

November 2025

Newsletter 25-26 #2

Focusing on women and girls can be the fastest way to improve the economy.

From the President's Desk



This past year, members showed up when we needed them and helped the Book Markers process more books than ever before. Results were record-breaking as you will see from the treasurer's report on our mammoth effort. We may have offered close to 50,000 books. We are considering a few changes, such as adding Saturday afternoon to set up,

eliminating a category or two to simplify, and charging a bit more for the Tuesday entrance fee. We had 90 more pay-to-enter this year. Any suggestions for additional improvements are welcome, so please email book committee members Anne Strauss or Diana Rice with your ideas.



In fact, we have a good bit more (yep—boxes and boxes) to peruse, clean, and price toward a good showing for the 2026 Used Book Sale. We will collect paper ream and banker boxes all year, since so many businesses are going paperless. Many



thanks to Sarah and Don for their vacation hours spent supporting the used book sale again this year. Since 2008 Kiwanis has joined us in this effort to raise funds for our community. This partnership will continue to have a lasting effect on all in Wayne County. Our funds, after expenses, are used for scholarships as well as the Be-Wise and now the Be-Wiser STEM programs offered through The College of Wooster. Participation in these programs dropped post-Covid, apparently because of less word-of-mouth advertising due to the shut downs, but we're hoping to return soon to larger participation—mostly from local girls.

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Wonderful effort this year by all book markers and others who showed up to help. Thank you.

We now have tons more books to process, so if you have an extra hour, please stop by the Red Barn to help. We are thinking of adding another processing time feedback is welcome.

Also, the three Kiwanis people in charge of the physical move to the fairgrounds have all resigned due to health or other issues. We're looking for ideas to solve this, although it's the responsibility of Kiwanis.

Dates for Bookmarkers		
November:	No book processing	Nov. 25 or 26
	Donations accepted	Nov. 29
December:	No book processing	Dec. 23,27 or 30
	Donations accepted	Dec. 27
January:	No book processing	Jan 3
	Donations accepted	Jan 3

On September 20, I attended an AAUW Ohio leadership conference in Upper Sandusky. Four affiliates were represented plus AAUW Ohio through President Janice McCloud and Vice President Rush Rogers (see our interview with Rogers in this issue). We covered what was expected of us, such as updating bylaws and sending them to State on time plus review of awards for meeting National goals. We also reported on our activities this year. Perhaps next year the closest conference will not be the first day of set up for the book sale!

October 5 was Candidates Forum hosted by the League of Women Voters and sponsored, in part, by our branch. Historically AAUW supports this event as our October meeting, and next year we hope to give additional support. The policies and procedures changes will incorporate this ability for next year. LWV President Joi Hemphill wrote to thank us for our "financial contribution and assistance with publicizing the event with our membership." They said they had a good turnout and received positive feedback from candidates and attendees. All of them said they supported NOT banning books and age-appropriate ones for elementary school-aged children. We did hear that they are often pressured by special interest groups who DO want to ban and control reading materials.

If you could let them know we support them that would be a very positive action. (See side bar for suggestions)

Looking forward to our holiday meeting in December and catching up with you all.

Respectfully,
Anne White Strauss

If you want to contact your elected representative(s) to make known your position on a banned-book movement, consider sending postcards, letters, or emails.

Here are some phrases to use or adapt.

Thank you for standing against Banned Books.

You have this voter's support.

Students need to be able to explore books and expand their horizons.

We support the Wooster School Board.

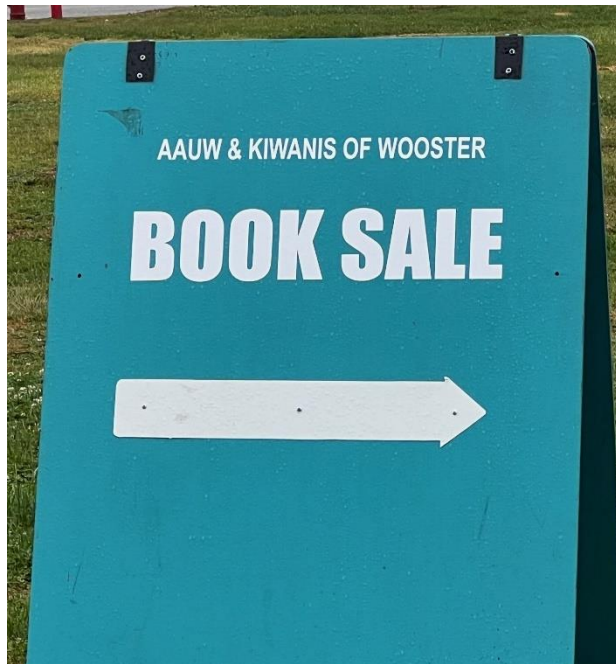
Banned books limit learning and critical thinking.

Wooster School Board contact information:

info@woostercityschools.org

(330) 988-1111

Wooster City School Board
144 North Market Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691



Hard Work Two Organizations Working Together Year after Year



After Year

After Year...



Member Tidbit: Linda Houston

Recently, I was re-reading a Christmas card sent to me last year from my son who died in March. It was about volunteering in his lifetime. Which got me thinking about my own life as a volunteer.

Recently, I became vice-president of the board of Ghana Beyond Subsistence, a non-profit organization that promotes cooperative educational advancement through teaching-learning-connecting. As a long-time English teacher, these are issues I believed when I traveled to Ghana for many summers—and still do believe. I also support the Obaatan Pa Women's Hospital in Accra, Ghana, the nation's capital. The organization was founded in 2013 and is run by two doctors in Wayne County, Dr. Cyril Ofori and Dr. Amelia Laing.



As many know, I have been to all the protests for Defending Democracy and am an active member of the Wayne County Democratic Party, and have even written postcards to help support the successful California Proposition 50 vote to re-district that state.

On Friday mornings, I cook and help serve breakfast at Trinity Church to those men and women in need of food and some in need of housing.

I am a member of NAACP Education and NAACP Health Committee as well as a member of NAACP.

Routinely, I support the school board and city council candidates, and other issues with signs prominently placed on my front lawn. This year the candidates I supported were elected.



I recently signed up for the Community Foundation's Give 365 for Wayne County. This non-profit, part of the Wayne County Community Foundation, focuses on emerging philanthropists, helping to fund non-profit projects selected by the committee.

But perhaps one of the most rewarding groups to which I belong is Womenade, a grassroots group of women who meet monthly and donate money, literally placed in a dish, which goes to support a woman in need. Each month a woman volunteers to be a host. As many women as possible attend. The local group was founded in 2005 by Heather Fitz Gibbon, Shirley Huston-Findley, Anne Nurse, and Diana Ryan, all College of Wooster faculty.

And, of course, I'm a member of AAUW and the LWV.

Submitted by Linda Houston

For more about Linda's activism, see *Time Magazine*, "Fear and Hoping in Ohio" by David Litt, October 31, 2024, 8 a.m. EDT



<https://time.com/7113445/wayne-county-ohio-election-2024/>
Photo credit: Rebecca Kiger

New Member Bios

Marianne Bowden received her master's degree in educational psychology from John Carroll University and her doctorate in counseling psychology from Kent State University. She began her practice in 1993 at the Wayne/Holmes Counseling Center. In 2000, she opened Bowden & Associates in Wooster, which she owned and operated for 25 years until her retirement in 2024. She now works part-time for Kent Psychological Associates in Kent, Ohio.

She is the 2019 winner of the Child Advocate of the Year Award presented by Wayne County Voices for Children. In 2020, she was nominated for the APA Rural Psychologist of the Year Award. She was also recognized by the APA's Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award-Best Practices for her work with Certified Angus Beef employees in Wooster.

She earned her bachelors of music education from Otterbein College (now university) and taught high school music in northeastern Ohio for several years before concentrating on counseling psychology. She continues her passion for music, especially singing, at Central Christian Church in Wooster where she's a long-time member of their choir and vocal quartet.

Loraine Smith earned her bachelor of science degree in education and her master of arts degree in speech pathology from Cleveland State University. She lives in Wooster and has two daughters, a son, and two grandchildren aged 15 and 22. Loraine is a retired speech therapist and has worked with all age groups.

Loraine's hobbies include traveling, tennis, playing cards, and playing the piano. She has a special interest in helping women gain an education and economic security. She looks forward to being a part of AAUW.

Finance

We had a record-breaking year with the book sale! This year our gross sales were \$36,517.50 and our (unofficial expenses) are approximately \$12,415.21.

We had 270 people attend the first night, which was an increase from 175 in 2024. As a reminder, net profits are split with Kiwanis (60%) and AAUW (40%).

Submitted by Sarah Miles

Words of Wisdom

"People make their own decisions about their timing, and they don't have to comply with somebody else's view of how that should be."

-Nancy Pelosi

Submitted by Anne White Strauss

"The only thing that you absolutely HAVE TO know is the location of the LIBRARY"

-Albert Einstein

Submitted by Anne White Strauss

"Always look for the shadows, as they are a part of life—just as darkness is a part of light."

- Marilyn Berthel
(Barb's sister)

Submitted by Barb Friedhoff

AAUW NATIONAL and STATE NEWS

National News

Sign up for News and Updates at <https://www.aauw.org/sign-up/>
and for Leadership-Resources at
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/leader-resources-tools/>.

Resources include the following:

- Leader Resources and Tools
- Strategic Plan Leader Toolkit
- Membership Surveys
- Bylaws Toolkit
- Community Hub: Tools and Resources
- Branch and State Affiliate Community Action Grants
- Fundraising Resources for Branches

AAUW Opposes Higher Education Contract:

The Trump Administration has invited all U.S. colleges and universities to sign a “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education,” which would offer preferential federal funding if institutions adopt sweeping policy changes. These changes include dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion, restricting campus governance and speech, holding tuition flat for five years, and capping international student enrollment (no more than 15% of undergraduates overall and no more than 5% from any single country).

Gloria Blackwell’s response: “America’s colleges should never be forced to choose between their values and their viability. We urge every institution to refuse this political litmus test and stand with students—especially women, students of color, student-parents, international scholars, and LGBTQ+ students—whose success depends on campuses that are inclusive, evidence-driven, and free to teach and learn.”

State News

AAUW Ohio held its Fall Summit on Oct. 11 at All Saints Lutheran Church in Worthington. Sessions included (1) information on STARZ and DEI Branch Recognition and how these programs can help branches align with AAUW’s vision and strategic plan; (2) team building; and (3) the state of education in Ohio featuring a panel of staff members from the Ohio State School Boards Association.

Coffee and Conversations Reading List Nov.-Feb. 2025-2026 (see sidebar)

Discussions are hosted on the third Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. via Zoom (no discussion in December).

Submitted by Nancy Grace

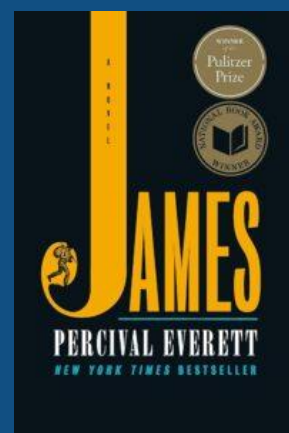


January 17, 2026

The Midnight Library

by Matt Haig 2023
Theme is Change

Discussion leader is Carolyn Reams Smith



February 21, 2026

James: A Novel

by Percival Everett
Theme is Diversity

Facilitator is Naykishia Darby

More member tidbits...sort of

Nancy Grace and Pat Mathews are not only co-conspirators editing the newsletter, we are also classmates in Watercolor Wednesdays, a watercolor class at the Wayne Center for the Arts. The Center provides classes in various media and for all age groups and experience levels.

AAUW held a program at the Center last year where we learned of their new and exciting plans for expansion.

The construction of the new Arts Park & Fab Lab is now underway, and the tentative timeline is for the facility to be open summer 2026. The Fab Lab will feature woodworking, glass, metal, ceramics, and design, while the Park will have green space and an accessible playground. The facility is located behind the current building. The Center is also expanding its music program.



Submitted by Nancy Grace



Submitted by Pat Mathews

The Wayne Center for the Arts is currently hosting an art exhibit in its Gault Gallery featuring student and faculty work. Watercolor, oil, ceramics, needle work, and other media are on display. The exhibit will be up until Dec. 13. The galleries are open during WCA's normal business hours. Each of us, Nancy and Pat, has a painting on display.



Nancy admiring artwork

Wayne Center for the Arts

Faculty/Student Exhibit
and
Pottery Exhibit

On exhibit until Dec. 13

Open during normal
WCA business hours



There is a display in the Looney Gallery of the outstanding pottery work of the Center's clay coordinator, Adam McVicker, and Cary and Stephanie Hulin of Holmes County Pottery.



STEM Day

AAUW Wooster is again gearing up to support The College of Wooster's STEM Day Camp, which takes place in mid-April. Our support for each participant will include a monetary contribution to provide a breakfast snack, a bookmark explaining our role in supporting women's equality, and a voucher to be used at the Kiwanis/AAUW book sale.

Another important donation is our time and effort to deliver the STEM Day pamphlets from the college inviting girls from 5th to 7th grade in Wayne and Holmes counties to participate in the camp. We will need five volunteers to deliver these bundles to approximately 22 schools in March 2026. To volunteer, contact Carole Erdos (clerdos@aol.com) or Mickey Asleson (Mickey.asleson@gmail.com).

This year, AAUW Wooster has also added a monetary contribution to the B-WISER (Buckeye Women in Science, Engineering & Research) residential camp sponsored by the college. The camp serves girls from grades 7 through 10, attracts students from across Ohio and some nationally, and will run from June 15-20, 2026. Their website states that "campers may qualify for merit or need-based scholarships to help cover B-WISER fees, with most receiving 75% off the cost." Daily classes include biology, chemistry, physics, geology, robotics, and special topics labs.

Submitted by Carol Erdos and Mickey Asleson

Bylaws Committee Update

AAUW National has informed all branches that updated bylaws are due June 30, 2026. The first seven articles of the bylaws are dictated by National and are to be adopted as given. The rest of our bylaws are specific to our Wooster Branch. Susan Buchwalter has graciously agreed to update the bylaws as she has the latest edition on her computer. As a group, we will vote on the bylaws at our annual meeting at the spring luncheon. In addition to the bylaws, each AAUW branch has a Policies and Procedures manual that spells out the procedures for various officers and committees. The Policies and Procedures manual is reviewed and updated every few years. This year, we asked board members and committee chairs to review their sections in the manual and provide any updates. Changes have been made to several sections, including scholarship committee procedures, communications, revision of bylaws, and new sections on the holiday luncheon and records retention. The completed manual will be reviewed and adopted by the board.

Submitted by Karen Armstrong, Susan Buchwalter, and Judy Taylor

From the Editors

We have gotten lots of feedback from members who really like how informative the newsletter has become.

With that in mind, we will be developing guidelines to support our "reporters" (the board members and committee chairs) as they prepare their quarterly reports.

Our goal is to have the articles be engaging and informative.

We would love to hear your suggestions for newsworthy topics you would like to see us address in the future.

Nancy Grace and
Pat Mathews
Co-Editors

**AAUW
Diversity Statement**

In principle and 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, and socioeconomic status.

Nancy Grace
and Pat Mathews

Co-editors
The Breeze

Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee met on Friday, Nov. 7. Pat Mathews and Barb Friedhoff who have championed our scholarship program for the past four years and five years, respectively, were on hand to help the new members of the committee transition into this important role. Their knowledge and experience are invaluable. We appreciate their willingness to be available for consultation in the coming year.

Nichollette Rogers will serve as the new chairperson of the committee. She and Bobbi Jentes-Mason participated in the selection of this year's awardees, which will ease the learning curve. The other two "new" members of the committee are Diana Rice and Lorraine Smith. We are thankful to have them on our team.

During our meeting, we updated the annual "Timeline" of the committee's responsibilities, discussed a new design for our flyer, and discussed necessary changes to the website and the Facebook page. Pat already volunteered to put together/format our new design ideas for the flyer.

Additionally, we brainstormed about additional ways we might help our awardees as they navigate their return to school.

Submitted by Nichollette Rogers

From AAUW National Facebook:

Yie-Hsin Hung is the President and CEO of State Street Investment Management, where she leads one of the world's largest and most

sophisticated investment platforms. A 1985–86 AAUW Selected Professions Fellowship recipient, she has built an extraordinary career marked by visionary leadership and a deep commitment to advancing women in finance.

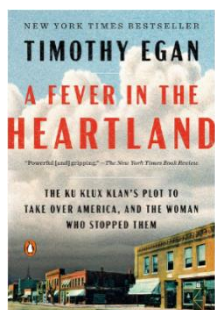
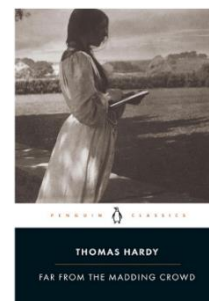
2025 Alumnae Recognition Award



Yie-Hsin has been recognized among **Barron's** "100 Most Influential Women in U.S. Finance" and **Forbes** "100 Most Powerful Women in the World." She also serves on several influential boards, including the Investment Company Institute, **Northwestern University**, and The Women's Forum of New York

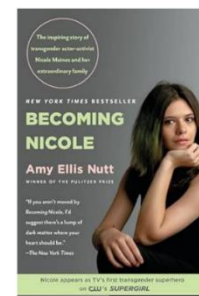
Literary

In August, Don Ackerman led the discussion on the classic *Far From the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy. There was a great discussion around women in power (or not) during the 1800s, the myth of the pastoral world as a paradise, the ways gender roles can also trap men, and Hardy's use of language to create humor and exposition. Don also presented some videos of critics' reviews and a clip from the most recent movie version of the book.



Kris Evans led the September discussion about *Fever in the Heartland: The Ku Klux Klan's Plot to Take Over America, and the Woman Who Stopped Them* by Timothy Egan. The book depicted the rise and fall of D.C. Stephenson, Grand Dragon of the Indiana Ku Klux Klan in the early 20th century. This history of the rise of the Klan through religious groups, wealthy community leaders, and Stephenson's charisma emerged as quite a surprise to some members. The group engaged in an energized discussion that focused on parallels between politics then and now, including sexual assault (e.g., murder), women's rights, money as speech, and fascism.

The October selection was the non-fiction book *Becoming Nicole* by Amy Ellis Nutt. Letty Nault led the discussion about the gender and physical transition of Wyatt Maines to Nicole Maines, now a transgender actor and activist. The book is a quasi-memoir of her mother, father, and twin brother as they negotiate personal, community, and legal issues as Wyatt fights to become female. Letty provided fascinating information about gender/sexuality language and cultural practices, and there was a very lively conversation by the members as they considered how quickly our sense of sexuality and gender has changed in the 21st century and why we now face a backlash.



Upcoming Calendar for the Literary

- Nov. 18: *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn. Reviewer, Karen Armstrong
- Dec.: **No Meeting**
- Jan. 20: *The Optimist's Telescope* by Bina Venkataraman. Reviewer, Lee Peart
- Feb. 17: *The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamali. Reviewer, Jan Steinbrenner
- Mar. 17: *Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon. Reviewer, Carol McKiernan
- April 21: *Night Watch* by Jayne Anne Phillips. Reviewer, Diana Rice
- May 19: **Book selection meeting at First Presbyterian Church**
- June 16: *James* by Perceval Everett. Reviewers, Anne White Strauss and Nancy Grace, who will provide some tips on *Huckleberry Finn* in advance.

Submitted by Donna Connolly and Don Ackerman

Programs and Events 2025-2026

The **Wooster AAUW Kickoff Meeting** was held on September 4, at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Wayne County. Our guest speakers were Rush Rogers and Peter Roberts.

Rush provided an update on State and National activities (see Nancy's interview for in depth information).

Peter, a member of Kiwanis, discussed vintage books included in the book sale.



Peter Roberts

Wooster AAUW Annual Christmas Luncheon

*Date & Time: December 6, 2025, 12 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church, 621 College Ave.*

Come celebrate the spirit of the season as we join together for holiday cheer and food. Members are invited to bring a salad, appetizer, side dish, or cookies to accompany the soup and bread that will be provided.

Please use this sign-up link to let us know what you are bringing:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040E4EADAA2FA4FC1-60233078-holiday>

Our speaker this year will be from Homeward Bound of Wooster and Wayne County, our community's response to local needs for food, housing, and health with dignity.

Members are encouraged to bring donations of cold weather clothing, hygiene and blankets for Homeward Bound, such as: sweatshirts and sweatpants of all sizes, anti-perspirant, combs, Gold Bond body powder, and basic first aid items such as Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment and hydrocortisone cream.

Agency wish lists are found at <https://linktr.ee/HomewardBoundWWC>.

There is no charge for this event.

Wooster AAUW Spring Luncheon And Annual Business Meeting

*Date & Time: April 18, 2026, 12 p.m.
Wooster Country Club, 1251 Oak Hill Rd.*

Members will be invited to RSVP for the annual spring luncheon.

We will recognize and honor the 2025-26 scholarship recipients.

Upcoming Events

Literary

*November 18
January 20
February 17
March 17
April 21
May 19
June 16*

Literary Book Selection Meeting

May 19

Holiday Gathering

December 6

Spring Luncheon

April 18

Board Meetings

*6:30 p.m.
Buehlers Milltown
Community Room*

*January 22
March 26
May 28
June 25*

**Board meetings open to
all members**

One Woman's Quest for Leadership: An Interview with Rush Coen Rogers



Rush Coen Rogers was a speaker at our September 2025 Kick-off meeting. She's a member of the AAUW Worthington branch and serves as program vice-president for AAUW Ohio, a position that is taking her on the road to promote AAUW leadership. Rogers has a bachelor of science in special education and educational administration from Ohio University and studied at Miami University (Ohio) and Stephens College. She also proudly states that she's "matriculated any time" she's "lived someplace more than six months!"

The Breeze: Why is AAUW important to you?

Rush Coen Rogers: I think because I have a daughter and two granddaughters, and I believe it to be a strong lobby. It's also a strong source of solid research-based policies and activities. It's a source where you can give and take, and it doesn't have any spin on it. Just to focus on women and girls and education and health and pay equity. But it's also because I get from that lobby the resources I need to gather advice and to find consent.

TB: How long have you been a member?

RCR: Well, the odd thing is, I served 30 plus years at the B-Wise camp [Women in Science Education] founded and sponsored by AAUW Ohio at Denison University, so I worked under AAUW. But my mother was in AAUW from 1957. For me, though, the problem was to find an AAUW branch in the place where I was teaching. So, the minute I settled here in Columbus in 2007 and I could get to a branch (Worthington), I did.

TB: There was a literal connection then with your mother and AAUW.

RCR: Oh my gosh. I thought that was just me. But when I did the AAUW officer training recently in Upper Sandusky, as we went around the table, many, if not most, of the people had been brought in by their mother. I thought that was very interesting.

TB: That's a generational issue. How have generational differences affected the AAUW—State and National—from your perspective?

RCR: Some people have a short memory. And the legacy of all the things we fought for really matters. If we don't have civil discussions with generations other than our own, we don't understand what people don't know or what they think is already there, so they don't worry about it slipping away. I also think we had more time for the AAUW than some career women do now.

But we're not setting up situations where people across generations or, for instance, from rural to urban, are having the opportunity to discuss what their "why" is and where that fits in some historical continuum. That's one of the reasons I'm out on the road doing leadership workshops. We seem hesitant to reach out to these young professionals, even though they need a safe place with like minds, to really see what their questions are and how they can partner with others. My feeling is that we're not initiating enough, not putting out enough opportunities.

Did You Know?

AAUW Ohio has 21 Ohio branch sites.

Dating back to 1924, AAUW Ohio has had 50 presidents.

AAUW Ohio defines good leaders as willing to compromise and have empathy, intelligence, patience, confidence and humility. They see themselves as an equal rather than a superior. They absorb blame, share credit, listen to others' needs, and act only after hearing everyone's concerns.

The History of AAUW Ohio Project is seeking new researchers and an editor. Use the Contact Us menu on the AAUW Ohio website if you're interested.

When you put people together—different ages, sexes, and backgrounds in terms of education versus time in the field, you have to be diligent about how you do that diversity. We must be intentional about how we're putting people together to mentor each other, and I think we can bridge that gap because our history is really, really, really important. Young people want to be spoken to. There's a young woman from Bowling Green who really wants to work with me, or us, on public policy. She told me, "I live for my ability to make a difference in the community." And I said, "We're for you. We'll partner up with you, give you some backup." That's exactly how it works. The opportunity to share is what we're looking for. We don't have to give up. We just need to figure out other ways to do it.

TB: Regarding officer training, we've had some difficulty recruiting a full slate. How was the training a few months ago—our president **Anne Strauss** was there—and how many times have you offered it?

RCR: That was the first time! I was worrying about the foundation of our branches and our connectedness. How to get information about what they're doing. Now, after the training, more than anything else, we're connected. We have a relationship. They can call me if they can't pay their dues, if they don't have a treasurer. They have access now, so they can reach out and know there's somebody who will help them. I might also do a follow-up survey: what your group is doing now; what it would like to do in the future; what we should add to the training. Useful data to share with all of us.

TB: Are there Ohio branches that are working particularly well from your perspective?

RCR: Do you mean better than Wooster?!

TB: Others too of course!

RCR: There are several branches that have special interest groups. That's when you've got a set of at least five members who care deeply about a single end. I've been impressed personally with Circleville [Political Discussion Group TBA and Book Club/Reading is Fundamental—three books a year for every local second grader]. I've been impressed personally with Springfield. They are recruiting and retaining new members. They have community partnerships and address community issues like immigration. I was impressed with Middletown [Pens Writing Group, Joy Luck Book Club, Voluntary Simplicity to support sustainable lifestyle]. And I thought Columbus had it right, but then they decided they didn't have officers and rolled right into mine [the Worthington branch]. Thankfully, I didn't lose any members, which was my goal. I didn't want anybody to leave AAUW, so I tried to be more than accommodating.

Some branches are blending, such as Warren Trumbull County [Adelante Book Club, Monthly donations to area women-focused agencies, large Anti-Human Trafficking program], which means they're really splitting the planning, prep, and setup. That seems to be making them pretty viable. Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst is a blend as well [Diversity Blog, Equity and Anti-Racism in Ohio Schools, Title IX Compliance, Supporting Migrant Workers, STEM, Content-rich website].

Sometimes the responsibilities will kill you. I have a couple branches whose contact is one person—and that makes me very nervous. If anybody comes in who hasn't been on the board, they can find it extremely difficult. They're not learning in the time that it actually takes, and leadership then doesn't roll up the way it used to. You don't have the horses in the yokes, and you'll burn out one person really fast.

I try to reach out to everybody who walks into my world. As an example, I've offered this year from the state to contact any person who's considering any job with an AAUW branch, and we'll walk them shoulder to shoulder all the way through the process.

TB: How many men are there as members? Especially since all protected groups need allies.

RCR: I know Bowling Green has a couple because their book discussion in October was led by John Zibbel. I know Bowling Green has worked on that. I don't know that I've laid my eyes on another.

TB: We have two. Blake Stone is on the Sunshine committee, and Don Ackerman is the co-chair of our literary meeting. He's also a Kiwanis member, and we partner with them for our book sale funder raiser.

RCR: That makes sense. It would also make sense for my son-in-law to be involved because he has two girls and a powerful wife. So how do I get someplace where I'm supporting them? I haven't done that yet. I should reach out to them. Ask them if they want to be able to provide support. Like I did with my daughter. I started by just paying her membership. Then inviting them to the events. And it's rolled mine in, and when my daughter said, "How about if Kenzie comes (that's a student)," and I said, "Yes! I'd be in heaven!" Maybe they'll show up when we go to various events. So, there's some support, but invisible in some ways.

TB: At our kick-off, a gentleman in the audience asked you how he could get his daughter in one of the salary negotiation workshops that you'd just spoken about. How could a branch start one as a way of providing opportunities to share and bring in new members?

RCR: The webinars coming out of the national site right now are where you'd begin. Their curriculum is very solid. They have one that's a refresher, one that guides you through the process of getting a trainer, and one on smart finances.

TB: If Wooster wanted to do that, would we say, okay, we're going to get together and view this webinar?

RCR: You very much could do that. That's almost what I was pitching when I spoke at your kick-off in September. Now because you have a partner with The College of Wooster, it makes sense to me that if two or three people made a committee—it could be five, doesn't matter, but not one, you'll drown if it's just one—they could get the training and run the workshop. Then run it through the school, run it through the city, run it through Kiwanis. What I might do at the state level is offer myself and whomever would join me to do the training in your neighborhood.

But I would help in any way that I could. That will raise the level of awareness about finances, which is very important, not just in one's personal career, but in one's personal finances. It might even impact one's decisions around voting. For instance, one might better understand what properties are taxed and what property taxes do. Then when somebody says they're going to give all that property tax money back to you, you'll be investigating where those dollars that used to come from property taxes are now going to come from ~~new~~. And the stakes for voting are so darn high right now. I won't tell you what to vote for, but if you don't vote, the results may be much worse than you imagined.

TB: What about branch research? How could a branch contribute?

RCR: Oh, my God. You certainly have some fields to explore. Take your school district from beginning to end and see who gets promoted. Why don't more women make the ranks of superintendent, even if they have doctorates? You could also look at the hiring and firing in one of your major corporations.

Another one is pay equity in your community. That might be a piece of research you did on your way to doing other financial topics for workshops. AAUW also took a good look at voting, and it did a solid piece on COVID relevant to medical care access. You could look at COVID in your state or county. Food security is another important issue to be researched very soon. Basically, look at whatever is most important in your community, pull data from over a five-year period. A lot of information is available through public records.

Here's another possibility through candidates' nights. The thing I've noticed at candidates' nights—and I've been to several—one, in particular, was set up by students. There were about three of them. They were on city council and school board and knew they had to answer the questions each round. Even if they had a couple of points that they repeated, they answered the questions they were asked. These people were freshmen to seniors [in college], and they did a marvelous job. All the candidates came, as well as two newscasters. When you get us back to being able to ask legitimate questions and get legitimate answers everybody wins. Students might be eager to do that!

TB: What are the topics that you want the AAUW to lobby our state government about?

RCR: That's the right word. Also, "testify." I'm trying to respond to the testimony piece. I've connected with the Red Wine and Blue group for nonpartisan voting. Now the focus seems to be school financing, also school education in general, also gerrymandering. But with gerrymandering, recently the state dropped the hearings 24 hours before they were going to have them, so they didn't make it easy to give our voice. Things might be opening back up now; however, that doesn't mean everybody wants your voice. But I've gotten into the pipeline, and I'll call on AAUW members and friends if the issues are relevant to them, so it's a matter of building on that.

TB: Connected to this, our local League of Women Voters had new member orientation this year. Would that be of use to AAUW?

RCR: There might a need for that. If somebody finds their way to me in our area, I send them everything about what I'm doing. Just to hear us out and for them to see what they can do along with me. The issue of how you keep members is tied to that. We might also need name tags, and maybe even icebreakers to start the meeting. I haven't gotten to the new member orientation piece, but I need to.

TB: Well, that can be down the road.

RCR: It makes great sense even though I haven't gotten to it yet.

TB: What do you see, then, as the future of AAUW?

RCR: I'm working hard because I think when National decided to make contact only with the State president, because, as they said, they don't care much about branches, *that was a mistake*. I've had branches ask me why they just can't stay a local organization, since they're not getting anything out of State and National.

That National/Branch separation—if you're going to do that and then send all these emails asking them for donations—it's very hard for the State to counterbalance that. Left to their own devices, the branches aren't being provided with an infrastructure from National, so they're not going to do things National asks them to do, such as provide data for the Five-Star Program. But we need the State and National: we need the lobbies; we need the numbers when we're speaking; we need policy updates. We needed them 20 years ago, and we need them now. Left to our own devices, we'll go under.

But I do think National is trying to turn this around, and I need to know more about what National is offering so we can take advantage of it. For instance, anyone who hasn't been with a branch for two years or more gets a free re-admit. There are also discounts for students, including undergraduate and doctoral. If National sees branches taking advantage of what they offer, then they're more likely to say, "Okay, we'll keep doing it." There's so much information out there about what leadership looks like today and how important relationships are and why women are leaving industries and other kinds of careers because you don't have that leadership. I'll keep reading about it and breaking bread with anyone who's willing to join me.

TB: Finally, what have you contributed to the AAUW that you are most proud of?

RCR: I am proud that I'm an active member. I give my time and energy to the AAUW missions at the local, state, and national levels. I intentionally work to rebuild the infrastructure of the organization so that it engages and supports all of us.

Submitted by Nancy Grace