



THE SCHOONER

Letter from the Co-Presidents

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After a dispiriting election season where it appears that many of AAUW's priorities will not achieve fruition, we enter into a much happier time, the Holiday Season. At this time, it is important to remember our connections with each other and our need to be together with friends and loved ones. Whatever our religious, racial, philosophical and political differences are, we are together in our fight for women's equity, education and freedom. Call upon each other, join in and celebrate as a large, diverse family.

SAVE THESE DATES

12/5, 12 pm.	National Program
12/5, 7 pm	Board Meeting
12/15, 11:30 am	Holiday Luncheon
12/17, 7 pm	Mystery Book Discussion Group
1/15	Lobby Day
1/29	Christ House
3/29	State Conference

Our Holiday Brunch on Sunday, December 15, will be at the charming Belle Haven Country Club. We will be in a lovely private room and we think the menu selections will please everyone. Our guest speaker will be Mayor-Elect, Alyia Gaskins. Don't forget to bring toys and gift cards for the Domestic Violence Shelter and food and personal items for NVCC Nighthawk Nest Food Pantry.

This is the year of our 80th Anniversary. We will celebrate it in May and we need a committee to start to organize it. Please let me know if you are interested.

It is also the 100th year of AAUW Virginia. The State Conference will be here in Alexandria on March 28/29th. Our branch will run the Hospitality Room. We are also creating a gift basket for a raffle. We are in the process of selecting a local organization to benefit from our charity project. Currently we are talking to the school system to get an idea of what books they can use in their libraries. More information will follow.

BRANCH NOTES

PROGRAM NOTES

January 2025

On January 12, 2025, the Alexandria branch of AAUW will present Dr. DeAnna Katey, Director of Undergraduate Student Programs at Virginia Tech's Center for the Enhancement of Engineering Diversity. She will speak on the experiences of women who work in or study for careers in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. As Dr. Katey lives in Blacksburg, VA, this program will be offered over Zoom. It will start at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 12.

February 2025

The featured speaker at the branch's February 2025 meeting will be Liz White, Executive Director of UpVoteVirginia. She will speak on Ranked Choice Voting. The date/time/location will be provided later.

Submitted By: Sylvia Linke, Co-President

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING STATEMENT

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

PUBLIC POLICY

FIRST THEY CAME

By Martin Niemöller



First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.

PUBLIC POLICY REPORT

This is a very busy time for Public Policy. US House bill 9495 passed. This ill-defined and potentially dangerous bill allows the Presidentially appointed Treasury Secretary to unilaterally remove non-profit status from any group if deemed a terrorism supporting organization. It is called the Stop Terrorism Financing and Tax Penalties on American Hostages Act.

The new US Cabinet is taking shape with personnel of widely divergent experience. Many of our priorities will depend on the makeup of the Cabinet and the upcoming US Senate and House. In the spring, the AAUW National Public Policy Committee will present to everyone the new priorities. They go before the Board in December.

Our AAUW Virginia Lobby Day will take place on January 16, 2025 with an evening meeting on January 15th. Please plan to come. It is important that AAUW make a strong presentation.

Next year is an important election year, with General Assembly races and the gubernatorial race taking place. This is a high stakes election, so please plan to be active.

AUTUMN LEAVES



Our 2024 drive opened on July 1, 2024. Thanks to those of you who have already contributed. The funds raised are divided equally between the AAUW Alexandria Branch and an AAUW National Fund. **Fifty percent of your donation is tax-deductible. All who make a donation received by Thursday, December 12, three days before the holiday luncheon, will be eligible for the drawing held at the luncheon.**

If you would like to contribute, please mail a check, **payable to AAUW-Alexandria**, with Autumn Leaves on the memo line, to Susan Cash, 8402 West Boulevard Drive, Alexandria, VA 22308.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES

A Summary of the Joint Program Meeting Alexandria & Mt. Vernon Branches

“In the silence I discovered these unexpected musicians.”

by Solveig Eggerz

For music educator, Annie Ray, everything changed on a Covid lockdown day in 2020 when she heard the unexpected sound of kids talking and laughing in the otherwise silent halls of Annandale High School. She discovered the source of these happy sounds was a group of CAT-B special ed students who had returned to school because their needs couldn't be met online.

“The world had gone quiet, but in the silence I discovered these unexpected musicians,” she recently told an audience of AAUW Mt Vernon and Alexandria branch members at Sherwood Regional Library.

The “unexpected musicians” Annie encountered had severe intellectual and developmental disabilities and, therefore, were not in her general music class. Yet it was they who transformed her approach toward teaching and toward music itself. To discover what their curriculum looked like and how she could apply music to their needs, she consulted all the professionals in the school who worked with the CAT-B students. Welcoming her interest, they responded with “Learn from us.” After that, they were a team.

“My team taught me everything I know,” Annie said, but so did her disabled students. For them she created the Crescendo Orchestra, a curriculum of its own. Using an approach similar to the Suzuki method of music education, Annie formed a relationship between student, teacher, and parent. Out of this concept emerged the Parents Orchestra to help caregivers understand the musical challenges their student faces. The 215 members of the Parents Orchestra meet twice a month and are obligated to learn how to play their child's instrument.

Annie's teaching is driven by the goal of “meeting kids where they are.” This does not mean lowering standards but rather leaving behind the traditional standards of success in favor of the idea that success may “look different for each kid.” Redefining success may mean “simply doing something you've never done before.”

Among her students is wheelchair-bound, non-verbal Dean who “redefined what success meant to me” as he learned to plucks along with his peers on a violin, modified for him, so that it has only one string. Another is Kevin, who when she handed him a cello and a bow, “began bowing back and forth, his eyes filled with tears. There was a connection.” She is always learning something new. “These unexpected musicians teach me more than I can ever teach them,” she said.

As she reevaluated concepts of success and failure, she discovered the “in-between part, the part that brings joy. The Musicking.” When her very diverse students play together, “they are connecting.” She noted, however, that “there’s nothing wrong with pushing students toward excellence but not at the cost of feeling the joy of the music.”

Parents often comment that their student has “come out of his shell.” They also tell her that since joining the orchestra their child performs better in other aspects of the curriculum

This is how Annie puts it: “Let me find where you are. Let me pull you along and let you become more than you ever thought you would be.” This means “being willing to make a loud, wrong sound and being willing to laugh at it.” Because music is “inherently human,” you don’t have to be able to speak to make music.

In addition to being Orchestra Director and Performing Arts Department Chair at Annandale High School, Annie is also a performing harpist. This year she won a Music Educator Grammy and was also named Fairfax County Public Schools Outstanding Secondary School teacher. Actress Meryl Streep attended the Grammy Awards and made a point of talking to Annie. “A music educator had a huge impact on her life,” she said. “Thanks to a music educator, I am where I am today.”

Sadly, music programs are often the first thing to go when it comes to budget cuts. Not only should music education be retained, Annie counters, but it should become a core subject for every student.

“I’m an open book,” Annie said and invited AAUW members to connect with her on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) and on her [Motherhood and Music Education](#) website. To stay in the loop on advocacy happenings, she suggested the [Fairfax Arts Coalition for Education](#) and support this new National Association for Music Education call-to-action:

Congress has passed a continuing resolution (CR) that extends current government funding levels until December 20th. While the CR staves off a government shutdown, it also provides advocates with additional time to reach out to their members of Congress and share their support for music education! The house appropriations committee approved its FY25 proposal for Labor-HHS-Education funding, which not only slashes Title I funding by 25%, but also proposes the complete elimination of Title II funding. In

addition to slashing funding for two of the Department of Education's (ED) most vital programs, the current proposal would eliminate the only Department of Education program focused on supporting the arts, the Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program. To rationalize the elimination of AAE the appropriation committee's report stated "funding provided by the Department should be focused on core education such as reading, writing, and math". This rationalization ignores the well-rounded focus of ESSA, as well as the benefits the arts provide across subject areas.

To encourage continued (and expanded) funding of the performing arts, she suggested contacting members of the Board of Supervisors at Fairfax County Public Schools.

Women in the Media, A Profile of Change

A description of the Branch Program presented at the Burke Branch Library on November 16th
By Eugenia Burkes



Sue Ann Staake, Deb Todd, and Carol Pearson

Each speaker described their role as a journalistic trailblazer. Sue Ann is a veteran broadcast producer/director in network control rooms to studios in Bosnia. In 1989, she founded SAS Production, Inc. and won regional and national EMMY Awards. Deb Todd broke the gender barrier for network technical directors. Her career led to show directing and producing at Voice of America. Her show "women and Breast Cancer" won an EMMY. Carol Pearson began her career in front of cameras and microphones in a small town in Pennsylvania and she spent most of her career with the Voice of America. She hosted an international talk show there with such guests as Hillary Clinton and Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. Each had awe inspiring stories of overcoming numerous obstacles and making paths other female journalists could follow. As Deb said "If you want change you must be a change agent."



AAUW HOLIDAY BRUNCH
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
MAYOR-ELECT ALYIA GASKINS
AT THE
BELLE HAVEN COUNTRY CLUB
6023 FT. HUNT RD., ALEXANDRIA
DECEMBER 15, 2024
11:30 a.m.

Please RSVP to Diane Schrier (diane.schrier@gmail.com)
and send your \$60 check to

Anne Simpson
1604 Old Drummer Boy Lane
Ft. Washington, MD 2074

Holiday Giving at the Holiday Luncheons

For many years, our Alexandria Branch has collected gift cards, toys, puzzles, and games for the City of Alexandria Domestic Violence Program at our holiday luncheon in December. This year our luncheon is on **December 15** at the Belle Haven Country Club.

Once again, we are asking members to contribute to the DVP so that they may distribute gifts to women and children at their holiday party or any time there is a need. Gift cards from major retailers such as Target, Walmart, Amazon, CVS, Giant, etc., in the amount of \$25 are very desirable. Children's gifts can be new toys, games or books. Teenagers prefer electronics or gift cards. Gifts go not only to those in the shelter, but also to those the DVP continues to support when they are able to leave the shelter.

Bring your gifts to the luncheon on **December 15** or deliver to Mary Ann Bier. Contact her at marybier@comcast.net for her street address. You may also find it in the branch directory. A useful tip: if you order online, you can have items shipped directly to her.

Thanks for your generosity.

Christ House

The next Christ House meal will be January 29, 2025. We will again be asking for donations from our members to serve with the pizza and for a few volunteers to help put the meal together.

Mark your calendar and we will be sending out an email in early January. Happy Thanksgiving and for the Holidays to come,

Margaret and Jan

Diversity Book Group



In December, the Diversity Book Group will finish our meeting year by discussing the list we curated of books we will read in 2025. While many were nominated that meet our criteria of dealing with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we also seek out authors whose voices we hear not at all or less frequently than those of the traditional group of writers. Our process for book selection is straightforward. Each member provides two nominations, which are then compiled on a master list. Members vote for the books they want to read, and the 12-13 books that get the most votes will be the ones the Group reads in the coming 12 months. With 18 members, there are more amazing books than we can read in 12 months. Members volunteer to facilitate a discussion, and all are encouraged to participate as a facilitator and participant.

The Group has remained stable since the worst of the pandemic ended, although new members have come and others dropped out due to competing priorities. We continue to diversify this group by age, race, and lived experience. This has led to an interesting discussion of every book we've read—different genres, styles, fiction/non-fiction, etc.—whether members enjoyed the book or not. There is always something to be gained by our discussion. In January, we will likely read the book that got the most votes, although at the December meeting we have the opportunity to move the order around, based on the length of the book, subject matter, and availability.

We are always happy to have new members. If you have an interest, please contact Bonnie Hershberg at hersh3b@gmail.com. We have a protocol for newcomers to ensure that they share our commitment to our goals and that they can quickly feel trusted.

Francophile Group



Our first 2025 meeting, rescheduled from November, Susan Cash will give two presentations. The first, will be a brief talk about 20th century French speaking First Ladies. It will also include some presidential remarks delivered in French. The second will be a surprise “reveal” presentation about a well-known francophile/francophone. Upcoming meetings include a Zoom event targeted for February 22 in which we will discuss a book to be selected in early January, along with two brief presentations. In late May or early June, we plan to have a Zoom talk on a World War II theme. To RSVP, please contact Susan at 703/587-4790 or scash5558@gmail.com.

Gourmet Group

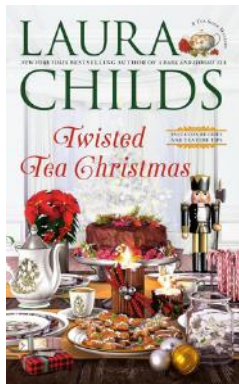
Stay tuned to the *Schooner* for information for our next event, to take place in 2025.



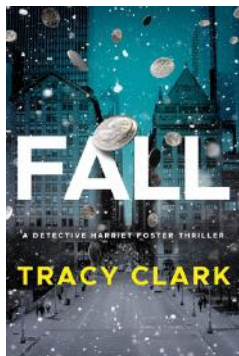
Mystery Book Discussion Group



Happy Holidays Mystery Lovers. Our last mystery for 2024 is Laura Childs' Twisted Tea Christmas. Because of the Christmas holiday, we will meet a week early on **December 17th at 7 PM via Zoom**. I hope that all mystery lovers will join us and learn a little about tea.



The Mystery Book Discussion Group will welcome in the New Year, January 2025, with Fall: A Detective Harriet Foster Thriller by Tracy Clark. We have read a different series (Cassandra Raines) of Tracy Clark's. This is the first Harriet Foster book we will be reading. Clark sets her mysteries in Chicago. Join us on **January 28, 2025, at 7 PM via Zoom**.





Fundamentals of Saving for Retirement

Date: December 5, 2024

Time: 12 – 1 p.m. ET

American Association of University Women (AAUW) is excited to continue empowering women with our impactful financial webinars. These are more than just learning sessions; they are a pathway to transform your career trajectory and financial well-being even in retirement years. These interactive and practical sessions have been meticulously designed to address women's unique challenges in the professional world. This session is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively plan and save for a secure retirement. By the end of the session, participants will have a foundation to make informed financial decisions.

Join us for this upcoming session presented by our partner, FINRA. [Register now.](#)

Kvells & Kudos



Special kudos this month to Sylvia Linke, our co-president. She completed the Police Academy, an intensive 9 week course in how the police system works. She also performed at the Watergate Storytelling Presentation and did an outstanding job with her wonderfully amusing story “Baked Alaska”.

Community Interests

Come and join the festivities of the season! Alexandria Choral Society is partnering with the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra to present "Holiday Dreams", an eclectic mix of holiday music at the George Washington Masonic Memorial on Sunday, December 8th at 3:00. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased on the ACS website, alexandriachoralsociety.org. Look for Anne Simpson, our treasurer, in the alto section of the chorus.

Let's Support the Burke Branch Library In Thanks for the Use of the Meeting Space




WINTER BOOK SALE

\$10 BAGS OF BOOKS!

BBF Members receive 50% off.
Membership forms available on site.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8**
11:00 AM - 4:00 PM 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

*For information or to volunteer, email
ecburkebranchfriends@gmail.com*

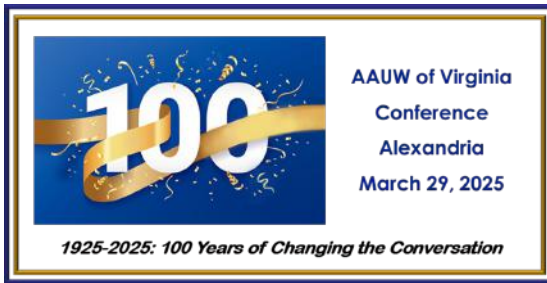
 [facebook.com/BurkeBranchFriends](https://www.facebook.com/BurkeBranchFriends)

ELLEN COOLIDGE BURKE BRANCH LIBRARY
4701 Seminary Road Alexandria, VA 22304
(703) 746-1704



NVCC Alexandria Student Mentoring Conference

In October, the NVCC Alexandria Campus held its 14th annual Student Mentoring Conference. Diane Schrier and Susan Cash of the AAUW Alexandria Branch attended. The conference began with welcome remarks from Alexandria Campus Provost Dr. Annette Haggray. The next segment was a keynote address by Dr. Anita Mehta of the George Washington University Cancer Center on breast cancer and the importance of regular screening. The attendees next had a choice of four breakout sessions. The sessions included workshops on ceramics, watercolors, yoga, and a project that combined recycling and gardening. After a boxed lunch, participants heard a panel discussion on health and wellness. The conference concluded with a presentation on mindfulness and a drawing for door prizes, including one donated by Susan Cash and the Alexandria Branch.



MARK THIS DOWN ON YOUR CALENDAR!

2025 AAUW-VA STATE CONFERENCE

MARCH 29, 2025

(Preconference activities on March 28)

On **March 27-28, 1925**, the seven already existing local branches of AAUW in Virginia met in Williamsburg. When they adjourned, the **Virginia Division of AAUW** was a reality.

On **March 28, 2025**, join us in Alexandria as the **AAUW-VA centennial celebration begins, and we jubilantly begin our second century of women changing the conversation.**

The conference is being hosted by the AAUW-VA Northern District branches at the **Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria, 801 N. St. Asaph Street, Alexandria 22314** on **Saturday, March 29, 2025**, with preconference activities on **March 28, 2025**.

Great news! It's not too early to reserve a room. Guest rooms will be available for March 28 & 29 (king/sofa bed or double/double for \$159 per night plus tax, * including a full hot breakfast for up to 2 persons.) Use this QR code to make a reservation:



or use this link. You can also call 1 (888) 236-2427; use code **AAUW** to reserve a room. The rate is also available for 3 days before/after March 28 & 29 on a space available basis. You must make a reservation for March 28 and/or 29, and then email jrasolofoson@sheratonalexandria.com to book extra days.

The earlier you book a room the better because the 2025 Conference will take place on the eve of Cherry Blossom season and rooms in the hotel will book up early. Once our block is sold out, we might be able to add more rooms, but that will only be possible if the hotel is not already sold out. Room reservations can be cancelled without penalty up until 72 hours before the first day of the reservation.

***IMPORTANT NOTICE:** When making your hotel reservation, ignore any reference to a \$25 resort fee. You will **NOT** be charged this. The room rate is \$159 plus state and local taxes.

Save the Dates



AAUW of Virginia Lobby Days in Richmond

**January 15, 2025
Evening Reception and Talk
Hampton Inn and Suites, Richmond**

**January 16, 2025
Lobby Day
Make our Voices Heard in Richmond
Connect with our Lawmakers**

**Room reservation link at Hampton Inn & Suites is
<https://group.hamptoninn.com/78zjxv>
\$157**

2024 - 2025 CALENDAR – ALL EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

12/5/24, 7p Virtual, AAUW Alexandria Board Meeting
12/9/24, 7p (Tent) Diversity Book Group, Virtual, Bonnie Hershberg, hersh3b@gmail.com
12/17/24, 7p Mystery book group, Susan Werner, susan.werner1@verizon.net
1/2/25, 7p Virtual, AAUW Alexandria Board Meeting
1/12/25, Program Meeting
1/13/25 Diversity Book Group, Virtual, Bonnie Hershberg, hersh3b@gmail.com
1/28/25, 7p Mystery book group, Susan Werner, susan.werner1@verizon.net

(CHECK <https://alexandria-va.aauw.net> OFTEN)

2024 - 2025 BRANCH OFFICERS

Co-presidents: Sylvia Linke (SFLaauw@gmail.com) & Diane Schrier (diane.schrier@gmail.com)
VP Membership: Dr. Felicia Goss (FMGoss@icloud.com)
VP Program: Dr. Gail Kalin, (gailkalin@yahoo.com)
Secretary: Lane Stone (LaneStoneAAUWVA@gmail.com)
AAUW Funds: Susan Cash (scash5558@gmail.com)
Diversity and Inclusion: Dr. Gail Kalin (gailkalin@yahoo.com)
Public Policy: Diane Schrier (diane.schrier@gmail.com)
Treasurer: Anne Simpson (aseyedoc@gmail.com)
Newsletter Editor: Eugenia Burkes (eugeniaburkes@mac.com)
Special Interest Group Leaders:
Campus Outreach: Danielle Beach (danielleaauw@gmail.com)
Christ House Dinners: Margaret Zebrowski (Mmzebrow@aol.com) & Jan Jaynes (janjjoek@verizon.net)
Diversity Book Group: Bonnie Hershberg (hersh3b@gmail.com)
Francophile Group: Susan Cash, scash5558@gmail.com
Gourmet Out Group: Susan Cash, scash5558@gmail.com
Great Decisions: Lynn O'Connell (lynnocConnellva@gmail.com)
Mystery Book Group: Susan Werner (susan.werner1@verizon.net)