



THE SCHOONER, October 2025

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A Letter from the Co-Presidents

Our year began with a great time at the Meet & Greet hosted by Danielle. We were thrilled to welcome eight guests and hope to see them again. Our October program will focus on the Alexandria school board. Alexandria is one of the places in Virginia that is standing firm against Trump's incursions into their policies. It will be interesting to see how they are managing. Sunday, November, 16th, we will have a discussion involving women on the Supreme Court, and Saturday, December 6th is our holiday luncheon. Saturday, December 6th, happens to be the day of the Scottish parade, so to accommodate those attending the parade, the luncheon will start at one.

SAVE THESE DATES

10/2, 7:00 p	Board Meeting
10/9, 7:00 p	Great Decisions
10/12 2:00 p	Program Meeting
10/18, 3 p	Spooky Mad Science
10/20, 7:00 p	Diversity Book Group
10/28, 7 p	Mystery Book Group
11/15, 3 p	Francophile Group
2/6, 7 p	Ann. Fund Raiser

The calendar is filling up with meetings put on by other branches and other groups. Be sure you look at the various Items in this newsletter that highlight these meetings. Some are on Zoom and some are in person. Follow up emails will be sent as reminders near the dates of the events. Many members are working hard to bring you interesting and informative programs. We urge you to take advantage of these terrific sources of information and enjoy the company of fellow members.

Anne Simpson & Jyothi Sunkari, Co-Presidents

PUBLIC POLICY REPORT

Election fever is spreading right now as candidates constantly call for our attention. Amidst all the noise, it is important to remember our priorities and what values that we hold. Then we look for candidates that support them the most. The AAUW Voter Guides will be online in the State Website under Public Policy. Please take time to look at them, so that you can make informed decisions about your vote. Our Public Policy Priorities are also on the State Website. Our Lobby Day is scheduled for February 5th.

Charlie Kirk's life path and murder remind me of Malcolm X. When young, as Charlie Kirk was, he was a firebrand, fighting for his beliefs. As he matured, his beliefs did also and he turned to a wider vision of people. Besides the tragedy for his young children and his wife, it is impossible to know how Charlie Kirk might have matured and become wiser with age. Malcolm X also died leaving a wife and young children. Violence should never be the response to political beliefs. It is time to stop the acceptance of the myth of the frontier gun culture, at the cost of school children, shoppers, politicians or others doing innocent activities.

However, many are using this tragedy to advance their own political gains and agendas. This type of behavior will only lead to more death. The United States had the reputation of being "The City On The Hill". We never achieved perfection, but we aimed on an irregular course to doing what was right for all people. That was in the concepts of both the Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Alexandria City Public Schools have decided to join Arlington Public Schools and Fairfax Public Schools to appeal the decision of the Department of Education to withhold funds based on a Title IX case, Grimm vs. Gloucester County School Board. The plaintiffs assert that the Dept. of Education interpretation is incorrect.

As of this writing, the U.S. House has decided to make a Continuing Resolution that will last for 7 weeks, before finalizing the 2026 Budget. The Senate has rejected it. The House bill follows President Trump's desires for education. Overall Department of Education funding would be cut by 15%. Federal Student Aid for college and beyond would be cut by \$1.4 billion. Title I school funding would be cut by 27% or \$5.2 billion. Funding for Teacher Training and professional development would be completely eliminated. Funding for Pell, TRIO and GearUp levels unfunded. IES (research within the Department) would be cut by 80%. The General Assembly subcommittees are meeting now to find ways of dealing with the expected tax loss for Virginia from the Federal firings and grant eliminations.

AAUW has asked the Department of Education to release the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) grant application. Approximately 20% of postsecondary students are parents and by delaying the funds, their education is put at risk. It is expected that the Family and Medical Leave (FAMILY) Act will be reintroduced. If passed, this will create a national

paid family and medical leave insurance program. Both of these actions will help women, who are often the primary caregiver of their families.

The newly released US Census Bureau data shows that the gender pay gap has widened for the second consecutive year. The data shows that Black women earn 65 cents full time but 63 cents overall. White women receive 77 cents full time and 73 cents overall. Asian American women earn 96 cents full time and 85 cents overall. Hispanic women earn 58 cents full time and 54 cents overall.

It is essential that all women stand together to fight inequity. What happens to any of us affects all of us. As John Donne wrote “No Man is an Island, Entire unto Himself.”

Diane Schrier, VP - Public Policy

ALEXANDRIA BRANCH NEWS

Meet and Greet

Around twenty-five people, including eight guests, gathered at Danielle’s house to chat and find out a little about AAUW, both the history and some specifics about our branch. The day was beautiful, the food was great and the conversation lively. It was nice to catch up with friends and find out what they were doing over the summer and to meet new people. The guests all got a Panera card and the members who brought them mostly did. (If you are a member and I missed you, let me know!) I have some cards left, so the offer still stands, bring a guest to a meeting and both you and your guest will get a card.



Anne Simpson
addressing
the attendees

Doratheia Peters
sharing her thoughts



Thanks to everyone for contributing
such delicious food!



Member Profile

Zohreh Khoshnamak



Zohreh Khoshnamak is a dynamic STEM education leader and social entrepreneur based in Alexandria, Virginia. Born and educated in Iran, she has successfully transitioned her extensive background in journalism and communications into impactful nonprofit leadership in the United States.

Khoshnamak began her career in Tehran, where she spent two decades as a distinguished journalist, editor, and communications specialist. Her journalism work included contributions to national publications and collaboration on World Bank projects as a social science researcher.

After eight years of working in the field informally in Alexandria, Khoshnamak founded the Chrysalis Development Group Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing affordable STEAM programming for students from elementary through high school. As CEO, she successfully transformed an informal community initiative into a fully established organization, building strategic partnerships with Alexandria City Public Schools and the city's Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities department.

From 2015 to 2023, Khoshnamak founded and chaired the Watergate Science Club for the children and parents at her condo community. She also established the Watergate Robotics Team (the Tech Troopers) and has served on various educational boards, including the Alexandria PTA Council and ACPS Grading Committee.

Her deep care for the community drives every initiative she leads, ensuring that equity, inclusion, and opportunity remain at the core of her work—creating spaces where all children and families feel seen, supported, and inspired.

Autumn Leaves

Our 2025 drive opened on July 1, 2025. The funds raised will be divided equally between the AAUW Alexandria Branch (Food for the Homeless Project) and an AAUW National Fund. ***Fifty percent of your donation is tax-deductible. All who make a donation received by the Thursday before the holiday luncheon will be eligible for the drawing held at the luncheon. In addition, the first five people to donate can select a gift of their choice, as well as participate in the drawing, if they desire. This year we have a goal of receiving 20 donations (in any amount). When that goal is reached, Susan Cash will add a bonus donation to the donation. So far we are 45 percent on our way toward this goal.***

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

Alexandria Branch Monthly Meeting

Our next program will focus on Education. Members of the School Board have been invited and additionally, there will be a discussion on the School to Prison Pipeline. This will be a Zoom event at 2:00 pm on Oct. 12th. The zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89842852205>.

Attacks on Education are reaching a fever pitch at this time. It is essential that we be informed as to what is happening, so that we can understand what is occurring underneath all of the clamoring noise.

Diane Schrier

Special Interest Groups

Diversity Book Group



On September 8, we discussed Anita de Monte Laughs Last by Xochitl Gonzalez. The book's dual timeline explored the life (and death) of a woman artist. The character was loosely based on the real-life artist Ana Mendieta. The Group pivots to Asia for its discussion on Zoom from 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, Monday, October 20 (postponed a week due to the holiday) with participants having the opportunity to read one of two books. Of course, those among us who are ambitious will likely read both. We will have two different volunteer facilitators. Grass, a "powerful" graphic novel, tells the life story of a Korean girl forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese. The other selection for the evening, is Tastes Like War: A Memoir takes place in part during the same time period. Its author, an American/Korean scholar, delves into her Korean mother's equally challenging history to try to discover the psycho-social roots of her mother's schizophrenia. We always welcome new members and invite you to join us by emailing hersh3b@gmail.com at least a few days prior to our meeting.

Bonnie Hershberg, Group Coordinator

Francophile Group

Our next meeting, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 15 at 3 p.m., via Zoom, will feature a discussion of the book *The Paris Novel*, by Ruth Reichl. For more information, contact Susan Cash, scash5558@gmail.com, 703/587-4790.



Gourmet Group



Our next event is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 23. It may be either a day or evening event. Some restaurant suggestions: Helena's Mexican Restaurant, 5735 Telegraph Road; Burton's Restaurant, 6452 Old Beulah Street (Hilltop Village Center), Taco Ssam, 4347 John Marr Drive (near Little River Turnpike), and LaPorta's, 1600 Duke Street, Pasara Thai Restaurant, 5926 Kingstowne Towne Center, Suite 180. Those interested should contact Susan Cash, scash5558@gmail.com, 703/587-4790.

Great Decisions



The *Great Decisions* program, organized by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA), is a nationwide initiative aimed at engaging Americans in discussions about key foreign policy issues. It serves as a platform to raise awareness and deepen understanding of global issues that directly impact U.S. foreign policy, security, and international relations.

Our AAUW-Alexandria Branch Great Decisions group began meeting in 2018. Originally, we met in person, and now we meet via Zoom to accommodate participants and guest speakers from all over our area. Typically, we meet eight times annually – on the second Thursday of the month from 7:00 – 8:00 pm. We cover one topic each month, based on the Great Decisions book which can be

purchased [at this link](#).

Our group welcomes new AAUW members as well as guests who are not AAUW members. Please reach out to Lynn O'Connell at lynnocConnellva@gmail.com with any questions.

Upcoming Meetings

Thurs, Oct 9, - Evolution of US Leadership in the Global Economy: Dilemmas & Choices (facilitated by Larry Korb - thank you, Lane Stone!)

Thurs, Nov 13 - India: Between China, the West and the Global South (facilitated by Danielle Beach)

Thurs, Dec 13 - International Climate Cooperation in an Era of Geopolitical Turmoil - seeking facilitator

Zoom Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84470339855?pwd=sYAiTBGdGDqazwygMfhVsHLDbVAODT.1>

Meeting ID: 844 7033 9855

Passcode: 655348

Mystery Book Discussion Group

As our Fall months get shorter, it is perfect weather to be enjoying MYSTERIES. Our October mystery is – Finlay Donovan Is Killing It by Elle Cosimano. The meeting date is October 28th at 7 PM. We will again be meeting via Zoom. Make sure that you are in contact with Susan Werner so that you can receive the link when it is available. This book is described as a witty, fast-paced novel about a struggling single mother who is mistaken for a contract killer and accidentally hired to dispose of a problem husband. Intriguing?? If you have suggestions for mysteries or questions about the Mystery Book Discussion Group, contact Susan Werner: susan.werner1@verizon.net. All mystery lovers welcome to this group.



YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!

SAVE THIS DATE--Friday, February 6, 2026, 7:00 P.M.

That's When the AAUW Alexandria Branch and the
AAUW Mt. Vernon Branch Join Together, Once Again,
for Our Annual Fundraiser At
The Little Theatre of Alexandria.
Following a reception, you'll be able to settle in and enjoy



Here's what the Little Theatre has to say about the show:

“School of Rock is a rocking, high-energy musical that will have ‘fists of all ages and sizes...pumping’ (*Vanity Fair*)! Watch a wannabe rocker turn a class of misfits into a band of rockstars. With a score that’ll make you groove, this show is a blast.”

Stay tuned for further information, especially how you can purchase tickets.

Leslie Tourigny

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.

Bring a Friend 2025-2026 Membership Drive

It's time to spread the word that AAUW's voice is being raised to fight for women's rights in these challenging times. The message is needed to go out to those frustrated and searching for a way to get involved. The Alexandria Branch also provides a **supportive community and interest groups** that: provide:

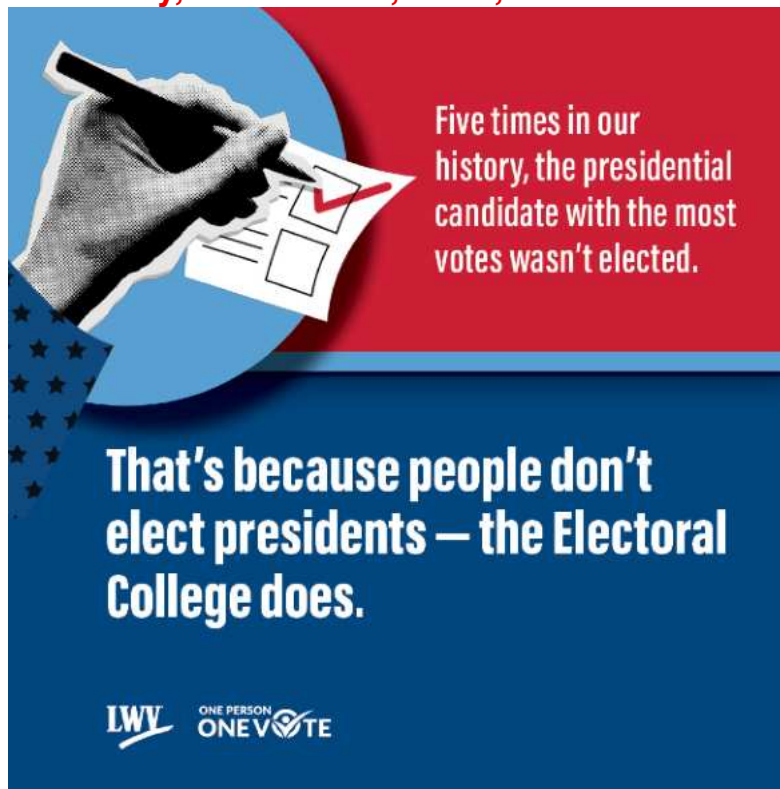
- * **friendship and serious conversations** (Great Decisions, Francophile Group);
- * **book discussions** (Diversity Book Group, Murder Mystery Book Group);
- * **visits to terrific restaurants** by the Gourmet Group..

The current membership count for our Branch is 58. We need new members because it's really true — **there is strength in numbers**. If everyone will do their part to invite their friends and neighbors, we can grow our Branch and increase our message so that it's heard in all the important places - City Hall, Virginia Capitol, and our national Capitol. **Men and non-residents of the City of Alexandria may join.**

Most of our events are open to visitors. Be sure to consult with the coordinator of the interest groups to confirm guests are welcomed.

**Accept the challenge
Bring a Friend**

AAUW-VA All-District Programs
Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 7 PM via Zoom



Join your AAUW sisters from around the Commonwealth for an informative program on **"One Person, One Vote: The National Popular Vote vs. The Electoral College,"** presented by Jane D. Newell, AAUW-VA Greater Richmond Branch AAUW Funds Chair, AAUW Honorary Life Member, and League of Women Voters of Virginia Director of Transformation. Jane will explore the League's plan to abolish the antiquated Electoral College, which has roots in racism. She'll discuss the history, impact, myths, and approaches to solving this election problem, including the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

[Join the Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88994832700?pwd=BdMN1U3FAcsVgJEZgbp7bqKpEnHpWo.1>

Meeting ID: 889 9483 2700

Passcode: 503418

One tap mobile +13092053325,,88994832700#,,,,*503418#

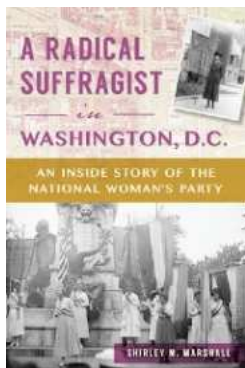
CO-Sponsors:



Pohick Regional Library

AAUW-VA Northern District Meeting
November 1, 2025, 12:00 p.m.

Pohick Regional Library
6450 Sydenstricker Rd, Burke, VA



Business meeting will follow talk.

Shirley Marshall will be talking about her book, *A Radical Suffragist in Washington D.C.* The book features letters from Elizabeth Kalb Green who worked and lived at the National Woman's Party Headquarters from 1918 to 1921. Her book will be available for purchase.

Events Sponsored by Other Groups of AAUW

AAUW Falls Church Branch

The Falls Church Branch recently discussed the fact that misogyny is thriving and women's advancement is stalling. That conversation prompted them to develop a two-part community forum Healing the Gender Divide in the Era of Pervasive Social Media. The forum provides research on widespread attitudes that directly harm AAUW priorities: equality, individual rights and social justice; economic security, and education.

The first forum will address the state of men and the state of women in our society, particularly how misogyny affects gender equity and the power of social media in reinforcing harmful gender attitudes. A representative of Equimundo <https://www.equimundo.org>, (a research organization which recently published The State of American Men 2025) will discuss the complex crisis of boyhood and manhood. A representative of Center for American Progress, Inclusive Economy <https://www.americanprogress.org> will focus on the "state of women" and the impact of misogyny and corrosive social media on the lives and livelihoods of women. **The first Community Forum will be held November 6, 2025, 7:00 - 9:00 PM at Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School, Falls Church.**

A second forum to be scheduled in spring 2026 will address solutions and means to become engaged. Feedback from local educators and counselors will laser-focus the global problem, discussing what's happening in our own schools and communities.

ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE UPDATE

The Atlantic Regional Conference will take place, **Sept. 25-27, 2026** in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Hotel registration will probably open in Oct. The date for conference registration isn't set yet. Lancaster, Pennsylvania is a destination spot. Speakers and extra activities are still being developed.





**Join Reston-Herndon
AAUW for a
Conversation with Hall
Baldwin, Director of
Reston Regional
Library via Zoom on
October 4 at 4:00.**

**She will speak on books bans, funding and
other challenges facing the Reston branch
and all libraries and provide an update on
the new library.**

**Register here for our Zoom meeting on Saturday,
October 4 at 4PM: [https://us02web.zoom.us/
meeting/register/WFdMyB3XTcirSDG0TJG_jg](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/WFdMyB3XTcirSDG0TJG_jg)**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Spooky Mad Science Expo

Member Sohreh Khoshnamak is organizing this event. Bring you kids and grandkids to this fun event!

We are getting ready for the 10th annual Spooky Mad Science Expo, Northern Virginia's premier family STEAM event, on October 18, 2025 (rain date: Oct. 25), from 3–7 PM in Alexandria, VA.

This vibrant STEAM celebration is expected to draw over 2,500 attendees, families, educators, and youth leaders, for an afternoon of hands-on science, art, and imagination. We'll have 100+ interactive stations, including robotics, live demos, a planetarium, and a costume parade.

Here is the Spooky Mad Science Expo Vendor registration link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScwCKJfBTLfx4iSOjiDLexCgf0QW8BIL9urenclIL3ZgYugwg/viewform>



Dear Constituents,

Please join me as I host my *Ninth Annual Women's Conference: The Ripple Effects of Resilience* on Monday, October 6 at George Mason University's new Fuse building at Mason Square. This event is free to the public but capacity is limited, so attendees are encouraged to register online [here](#).

This year's event will bring together women leaders to share stories of perseverance, strength, and resilience in the face of the challenges confronting our country and community in these unprecedented times.

The discussion will feature Brooke Sydnor Curran, founder of Move2Learn; Lisa Jacobs, Executive Director of the Alexandria Tutoring Consortium; and Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, Executive Director of Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR). The discussion will be moderated by Nyree Wright, Executive Vice President of Crisis & Risk Communications at Edelman. I will also present this year's Clara Mortenson Beyer Women and Children First Award.

Ninth Annual Women's Conference: The Ripple Effect of Resilience

**Monday, October 6 at 6:30 pm
George Mason University's Arlington Campus
Fuse at Mason Square
3351 Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22201**

Virginia Women's Conference

Sponsored by US Senator Mark Warner

NOVEMBER 15, 2025, 8a-3p

The Johnson Center, George Mason University,

4400 University Dr, Fairfax, VA 22030

Click [here](#) for information on registration.

AAUW will once again have a table at the Virginia Women's Conference. Email AAUW-VA Public Policy VP, Diane Schrier, if you can help out, Diane.schrier@gmail.com.



BRANCH OFFICERS

2025 - 2026

Officers

Co-presidents: Anne Simpson (aseyedoc@gmail.com) & Jyothi Sunkari
(jyothi.sunkari@gmail.com)

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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 (lynnoconnellva@gmail.com)

Mystery Book Group: Susan Werner (susan.werner1@verizon.net)

Cultural Group: Diane Schrier (diane.schrier@gmail.com) - tentative

LTA: Leslie Tourigny (ltourigny@gmail.com)