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The Current

A publication of the LaCrosse, WI AAUW Branch

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President's Perspective



Reflecting on Our Accomplishments, Moving Forward Together

by Lema Kabashi, Branch President

As I begin my second year serving as president of the La Crosse Branch of AAUW, I want to reflect on the dedication and accomplishments of this past year. Our AAUW year officially begins in September, and our members returned with fresh energy, continuing their visible work in the community. From that starting point, we launched a full calendar of events and programs that advanced our mission to *advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy*.

Alongside major events, our branch offered thought-provoking programming throughout the year. We engaged our community on pressing topics such as homelessness, immigration, women entrepreneurs, and other issues central to equity and inclusion. These conversations created meaningful opportunities to learn, connect, and take action together.

In March, we proudly led the International Women's Day 2025 celebration under the global theme "*Accelerate Action*." With the support of local organizations and three area universities, this event highlighted the power of collaboration and provided a strong platform to raise awareness, foster dialogue, and inspire meaningful steps toward gender equity in our community and beyond.

We hosted a successful convention in April 2025—organized by District 4, but made possible in large part by the strong leadership and involvement of our La Crosse

In May, we celebrated our scholarship recipients, honoring the achievements of young women whose futures will be shaped in part by the generosity and vision of this branch.

The summer brought another highlight with the Art Fair on the Green in July, a vibrant and successful event that not only celebrated creativity but also provided vital funds for scholarships.

Looking back, it is clear that the year was filled with momentum and impact, thanks to the energy, vision, and collaboration of our members. I am deeply grateful for all you contribute to this organization.

Looking ahead to 2025–26, we will continue to build on this strong foundation. We will expand scholarship support, deepen community partnerships, and offer programming that addresses both local and national equity issues. We will continue ensuring that AAUW La Crosse remains a visible and powerful force in advancing equity for women and girls.

I invite each of you to take part—whether by attending programs, sharing your ideas, volunteering your time, or encouraging others to join us. Your involvement keeps our branch vibrant, relevant, and ready to make a difference.

September Meeting

Getting to Know You (Potluck Dinner) | **Sept. 9 | 5-7 pm**

English Lutheran Church, 1509 King Street, La Crosse

(parking adjacent to the building)



You are cordially invited to our potluck supper! Bring a favorite dish to share (appetizer, salad, entrée or dessert). Beverages will be provided.

Program:

- Mix and Mingle (some fun questions will be on each table!)
- **VITERBO UNIVERSITY'S Viva Voce student a capella group at 5:30 pm.**
- Plans for the coming year. We will review our branch goals for this year as well as introduce our committees; learn what opportunities there are for you to be involved in this year.
- Celebration of our 50-year members; some of our branch members will be recognized for over 50 years of membership.

Please RSVP by Sept. 7 to Robert at 608.788.0595 or richards.rob2@eagle.uwlax.edu.

THE BRANCH DIRECTORY will be available at AAUW's September potluck gathering. If you cannot attend the gathering, perhaps you can ask another member to deliver your Directory to you. This helps to minimize eventual mailing costs.

Email RSVP

by Robert Richardson



RSVP Modus Operandi: Fourteen days prior to a branch meeting, each member with an active e-mail address receives from Robert an e-mail message with a request to reply by 11:59 pm on the Sunday prior to the Saturday meeting, October thru May. We need all members to reply so we know how many members/guests plan to attend and how many request the meal. On Monday, we need to report both numbers to the catering service. Aramark prepares food/beverages in a quantity that aligns with the latter number, and the Branch is invoiced based on that number. Program committee members arrange seating based on the total attendance number.

Treasurer's Report

by Andrea Hansen & Noreen Holmes

Checking account balance as of **August 20, 2025**: \$8,079.23

July 1-31, 2025:

...Outflows: \$1,160.94

...Inflows: \$765.00



Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership



Welcome to Our Newest Member

Constance Welch, 2717 Bayshore Dr, La Crosse, WI 54603

Contact info: 608.772.3284 and conniwelch@aol.com

Constance has a Masters of Public Health from UC-Berkely, CA

Elsie Patterson passed away on August 3rd 2025. She was an long-time member with a heart of gold. She was well know having been a Past President and holding many other offices. With a PHD in Speech Communications from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, she taught for many years.

Get Well Wishes

Carol Robertson is still healing from injuries due to her fall. She is home now and will continue rehab in her home. She wants to thank everyone for the words of encouragement and for the cards.

Marilyn Hempstead is recovering from hip surgery due to a fall and has had some other difficulties as well. Please keep her in your thoughts.

Hope Restores' Gayla was a Wonderful Event

Congratulations to Denise Christy for a wonderful celebration to honor young adults. It was a very meaningful presentation and all participating did such a fantastic job. The speech by Miss. Wisconsin about not giving up was one that all young people should hear. The whole event was very enjoyable.



AAUW In Action (AIA)

Wednesday, Sept. 24 @ 4 pm

Caribou Coffee Shop

1202 County Road PH, Onalaska

(near Bronston Chiropractic clinic and Jersey Mike's subs)



The first meeting of the year for AIA. We'll be talking about plans and activities for this year to include International Women's Day (March), Equal Pay day, banned books events and more! Please join us to see what's going on and how you can be involved in promoting AAUW's mission in the La Crosse area.

For more information, please email Erica at moogs56@hotmail.com.

Scholarships & Grants

by Robert Richardson, Co-Chair



The Scholarships & Grants Committee will meet in-person in Room 103, School of Nursing, at 9 am prior to the October Branch meeting. In advance, Robert & Sharon will send meeting-preparation materials. We will use our time efficiently and finish our business prior to the start of the branch meeting/program. We send AAUW Scholarship applications to the schools and colleges on Nov. 1st. We welcome any AAUW member to join our high-impact committee. <[Learn more](#)>

Art Fair on the Green

by Carol Robertson, Art Fair on the Green Chair



A huge thank you to the art fair committee and to all the members who helped with art fair. I was sorry not to be there physically but was with you in spirit. I will get financials in the October issue but it appears we did okay. I am home and feeling better. Hope to see you all soon.

Equity and Belonging Committee

I wanted to begin my note to all of you about our DEI committee to extend my thanks to Diana Moran Sanchez Thundercloud for being a member of our committee for four years. Diana is a wealth of information about diversity



programs in our country as well as many other countries. Her adventures and achievements are dizzying. I hope we can arrange for her to conduct a diversity discussion for our branch. Diana will assume the role of chair of the STEM committee for next year. She is writing a book about some of the topics covered in STEM. Good luck to you and adventures in and out of the branch. Also, I would like to welcome Cecilia Beldtrane, our new intern from WWTC.

Join us in spreading the word. Everyone is welcome. In 2021, AAUW La Crosse Branch formed a new committee. The committee aimed to promote inclusion and awareness, enabling all members to create an equitable, sustainable, and inclusive membership that reflects today's world. I was very pleased to volunteer as our first DEI Coordinator for the La Crosse Branch of AAUW five years ago. I thought it was a perfect fit for me, as I worked in the field of diversity and was hoping to contribute to

named the DEI committee, and many organizations across the country have adopted the name. The DEI committee stood for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The DEI committee functioned in our club for five years. Then the 2024 election came to pass, and DEI became a forbidden word. What was once a powerful name is becoming a distrusted one, along with the “Woke” culture. As I spoke with my colleagues, much of the frustration with the name and the perception of DEI was that people saw it as less desirable and disregarded it as just a fad. At first, I resented the fact that we had to look at the title of “DEI” as though it was a forbidden name. There was a change in administration in this country, and the name DEI took on a sinister tone. It was being marginalized across the country, making it challenging to sustain the DEI name and programs in our colleges, public schools, industry, and other organizations. It became a disposable term and was often misused and misrepresented.

I finally decided that we needed to broaden our horizons and consider another name. I talked to other DEI coordinators in the state and nationally, as well as our BOD and other members, and we decided on a name that would reflect what we are doing. I liked it, and we are in the process of revealing this to our members at our opening Potluck in September. Our new name for the diversity committee is the **Equity and Belonging Committee**, a name that we collectively chose, reflecting our shared vision and values. I must say the response has been overwhelmingly positive. We have emphasized these two concepts in our programs and hope to continue striving to live them in our Branch.

Our webmaster and I will be making changes to our [website](#). A strategic plan, a 5-year evaluation, and detailed ideas for planning group activities that emphasize diversity will be developed. In the future, we will focus on empowering AAUW branch members and committees to address and implement diversity initiatives within their groups, and an Equity and Belonging (E&B) committee member will assist as needed. The E&B committee will continue collaborating with community groups that advocate for diversity and women's rights. Look for objectives and accomplishments on our Strategic Plan on the [AAUW website](#).



Leap from Inclusion to Belonging

“DIVERSITY IS BEING INVITED TO THE PARTY. INCLUSION IS BEING ASKED TO DANCE. BELONGING IS BEING ASKED TO HELP CHOOSE THE MUSIC.”

-Verna Myers



Public Policy

by Silvana F Richardson



AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and advances equity through research, education, and advocacy. Considering this mission, the Wisconsin Convention body adopted the following resolution at the 2024 AAUW-WI State Convention in La Crosse.

Resolution on Anti-Racism

Whereas AAUW National and AAUW-WI both believe that AAUW must advocate for equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse and inclusive society, and

Whereas, psychologists and other social scientists, educational professionals, public health care providers, legal experts, and religious leaders acknowledge that racism and racial discrimination are pervasive and persisting challenges for our country, and

Whereas racism and racial discrimination threaten human development because of the obstacles which they pose to the fulfillment to basic human rights of survival, security, development, and social participation, and

Whereas AAUW-WI members recognize the need to engage in constructive acts to make a meaningful difference towards societal change, and

Whereas AAUW-WI members recognize that we have an obligation to fight ignorance and intolerance, model inclusivity, and embrace our differences and the value which diversity represents,

Therefore, be it resolved that AAUW-WI will pledge to actively support racial justice initiatives encouraging diversity, inclusion, equality and belonging in our communities. In addition, AAUW-WI will advance educational opportunities to reinforce that all people understand and experience an environment free of prejudice and hate.

How will we do this as a chapter and as individuals living during this challenging time?

AAUW Two-Minute Activist

Please sign up for AAUW network so you can get action alerts and updates.

Advocacy Toolkit

Meet A Rural Doctor Already Seeing the Impacts of Trump's Budget

"Rural hospitals are infrastructure that all of us depend on."

Pete Buttigieg's Substack | Aug. 08, 2025

Listen to **Dr. Jill McMullen**, 2025 AAUW Wisconsin

Convention speaker's interview with **Pete Buttigieg** about rural health care.

Empowering Women Through Innovative Programs

Encourage women young and old to view the great webinars on our National [website](#).

Work Smart & Start Smart: Salary Negotiation and other great webinars [online](#).

There are several dates and times to choose from regarding the following topics.

- **Work Smart: Know Your Value and Get Paid.**
- **Start Smart.**
- **Money Smart: Smart Foundations.**
- **Work Smart: Refresher.**
- **Money Smart: Smart Finances.**
- **Money Smart: Smart Future.**
- **Work Smart: Develop Your Value Statement Deep Dive.**

Upcoming event!

An important upcoming **Robert Reich** event happening in Sparta, WI.

Robert Reich is a former U.S. Secretary of Labor, an author, and a professor. Reich, a teacher for 42 years, discusses wealth inequality, bullying, and the importance of teaching.

Wealth & Poverty Fall Classes

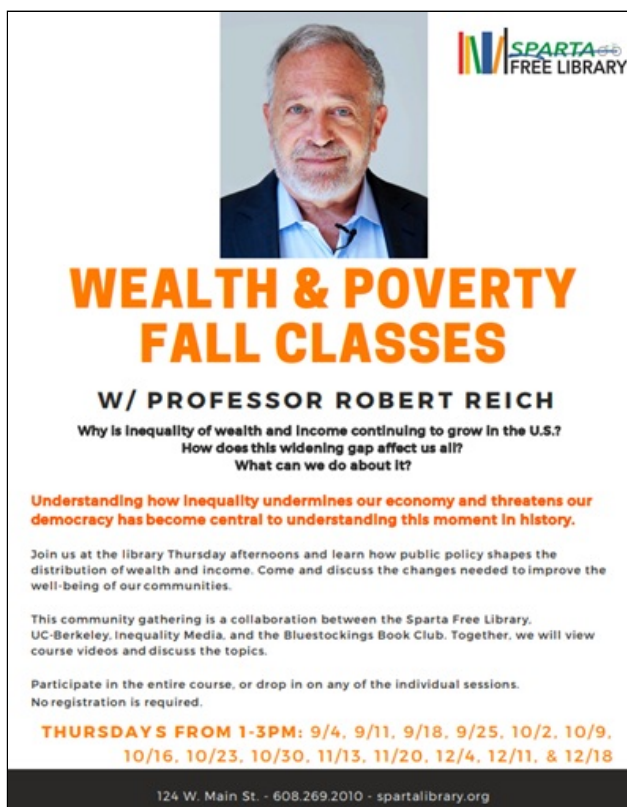
w/Professor Robert Reich @ the [Sparta Free Library](#),
(www.spartalibrary.org/calendar).

Thursdays from 1-3 p.m.: 9/4, 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23, 11/13, 11/20, 12/4, 12/11, &

12/18. Together we will view course videos and discuss the topics. Participate in the entire course, or drop in on any of the individual sessions. No registration is required.

- **Why is inequality of wealth and income continuing to grow in the U.S.?**
- **How does this widening gap affect us all?**
- **What can we do about it?**

At this moment in our history, we need to understand how inequality undermines our economy and threatens our democracy.



**WEALTH & POVERTY
FALL CLASSES**

W/ PROFESSOR ROBERT REICH

Why is inequality of wealth and income continuing to grow in the U.S?
How does this widening gap affect us all?
What can we do about it?

Understanding how inequality undermines our economy and threatens our democracy has become central to understanding this moment in history.

Join us at the library Thursday afternoons and learn how public policy shapes the distribution of wealth and income. Come and discuss the changes needed to improve the well-being of our communities.

This community gathering is a collaboration between the Sparta Free Library, UC-Berkeley, Inequality Media, and the Bluestockings Book Club. Together, we will view course videos and discuss the topics.

Participate in the entire course, or drop in on any of the individual sessions. No registration is required.

THURSDAYS FROM 1-3PM: 9/4, 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23, 10/30, 11/13, 11/20, 12/4, 12/11, & 12/18

124 W. Main St. - 608.269.2010 - spartalibrary.org

to improve the well-being of our families and community.

These events are a collaboration between the Sparta Free Library, UC-Berkeley, Inequality Media, and the Bluestockings Book Club.

Hope to see you there!

You're Invited to Breakfast!

Everyone is invited!

SSP Locally-Grown Scholarship Breakfast

October 30, 2025 | 7:30-9 am

The Bluffs Ballroom, Student Union, UWL

Register by Oct. 16 at www.uwlax.edu/ssp.
Free Breakfast & Parking.



*The Self-Sufficiency Program is supported
by a grant from the La Crosse Branch of AAUW.*

Coming next year!

2026 AAUW WI State Convention

April 17-18, 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Madison East
4402 East Washington
(opposite East Towne)
(less than a mile west from I-90)



The Hosts: District 1 (Beaver Dam, Fort Atkinson, Janesville, & Monona/Madison)
<[Learn more](#)>

Visit our AAUW-WI website to learn more about us!



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