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The Current

A publication of the LaCrosse, WI AAUW Branch
[Volume 65, Issue 6] February 2026

President's Perspective



February Column

by Lema Kabashi, Branch President

From Awareness to Action: Addressing Substance Use in Our Community

As we enter February, a month often associated with care, reflection, and responsibility toward one another, it feels especially important to focus on a public health issue that continues to shape the well-being of our community: substance use and its far-reaching impact. Drug misuse does not occur in isolation; it affects families, schools, workplaces, and disproportionately impacts women, children, and individuals with disabilities. In recognition of the importance of education and awareness, our February AAUW general meeting will include presenters from Narcotics Anonymous, who will help deepen understanding of substance use, recovery, and the human stories behind the data.

Nationally, the scope of this issue is significant. An estimated 48.5 million Americans, approximately 17 percent of the population, live with a substance use disorder (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023). The impact extends well beyond the individual: nearly one in four children in the United States lives with at least one parent who has a substance use disorder, increasing risks to their emotional well-being and educational outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Here in Wisconsin, overdose deaths remain alarmingly high, with synthetic opioids such as fentanyl driving many fatalities, reminding us that this crisis affects our own neighbors, families, and communities (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2024).

Women experience substance use and its consequences in distinct and often underrecognized ways. More than 41 million women in the United States live with a

mental health or substance use disorder, and for many, exposure to opioids begins through legitimate medical care, such as pain management following surgery or childbirth (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2023). While these data reflect broad national trends, they also invite personal reflection. From my own perspective, I have never dealt with drug use, and even after two major surgeries, I chose not to take prescribed painkillers out of concern about dependency and an awareness of my own vulnerability. Although my experience is not universal, it underscores how easily concerns about pain, health, and reliance on medication can arise and why this issue calls for understanding rather than judgment. Women are also more likely to experience chronic pain, caregiving stress, and trauma, and they often face greater stigma and barriers when seeking treatment. These challenges are further compounded for women and individuals with disabilities, who may encounter additional obstacles in accessing appropriate, evidence-based care (NIDA, 2023).

As members of AAUW, we are committed to advancing equity and improving the lives of women and families. Addressing substance use means supporting prevention, treatment, and recovery-focused policies; expanding access to mental health and substance use services; and ensuring that families and individuals with disabilities are not left behind. Through education, advocacy, and open dialogue, such as the conversation we will have at our February meeting, we can help build a community that responds to substance use with dignity, empathy, and hope.

February Meeting

How does Drug Misuse Affect La Crosse?

presentation by Narcotics Anonymous representative

Saturday, February 14, 2026

9:30 a.m. Registration, 9:45 a.m. Brunch and Inclusion Activity, 10:15 a.m. Meeting; 10:30 a.m. Program
Viterbo University School of Nursing, Rm 195, 10th & Jackson Sts, La Crosse
(parking available in the lot next to the building)

Happy February!

Goals: Increase awareness of the impact of drug misuse on the community's resources for the unhoused, education, health care, and other social systems.

NEVER ALONE NEVER AGAIN

What is our message? The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise is freedom.



We encourage all to invite a friend, colleague, or acquaintance to share the morning with us and learn about AAUW and the topic of the day!

Brunch: Cost \$13; pay with cash or check

Menu: Taco breakfast, salsa, Pico De Gallo, corn and/or gluten free tortillas, egg scramble, coffee (regular and decaf), tea, and hot water with tea bags. Gluten-free options provided.

Please RSVP by February 8 to the email which will be sent from Robert at 608.788.0595 or richards.rob2@eagle.uwlax.edu.



Email RSVP by Robert Richardson

RSVP Modus Operandi: Fourteen days prior to a branch meeting, each member with an active email address receives from Robert an email 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, December 1-31, 2025:

Starting Balance: \$8,351.46

...Outflows: \$770.65

...Inflows: \$798.00

December 31 ending balance: \$8,370.81



Checking account balance as of **January 20, 2026**: \$8,505.81

Membership News

by Barb Fischer, VP Membership



Welcome to Our Two Newest Members!

Both new members attended our January meeting. Marilyn was a guest of Betty Kruck and Julie was a guest of Lois Gilbert.

- **Marilyn Garrett:** Marilyn earned a degree in Education from the University of Missouri. Her contact information is: 620 Bennora Lee Ct, #311, La Crosse, WI 54601 / margar@posteo.net / 608.385.0743.
- **Julie Kish:** Julie earned a degree in History from UW-La Crosse. Her contact information is: 323 River Bend Rd, #514, La Crosse, WI 54603 / julieannkish@yahoo.com / 608.780.4840.

February Dues:

If you need to pay your dues in February, you can get the form at:

AAUW In Action (AIA)

Tuesday, February 17 @ 4 pm via ZOOM

Erica will send out an agenda and Zoom link prior to the meeting.

ZOOM

Thank you for all the donations to the birthday cake kits!

We had 2 complete kits donated as well as enough to make 8 more complete ones, plus a few extra items that will go toward this month's collection. We will still take items at our February 14th meeting and if there's time after the meeting, we will be able to assemble them. These will be going to local food pantries like Couleecap and women's shelters like Brighter Tomorrows. Let me know if you have a suggestion for a group that can use them too!

The items we collect are:

- box cake mixes
- cans of lemon-lime pop (7up, Sprite, etc...)
- tub of frosting
- 9 x 13 aluminum pan
- small bag of balloons
- general kids birthday card
- small paper party plates and napkins
- small shaker of sprinkles

Thank you for any donations!



Banned Books Bookmarks

We have another 250 of the banned books bookmarks.

Please take some at our February 14th meeting to share with other organizations, libraries or friends. There are labels saying "Donated by AAUW La Crosse" available at the meetings for you to place in a banned book and put in your own Little Free Library or in one near you. June Reinert, Equity and Belonging Chair, is working to form a Banned Book discussion club; see her article about it in this newsletter.

The Enduring Families Project



The Enduring Families Project books will be available in February. You can find out more about them at <https://efpcs.org>. Our branch members Rebecca Mormann-Krieger and Denise Christy are involved with the Enduring Families Project.

Named Grant nominations needed. By Erica Koonmen, Chair

AAUW-La Crosse has been awarding Named 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 Greatest Needs Fund. A list of names of previous Named Grant recipients appears near the end of AAUW-La Crosse Branch's Membership Directory. If you know of a member who is deserving and has not previously received a Named Grant, please nominate her or him. To make a nomination, e-mail me at moogs56@hotmail.com. I'll need the nominee's name plus a few sentences about why you think that the individual is worthy of the 2026 Named Grant. The deadline for nominations is **Friday, April 3, 2026**. The recipient of the Named Grant will be announced at the April meeting.

International Women's Day event.

Save-the-date for this year's 14th Annual International Women's Day event:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 | UWL Student Union, Bluffs | 5-7 p.m. Free parking.

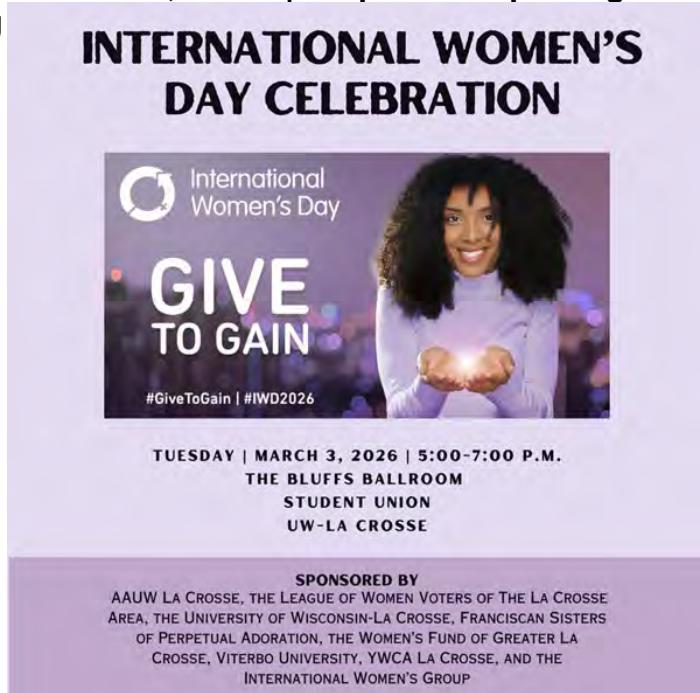
We have 3 exciting panelists sharing their stories and journey from their country of origin to the U.S.:

1. **Assem Izmukhanova**
Kopitzke, Kazakhstan
2. **Ngozi Nduka**, Nigeria
3. **Lisbeth Reynertson**,
Denmark

Lisbeth is a branch member and a longtime member of the IWD planning committee so it will be wonderful to hear her story! There is also a Zoom option; the link will be available on the [Facebook event page](#) as it gets closer to March 3rd. You can also check our AAUW La Crosse branch [Facebook page](#) for the Zoom link. We will also be doing a period products collection, as we have in the past few years. The doors will open at 5 p.m., giving you half an hour to visit local women's organizational tables and have light refreshments before the program begins at 5:30 p.m.

We will have more information next month about a couple of new Women's History month activities. We would be happy to have you join us as we plan and do activities in the area that support the AAUW mission.

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



The poster for the International Women's Day Celebration features a purple background. At the top, it says "INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION". Below that is a logo for "International Women's Day" with a circular arrow icon. To the right is a photo of a smiling woman with curly hair holding a small glowing light in her hands. The text "GIVE TO GAIN" is prominently displayed in large white letters. At the bottom, it says "#GiveToGain | #IWD2026". The event details are listed as "TUESDAY | MARCH 3, 2026 | 5:00-7:00 P.M. THE BLUFFS BALLROOM STUDENT UNION UW-LA CROSSE". The "SPONSORED BY" section lists: AAUW LA CROSSE, THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE LA CROSSE AREA, THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE, FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION, THE WOMEN'S FUND OF GREATER LA CROSSE, VITERBO UNIVERSITY, YWCA LA CROSSE, AND THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S GROUP.

Scholarships & Grants Committee (SGC)

by Sharon DiCicco and Robert Richardson, Co-Chairs



Saturday, February 14, 2026 at 8:45 a.m. (Pre-Branch Meeting)

Committee members will:

1. report on their grant recipient research & the committee will determine grant recipients/amounts;
2. prepare for the distribution of scholarship applications for review in sub-committees;
3. validate calculations regarding the amount available for 2026 award distribution.

The Scholarships & Grants Committee (SGC).

Interested to be added to the reader-cadre? Contact Sharon DeCicco or Robert Richardson <Learn more>



Applications Are Open for NCCWSL Scholarships

by Jan Eriksen

NCCWSL is the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders. The

2026 conference will be held at the

University of Maryland-College Park (just outside Washington, DC), **May 27-30**.

AAUW-Wisconsin is offering five \$1,000 scholarships to cover conference registration, lodging and meals, and airfare. The La Crosse Branch will also sponsor one scholarship. All women student leaders attending colleges or universities in the state are invited to apply.



The application for both the branch and state scholarships can be found at <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/nccwsl>. Students should complete just one application to be considered for all scholarships. For more information about the conference, please go to <https://www.naspa.org/events/nccwsl>. Deadline for all scholarship applications is **April 1, 2026**.

NCCWSL unites college women students from across the nation for a transformative experience in leadership development, networking, and inspiration. NCCWSL provides a welcoming and empowering space to build leadership skills, connect with peers, and find inspiration to drive change.

Through engaging workshops and hands-on activities, NCCWSL challenges and inspires attendees to make meaningful impacts on their campuses and communities long after the conference ends. Students attend the conference to become part of a dynamic network of change-makers ready to lead the way.

NCCWSL provides opportunities to connect with other college women leaders to bring light to common challenges and help build supportive networks through which to share ideas and solutions. This space highlights the importance of gathering as women to understand the impact of gender on the following learning outcomes:

- Awareness of self and others
- Career engagement
- Civic engagement, policy, and advocacy
- Leadership development

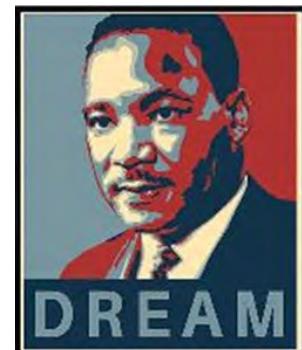
Nearly 500 colleges from 48 states have sent campus leaders to NCCWSL. Approximately 50% of NCCWSL attendees are women of color.

Equity and Belonging Committee Corner

by June Reinert, *Equity and Belonging Chair*

Welcome to Black History Month

I have a dream
Martin Luther King Jr. Day



The Infrastructure of Racial Justice Is Under Attack. We Must Fight for It!

Schools were ordered to remove any books "potentially related to gender ideology," to immediately cancel cultural observances like Black History Month or Pride Month, and to censor curricula and educational materials that cover immigration, Black history, and sexuality and gender in a way that the Trump administration doesn't like.

These removals are a clear attempt to force a political agenda at the expense of our students. But muzzling free speech and punishing schools for telling the history of this country doesn't erase the truth – it just jeopardizes our students' education.

President Trump continues to attack our students' right to learn. With every attack, we'll continue to meet him in court – and with the help of our ACLU community, we'll take the fight to Congress, too.



Deborah Archer, President
ACLU National
February 24, 2025 (Facebook post)

New York, NY — Deborah Archer, a civil rights attorney and professor at New York University School of Law, has made history as the first-ever Black person to be elected as President of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) since the organization was established in 1920. Archer has been elected in a virtual meeting of the organization's 69-member board of directors. She will then serve as chair of its board of directors, overseeing organizational matters and coordinating policies aimed at racial equality and civil rights.

After graduating from Yale Law School, Archer joined the ACLU as the Marvin M. Karpatkin Legal Fellow before becoming a member of the board in 2009.

The laws, systems, and structures that support racial equity in America will stand strong in the face of inordinate pressure, but only if we band together to protect this vital civil rights infrastructure.

President Donald Trump began February with a proclamation that Black History Month offered "an occasion to celebrate the contributions of so many Black American patriots who have indelibly shaped our nation's history." In the closing days of the month, he hosted a Black History Month reception at the White House where he promised he would fight for Black Americans. What he did not mention during his remarks was that the proclamation and reception came amidst a systemic crusade to dismantle the civil rights infrastructure that Black Americans helped build and that sustains our hopes for equal citizenship.

One of the first moves Trump made after his inauguration was to issue a wide-ranging executive order ending the federal government's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs and firing the public servants who lead that work. He has moved to end affirmative action programs in federal procurement. He has threatened colleges and universities, intimidated non-profit organizations, and removed Black and women leaders from the nation's military leadership.

Across the country, Black History Month proceeded against the backdrop of relentless attempts to erase Black history. Enemies of justice have sought to erase history so that past injustices cannot be connected to present inequities. Those who fear racial equality have always understood the importance of silencing stories that give people the hope and the means to build a better future. This whitewashing is a clear and present danger to an inclusive democracy. If Americans do not reflect on slavery's enduring legacy, on Reconstruction and its violent backlash, on Jim Crow and its transformation into modern mass incarceration, then they cannot fully understand why racial injustice persists today and they will not be equipped to fight it. Now, with President Trump in office, the wind is at their back as he and his allies attempt to bludgeon Black history and Black futures at the highest levels.

But this is not just about how we study history. Much of American history can be understood as the struggle to build an infrastructure of racial justice. That includes the fight to end residential segregation and connect communities of color to opportunity, and the fight to pass and enforce laws like the

Reconstruction amendments and the

Civil Rights Movement-era laws that sought to move Black Americans closer to the American dream. What we are seeing today is a full-scale attack on that infrastructure; the deeply interconnected systems that make racial justice victories real. This infrastructure includes laws grounded in the 14th Amendment's promise of equal protection under the law and the benefits of citizenship regardless of race; enforcement structures like the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission or the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice; pathways to upward mobility like the federal workforce; social norms that ensure fair treatment in businesses; the network of activists, educators, and journalists who inform and organize; and, yes, the teaching of Black history. The very laws and policies that sought to bring us closer together are being rapidly dismantled.

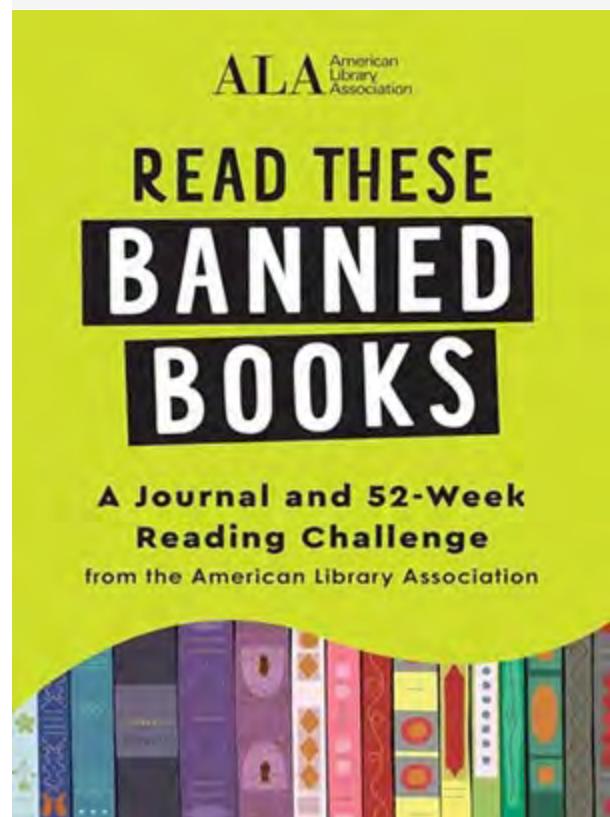
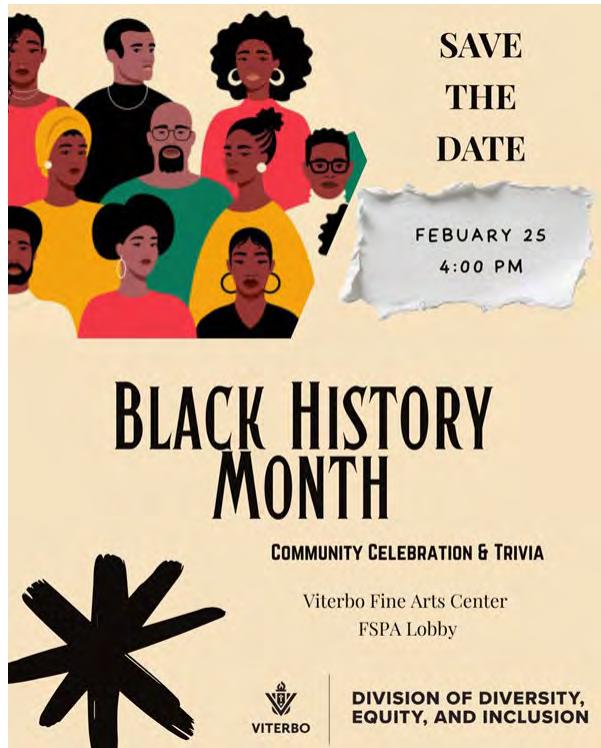


The fight for racial justice has never been won by laws alone. Legal rulings can declare rights, but they cannot enforce them. Legislation can assert equality, but it cannot guarantee justice. What makes racial justice victories real is the broader infrastructure that brings together the power and rights embodied in law, the enforcement mechanisms of both our laws and our social norms and customs, and the strength of communities to fight threats to their families and neighbors. This was the infrastructure that allowed Charles Hamilton Houston and other pioneers to lay the legal groundwork for *Brown v. Board of Education*. It was the infrastructure that allowed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to not just outlaw discriminatory voting practices but also mobilize communities to claim their right to vote. It was the infrastructure that opened doors to education and economic opportunities that had long been denied to Black people. It was the infrastructure that opened doors to education and economic opportunities that had long been denied to Black people. It is this infrastructure that continues to hold up communities around the country who are fighting against industrial projects that would pollute their air and transportation projects that threaten to flatten their homes.

Yet, this infrastructure—built over centuries—is fragile. Today, the news is full of stories about attacks on affirmative action, DEI and people of color who have managed to find some measure of success in traditionally white spaces. Legal decisions, particularly from Chief Justice John Roberts' Supreme Court have undermined the effectiveness of laws such as the Voting Rights Act, which is responsible for broadly expanding the right to vote in the face of vicious restrictions on Black voting; and policies such as affirmative action in higher education, which has increased access to higher education for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups who face systemic barriers to education and admissions criteria that capture and magnify racial bias.

In many ways, this has always been the way of history. Progress has always been met with retrenchment. We take two steps forward, and then one step back. Yet throughout the country, activists, political leaders, lawyers, and everyday Americans are organizing to resist the retrenchment, as they have throughout American history. The infrastructure of racial justice is fragile, yes. But it is not broken. If we protect it, it will remain standing.

Save-the-Date | February 25 @ 4 p.m. Black History Month ~ Community Celebration & Trivia, Viterbo Fine Arts Center
AAUW is co-sponsoring this event by donating books for raffle prizes.



The Equity and Belonging and the AIA committees are also proposing the creation of a book club dedicated to studying "Banned Books" found in our libraries. This group will read selected titles and discuss why school boards may have placed them on forbidden lists. Depending on member preferences, meetings may be held in person or via Zoom for group discussions.

The club may invite guest speakers to discuss the chosen books or related issues within our community. Recently, the ACLU hosted a discussion on banned books across the United States; our group may adopt some of their procedures to facilitate our own conversations.

Please join us in listening to the following message.

Tom Morello Reads Banned Books | ACLU

<https://youtu.be/4hRyDGB11Y>

Sign up with June, Erica, or Annie at our February meeting.



How Many Of These Banned Books Have You Read?

- Animal Farm by George Orwell
- Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
- Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret by Judy Blume
- Beloved by Toni Morrison
- Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
- Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown
- The Catcher In The Rye by J.D. Salinger
- A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess
- The Color Purple by Alice Walker
- Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
- A Farewell To Arms by Ernest Hemingway
- Go Tell it on the Mountain by James Baldwin
- The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
- House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
- The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
- My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult
- Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell
- Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
- The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
- Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi
- The Shining by Stephen King
- Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
- So Far from the Bamboo Grove by Yoko Kawashima Watkins
- To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

How Many Of These Banned Books Have You Read?

- The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
- All Boys Aren't Blue by George M. Johnson
- An American Tragedy by Theodore Dreiser
- Beyond Magenta by Susan Kuklin
- Breathless by Jennifer Niven
- Catch-22 by Joseph Heller
- Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
- The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy
- The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
- Identical by Ellen Hopkins
- Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
- Kapaemahu by Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, and Joe Wilson
- Lady Chatterley's Lover by D. H. Lawrence
- Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story by Reem Faruqi
- Last Night at the Telegraph Club by Malinda Lo
- The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury
- Mexican Whiteboy by Matt de la Peña
- One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez
- The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie
- A Snake Falls to Earth by Darcie Little Badger
- Sold by Patricia McCormick
- The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner
- The Stand by Stephen King
- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston
- Ulysses by James Joyce

How Many Of These Banned Books Have You Read?

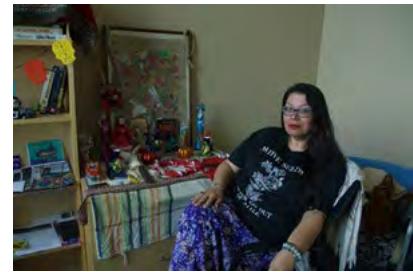
- The 1619 Project developed by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J. Maas
- All the King's Men by Robert Penn Warren
- A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith
- The Awakening by Kate Chopin
- A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle
- Brideshead Revisited by Evelyn Waugh
- The Call of the Wild by Jack London
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
- Felix Ever After by Kacen Callender
- The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin
- Flamer by Mike Curato
- The Giver by Lois Lowry
- Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
- I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika L. Sanchez
- Looking for Alaska by John Green
- Maus by Art Spiegelman
- My First Thirty Years: A Memoir by Gertrude Beasley
- Native Son by Richard Wright
- Nineteen Minutes by Jodi Picoult
- Out of Darkness by Ashley Hope Pérez
- Rabbit, Run by John Updike
- The Stand by Stephen King
- The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway

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STEM Student Empowerment & Mentoring Committee

by Diana Elena Moran Sanchez Thundercloud, STEM Coordinator/Chair



February 25 @ 6-7 p.m. Via ZOOM.

I am seeking members for the STEM Committee. If you would like to assist in supporting future Lectures for the FALL (2026). Or support the Book/Film Circle (Fall, 2026). Let me know. I plan to have a few regional and international guest lecturers on STEM & Humanities topics. Good experience! Exciting topics!

Please email me at dmoranthundercloud@gmail.com if you are interested in attending. We can meet via ZOOM.

STEM. Science. Technology. Engineering. Math.



Overview of January. It was a month! Update & Reflections:

Reminder: AAUW STEM (State-Wide & National) is focused to support both K-12 and College-Level Education. Graduate Level. Post-High School. STEM Community Education. *STEM also supports learning through integrated STEM related community activities. STEM learning can occur in various "sites" for learning of STEM related issues for girls and women. **AAUW-STEM is also about the Mentorship of Girls & Women in the area of STEM.** To support and foster the interest of STEM. Various areas of study. Examples:

- Learning STEM-related topics in a Nature Center. Library. Community Center.
- Middle-School or High School Student, Attending a STEM related Summer Camp.
- Mentorship: Learning through a AAUW-STEM Lecture about Topics that can mentor students in other programs or a specific student.
- Mentorship: Supporting a STEM graduate student about Topics/Research in her dissertation. Meeting a few times over a year. Sharing about a STEM profession.

Exciting News!

This month our **STEM Empowerment Committee** met to discuss and review information about a future scholarship to support STEM Middle School Girls. We are in the process of revising the application for the scholarship. I will share more next month. In progress. This will be our first year to award small scholarship(s) to girls. Amount to be decided. State-wide. Scholarships will be awarded through an application process. Open to any middle school girl in the region.

(A second area of focus for our STEM Empowerment Committee: We are also reviewing what STEM-related programs/conferences/workshops are available to youth Wisconsin. Overall, create a list of high-quality STEM programs/conferences/camps for students in Wisconsin. Lots of discussion around the topic(s) for future meetings.)

The first STEM scholarship applications may begin by summer (2026). We plan a small "launch" to a few AAUW-Chapters -- the first year. It is a process. Next year:

The application (with any revisions) will go out state-wide to all the AAUW/Chapters. The awards are for middle-school girls who are interested in attending a STEM-related conference, workshop, lectures, and/or camp. Anyone can apply from the middle school level. We are excited to have a small lump sum to begin the scholarship fund! We hope for donations for the future. We are still in the planning stages. (Any mistakes in sharing at this "stage of the process" or application development/scholarship proposal -- are mine.) The process: We met as a STEM Empowerment Committee. Our Committee Chair will take our discussion to the State Board. Exciting!

Here are some updates of meetings that I attended as the STEM Coordinator:

January 2026.

TAM Meeting as the STEM Coordinator.

Tribal Climate Change. State-Wide. Midwest.

TAMS is part of the Great Lakes Intertribal Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). I will share next month more about TAM and GLIFWC. They do important work! GLIFWC is an inter-tribal agency that manages and protects the treaty-reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights of seven Ojibwe tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. I plan to attend some of the TAM workshops and/or conferences over the next year. I also shared a short bit about my role as the new AAUW-LaCrosse STEM Coordinator. I shared that we may need STEM Mentors in the future. We have different guest speakers. Various different people participate from various regions--nation-wide--at times. I have been part of the "TAM Family" for a few years. I completed the Tribal Climate Change Adaptation Menu Curriculum Training about six years ago. It truly helped to support my own teaching about Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Environmental Education through an Indigenous Worldview.

SPRING Lectures: To be rescheduled for FALL 2026.

Due to the heavy issues that are impacting our region/nation at this time... Our sister state of Minnesota is going through some very critical times. National headlines. Protests. I talked with many people and at this time -- I have rescheduled the Lecture/Book Club for Fall 2026. Invited "proposed" guest speakers who I have talked with -- prefer the FALL. I may try to have one guest Lecture in April/May. Due to the issues at the regional and national level -- speakers asked to share next Fall. I agreed.

I plan to begin the book club in the FALL. I have not had interest. Each person who I have talked with has shared there is so much going on in the news/world. Heavy. Many are focused on self-care too. To keep their schedule lighter. (*I need to have interest and participation.*) It is good to put my energy to support and "uplift" STEM in other ways this semester. To build that foundation for STEM. All good use of time. I will use this time to organize and prepare for lectures for September. Future book/film club. I am focused on selecting some good films. The Visual. I just began as the STEM Coordinator and this is a good goal for next FALL.

Public Policy Committee Meeting. I attended this January to share my input as the STEM Coordinator. I attended as a guest. The Public Policy Committee is reviewing and drafting the Public Policy Priorities statement for the State-Wide Conference. 2025-2026. I wanted to make sure that we included the word "Empowerment" as that is a focus of STEM Empowerment for Middle School Girls. Mentorship. I also wanted to share the focus on the need for Wellness and the Social Emotional for Girls/Women

during these times in Education and in Communities. It is a major concern at all levels. A topic of concern at all my meetings that I have attended at the regional, state-wide, national, and international level. We are living in historic times. Lots of transitions. Changes.

The STEM Committee upholds the AAUW policy of EQUITY for all women and girls in Education. Equity and Belonging. Research. Advocacy. Empowerment.

Public Policy

by Silvana F Richardson

Wisconsin Election Season is Here



Be Informed!

- Wisconsin's spring primary is **Tuesday, Feb. 17**, but it is not a statewide primary. Only voters in areas with contested local, nonpartisan races (such as city council, school board, county board, or judgeships) will have a ballot.
- The best way to confirm whether you have a primary is to visit MyVote.Wi.Gov. Enter your address in the ["What's On My Ballot"](#) tool to see if there are races in your area. Sample ballots will be available by **Jan. 26**.
- Voters have multiple options to participate, including early voting (**Feb. 3–15**), absentee voting, and Election Day registration. The website provides detailed instructions for you: MyVote.Wi.Gov.

Other Important Dates:

- **April 7, 2026:** The spring election, featuring local candidates who moved on from the primary. The state Supreme Court race is also on this ballot.
- **August 11, 2026:** The partisan primary to narrow down candidates for offices like governor, U.S. Congress and more.
- **November 3, 2026:** The general election, when voters make their final choices for partisan office.

Your Vote Counts!

- Make sure you are registered to vote. Check on: MyVote.Wi.Gov
- Check the website for your assigned polling place.
- On election day, bring an acceptable photo ID. Polls are open statewide from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Our democracy depends on each of us making our voice heard. Those whom we elect to local, state and federal offices guide our future. Let's speak loudly and clearly on what matters to us and our communities.



Final Ruling in American Sociological Association lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education

Submitted by Andrea Hansen



A Win for Students, Teachers, Public Education, and All of Us!

In August 2025, the U.S. District Court-Maryland ruled that the Trump-Vance administration's attempt to require school districts nationwide to censor lessons, abandon student support programs, and certify their compliance with the administration's unlawful interpretation of civil rights is UNCONSTITUTIONAL. The administration appealed the decision, of course...

On January 21, 2026, the appeal was voluntarily dismissed. A major victory.

Link to read: [Full letter to Members of the American Sociological Association.](#)

ON THE WEB

by Barb Fischer

Check out [AAUW Two-Minute Activist](#) webpage on our National site - AAUW.org. To reach the next goal only 361 are needed. Actions already taken are at 1639. AAUW's strength is our collective voice. Everyone is asked to take the pledge for gender equity.



Go to: <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>

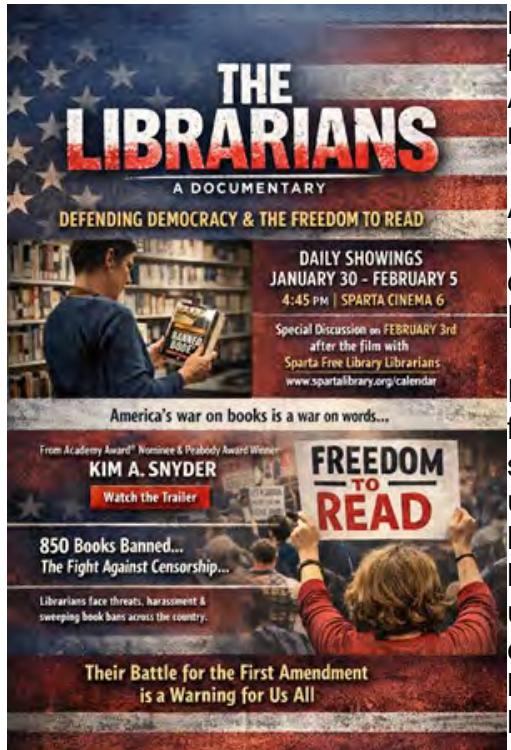
Join AAUW in the fight for gender equity! Take an action click "Sign Up" to get regular "Two-Minute Activist" alerts on when and how to engage on pressing issues.

[Advocacy Toolkit](#)

Two Events in Sparta!

THE LIBRARIANS (film/documentary) showing scheduled daily **January 30-February 5 @ 4:45 pm** at the [@ Sparta Cinema 6](#). Following the **February 3rd** showing with a discussion from the [Sparta Free Library](#) Librarians, (www.spartalibrary.org/calendar).





Librarians emerge as first responders in the fight for democracy and our First Amendment Rights. As they well know, controlling the flow of ideas means control over communities.

America's war on books is more than a war on words. *THE LIBRARIANS*, a new feature documentary from Academy Award® nominee and Peabody Award winner Kim A. Snyder.

In Texas, the Krause List targets 850 books focused on race and LGBTQia+ stories – triggering sweeping book bans across the U.S. at an unprecedented rate. As tensions escalate, librarians connect the dots from heated school and library board meetings nationwide to lay bare the underpinnings of extremism fueling the censorship efforts. Despite facing harassment, threats, and laws aimed at criminalizing their work – the librarians' rallying cry for freedom to read is a chilling cautionary tale.



This film is a collaboration between the Sparta Cinema6 and the Sparta Free Library.



Join us in February for civic learning and discussion @ the Sparta Free Library, (www.spartalibrary.org/calendar).



**Wisconsin League of Women
Voters (LWV) Issues Briefing
series (2025) about our current
constitutional crisis. Mondays from
1-3 pm.**

- **February 2: "The Crisis in our Executive Branch"**
- **February 9: "The Crisis in our Legislative Branch"**
- **February 16: "The Crisis in our Judicial Branch"**



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

This series is a collaboration between the Sparta Free Library and the LWV.



The graphic is a dark blue rectangular card. At the top, there are five white stars of varying sizes. Below the stars is the Sparta Free Library logo. To the right is a circular inset showing the exterior of a classical building with many columns, likely the US Supreme Court. The text "Meet the Branches!" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below that is the tagline "Been a while since you took a Civics class?". A horizontal line separates this from the next section. The text "Learn more about your government!" is in white. A red rounded rectangle contains the word "Sessions:" and a bulleted list of three events: "Executive: Monday, February 2 | 1-3pm", "Legislative: Monday, February 9 | 1-3pm", and "Judicial: Monday, February 16 | 1-3pm". Another horizontal line separates this from the bottom section. The text "No registration! In partnership with the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin!" is in white. At the very bottom, the address "124 W. Main St. | 608.269.2010 | spartalibrary.org" is in white, along with a row of five white stars.

[Visit our AAUW-WI website to learn more about us!](#)



Our mailing address is:

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

