

APRIL MEETING

Annual Business meeting and Officer Installation

When: Saturday, April 12, 2025

Time:

9:30 Registration

9:45 Brunch

10:15 Meeting:

- Voting for New Officers
- Installation of Officers
- Officer and Committee Reports
- State Convention Announcements
- Small Group Conversation

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

RSVP to email message from Robert or
email him at richards.rob2@eagle.uwlax.edu

All members are encouraged to attend our AAUW Annual Meeting. We will be electing members for the offices of President Elect and VP of Programs. We will affirm our support of the new and continuing officers during the Installation Ceremony. Members will have the opportunity to share ideas for next year's monthly programs and for the direction of our Scholarship and Grants Committee.

Please see page 2 for Officer nominees.



AAUW

LA CROSSE (WI)

The Current

a publication of the La Crosse, WI AAUW Branch



VOLUME 64, ISSUE 8

APRIL 2025



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

Bridging Generations: Empowering Young Women for the Future

by Lema Kabashi, Branch President

As we step into April, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment for advancing gender equity. For 130 years, AAUW has championed the rights of women and girls, breaking barriers in education, workplace equity, and leadership. This legacy continues today as we take on the role of hosting the AAUW Wisconsin State Convention on April 25-26.

With the theme Forward AAUW: Advocacy, Education, and Equity as Bridges to the Future, this convention is not just a gathering—it is a call to action. Now, more than ever, we must reaffirm our mission and ensure that the next generation of women is ready to carry this work forward.

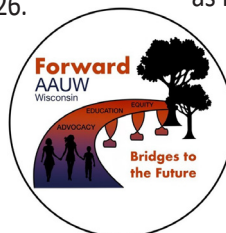
One of the most powerful ways to ensure lasting change is to engage young women in conversations about the progress made and the challenges that remain. The convention offers a unique opportunity for young women to witness firsthand the strength of advocacy in action, to connect with leaders who have paved the way, and to gain the tools necessary to shape their own futures. By attending, they will hear from women who have fought for policies that directly impact their lives, from equal pay to reproductive rights and access to quality education. Knowledge is power, and the more informed they are, the more equipped they will be to continue breaking barriers.

It is easy to assume that progress will naturally continue, but history has shown that rights once gained can be challenged or even lost. The voices and actions of young women today will determine the landscape of tomorrow. This country belongs to them as future leaders, and they must see themselves as key players in shaping its policies, institutions, and social fabric.

Our role, as members of AAUW, is to provide them with the knowledge, mentorship, and opportunities to lead with confidence and purpose.

Hosting this year's convention is an incredible responsibility, but it is also an opportunity to reinvigorate our commitment to advocacy. It is a time to reflect on what we have achieved and strategize on how t Equity in education, workplace policies, and leadership representation remains a work in progress. The bridges we build today will carry the next generation

Continued on Page 2 »



NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, April 1

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

Bridging Generations: Empowering Young Women... (continued from page 1)

across the gaps that still exist. We need every member, every advocate, and especially every young woman to be part of this effort.

As we prepare for the convention, let us all recommit to the mission that has guided AAUW for over a century. Let us reach out to young women, invite them into these critical conversations, and show them that their voices matter. The future is not just something that will happen—it is something we must actively shape. Together, through advocacy, education, and equity, we are building that future.

2025 Branch Election: April 12

Our annual meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2025. A portion of the meeting will include a vote on the following slate of officers, followed by their installation:



President-Elect: Annie Allen-Wyman – Currently serving as District 4 Coordinator for AAUW-Wisconsin and STEM Chair for the La Crosse Branch. Annie is also a member of the AAUW-WI Convention 2025 Planning Committee.



Program Co-VP: Maggie Rivera – A registered nurse in the medical cardiac intensive care unit at Mayo Clinic in La Crosse and Rochester. Maggie joined AAUW in January 2025.

Both officers will begin their two-year terms on July 1, 2025. We sincerely appreciate their willingness to serve in these leadership roles.

We are also grateful for our appointed board members who contribute significantly to our committees and serve as key branch representatives.

Nominating Committee: Andrea Hansen, Lema Kabashi, and Jan Eriksen

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. Please include the nominee’s name and 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 12th meeting.

Convention Corner

April 25-26, 2025

AAUW Wisconsin 2025 Convention
Stoney Creek Hotel, La Crosse

The AAUW Wisconsin 2025 Convention is almost here. The theme is “Forward AAUW: Bridges to the Future.” It’s not too late to register at <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention/>.

The Convention Planning Committee, made up of members from all five branches in District 4, has designed an outstanding event with three wonderful



keynote speakers, plus several concurrent sessions. The sessions include “AAUW 101: Everything You Didn’t Know” for newer members or those who would like more information about the organization. A sampling of other breakouts include a woman MD speaking about reproductive health, a teacher discussing the use of AI in science education, and a public policy expert addressing the topic of how to get big money out of politics. The usual traditions, such as the silent auction and Sweet Suite, will be held.

A small committee of La Crosse Branch members is working with local bakers to assure delicious treats for Sweet Suite on Friday evening of the Convention. June Reinert’s daughter, Rose Reinert, will make an in-kind contribution of cake pops from her business Make It Pop. The donation is in honor of Rose’s mother.

This is your chance, which won’t arise again for at least five years, to conveniently and economically attend a state Convention. Please come and welcome other members from across Wisconsin to our beautiful Coulee Region. In post-convention evaluations from past years, attendees cited networking as the best part of the Convention. There will be plenty of time, at the 2025 Convention, to share programs and ideas with members from other branches.

Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBER

Mehtap Aldogan Eklund

801 Main Street, Apt. 327

Washburn on the Park, La Crosse, WI 54601-4198

email: meklund@uwlax.edu

Mehtap is an associate professor in the Accounting Department at UW - La Crosse. She has a Ph.D. degree in Accounting and International Business and is one of the regional governance partners at the International Board Foundation (BF) in St. Gallen, Switzerland. Mehtap was one of the 2025 International Women's Day celebration panelists!



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Thank you to those that completed the Membership Survey. Information from the survey has been shared with the program planning committee and to Robert Richardson for the directory. The rest of the results will be shared at our May meeting.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee will meet in person at 4:30 on April 30th at Java Vino. Everyone is welcome. If you are interested, please contact Barb Fischer - fischerba@live.com. Thank you to our Membership Committee and all who attend!

2025 International Women's Day

The International Women's Day event on **Tuesday, March** was a successful evening!

The panel included two of our own members, Dr. Sona Kazemi, representing Iran, and Dr. Mehtap Aldogan Eklund, who just joined our branch, representing Turkey. The third panelist, Shreya Regami, represented Nepal.

Thanks to all who attended and to those who brought period products for the community.



2025 IWD Committee and panelists



2025 IWD panelists with Lema



Mehtap, Lema, Alex Carter & Art Jarrett News8 Mindful Monday interview

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: May potluck dinner in Sparta, TBA

Next event we're planning: An Equal Pay Day tabling at Viterbo University, co-sponsored with the Viterbo Division of DEI.

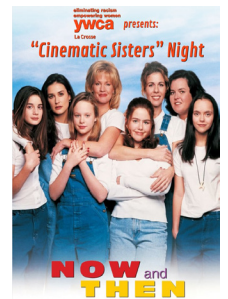
It will be Tuesday, April 8 from 11am -1pm and will feature dispays, pamphlets and COOKIES.

We need bakers willing to bake a couple of dozen sugar cookies with a "bite" out of them. Pink frosting is optional! Please contact Erica if you can provide cookies.



YWCA La Crosse Movie Fundraiser

Join YWCA La Crosse & Rivoli Theatre and Pizzeria on Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 5PM for a special screening of "Now and Then"! Enjoy our signature Persimmon Mocktail, with a portion of proceeds supporting YWCA La Crosse.



Celebrate the power of friendship with our community and take part in a 90's themed take-home trivia contest for a chance to win exciting prizes — and ultimate bragging rights! Don't miss this fun-filled evening of nostalgia and connection.

Although we encourage to buy tickets ahead of time, tickets can also be purchased day-of in person! Click [HERE](#) to buy.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

by June Reinert, DEI Chair

What Does the Department of Education Actually Do?

We need more members to serve on our DEI committee to assist us in spreading the message of inclusiveness and welcoming diverse members to our AAUW Branch. Please give June Reinert a call at 608-461-1109 or e-mail me at reinert.june@eagle.uwlax.edu

I wanted to update you on the article I wrote in last month's newsletter about possibly dismantling the U.S. Department of Education.

This week, we received communication from the AAUW Executive Director, Gloria Blackwell, regarding the Executive Order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education and urged us to take immediate action to protect the students we advocate for in AAUW. She states, "The American Association of University Women (AAUW) unequivocally condemns President Trump's executive order "Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities," dismantling the U.S. Department of Education.

"This reckless and shortsighted action threatens to gut vital protections that ensure equal access to higher education and will have devastating consequences for students — especially women, students of color, and those from low-income backgrounds — who rely on federal oversight for their right to an equitable education," said Gloria L. Blackwell, CEO of AAUW. "Eliminating the Department of Education would decimate federal civil rights enforcement, slash protections against gender-based discrimination, and roll back decades of progress toward making higher education accessible and affordable. This decision is not about streamlining government but about stripping students of their rights and futures."

Consequences of this action may include:

- Low-income students may lose vital federal financial aid that makes it possible to earn their degrees.
- Survivors of sexual harassment and assault on campus may see more Title IX cases dismissed and drastically weakened pathways to justice.
- Students with disabilities could be left without critical safeguards to protect and enforce their rights in schools.
- LGBTQ+ students who experience harassment and discrimination could face unsafe environments without their schools being held accountable.
- Student loan borrowers may be more vulnerable to abuse by predatory for-profit colleges and noncompliant servicers while facing unaffordable repayments;

AAUW urges Congress to oppose this move and protect the Department from any further cuts that could hinder the enforcement of federal civil rights laws protecting students and preserving access to higher education. The cost of inaction is too high, and the futures of millions of students, especially those from marginalized communities, hang in the balance.

Newsletter Survey

by Susanne Koehler



We are planning to update the AAUW newsletter to a modern platform using responsive templates. This will allow the newsletter to be viewable/readable on all electronic devices (Cell phone, Tablet, Laptop, Desktop computer, etc...). We are asking for your feedback on 5 questions. Also, going forward the newsletter will be electronic only. We will not be furnishing printed copies. Deadline to respond: April 15.

Please use this link to take the survey:

https://uwlax.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5nDFO9Y7bMdtidx

Printed copies will be available at the April 12 meeting.

AAUW 2024 Annual Report



Looking for a way to review AAUW's impressive accomplishments in 2024? The national office has written them all down for us.

Although reading the [AAUW Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report](#) sounds as interesting as reading nutrition labels, you may be surprised that you won't doze off.

You can't ignore feats like sending 47,000 Two-Minute Activist messages to elected officials, granting \$6.3M to AAUW Fellows and community organizations, or training 6,157 women to be smart about job compensation.

Take a gander at the report's easy-to-read pages and remember why you're a part of AAUW!

In response to these coordinated and continuing attacks on education in America, AAUW is launching [The Defend Higher Education Fund](#) to enable AAUW to elevate the critical higher education issues impacting women, mobilize advocates across the country, provide strategic resources to students, staff and faculty on campus, and fuel investments in the infrastructure and technology necessary to move our mission forward. Support to this fund ensures that AAUW can effectively advocate for women on campuses nationwide and remains a trusted and powerful voice for equity.

To give to the fund, please visit [National's website](#).

Scholarships & Grants

by Robert Richardson, Co- Chair

The Scholarships and Grants Committee seeks your feedback to refresh our mindset as we do the work of the SGC on behalf of the branch membership. During our April meeting, we will ask our members to converse and then reference our AAUW mission to rank order the grant and scholarship considerations.

A little background first. We open our annual Directory with the following statements.

Since AAUW’s founding in 1881, members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental, equity issues of the day – educational, social, economic and political. AAUW – La Crosse Branch reflects commitment to our mission in all aspects of our work. AAUW advances equity for women & girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. AAUW members belong to a community working together to dismantle the intersecting barriers to education and economic equity.

When documenting criteria for our scholarships and when reviewing completed applications, we consider many factors. We need to make decisions aligned with our mission. We consider GPA, educational goals, likelihood to succeed in studies, documented financial need, situational financial need, home/school/community involvement, barrier breaking (past, present, future).

For the 2025-26 academic year, we selected 19 scholarship recipients each to receive \$1000 awards. We have long debated increasing our awards to \$1500 or \$2000 and reducing the number of recipients. Money for scholarships is drafted from the AAUW Scholarship Fund at the Community Foundation; money for this fund is generated from the Art Fair.

When researching, reporting, and determining possible grant recipients, we consider many factors. Most organizations brought to our attention do good work, but AAUW La Crosse cannot award unlimited grants. SGC needs to use a model to determine recipients and non-recipients. We need to make decisions aligned with our mission. We consider non-profit organizations’ pressing need, impact on community, and impact on individuals.

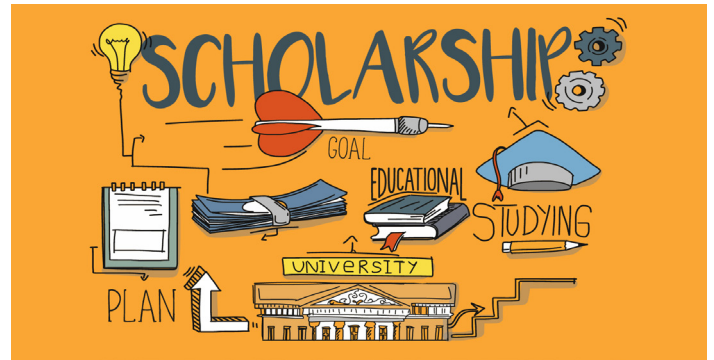
As a point of reference...we selected seven 2025 grant recipients and increased monetary awards for several.

Three at \$1000: SSP Emergency Fund, WTC Student Assistance Fund, YWCA Restorative Justice Circles.

Four at \$1500: Cia Siab, Inc., Hope Restores, Monroe County Shelter Care (Brighter Tomorrows), New Horizons.

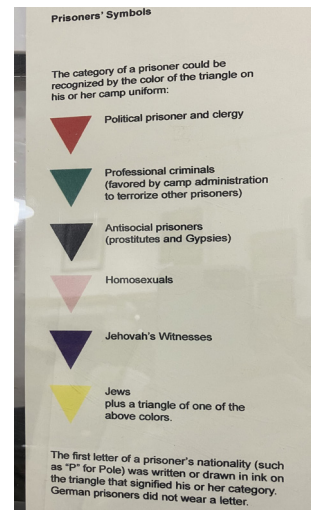
Money for grants is drafted from the Donor Advised Fund at the Community Foundation; money for this fund is generated from individual donations.

We have set aside time at the April meeting for small group discussion on these topics and value your feedback to refine our work as a Committee



March Meeting with AAUW Winona

We had an enjoyable time on March 8th as our branch joined the AAUW Winona branch for a tour of the Kashubian Cultural Institute & Polish Museum, followed by a sandwich lunch catered by Beno's Deli.



FROM THE TREASURERS

Andrea Hansen & Noreen Holmes

Financial Report as of March 19, 2025

Checking Account..... \$8222.61

Outflows: \$1,707.94

Inflows: \$ 480.00

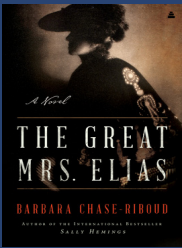
Scholarship Bridge.....\$700.00

Contact Andrea if you have a request for payment, a deposit, or request for purchasing.

Recommended Reading

The Great Mrs. Elias

by Barbara Chase-Riboud



A murder and a case of mistaken identity brings the police to Hannah Elias' glitzy, five-story, twenty-room mansion on Central Park West. This is the

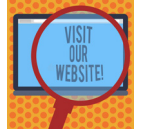
beginning of an odyssey that moves back and forth in time and reveals the dangerous secrets of a mysterious woman, the fortune she built, and her precipitous fall.

Born in Philadelphia in the late 1800s, Hannah Elias has done things she's not proud of to survive. Shedding her past, Hannah slips on a new identity before relocating to New York City to become as rich as a robber baron.

Packed with glamour, suspense, and drama, populated with real-life luminaries from the period, *The Great Mrs. Elias* brings a fascinating woman and the age she embodied to glorious, tragic life.

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 IT OUT

STATE CONVENTION INFORMATION - April, 2025

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

A GREAT WEBINAR ON AAUW HISTORY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCGHF_w109Y&t=23s

EQUAL PAY DAY WEBSITE WITH ACTION SUGGESTIONS

<https://www.equalpaytoday.org/>

UWM Afghan Student Update

Many of you will remember our 2020 -2021 campaign to help Women Afghan Refugees feel welcome and cared for through providing personal care items and notes of encouragement! We were able to sponsor 15 of these amazing young ladies to attend the virtual NCCWSL conference that year. They were so gracious and grateful, while at the same time so strained, worried, and overcome with fear and loneliness for their loved ones.



Jean K, Afghan student, Deb Thiel
2023 AAUW WI convention

Following the fall of Afghanistan in August 2021, AAUW members responded with generosity to provide hope and opportunity to a cohort of Afghan women seeking to continue their university studies in the United States. It is hard to believe that they are about to complete their Junior year at UW-Milwaukee this Spring!

Over the last four years, we have seen this cohort of young women navigate many transitions. They have settled into a new community in Milwaukee, completed the Intensive English Program, pursued their Bachelor's degree full-time, worked part-time to support themselves and families back home, moved in to their own apartments, cared for fellow Afghan refugees, and advocated for refugees and women's education worldwide.

They are an incredible group. We know it can feel like we are in a particularly divided and uncertain time, but it has been a privilege to be a part of a shared effort between individuals, local faith communities, and public institutions to see these women thrive. It has been a picture of what is possible when we work together.

Thanks to the hard work of UW-Milwaukee staff, we have been able to access grants and awards that have met the majority of the tuition costs for the ASPOM students. Your generous response in 2021 and 2022 has been enough up this point to cover the remaining tuition costs. Now with the students on track in their individual majors and programs, we are able to project what the remaining financial needs is.

We anticipate that an additional \$20,000 is needed to help the seven Afghan women remaining in the ASPOM cohort to complete their Bachelor's degree program at UW-Milwaukee. If you are able to help with this amount, you can learn more about how to make a donation by visiting aspom.org.

AAUW La Crosse Board Meeting Minutes

by Erica Koonmen, Acting Secretary

Monday, March 3, 2025 Zoom 6:00pm-7:00pm

Present: Jan Eriksen, Barb Fischer, Andrea Hansen, Lema Kabashi, Erica Koonmen, June Reinert, Silvana Richardson

President Lema Kabashi called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

1. Suggestions requested for food vendors for the Art Fair by Betty Kruck. We came up with these: 7Brew Coffee, a new beverage shop that may have off-site sales; Mia's Kitchen; checking with Hmong Center for options and asking the City of La Crosse if there's an approved vendor list so we know they have already been licensed.

2. Convention baskets: Jan. The basket silent auction at the convention raises funds for AAUW National Greatest Needs fund. Each branch donates at least one, with a value of at least \$100. Deadline to send a picture of the basket to be posted on the convention website is March 24. Motion: by Andrea to spend \$100 to purchase basket items. 2Nd: Erica. Motion passed. Andrea and Jan will buy the items.

3. Preparations for April Annual Business meeting/Installation of Officers.

- A. Lema shared a list of current officers and their terms. Only the elected officers (President, President-elect, VP Membership, VP Finance, VP Programs, Secretary) have terms that expire; appointed officers do not.
- B. Silvana shared a plan for the Annual Meeting on April 12:
 - 1. During brunch, we can discuss programs for next year. Barb and June have handouts.
 - 2. Each officer/ committee chair will have 3-5 mins to report on the focus of their work this year and how members can contribute or assist.
 - 3. Have a small group discussion (15 mins) to talk about the direction of Scholarships & Grants for the future.
 - 4. Officer Installation
- C. Andrea: the nomination committee has to send the slate to the general membership 30 days before the election and installation of officers for next year. The nomination committee is Lema, Andrea and Jan. Officers needed this year are President- elect and one Co-Program VP.

4. March 8 meeting in Winona. The meeting begins at 10am at the Kashubian Polish Museum. At 11:30am, there will be a brief business meeting and lunch. It will adjourn at 1:00pm

5. Discussion on inviting students to the convention April 25-26. We thought we should be able to offer them free admittance. Barb will send us a 1 page convention schedule to share and that can be used as a handout at the International Women's Day event on March 4. We will handout postcard invitations to visitors at the table there as well as to the other women's organizations.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

Next meeting: April 1, 2025 5:30pm via Zoom. We will decide on a date for the May transitional board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Erica Koonmen
Acting Secretary for Ann Brice, excused.