://lacrosse-wi.aauw.net/>

The SGC will meet in-person prior to our branch meeting on 02/08/25 @8:45am in Room 103 in the School of Nursing Building. Grant researchers will report on their findings. Funds available for scholarship awards will be verified. Review teams will prepare for reviewing applications.

Name Grant 2025: Nominations Needed

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, regional, 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 2024-2025 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 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 2025 Name Grant.

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

Convention Corner

April 25-26, 2025

The 2025 AAUW-WI Convention will be held at the Stoney Creek Hotel in Onalaska on Friday, April 25 and Saturday, April 26. It opens at 1:00 pm on Friday and ends at 3:30 pm on Saturday. For additional information, please click on this link: <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention/>. The registration form will be live on the site by the time you receive this newsletter or very soon after. Convention registration will be done online, with a choice of paying fees either online or by sending a check in the mail.

The convention planning committee is pleased to announce that Wisconsin State Representative Jill Billings, of the 95th Assembly District (La Crosse County and half of Monroe County) will provide the welcome at the event. Concurrent sessions will feature topics such as the differently abled, artificial intelligence, big money and politics, the Holocaust, reproductive health, and local African American history.

Traditional convention activities, such as tri-board displays from each branch and a fundraisingsilent auction, will be included. Branches are encouraged to donate baskets for the auction. A submission form for posting photos and descriptions of auction donations is available on the convention website <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention/>. The deadline for entries is March 29. A Silent Auction Gallery of baskets and other donations will be posted on the convention site in early April. All bidding will take place at the convention, with winners being announced after lunch on Saturday, April 26. The Friday evening “Sweet Suite” will again be offered, as well.

On Friday morning, two free activities are offered. A guided tour of **Mary of the Angels Chapel at St. Rose Convent** in La Crosse, founded by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in 1878, will be from 9am-10:30am. The showing of the movie **Decoding The Driftless** will be from 11am-noon.

Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership

Welcome

We are very pleased to welcome **Maggie Rivera** to AAUW. Maggie attended our January meeting with Lema.

Her contact info is: 315 Losey Blvd. So., La Crosse, WI 54601, 219-775-6975, maggierivera1990@gmail.com

She is a registered nurse for the medical cardiac ICU at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and the special procedures department at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.

Member Updates

Katie Webster is at Havenwood in Onalaska. 608-615-4700.

Marilyn Hempstead is continuing to recover and is getting stronger.

Kristie Lonsdorf email: kristiel.lonsdorf@gmail.com

Cindy Cassellius email: ccwoman3@gmail.com

Condolences

Our dedicated Honorary Life Member, **Lila Seager**, passed on December 15, 2023 at Ormand Care Center in Florida. She was a past President of our branch, the first woman president of the Rotary Club. She and her husband Glenn have been active in many organizations. Our sincere sympathy to Lila's husband, Glenn Marvin Seager, their many family members, and friends. Her complete obituary is at:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/lacrossetribune/name/lila-seager-obituary?id=57306878>



Congratulations

Dr. Diana Moran Thundercloud was selected through Viterbo University and the LaCrosse Community Foundation to take part in a six-month program to complete her "Nonprofit Leadership Graduate Leadership Certificate." She represents AAUW and her work in Policy & Law and Education with a focus on board development, ethical leadership & policy, communication & outreach, and diversity. Her mentor will be Andrea Hansen (AAUW, LaCrosse). She completes her Certificate in April. Diana is also on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee for AAUW.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee will be meeting VIA Zoom on Tuesday, February 18th at 4:30. If you are interested, please contact Barb Fischer for the link. Everyone is welcome.

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: Monday, Feb 17; 6pm; Zoom

The 2025 Women's History Month theme is "**Moving Forward Together! Women Educating and Inspiring Generations**". We won't have our daily biographies in the La Crosse Tribune this year (they apparently don't have space for them) but we'll be posting bios and fun facts based on the theme on our branch social media so watch for those in March.

The theme for International Women's Day is "**Accelerate Action for Equality**". Our annual event will be Tuesday, March 4, 5-7pm at UWL's student union. Our panelists include our own Dr. Sona Kazemi representing Iran, Shreya Regami, Nepal and Mehtap Eklund, Turkey. We hope to be able to offer a Zoom option-- more information on that next newsletter. We'll be doing a period products collection at the door.

Hearth & Home

Hearth & Home study group meets monthly to explore new ideas, culinary experiences, fun activities and our area through visits to local businesses or in-home happenings.

If you are interested in planning a program for the group or if you would like to head it up, please contact Sharon at sharon.decicco@gmail.com or phone 608-452-4571.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

by June Reinert, DEI Chair

On January 9, 2025, Chip De Nure wrote a Letter to the Editor of the La Crosse Tribune entitled "DEI policies a 'cancer' on body politic". Our DEI Chair, June Reinert, wrote this response, published in the January 13, 2025 issue.

Diversity strengthens organizations and communities

Letter writer Chip De Nure questioned the importance of entities in the community advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion of their employees and policies.

The La Crosse Branch of the American Association of University Women advocates for women, and I am the spokesperson for diversity in our branch. We promote inclusion and awareness to create an equitable, sustainable, inclusive membership that reflects today's world.

We celebrate the diversity that all individuals bring. We engage in impactful initiatives, programs and research. AAUW helps members become comfortable sharing their perspectives outside of diversity training and addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of work and life.

Through ongoing dialogue, we seek to inspire all members to bring these values to their personal and professional interactions. We aim to turn these conversations into actionable goals and strategies. We seek to help members understand how inclusion factors into every decision. AAUW seeks inclusion in the workplace, including transparent advancement and development opportunities.

AAUW members value the importance of intersectionality, diversity, and equity and do the lifelong work. We cannot achieve gender equity without addressing this country's deeply rooted racism. Today's injustices mirror our shameful history, from police brutality to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color to the more significant pay gap faced by Black women and Latinas.

AAUW's commitment is not about words in a strategic plan and is not limited to efforts to diversify our members, differences form our organization.

"In diversity, there is beauty, and there is strength."—
Maya Angelou



You cannot leave a comment at the Tribune website but you can click on an emoji to show your support.

You can find June's letter [HERE](#).

Historian's Corner

by Marilyn Hempstead, Branch Historian

ERA - Law of the Land!

Well, maybe not.

Equal rights for women are not guaranteed in the Constitution. Thus, after the amendment granting women the right to vote, early suffragists Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman sought to remedy this by introducing an amendment into congress in December 1923:

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

It languished until being introduced into and approved by the House of Representatives in 1971 and the senate in 1972. Those involved in the Women's Movement, including AAUW, launched a vigorous campaign. Wisconsin on April 26, 1972, joined the flurry of 30 states which ratified the amendment during the next year.

Then, after just trickle of states joining, in 2020 Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the amendment. This satisfied the requirement of the three quarters of states needed for the amendment to become part of the Constitution. All that was left to do was to be ratified by congress or by presidential order and one other little detail.

On January 17th President Biden in his end of term directives did just that and declared the ERA to be the law of the land. But he did not direct national archivist Colleen Shogan, to certify and publish the ERA which is a necessary step. The American Bar Association agrees that it has been ratified. But the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel says it considers the ERA expired unratified in 1982, and Shogan says she will defer to the opinion of the Office of Legal Counsel. So, the ERA is not officially written into the code of laws.

President Biden declared "We, as a nation, must affirm and protect women's full equality once and for all." What will happen now?



AAUW Travel & Lecture News: Independent Scholar & Educator. Photojournalist.



Branch member Dr. Diana Moran Thundercloud while on sabbatical in writing her book (in progress) was invited to visit and discuss issues of Comparative Education in the United States. In the past few months she has traveled to Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile regarding research and to explore more about education and share her photographs. (She was briefly in Thailand too to attend a conference and explore.) Diana was invited to visit and share about US education with schools/colleges/communities in Chile and Bolivia. She visited a small public school outside of Temuco, Chile. The K-12 school was located on Mapuche homelands and she was able to learn about Mapuche culture and language. She visited the island of Rapa Nui briefly too. Rapa Nui language and culture. Teachers, staff, and students shared their stories too about their role during the COVID pandemic. Teachers shared their experiences teaching in a rural school in Chile.

She also was invited to be part of an international panel via remote viewing in El Alto, Bolivia (Andino homelands of the Aymara & Quechua). The invite was through the university --UPEA and a Aymara Cultural Community Center focused on education, literacy, and writers/literature. Diana discussed her role with AAUW and the quickly changing world of Education (K-12 & higher Education) in the United States. She discussed gender and her own role as a Native indigenous woman educator too. (Diana holds a Superintendent license that allowed her to share about educational leadership.) Through the panel discussion in Bolivia-- a professor from South Korea discussed Education in South Korea. International lectures --- visits foster diversity and collaboration for AAUW members and give insight to comparative policy and law in education for women and girls too in the USA and Western Wisconsin.

Dr. Moran Thundercloud will be in Chile this April to continue her research and photos.



FROM THE TREASURERS

Andrea Hansen & Noreen Holmes

Financial Report as of January 20, 2025

Checking Account..... \$9,519.55

Outflows: \$140.00

Inflows: \$456.00

Scholarship Bridge..... \$700.00

Andrea will have the checkbook for the month of February, as Noreen is traveling. Contact Andrea if you have a request for payment, a deposit, or request for purchasing.



Recommended Reading

The Secret History of the Rape Kit

by Pagan Kennedy



A woman invented the rape kit. So why was a man given credit for it? In 1972, Martha "Marty" Goddard volunteered at a crisis hotline, counseling girls who had been molested by their fathers, their teachers, their uncles. Soon, Marty was on a mission to answer a question: Why were so many sexual predators getting away with these crimes? By the end of the decade, she had launched a campaign pushing hospitals and police departments to collect evidence of sexual assault and treat survivors with dignity. She designed a new kind of forensics tool—the rape kit—and new practices around evidence collection that spread across the country. Yet even as Marty fought for women's rights, she allowed a man to take credit for her work.

When journalist Pagan Kennedy went looking for this forgotten pioneer, she discovered that even Marty Goddard's closest friends had lost track of her. *The Secret History of the Rape Kit* chronicles one journalist's mission to understand a crucial innovation in forensics and the woman who championed it.

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

Wisconsin updated all branch websites. Take a look at:

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

It is suggested that you use the above web address to reach our branch site. At present some browsers do not work with the "www.aauwlacrosse.org" address. Erica is kindly working on fixing this.

REMEMBER THE AAUW VOTE :

Our AAUW National Board will vote on Membership issues in April. Members have until January 29th to voice their opinions and concerns. The vote relates to dues increasing, bylaw changes, and Public Policy priorities. For more information, go to the link below and click on National Election: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/initiatives/>



Public Policy

by Diana Moran Sanchez Thundercloud, Chair

With the election of a new US president and an entering new administration in Washington DC--- there is a dramatic changing landscape regarding Education. Some of these changes have occurred in the past few days and hour by hour. Our role through AAUW is to support the empowerment of women and girls through education. Equity in Education. We know that there has been a recent assault on the rights of Transgender and LGBT communities nationwide. In the next newsletter-- I will share more as we will be better informed regarding the many changes that impact our role as AAUW members at the state and national level. What we can do as AAUW members at this point: To be informed at the local level and state level regarding the Supreme Court Judge election. To be aware of the changes that may impact Education through the Department of Education at all levels. To be aware of the changes that will directly impact Higher Education and K-12 Education.



NOTE: One of the changing issues that directly impact women and girls is the issue of immigration, migration, and mass threats of deportations of family members throughout the USA and Wisconsin. I have tried to stay current with the news as it has changed daily. The current threats of mass "deportation" impact school school and college campuses and issues of safety. The social and emotional wellbeing of children and youth. Mental health. When there are barriers to education that impact women and girls. I encourage us to be aware of policy changes as they are changing daily at this point. Significant and drastic changes that are not part of empowerment and equity of women and girls in education. I will begin to post resources regarding immigration policy and law to this newsletter too. I also represent AAUW, the LaCrosse Coulee Region Immigration Advisory Council.



AAUW La Crosse Board Meeting Minutes

by Ann Brice, Secretary

AAUW-La Crosse Minutes: January 7, 2025 5: 30 – 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Present: Lema Kabashi, Andrea Hansen, Erica Koonmen, Silvana Richardson, Jan Eriksen, Lin Rauch, June Reinert, Ann Brice, Barb Fisher

Welcome: Meeting called to order at 5:31 pm by Lema

Budget Report – Andrea & Noreen:

Bank balance as of December 31, 2024: 9203.55

Andrea and Noreen closed out the AAUW branch account that was inactive for many years. A question about what MMA stands for.

Andrea found the missing Post Office Key. Discussion about who should get a key. Noreen as treasurer, and then have Robert and Carol hand off the key for Scholarships and Art Fair.

Website-- Barb State has changed the address of our website. Barb is trying to get it back to what it is supposed to be. The board has agreed to pay the ~\$17.00 to keep our old website for the next year.

Offering the option of Monthly Meetings on Zoom – Erica. Discussion about logistics with camera and speaker. Barb suggested we use our phone to show/hear the speaker. Suggestion to check in with Viterbo before we buy an OWL (camera) or portable microphone. Board agrees we would like to offer an online option, but we need to examine our possibilities. Lin will check on things at Viterbo and we will see if we can set this up for April.

Disability Action Network (D.A.N) - Silvana received email from Michele Mihalovic inviting us to kick off meeting for Disability PrideFest January 15. Also attached a letter asking for sponsorship - there are different levels. Silvana asked if a. we want to ask our members if anyone wants to volunteer for the PrideFest event and b. Do we as an organization want to give a donation as a sponsor? Discussion from the floor about whether we want to have a table at the event. June thinks we want to be involved. Erica thinks it would be a good idea to sponsor, and Andrea agrees. Andrea motions to sponsor at a \$100 level, Silvana seconds. Unanimous ayes. Suggestion from Silvana to ask members at meeting this Saturday if anyone would like to be involved in the event. Silvana will send Andrea the information so she knows where to send the check.

DEI discussion: June mentioned concerns about DEI being in jeopardy due to the incoming regime. Lin suggested we develop a poster with “hot topic” buttons that we display at each meeting – would show the AAUW areas of concern. June said this is something we could work towards for next year.

January Meeting Presentation

9:30 - Registration, 9:45 - Brunch, 10:15 - Welcome & Announcements, 10:20 - Introduction of Guests
10:25 – Thank You Videos, 10:30 – Presentation, 11:20 – Q & A, 11:30 – Adjourn

New Business--Lin mentioned this is the 50-year anniversary of the Hmong population in La Crosse. Andrea pointed out there is a standing exhibit at the Minnesota Art Museum about the Hmong and the African slave experience.

Next meetings: Every month on the First Tuesday, except on April 29th.

Feb 4, 2025 05:30 PM - Monthly Meeting: February 8, 2025

Mar 4, 2025 05:30 PM - Monthly Meeting: March 8, 2025

Apr 1, 2025 05:30 PM - Monthly Meeting: April 12, 2025

April 29, 2025 05:30 PM - Monthly Meeting: May 3, 2025 (First Saturday)

Adjourned at 6:31 by Lema.