

AAUW FALLS CHURCH FLASH

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PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

“Refusing to fall prey to fatalism is critical to the important task of saving democracy, the rule of law and a decent, stable world.”

2024 resolution: Save democracy, Wash. Post, Rubin, J. 12/29/2023

Dear Members,

Happy New Year! What have you resolved to change this year? What do you think AAUW FC branch should change? There is no dearth of suggestions. What do you find appealing?



Certain authors suggest that we reflect on the previous year and ask: what went well, what did I accomplish, how did my life improve, what goals did I abandon and why, and what do I wish I had spent more time doing? Others suggested ways to accomplish goals by setting “SMART” (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goals, writing them down and tracking behavior. Some favored adopting very specific goals: get 8 hours of sleep; start a gratitude journal; introduce a spiritual or meditative practice or period daily; write letters to 3 people in your life and let them know what they mean to you; buy a new bed pillow; or, talk or walk with a friend every day. (We resolve to write these newsletter messages more than 24 hours before the newsletter should be published.) Whatever you decide, we wish you a year of promise, happiness and a sense of accomplishment, and a year of enthusiastic participation in FC AAUW. With your fire, muscle and mental might, FC AAUW has made life better for many of our area citizens and we can continue to have a positive impact on our community if we raise our voices effectively together.

We are looking forward to the **SUNDAY, January 14, 2:00 p.m. program on desegregation in Northern Virginia libraries by Christopher Baruschak, archivist/librarian and author and Suzanne LaPierre, librarian and author.** Baruschak and LaPierre are co-authors of the book *Desegregation in Northern Virginia Libraries* (The History Press, 2023). The program will be held at the Falls Church Community Center. A gentle reminder that in both January and February, our branch meeting is traditionally held at 2:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month. Our February meeting will be on Feb. 11, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

There is an interesting opportunity that has come to our attention, which we would like to discuss at our January 14 branch meeting. We have been invited by AAUW National and VA Tech Innovation Campus to sponsor a Saturday morning **STEM session** for five high school girls. The program would be led virtually and the kits to build a sensor used in the backup cameras in cars are provided. I believe the only expense we would incur would be for the room rental, and of course our time. Please think about this prior to our meeting later this month.

FUNDRAISING RESULTS! The Falls Church AAUW Branch Christmas tree sold for \$100 and an additional \$21 was donated. Thank you, crafty Clare O’Sheel, for all you did to obtain and decorate the tree, put it in place, and deliver it to the winner (SZ)! Also, many, many thanks to Sarah John and Aida for organizing the

profitable FC AAUW pop-up book sale held on Dec. 9 and the volunteers who worked with them. The rescheduled **FC AAUW jewelry sale** on Saturday, December 16, 2023 at the Falls Church Farmer's Market was also successful. Please thank Bunny Jarrett and Mary Ellen Gannon for all their efforts, and those that worked at the sale with them.

Remembering all members' contributions that sustain our branch, first, thank you, Susan Conklin, for the holiday lunch you organized on December 2. It was fun to catch up with everyone, and prepare a donation for The Graham Road Elementary School, which was delivered within days of our luncheon.

Thanks again to Pam Martinov and Clare O'Sheel for this newsletter, working again just when everyone else is taking a snooze! Thank you also to all the volunteer fundraisers! (Some of you have done so much, you could turn professional.)

Happy New Year,
Aida Loomis and Sharon Zackula
Co-Presidents
AAUW Falls Church Area Branch

We are only as strong as our membership. If we want to make a difference and have an impact on policies that are important to us, we cannot let up on building our branch. Please help by inviting a friend to come to the January 14 program, another program or an AAUW movie or book group. Consider asking a friend to join AAUW. Explain to your friends the many aspects of AAUW and the positive contributions of AAUW to the community, the state, and the nation.

BRANCH MEETING FALLS CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2:00 PM



Desegregation In Northern Virginia is the topic for our January 2024 program presented by Chris Barbuschak and Suzanne LaPierre. The program will be held January 14, 2:00 pm at the Falls Church Community Center. Chris Barbuschak is an archivist/librarian in Fairfax County Public Library. He gets paid to do what he loves: highlighting Northern Virginia history and genealogical quests. Suzanne LaPierre is a Virginia Specialist Librarian with Fairfax County Public library and co-author with Chris of the book *Desegregation in Northern Virginia Libraries* (The History Press, 2023).

During the Jim Crow era, many public libraries were segregated. Public libraries play a fundamental role in
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communities by providing free education resources, boosting literacy and knowledge, and serving as a place of refuge. Despite this, many were inaccessible to Black residents and continued to resist integration even after the landmark cases *Brown V Board of Education* in 1954. Discover the truth about barriers imposed on the Black community and learn about the citizens-turned-activists who used protests and lawsuits to achieve more equitable library services in Northern Virginia. Their legacy resonates today as libraries continue to evolve and embrace more inclusive practices.

Susan Conklin
Vice President, Programs

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, February 11 at 2:00 pm: Branch program featuring three women entrepreneurs discussing the challenges and rewards of running your own business.

Reston-Herndon AAUW Program

Human Trafficking

Jeremy Nusbaum from Reset180 became aware of the problem of Human Trafficking in Northern Virginia after having previously worked to combat human trafficking in Thailand. He will discuss with us what the problem is, and how Reset180 works through awareness, education, prayer, and prevention efforts. They work to prevent and disrupt human trafficking and restore the survivor through trauma-informed wrap-around case management. Jeremy will tell us what we can do to combat this terrible problem. Our meeting will be held on **February 1 at 4:00 pm** via zoom. We hope you will join us to learn and then take action. Contact Cyndi at cyndi9817@gmail.com for the zoom link.



PUBLIC POLICY UPDATES

Virginia General Assembly

The Virginia General Assembly will convene on **January 10, 2024**. With 33 new members in the House of Delegates and 17 in the Senate, the 2024 General Assembly will not have the long-time experience of the previous Session, but it appears that it may be more supportive of AAUW-VA's legislative priorities. In preparation for AAUW-VA action during the new Session, the Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy will hold a **Zoom meeting on January 4, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.** to discuss legislative priorities and provide members with detailed information on which bills AAUW-VA will be supporting and how to communicate to legislators AAUW-VA's position on these bills. The link to this important meeting will be provided in an email as soon as it is available.



Lobby Day

AAUW-VA Lobby Day events in Richmond include a **Women Legislators Reception on January 30 at 5:00 pm** and an in-person **Lobby Day on January 31, 2024**. There will also be a Virtual Lobby Day on **February 28**. More details will be provided about activities on the 28th as they become available.

To assist with the planning and preparation of materials for Lobby Day, please fill out a quick poll by clicking: [AAUW-VA 2024 Lobby Day Events](#). **All members are asked to complete this poll**, even if they will not be attending the in-person Lobby Day as the poll will let AAUW-VA determine which legislators represent our members.

For those members who plan to attend the Reception on the 30th and would like to stay overnight, AAUW-VA has reserved a limited number of rooms with two queen beds at the Hampton Inn in Richmond for the night of January 30 at the special rate of \$149 plus taxes and fees. To reserve one of these rooms, call 877-213-8074 and ask for the AAUW-VA room block for January 30 at the downtown Richmond Hampton Inn.

If you are planning to participate in Lobby Day and will be driving to Richmond or are interested in riding with someone, please email Marilyn Falksen at fcaauwpublicpolicy@gmail.com, so that we can try to arrange carpools.

Update on Reproductive Rights in Grayson County

AAUW of Virginia was part of a coalition that defeated a proposed ordinance in Grayson County Virginia that would have made the county a “sanctuary for the unborn.” The ordinance would have denied women in the county access to abortion care. The drive for the ordinance was spearheaded by outside conservative groups and was seen by these groups as a test case. The ordinance mirrored much of the legislation in Texas.

Denise Murden, Co-Vice President for Public Policy, testified at the December hearing where the ordinance was defeated. Lane Stone, President, and Sarita McCoy Gregory, Administrator, filed a letter with the Board of Supervisors of Grayson County opposing the ordinance. The testimony and letter are included in this newsletter.

I’m Denise Murden and I’ve traveled here from Suffolk, VA, to speak on behalf of the 1,000 members of the American Association of University Women of Virginia who support our sisters and brothers in Grayson County who oppose this board’s attempts to force people to continue a pregnancy against their will. I am sending a letter from AAUW of Virginia, signed by our state President, confirming our opposition to this ordinance.

The proposed abortion ban before you tonight is designed to control, dehumanize, and criminalize women. Should you pass it, you will find yourselves in the company of one of the world’s most notorious Communist dictators, Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, whose policies of banning abortions and policing women’s bodies for more than two decades never achieved his intended objective of increasing the country’s birthrate; his policies simply ensured that more than 10,000 women died, and Romania’s maternal mortality rate rose to the highest in Europe with 87 percent of maternal deaths attributed to complications from illegal abortions. Women who were hospitalized for complications from abortions or even suspected abortions were left to die if they would not implicate themselves or others. Women who had unauthorized abortions, most of them already mothers, and those who performed or help procure them were incarcerated. Medical providers were forced to choose between their own freedom from jail and saving women’s lives.

The abortion ban, which was accompanied by lack of access to contraceptives and a mandate that every woman under the age of 45 bear five children, also led to the warehousing of hundreds of thousands of children who were turned over to state orphanages when their economically strapped families could not afford to feed more mouths. Women came to think of their reproductive lives as “the enemy within.”

The results of Romania’s decades-long efforts to control women’s bodies are well documented, but I witnessed them for myself when I traveled there in 1991 and again in 1993 to adopt my daughter from one of the orphanages. The culture of fear that the ban and other repressive measures that Ceausescu imposed on the people was still palpable. Friends, neighbors, even family members had not been able to fully confide in one another for 23 years, an entire generation. Imposing a ban on abortion demands surveillance and policing of women’s bodies and that included Secret Police questioning and often criminally charging a web of loved ones and friends. After Ceausescu’s execution on Christmas Day in 1989 and a nearly immediate rescission of the

abortion ban, trust among people was slow to build and communities struggled to come together for the common good even though their despised, repressive leader was gone.

Is this the result you seek to achieve with this ordinance? To emulate a Communist dictator? To alienate family members and friends and rip Grayson County communities apart? Americans are proud of their freedom, but we aren't truly free unless we can control our own bodies, lives, and futures. In a democracy, we expect that everyone will be free to follow their own beliefs, moral code and conscience. Our laws should protect our rights, not control and dehumanize us, nor is it your job as county board supervisors to punish or shame those who decide to have or support an abortion. All people should be able to control their own bodies, so I urge you to vote no on this ordinance and commit to a future where Grayson County communities are thriving and everyone has the freedom to control their own bodies, safely care for their families, and live with dignity.



13 December 2023

Grayson County, VA Board of Supervisors
c/o Stephen Boyer, Grayson County Administrator
P.O. Box 217
Independence, VA 24348

Dear Grayson County Board of Supervisors:

We are writing today on behalf of the 1,000 members of American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Virginia. Our national organization was founded in 1881 and AAUW-VA was founded 98 years ago. Yes, we've been around the block a few times, advocating for the rights of women and girls. Plainly, abortion access is vital to women's ability to control their lives, bodies, and futures, but my purpose in writing today is not to try to sway you to the (smaller government) pro-choice stance.

Rather, I'm writing to you as a Virginian. We understand that you are struggling against groups from outside the state who care more about Grayson County being a test case, than the welfare and rights of the women you represent in your public capacity.

We implore you to stand up for the women in Grayson County and vote against the criminal ordinance.

Denise Murden, AAUW-VA Public Policy Co-VP, from Suffolk, will be at the December 14 public hearing. We are all available to discuss this with you or your staff at your convenience.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lane Stone'.

Lane Stone, President, AAUW-VA, Alexandria, VA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dr. Sarita McCoy Gregory'.

Dr. Sarita McCoy Gregory, Administrator, AAUW-VA, Yorktown, VA

FUNDRAISING UPDATES



Holiday Accessory Sale – December

The Sun came out on December 16, shining on our efforts to raise money for Women’s Scholarships for local high schools. Although, a bit nippy in the beginning, we were warmed by the crowd flocking to the tables, and enjoyed reaching out to all the participants.

At the last counting, we raised over \$1100 towards the scholarship fund, and have enough goods left over for a Spring sale, possibly closer to Mother’s Day. Along the way, we learned a few lessons and discovered we could have kept selling all day.

Thank you to The Falls Church Farmer’s Market (Jennifer Brady), to our donors (customers loved the vintage), and to our wonderful volunteers. Who knew we had such talented sales ladies? From dispensing fashion advice, negotiating sales, purchasing some of the treasures, and providing good cheer, you were great!

Bunny and Mary Ellen

December POP UP Book Sale

When approached about whether to have a Pop-Up Book Sale in December, the answer was why not! After that we started to ask the hard questions, did we have enough books to make it work? Last spring, we decided to save all holiday books for a possible pop up in the Fall. We also had some unique books, including pop ups and several boxes of paperback fiction books that did not sell in May. Along with member and friend donations of new used books we were all systems go!

Thank you to members and friends who helped with donations or worked during the sale. Your efforts paid off. We earned approximately \$800.

Aida and Sarah John



DUES NEWS!

HEADS-UP FOR 2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES & RENEWALS

Up until this year, branch memberships always expired on June 30 so, for most of us our AAUW membership will expire 6/30/24. But things changed last year – for newer members, your expiration date will be one year from the time you officially joined.

Several branch members joined during the first quarter of 2023 and should renew their annual membership in March 2024. However, you can renew at any time prior to the expiration date. You'll want to stay up-to-date on programs and activities and continue to receive *The Flash!*

The total annual dues amount is \$105.00 composed of National membership dues \$72, (of which \$69 is tax-deductible). State dues are \$15.00 and FCAAUW branch dues \$18.00. AAUW national life membership is \$1,440 and is fully tax deductible.

Current membership status is when you are within the 12 months of membership from start/join date to end/expire date. **Grace** is 90 days after the end/expire date where a member can still renew without an official lapse in the membership.

For renewing members, as long as you renew within your grace period which is three months after your expiration date, you maintain your current expiration date.

Ways you can renew:

You can mail a paper check as in past years. **Or** you can self-renew online.

Advantages of self-renewal:

- You can pay by credit or debit card – no need to write a check.
- You will save yourself an envelope and postage stamp.
- It will take effect immediately – no waiting for your check to clear.
- You can renew anytime – membership will extend 1 year from your current expiration date.

How to use the online system:

- You will need an email address in the AAUW database and a password.
- Go to my.aauw.org and log in. The first time you log in, you'll need to set or re-set your password by clicking the "Forgot Password" Link. After that, click the "Log In" at the top right corner of the website aauw.org.
- In a few steps, you can find your name, click to renew, and enter your payment info.
 - Note – you will be renewing as a "national" member unless you choose to become a lifetime member. If you are a dual member, please be sure to choose both (all?) your branches and states – you'll be able to designate which is the primary affiliation.
- You will immediately get an email confirming the renewal and payment.

What if I don't have an email address or don't want to go online?

- We will process your renewal for you if you send a check made out to "FCAAUW".

Mail to: Linda Lawrence, Treasurer, 410 S. Maple Ave. #444, Falls Church, VA 22046

MOVIES & BOOKS

Let's Go to the Movies

Susan is recovering from bronchitis and has discovered no movies this first week of the year that tempt her to leave her bed, so watch your emails because once she's back on her feet you know she will be planning some great movies and lunches. In the meantime, she welcomes ideas and suggestions for movies you would like to see!



Virtual Movie Club

Wednesday January 24 at 7:00 PM
May December



The virtual film group opens 2024 with **May December** which stars Oscar winners Nalalie Portman and Julianne Moore. The 2023 film is about Elizabeth (Natalie Portman), an ambitious, professionally charming actress who travels to meet and observe the woman she's about to play in a docudrama. Gracie (Julianne Moore) now lives quietly with her husband Joe (Charles Melton) and their children. But decades earlier, they were at the center of a tabloid news scandal and criminal case.

Watch **MAY DECEMBER** on Netflix streaming. Join the group on zoom on Wednesday January 24th at 7:00 PM. Please call or text Aida at 703 966 8050 if you are interested in joining any of our film discussion evenings. All are welcome!

Upcoming Attractions:
February 28, **Rustin** (Netflix)
March 27 TBD

Book Club



Book group will meet by Zoom on Tuesday, January 16 at 7:30 pm. Members will share what books they received as holiday gifts and their suggestions for what to read in February. Contact Anne Baxter (vabaxter@verizon.net) if you have any questions.

JANUARY CALENDAR

January 4, 6 pm: Zoom meeting to prepare for the 2024 VA legislative agenda

January 14, 2 pm: Branch meeting, Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church

January 16, 7:30 pm: Book Club, Zoom

January 24, 7 pm: Virtual Movie Night, Zoom

January 30-31: VA-AAUW Women's Legislative Reception and Lobby Day



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 based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

