

January 2025

Celebrating 100 Years of AAUW in Monmouth!

Presidents' Report

Carolyn Weber

Dear Friends,

Today I celebrate LIFE. Life of my son and his wife. Life of my two grandchildren. Life of their two dogs. They evacuated their home when the Palisades fire was already spreading and early enough to avoid the last minute rush to outrun the fire pushed unpredictably by Santa Ana winds.

Now only chimneys stand as sentinels reaching up to the sky, marking places where life once throbbed, a moonscape entirely devoid of basketballs thumping in driveways. No dogs out for a walk. Or deer, owls, foxes, and coyotes roaming the canyons under a full moon. Butterflies, songbirds, and bees searching for nectar have vanished. So much vaporized without a trace.

While I am celebrating the living, so many others here, there, and across the globe are mourning the loss of untold numbers of loved ones whose bright eyes beamed with hope and a future, and then dimmed by addictions, or human trafficking for another's addiction, domestic violence or the black hole of warfare and mass graves dotting the landscape or school yards converted to unmarked graves of First Nations children who were stripped of their honor and all that they held sacred.

Untold numbers of children, teachers, uniformed guardians of peace, women and men of every race and creed whose lives abruptly end by a bullet, bomb, or vehicle; untold numbers of unhoused folks slip through the cracks, lives and hopes shredded by PTSD or unimaginable trauma, pain and loss; untold numbers of enslavers squeeze every drop of life and worth and meaning from those they enslave not only during the 18th and 19th centuries, but also today in 21st century environments, suburbs, and affluent settings.

We in AAUW are called to listen, look, and reach out to, befriend and partner with so many more than educated persons. So many brilliant persons

have not had the opportunities for almost any kind of education; yet they may be creating and sustaining loving, kind, and compassionate environments where imagination and creativity can be nurtured that brings such joy to those around. Our January 24 3:30-4:30 pm meeting in the Warren County Public Library is one such opportunity for us to invite many people of all ages to hear a message of empowerment when it was thought that all hope was lost. May your 2025 be blessed with peace, love, and joy! Carolyn




SEE PAGE 2 for January 24th meeting details. During this Centennial year of our Branch, we will be reaching out to the community to build new relationships.

Rada Report

Rada orders from 5 people in December netted our branch \$\$135.11! Thank you to all who submitted orders. This will bring our treasury total to \$267.33. The easiest way to order, anytime during the year, is to google Monmouth Area AAUW to get to the branch website, and then link to Rada through the RADA CUTLERY FUNDRAISER tab on the home page.

*Marilyn Van Ausdall Current Finance Officer
Monmouth Area Branch*





**Carey Jones & Winston
LeaderDog
Informational Class
Hear Carey's
empowerment through
LeaderDog Winston
Friday, January 24
3:30-4:30pm
Warren County Public Library
All Ages Welcome**

AAUW
monmoutharea-il.aauw.net

**LEADER DOGS
FOR THE BLIND**
leaderdog.org

**Warren County
Public Library**

**Carey has 30+ yrs as an
Exercise Instructor for the
Warren County YMCA, is
legally blind & owns leader
dog Winston. Carey will share
her inspiring story of
personal empowerment
through the leaderdog.org
program.**

“Plan to attend this January 24, 2025, 3:30-4:30 pm Monmouth Area AAUW Branch meeting that we’re cosponsoring with the Warren County Public Library during our Centennial Celebration to reach out to the community. Invite your friends and family to come. All ages are welcome.”



Book Group
Marilyn Van Ausdall

Book group will be Zooming on Thursday, January 30, starting at 10 am. We’ll be discussing Let Us Descend by Jesmyn Ward.

- From NPR: *Let Us Descend* describes a journey from the rice fields of the Carolinas to the slave markets of New Orleans and into the fearsome heart of a Louisiana sugar plantation. A journey that is as beautifully rendered as it is heart wrenching, the novel is “[t]he literary equivalent of an open wound from which poetry pours.”
- OPRAH’S BOOK CLUB PICK • Instant *New York Times* Bestseller • Named one of the best books of 2023 by *The Washington Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Boston Globe*, *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and more.

Public Policy Updates

AAUW STATEMENT RE: DO NO HARM V. AAUW WASHINGTON, D.C. – Regarding the settlement of the recent lawsuit by Do No Harm about AAUW’s Focus Group Professions Fellowship, see the following statement from Gloria L. Blackwell,

AAUW’s CEO:

“AAUW is proud of the work we do to empower and fund women’s education. For more than 135 years, AAUW has worked to eliminate barriers to women’s educational access and economic opportunity.

“Through its Focus Group Professions Fellowship, AAUW sought to eliminate the historic and systemic barriers underrepresented groups face to access the same professional careers as their white counterparts, barriers that also keep healthcare disparities higher for communities of color.

“America’s physicians are nearly 64% white, while only 2.8% are Black women and 2.4% are Latina women. Research shows bias and the lack of physicians of color may have a direct correlation to disparate health outcomes plaguing communities of color. For example, the CDC reports Black women face the highest levels of maternal mortality in the U.S., being three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women.

“While AAUW remains committed to achieving equity for women and girls, we acknowledge that recent Supreme Court decisions have changed how we must fight for equity. Rather than using the considerable resources this lawsuit would have consumed, AAUW has agreed to remove race as a criterion for its Focus Group Professions Fellowship.

“We will not pretend the playing field is even for all. At a time when equity initiatives face unparalleled attacks, AAUW remains committed to our mission of empowering women — including women of color — through research, education, and advocacy.”

HOT OFF TODAY’S PRESS

RE: TITLE IX

AAUW Denounces District Court’s Decision to Vacate 2024 Title IX Rules January 9, 2025

Decision makes it easier for schools to dismiss cases harder to hold perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault accountable; more difficult for survivors to get the protections they need.

WASHINGTON — AAUW (American Association for University Women) today denounced the decision by the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Kentucky to vacate the updated Title IX rules released in April 2024. The decision makes it easier for schools to dismiss cases, harder to hold perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault accountable, and more difficult for survivors to get the protections they need.

“This ruling is a direct attack on students nationwide,” said AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell. “The U.S. District Court has just made it harder for America’s most vulnerable students to report their harassment and seek protection.”

The 2024 Title IX rules increased protection for student survivors of sexual harassment and assault and ensured equal education opportunities for pregnant, parenting, and LGBTQ+ students. The court’s decision reverts Title IX back to rules instituted by former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, which fail to respond to the reality of sexual harassment and violence in schools.

Title IX, part of the Education Amendments of 1972, empowers students with the right to report misconduct, seek justice, and access resources to continue their education without fear or disruption. Upholding Title IX ensures campuses remain spaces where equity and respect are cornerstones of the academic and social experience.

“Students deserve to be in inclusive, welcoming learning environments — not to be political pawns,” said Blackwell. “AAUW is prepared to fight on behalf of all students, who deserve protection regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race or ethnicity, and parenting status.”

Profile on New Monmouth AAUW Member – Mary Ann Sturek

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Although an AAUW lifetime member, Mary Ann Sturek returns as a branch member after twenty years of just being a member in name only. Born, raised, educated, and life-long citizen of Omaha, Nebraska, she joined AAUW and the Omaha Inc. Branch almost fifty years ago. With an undergraduate degree in English and a teaching certificate from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1969, she was in her early days of her 33-year career as an educator in the Omaha's Westside Community Schools when her friend (of over 60 years), President Carolyn Weber, filled out the form and said to attach the membership fee. It was the right time to join this amazing organization.

She cherishes the rewarding experience of hosting seven Japanese college students from Omaha's sister city in a program through Creighton University and stays connected with some of them. The importance of IFUW became real to her and was solidified as she represented Nebraska AAUW when Stanford University hosted IFUW in 1994.

She enjoys reading, traveling, staying connected with a large extended family, and being an amateur flower gardener. With a certificate in Floral Design, she creates floral arrangements for family and friends. Another creative outlet is designing personalized greeting cards (birthday, anniversary, etc.) as special gifts.

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Her teaching career began at the junior high level for ten years, continued for six years at the district level initiating as Executive Secretary the Nebraska Consortium which still networks school systems across the state and as Co-Director of the Gifted Program, nurturing potential and breaking through school walls to connect students to learning in various venues of the community. The remainder of her career was spent at the high school level teaching various English courses and being team leader for honors courses and Humanities.

After earning her Masters in Secondary Education in English with an emphasis on curriculum

development, she spearheaded many revisions and additions of courses. Being a lifelong learner, additional education took her to St. Peter's College in Oxford, Carnegie Mellon, and the Catholic University, etc. mainly focusing on various aspects of the humanities.

COMMUNITY-BASED HIGHLIGHTS

She has served on the executive boards of the Omaha Children's Museum, the Nebraskans for Peace, the Friends of the Omaha Public Library, and the League of Women Voters at the state and local level as secretary, Education Director, and Director of Voter Registration and Representative at Immigration ceremonies. Currently, she serves as Secretary for the Edwards Foundation which grants scholarships to college students and as a Director of the Cultural Society of the Omaha Polish Home Inc. which grants scholarships to Polish descendants planning to attend a Catholic high school. She also enjoys judging for the Omaha Public Library's Creative Writing Contest for students in grades 5-8.

Since her retirement she has volunteered for Omaha Performing Arts as an usher which allows her to feed her soul through experiencing fine arts productions.

AAUW HIGHLIGHTS

Being a member for nearly 50 years, she was able to serve at both the branch and state levels in various roles including Branch Program V-P and President and Nebraska State Cultural Interests AR and Nebraska State President. In 1981 she celebrated the Association's 100th Anniversary in Boston. She is most proud of being State President bringing to the Association Convention a resolution addressing the Moral Majority that was adopted. Second would be the Nebraska activities initiating the Association's Shortchanging Girls Shortchanging America.

Seeking to be at the grassroots level to more directly contribute to achieving AAUW's goals, she is now a member of the Monmouth Branch, even though she lives in Omaha. Technology allows this.

There is no more appropriate way to think about AAUW's foresight in empowering women and girls than to end this with the following poem:

A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE:

In Praise of Mystery: A Poem for Europa by Ada Limon

*Arching under the night sky inky
with black expansiveness, we point
to the planets we know, we*

*pin quick wishes on stars. From earth,
we read the sky as if it is an unerring book
of the universe, expert and evident.*

*Still, there are mysteries below our sky:
the whale song, the songbird singing
its call in the bough of the wind-shaken tree.*

*We are creatures of constant awe,
curious at beauty, at leaf and blossom,
at grief and pleasure, sun and shadow.*

*And it is not darkness that unites us,
not the cold distance of space, but
the offering of water, each drop of rain,*

*each rivulet, each pulse, each vein.
O second moon, we, too, are made
of water, of vast and beckoning seas.*

*We, too, are made of wonders, of great
and ordinary loves, of small invisible worlds,
of a need to call out through the dark.*

(The poem was attached to the side of the Europa Clipper mission spacecraft, and is traveling to Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, which scientists believe might contain life, as water has been detected there. The Library of Congress released the poem on June 1, 2023 in celebration of the poem's engraving on NASA's Europa Clipper, launched October of 2024.)

**THANKS TO BCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KRISTYNE GILBERT, AAUW BRANCH
MEMBER/FINANCE OFFICER, AND
CONGRATULATIONS ON HER FUTURE!**

Kristyne,

When my closest Monmouth friend Peggy Kulczewski passed nearly six years ago, I decided to stay in Monmouth because of the BCA and the YMCA.

You have certainly put Monmouth on the arts map with so many innovations and success in sharing your vision with large and small donors and key community folks who have been essential in carrying it out.

You have done a stellar job in every way here in Monmouth. Congratulations to you and your husband Duane for pursuing what each of you loves to do so well in this next leg of your journeys! Our Monmouth Area AAUW Branch is extremely grateful for the BCA partnership with the AAUW Art Presenter program over many years and welcoming it fully into your programming 10+ years ago.

We also thank you for your active role in this Branch during Covid and more recently in the preparation and execution of the Centennial Celebration June 1 of last year. You have truly blessed us all mightily in so many ways and we will miss you!

Gratefully yours,
Carolyn B. Weber
President
Monmouth IL Area Branch



WE'RE INVITED!

**AAUW Jane Addams Online Branch
Program: "Travel Experience as a
Solo Woman"**

Wed January 22, 7 pm

**Presenter: Maria Manhart, an
experienced international traveler for
40 years.**

**Are you worried about traveling
safely as a solo woman traveler? You
can get good advice from an
experienced traveler. The program
includes preparation tips, tour
provider recommendations, and
examples of savvy, exciting traveling
experiences. Get answers to all your
questions.**

Register:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAv-](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAv-2urDgiHdPuB8oSx_opcxhNkYswIngX)

[2urDgiHdPuB8oSx_opcxhNkYswIngX](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAv-2urDgiHdPuB8oSx_opcxhNkYswIngX)

Questions? Contact

aauwJaneAddams@gmail.com



Mission Statement: AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

Vision Statement: AAUW will be a powerful advocate and visible leader in equity and education through research, philanthropy, and measurable change in critical areas impacting the lives of women and girls.

Value Promise: By joining AAUW, we belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance.

Association Web site: www.aauw.org

AAUW-Illinois Web site:

<http://aauw-il.aauw.net/>

Monmouth Branch Web site:

<http://monmoutharea-il.aauw.net/>

AAUW Initiative Editor: Sharon Gilbert,

sharon711gilbert@comcast.net

