

Presidents' Report

Carolyn Weber

April 2025 President's Letter – Take a Pause

Dear Friends,

As spring buds are bursting into flower and the weather forecasters are predicting the tug of war between late winter and summer temperatures and storms, we each are noticing our internal temperatures as we are bombarded by 24/7 newscasts on television and in our social media feeds.

I have learned over the years following January 1995 when I first became acquainted with the labyrinth at my seminary, that the labyrinth is a sheltering place within which one can release pressures, pay attention to each step and breath taken, and receive the gift/s it holds.¹

When I was called to serve the Presbyterian and United Methodist Churches in Oneida IL, it was suggested that the large grassy area south of the Presbyterian Church would be the perfect place to create a grass labyrinth measuring 86 feet in diameter and so it was dedicated on Mother's Day 2000. On 9-1-1 when the NY Trade Towers were struck, I found myself out on the labyrinth, walking those familiar paths to release the fear and pent-up pressures resulting from a world that was crashing into pieces.

Last Sunday I was drawn to the Monmouth College Labyrinth to release much and spend solitary time noticing and giving thanks for each tiny thing I interacted with. Each gust of air. Each bird note sung. Each tiny bug or spider. Spring leaves and buds unfurling. These past several days I have returned to humming or whistling or softly singing

the words to familiar Taizé chants such as *Stay with me; remain here with me; watch and pray; watch and pray.* Or *Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, never dies away. Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, never dies away.*

As I spend greater amounts of time thinking and praying about the many whose lives, studies, and livelihoods are being crushed and torn apart, I am reminded that I must carry the light. I must beam out Light and Love wherever I go. Light and love each hold great healing power. And I must reach out to my legislators to speak up and defend what is right and just. I invite you to share in these life-giving endeavors to take the pause that refreshes. A giggle may turn into a belly laugh as we create puns and new words.

I also activate the schema of creative thinking by reading or listening to poetry; considering ideas penned by Margaret Wheatley. Living, praying, marching in community-each brings hope. May you experience the spring moon in the early morning hours. Creating collages, journaling. Even catching phrases concretizes the free-floating fear we may be feeling. Whether it's a labyrinth or a country road or a walk/bike around the neighborhood, may you know that all creation is ONE.
WE ARE ONE.

Grace and peace, Carolyn Weber

see Labyrinth article and picture on p. 3

SAVE THE DATE
for our Mid-Year Centennial Celebration
Brunch May 3rd 9-10:30 am at the Warren
County Public Library Board Room.
930-1030 am Zoom option for those who
cannot attend in person.
RSVP to Carolyn Weber at
joyfl66.weber@gmail.com – Indicate
Zoom or In-person attendance

One or two helpers needed.

Monmouth Area AAUW April Branch Meeting – PLEASE RSVP

to Carolyn Weber joyfl66.weber@gmail.com

Date: Earth Day Tuesday April 22, 4-6 pm

Come when you can.

Bring: an iPad or tablet or laptop.

Also bring the Presidents' email addresses of your personal alma maters

This is a working meeting. ALL Monmouth Area Branch members are urged to participate regardless of your distance from Monmouth (WI, IA, Omaha)

Location: Faith U. Presbyterian Church Meeting Room

Enter door by parking lot.

Purpose: With the current attacks on efforts to welcome all students and professors, along with the threats to federal funding at colleges and universities, our institutions are under threat. While many of them are continuing to work to create safe and welcoming communities, they are facing risks. We gather to reach out to our own colleges and universities and express support for their efforts, or concern for their withdrawal from these efforts. The visas of two WIU international students were cancelled earlier this week.

6 pm Gather at Maple City Restaurant for dinner. (optional)

7:30-8:45 Great Decisions Special Earth Day Event on our Climate (optional)



Taken last Sunday after worship at Faith UPC a few blocks away.



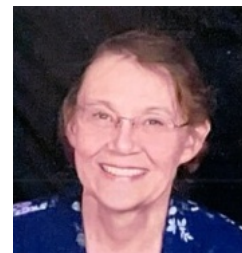
Book Group

Marilyn Van Ausdall

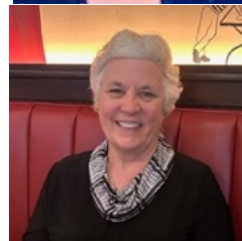
On Thursday, April 17 we will discuss In Thought, Word, and Seed: Reckonings from a Midwest Farm by Tiffany Eberle Kriner next Thursday the 17th. Zoom links will be sent out to anyone interested a few days ahead of that. Just let Marilyn know if you want to take part: vanausdm@gmail.com. Book discussion will begin at 10:00 that morning.



News from AAUW-IL 2025 AAUW-IL Convention April 25-26, 2025



Mary
Anne



Marilyn



Carolyn

Branch member Mary Anne Sturek will be driving from her home in Omaha to join her long-time friend, branch president Carolyn Weber. They then will travel together to our state AAUW convention at the Northfield Inn in Springfield. Marilyn Van Ausdall will be joining them from Oswego for the 2-day event which begins Friday, April 25, at 5 pm & ends Saturday afternoon at 3:30.

Friday's festivities will include dinner, a presentation by a special guest, and a reception hosted by state president Laura Desmarais. On Saturday, AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell will speak, our state lobbyist, Jenni Purdue, will update attendees on pending legislation, fun interactive presentations will take place, and branch accomplishments over the past year will be celebrated.

Besides CEO Gloria Blackwell and Lobbyist Jenni Purdue, other speakers at convention will be:

- **Dre Duvendack, M.A.** | Program Coordinator, Gender & Sexuality Student Services and Interim | Women's Center, University of Illinois-Springfield
- **Emerson Krasnican, BSW** | Gender and Sexuality Student Services Graduate Assistant, University of Illinois-Springfield
- **Charlotte J. Warren, PhD** | President, Lincoln Land Community College

- **Al Llorens** | President, Illinois Education Association

A service component is being added this year – feminine hygiene products will be collected and donated to a Springfield LGBTQ+ organization which works to help the central Illinois LGBTQ community. **Please bring a feminine hygiene product donation to our branch meeting on April 22 at Faith Presbyterian Church.**



Treasurer's Report –

We currently have \$303.33 in the account. Three members have already renewed their memberships and Geneen Gillen has rejoined!



Labyrinth

Inside the cover of the Vol.36 No. 2 Summer 2021 edition of the *Monmouth College Magazine* titled "For the Love of Legacy," I found a full page photo of the LUX students attending the 2021 LUX Summer Theological Institute for Youth and their director associate MC chaplain Rev. Jessica Hawkinson standing masked with the generous donors Jon Dahl '75 and his wife Barbara, who

donated the funds to construct the meandering contemplative path to provide the campus community with an outlet for meditation and spirituality. The photo is titled "Beginning a new path." Constructed of red and black pavers, the labyrinth is now located on the lawn behind Wallace Hall and may be traversed daily by visitors and area residents.].



Berklee Williams wins Best of Show



March 15, 2025 Berklee Williams won the overall Best of Show Award for her painting entitled "My Cooper". Berklee is a student at United Intermediate School and has loved creating art since she was a little girl.

This Kathy Lowe-Arthur Best of Show Award in the Buchanan Center for the Arts 56th Town and Country Art Show is particularly dear to all our hearts because it is given in Kathy Lowe-Arthur's name by the AAUW Monmouth Area Branch. Kathy has been a tireless "behind the scenes worker" for decades at the Buchanan Center for the Arts and in the AAUW Monmouth Area Branch.

Please note the black, blue and white Best of Show Ribbon with Kathy's name on it. Berklee's Award Certificate contains the following words in fine print: "for overall outstanding artwork within the entire exhibition. Sponsored by American Association of University Women."



Welcome back, Geneen Gillen



Hello. I am Geneen Gillen and I have been asked to write about myself. "Piece of cake" I said to myself, but after four days of trying to put together something that sounds coherent, I am realizing that this cake is hard! Between total knee replacement surgery, a compression fracture of my back, Type A flu, and RSV, I haven't had much contact with anyone or talked about myself. I have been a member of AAUW twice since around 1985. Marilyn Van Ausdall was instrumental in my joining the first time. She encouraged me to come to a meeting to discover what AAUW believed in and to meet new people. Even though I grew up in Monmouth, I really didn't know the AAUW members. I attended college at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois for my undergraduate degree and earned my master's degree at Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL.

After graduation, I taught 3rd grade in Fox Lake, IL and 5th grade and Kindergarten in Aledo, IL. After getting married, I taught 4th grade and Kindergarten for the Yorkwood School District.

At that time, AAUW seemed to be concentrating on women's education, women's right to a good job of their choosing with equal pay, and a safe work environment. While in AAUW, I held the positions of secretary and co-president with Alice Lawson. That's my AAUW history.

I retired from teaching in 2013. I had dropped out of AAUW when our children were young and in sports, but after retirement I realized that I had more time. So, I joined AAUW for the second time. This time our membership had shifted to Monmouth College and fewer members were Monmouth school teachers so it was interesting to get to know new people.

My proudest accomplishment has to be our children: Brandon, Tyler, and Amanda. All three live with their families in Zionsville and Whitestown, Indiana. Our oldest, Brandon, works for Corteva as a Technology Advisor. Our second son, Tyler, is a Turbine Aerothermal Specialist at Rolls Royce. He is an engineer for the internal turbine components of the Rolls Royce jet engine. Our youngest, Amanda, is a lawyer who works for KPMG accounting as a corporate tax law advisor.

My story wouldn't be complete without mentioning my husband, Dave. We live and farm 7 miles west of Monmouth. For years, he was a crop duster. That's my story! Thank you for reading it!

President's NOTE: Geneen, we're delighted to have you back and were so happy to see you at Sharon Gilbert's recent extraordinary portrayal of Frances Perkins, the first female United States Secretary of Labor! We're also pleased you're returning to our Adelanté Book Discussion interest group as we discuss Tiffany Eberle Kriner's In Thought, Word, and Seed: Reckonings from a Midwest Farm, next Thursday, April 17, by Zoom.

The Indomitable Frances Perkins

Frances, where are you when we need you?



**March 25, 2025
Monmouth College
Weeks House**

Sharon Gilbert

**AAUW Monmouth Area - IL
American Association
of University Women**

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DIRECTIONS

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230 S. Dearborn Street
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Chicago, IL 60604
p: 312.353.4952
8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Get Directions

SPRINGFIELD

525 S. 8th Street
Springfield, IL 62703
p: 217.492.4062
8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Get Directions

CARBONDALE

250 W. Cherry Street
Suite 115-D
Carbondale, IL 62901
p: 618.351.1122
8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Get Directions

ROCK ISLAND

1504 Third Avenue
Suite 227
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p: 309.786.5173
8:30 am to 4:30 pm

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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