



# Vision

of Virginia

Summer 2021

**AAUW** advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. AAUW, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.

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.

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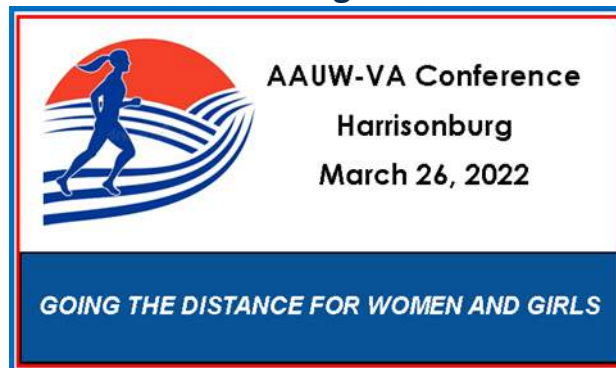
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## One Giant Step Towards the New Normal

Although this year has been a challenge for us all, our branches all around the Commonwealth did not lose sight of our mission. We never lost our stride. We continued to work to create a future where women from all walks of life not only survive but also thrive!

Now it is time to move toward the new normal and announce our **2022 AAUW of Virginia State Conference, hosted by the AAUW-VA Northwest District branches of Harrisonburg, Greater Richmond, and Winchester.** VP for Program **Nadine James** and Northwest District Representative **Sylvia Rogers** have already teamed up and started the planning.

### 2022 AAUW of Virginia Conference



#### Save These Dates

**Part 1- Saturday, March 26, 2022, in-person at the Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center Harrisonburg, VA**

**Part 2- Saturday, April 30, 2022, Virtual Annual Business Meeting**

**Part 1, on March 26,** is designed so members can come and go in one day if they want. What a pleasure it will be to return to the Hotel Madison, a place described by many branch members as the perfect location! It's located on the edge of the James Madison University campus and a five-minute walk from downtown Harrisonburg. For those who want to arrive the day before, there will be a block of guest rooms available at Hotel Madison at \$119 plus tax each. There will also be a welcome social event on the night of March 25, 2022, so we can all reunite. For those who want to turn this event into a mini-vacation, here is the link to [Harrisonburg Tourism](#), where you can find information about what to see and do in the area.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## AAUW of Virginia Elected Officers

- ◆ **Co-Presidents**  
Suzanne Rothwell  
Leslie Tourigny
- ◆ **Vice President  
for Program**  
Nadine James
- ◆ **Vice President  
for Membership and  
Branch Development**  
Cheryl Spohnholtz
- ◆ **Vice President  
for Finance**  
Marsha Melkonian
- ◆ **Co-Vice Presidents for  
Public Policy**  
Susan Burk  
Denise Murden
- ◆ **Vice President for  
Communications**  
Patsy Quick
- ◆ **Recording Secretary**  
Deborah Dodd

[https://aauw-va.aauw.net/  
contact-us/](https://aauw-va.aauw.net/contact-us/)

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

### VIRGINIA VISION

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Bianca Daugherty

## From your Co-Presidents



**Y**es, Virginia, there is a light at the end of the tunnel!

After doing the hard work of social distancing, wearing masks, and forever washing our hands, the availability of vaccines has led to multiple steps toward a more normal society, albeit not the same as we left it. A Happy AAUW New Year is on the horizon beginning on July 1.

There is no reason to revisit the challenges faced by society and our organization since March 11, 2020. It is time for us to move forward with the new normal. Although we missed human contact we were accustomed to, social distancing introduced us to virtual ways of communicating and connecting with others that allowed us to continue programs, often schedule speakers from far-off places that we could not have secured before, and share programs with members and non-members from anywhere in the world. We are confident that the future will embrace hybrid programming—virtual and in-person.

After the extremely successful virtual state conference over three days in March, the State Board decided to cancel the summer leadership meeting this year. VP for Program **Nadine James** plans to commence contacting branch program vice presidents during the summer to discuss their ideas for future state meeting programs and structures. Although the State Board will hold its July 31-August 1 board meeting virtually, we have taken a giant step forward by scheduling an in-person State Board meeting in Richmond on November 6-7.

As you see in the articles on the front page and on page 10,

**Nadine James** and Northwest District Representative **Sylvia Rogers** have been moving ahead at warp speed with planning for our 2022 state conference. We are excited to offer AAUW of Virginia's first hybrid event: one part in-person and the other part virtual. Please plan on attending both parts so you will be able to reconnect with old friends, meet new friends, listen to engaging speakers on mission-related subjects, and help conduct the business of our organization.

We are pleased to announce another year and an expansion of public policy mini-grants for FY 2022. The State Board increased the total amount for the mini-grant program another \$500 to \$2,000. Co-Vice-Presidents for Public Policy **Susan Burk** and **Denise Murden** have included the application details on page 4.

Finally, on November 2, we will be electing our Commonwealth's next governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general, all delegates in the House of Delegates, and local positions in some jurisdictions. Do not forget the important role branches and AAUW of Virginia can play in voter education, voter registration, and other Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities.

Best wishes to all for another great AAUW year.

*Suzanne and Leslie  
Co-Presidents*

### District Representatives

#### Northern

Sara Anderson  
Sandy Lawrence

#### Northwest

Sylvia Rogers

#### Southeast

Tammie Mullins-  
Rice

#### Southwest

Anita Aymer



## Public Policy



Virtual lobbying turned out to be the next best thing to being there. We learned a lot and significantly raised the profile of AAUW-VA statewide thanks to the efforts of our members to contact their legislators by email and phone. Notably, two delegates sought AAUW-VA's support for their respective bills (to require a review of mandatory computer science courses in VA schools and to authorize public bodies to conduct electronic meetings). We hosted a second virtual lobby team meeting at the end of the VA General Assembly

session to discuss the outcome, review lessons learned, and begin the process of identifying future priorities. We also agreed to hold quarterly Zoom meetings to coordinate our legislative priorities and plan activities for the coming year with interested members. We will continue our collaboration with **Virginia's Coalition for Paid Sick Leave** and are excited to announce that **AAUW-VA has now joined the Campaign for a Family, Friendly Economy (CFFE), VA**. The campaign's focus is on promoting a program of paid family and medical leave in the Commonwealth--a priority we share. **The next AAUW-VA Public Policy virtual meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2021, at 5:00 pm**, and will feature **Kristina Hagen**, Director, CFFE. A Zoom invitation will be sent out. All are welcome to join and hear more about how we can help advance paid family/medical leave in Virginia.

We continue to work with AAUW on the passage of national legislative priorities including the **Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 7)**, which would help close the persistent gender pay gap; removing the arbitrary deadline for ratifying the **Equal Rights Amendment (H.J. Res. 17)**; passing **The Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2021 (H.R. 1620)**; passing the **For the People Act of 2021 (H.R. 1)**, which would make it easier for people to vote in federal elections; ending congressional gerrymandering; and more. All these bills have now passed in the U.S. House of Representatives and await action in the U.S. Senate.



Become a Two-Minute Activist and let your congressperson and senator know your views on these and other AAUW legislative priorities. <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>.

*Susan Burk/Denise Murden  
Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy*

## 2021-22 Public Policy Mini-Grants – Let Your Creative Juices Flow

It is not too early to start thinking about mini-grant proposals for the coming year. You may draw inspiration by reviewing the 2020-21 awards profiled in the Winter/Spring 2021 *Vision*. In March 2021, the AAUW-VA State Board voted to allocate \$2,000 for the state mini-grant program this year, a \$500 increase over last year's original budget. Mini-grants are used to support branch projects that advance AAUW and AAUW-VA's public policy priorities including, but not limited to economic security for women and families, including closing the gender pay gap and supporting paid family/medical leave; Title IX, including eliminating campus sexual violence; access to health care; voting rights; human trafficking; and promoting STEM for girls. To the extent possible, projects should reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organization and objectives. Branches interested in applying for a public policy mini-grant must complete and apply online by going to this link: <https://aauw-va.aauw.net/mini-grants/>. **Applications are due no later than September 15, 2021. Decisions will be announced on or about September 22, 2021.** We have moved up the deadlines to allow branches more time to carry out their projects, which must be completed by June 30, 2022.

*Susan Burk/Denise Murden  
Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy*



## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

### Let's Leverage National's DE&I Toolkit!



The country and AAUW-VA continue to mature in our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) issues by raising awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement and Asian inequity issues. As continues to be true in our long history of working toward gender equity, we have been reminded by experts of DE&I that the work of changing ourselves, our communities, and our country to be more equitable is a lifelong effort, not one that is quickly resolved. We now have a tool provided by AAUW National that can accelerate our learning and actions – the AAUW DE&I Toolkit. Let us be sure we are leveraging it to the hilt!

The Toolkit was introduced last December. It is comprehensive in those aspects of DE&I that it covers, providing us with information, resources, and activities. AAUW National is enhancing it by providing webinars on each module of the Toolkit:

- [Introduction to the DE&I Toolkit](#) – December 10, 2020
- [Creating Diversity Structures and Planning for Success](#) – February 11, 2021
- [Scheduled for June 17: Key Terms and Concepts](#)

Each of these webinars provides an overview of a module of the DE&I Toolkit and ideas from experienced AAUW leaders about how to use it to enhance branch programming. Recordings of each webinar appears on the AAUW Website following each program.

Upcoming webinars in the remainder of 2021 and into 2022 include the following:

- Implicit Unconscious Bias
- Inclusive Spaces
- Allyship
- Intersectionality
- Social Justice

I hope that each branch leverages these webinars by using the programming ideas throughout the next year so that we have a common DE&I understanding. In support of the toolkit and webinars, AAUW-VA has scheduled a Zoom panel discussion on inclusiveness on Saturday, January 22, 2022, from 10 –11:30 am. I hope that each branch will use this as their January meeting, and each of you will join in the program.

Your DE&I point of contact has great ideas from across Virginia, including working on getting out the vote and providing children with books that include black and brown characters.

Many of our DE&I efforts have been conducted in collaboration with other like-minded organizations within our community. I encourage each of you to continue to search for these types of organizations with which to share and coordinate. Doing so will help us sew the fabric of our community into a closer and more empathetic place to be.

*Cyndi Shanahan  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair*

### Results are in!



Thank you to the 316 AAUW of Virginia members who voted in the recent **One Member One Vote Election** of state officers; that is 31% of our membership, and definitely meets the 7% quorum we needed.

Each candidate was elected with 99% or more of the vote. AAUW of Virginia 2021-23 officers for the following positions are:

- **Vice President for Finance - Marsha Melkonian**
- **Vice President for Membership and Branch Development - Cheryl Spohnholtz**
- **Recording Secretary - Sherry Warren**

Congratulations and thank you to these three members for volunteering to serve on the State Board!! We look forward to working with them in 2021-23.

Additionally, the proposed bylaws amendment to establish the elected position of **Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** on the State Board passed with 94.9% of the vote.

*Sandy Lawrence  
Voting and Elections Chair*

## College and University Partners Update



On March 25 we held a meeting of AAUW of Virginia branch college/university representatives. We were pleased to have **Suzanne Rothwell**, co-president of AAUW-VA, and **Sylvia Rogers**, Northwest District Representative, participate in the discussion. We appreciate their experience and input.

We received guidance from **Shannon Wolfe** at AAUW National in response to our question concerning how best to reconnect with higher education partners we lost this past year. **Shannon** reports that C/U partners are contacted annually to renew their memberships. AAUW reached out to partners several times this past year, but many have been unable to renew given financial considerations.

We inquired, also, about the potential impact proposed changes to name and membership requirements might have for our work in the coming year if the proposed bylaw amendment passed.

The group focused on best practices to engage students and faculty/staff members in the activities of AAUW branches. We considered the content and role a brief brochure or information sheet could play in that effort. Our goal is to have a publication available for use in the fall.

*Barbara Woodlee  
College/University Chair*

## Branches Need to Update Their Officer Information in MSD by June 30

**All branch presidents need to update information about their officers for July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, in the AAUW Member Services Database (MSD) no later than June 30, 2021.**

Here is how to do it:

Go to [aauw.org](http://aauw.org). In the top right corner click on "Membership." Then click on "Member Services Database (MSD)," followed by clicking on "Enter the MSD."

- From the menu on the left-hand side of the page, click on "State & Branch Officer Listing."
- Then click on "State/Branch Officer Maintenance."
- Below the words "Edit Branch Officer List," Select Term Year (2021-22), then click on "Edit." You will see the following 3 lines of directions, which may seem confusing:
  - ➔ **For officer roles not currently held, click to add officers.**
  - ➔ Use the corresponding "Officer" button at each officer role to replace an officer or to expire an officer's term.
  - ➔ Use the corresponding "Contact" button at each officer role to update an officer's contact information.

Use only the first line now ➔ **"For officer roles not**

**currently held, click to add officers."** Now click on "NEW." Since every name is new for the 2021-22 term year, **that is the box to click on, every time you add a board member.**

- Then you will select the "Position," then the "Person," from lists of member names that come up. It auto-fills contact info for selected members.
- You will also need to change the "Effective Date" to July 1, 2021.
- Then, click on "ADD."
- Once you have finished entering an officer, it will say "pending."

Each officer must be entered separately, and the process is the same for each officer you want to enter. (The page automatically pops back up to click on NEW after each one is completed.) It may seem like you only need to enter only the **newly** elected officers or **new** people in the position, but you need to separately add **everyone who will be on the board next year**. Unfilled positions can be added later as you determine who they will be.

Those other two lines in the directions are for editing contact info or editing when a position/person changes during the year.

*Leslie Tourigny, Co-President  
Patsy Quick, VP for Communications*

## ***Congratulations to Our First State Named Honorees***

Last year, the State Board decided to create a special honor for those in Virginia whose actions have had broad impact in furthering AAUW of Virginia's mission and priorities and who have provided outstanding or exceptional service to the state beyond the branch or local community. The committee sought nominations from past and current state board members and branches. We were pleased to receive more nominations than anticipated.

Three recipients stood out, and they were selected as the **first State Named Honorees**. The names were kept a secret and were revealed at the 2021 Annual Business Meeting. **Congratulations to Marion Stillson, Patricia (Trish) Wallace, and Neola Waller!**

**Marion Stillson** (Reston-Herndon Area) is honored for her outstanding leadership of more than 30 years, not only in her branch but also in numerous positions on the state board and on the national AAUW level. As 1994-96 state president, **Marion** assembled a diverse board in both ethnicity and age. On behalf of AAUW of Virginia, she was instrumental in alerting the U.S. Justice Department to the Homestead Resort's inaccessibility for wheelchairs, which resulted in the resort's remodeling. **Marion** also served at the national level as a diversity trainer and was twice elected by the national membership to the AAUW Board of Directors as public policy chair.

**Trish Wallace** (Greater Richmond) met the criteria of outstanding service with state-wide impact because of

her immense contribution in getting ERA ratified by the Virginia legislature. Crucial to our success, Trish was the head legal researcher and strategist in our coalition group, VARatifyERA. She determined ways for us to engage lawmakers, determined which newspapers statewide needed contact and arranged for our members to submit op-eds and letters, and organized special events. She continues to provide pro-bono service to three AAUW state affiliates in a suit in U.S. District Court against the Archivist of the U.S. for refusal to certify the ERA ratifications of Virginia, Illinois, and Nevada.

**Neola Waller** (Virginia Beach) is honored for 47 years of exceptional leadership at all levels of AAUW. Not only did Neola serve as state president 1998-2002, but she also served in six other positions on the board, including membership vice president and treasurer. As president, she conceived and headed Virginia's Diamond Donor Project in 2000, raising \$75,000 for the state's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In her last position, state historian, she took on the awesome task of four years' work, updating the history of AAUW of Virginia, last updated in 1970. At the national level, she served on the AAUW Educational Foundation Board. She also served on the national Legacy Circle Team from 2007-2020 and recruited 85% of the Legacy Circle members in Virginia.

*State Named Honorees Committee (Caroline Pickens, state AAUW Funds chair; Deborah Dodd, state board secretary; Leslie Tourigny, state co-president; Sherry Warren, Portsmouth Branch; Laura Wimmer, Greater Richmond Branch)*

### AAUW Funds

## **Success Despite It All**

**2020** was not a great year to be raising money for AAUW Funds, but our branches came through. Largely due to the cancellation of the three big used book sales, we could not reach the record \$86,451 raised in 2019. We still did outstandingly well with **\$71,104** in contributions to AAUW Funds from branches and members. A huge thank you and a pat on the back to all!

There was even a silver lining. Fourteen of our 24 branches contributed more in 2020 than in 2019. Kudos to **Arlington, Greater Manassas, Greater Richmond, Mt. Vernon, Newport News, Portsmouth, Reston-Herndon Area, Springfield-Annandale, Suffolk, Vienna Area, Virginia Beach, Winchester, Woodbridge, and Wytheville.**



*(Continued on page 8)*

The Top 10 Branches in contributions were **McLean Area** (\$15,688.50), **Mt. Vernon** (\$5,579.00), **Springfield-Annandale** (\$4,871.00), **Vienna Area** (\$4,324.00), **Reston-Herndon Area** (\$4,212.00), **Alexandria** (\$3,842.00), **Arlington** (\$3,649.00), **Virginia Beach** (\$3,558.00), **Greater Richmond** (\$3,449.00), and **Falls Church Area** (\$2,873.00).

The covid-19 virus is already impacting our fundraisers for 2021, but we can continue the successful fundraising we did last year. We can still have alternative fundraisers to support AAUW Funds and girls' and women's education and equity. See below for a list of some easy fundraisers, some of which are even lots of fun. Keep up the fundraising—and let's see if we can surpass that \$71,104 in 2021!

*Caroline Pickens  
AAUW Funds Chair*



### **2020-2021: A Year of Creative and Unique Fundraising Ideas**

**Our branches found many alternative ways to fundraise.  
Many may even be worth continuing.**

- **A VIRTUAL EVENT** instead of the real thing: **Fairfax City's** annual Book & Author Luncheon was held virtually, raising \$3,000. **Mt. Vernon** held an online raffle of baskets already filled for their in-person theatre fundraiser. **Springfield-Annandale** sold tickets for their virtual luncheon speaker and sold online auction items already collected.
- **HOLD A NON-EVENT.** First, send out a clever/cute invite to your non-event. For their Non-Event Event **Smith Mountain's** members bought tickets for a non-luncheon. **Greater Richmond** had a NO Wine Tasting with branch members donating what they would have spent on tickets, prizes, and wine.
- **CAN'T HAVE YOUR USUAL FUNDRAISER?** Ask members to donate the value of the work they will not have to do. **McLean Area** members contributed the value of the hours they would have spent sorting books, working at the book sale, and buying books.
- **DOUBLE YOUR MONEY.** **Suffolk** members were asked to double their annual donations to AAUW Funds. **Virginia Beach** members donated what they would have spent for the luncheon and sold car wash gift certificates—and donated the money to the Greatest Needs Fund when the national AAUW Board was matching donations. Clever!
- **GO NUTS:** Pecans are easy to sell because they are popular for baking and snacks and can be frozen. Best in the fall with the holidays approaching. Branches with successful sales recommend Georgia's Harrell Nut Company and Schermer's Specialty Pecans.
- **BASKET RAFFLE:** This is used by several branches. I particularly like **Reston-Herndon Area's** idea. They start with deciding on five theme baskets.
  - \* Gourmet Basket: wine, chocolates, jellies/jams, other boutique items.
  - \* Entertainment Basket: movie tickets and local casual dining gift certificates.
  - \* Body & Soul Basket: specialty soaps, bath lotions, spa/nail salon gift certificates.
  - \* Family Entertainment Basket: books and strategy games.
  - \* Child's Activity/Library Basket: children's books and strategy games.

There is an organizer (or two) for each themed basket. Members pick a basket and donate an item or cash to purchase items for the basket. Raffle or sell the baskets.

- **GIFT BAG:** **Harrisonburg** does a gift bag sale or an auction at their December holiday party. Everyone brings a bag with something in it of \$10 value, with the bag tied shut. Can be a book, a plant, a holiday decoration, anything. Attendees either bid for bags or buy them, they make \$200 or more, and everyone has fun.

*Caroline Pickens  
AAUW Funds Chair*

#### **When we are together again--**

- **BOTTLE RAFFLE:** At a branch meeting everyone brings a bottle of wine or gourmet salad dressing or olive oil. Sell raffle tickets. As a ticket is drawn, that person selects a bottle of wine, salad dressing, or olive oil. Continue drawing until all bottles are chosen.





## UPDATE ON VIRGINIA'S STARS!

**AAUW-Virginia is the very first state to achieve five stars.**

Congratulations to our nine star-winning Virginia branches in the **AAUW Five-Star National Recognition Program**. Suffolk is the most recent branch to have been awarded two stars in our Virginia constellation.

**FIVE STARS**

**Virginia Beach, Reston-Herndon Area, Springfield-Annandale, and Woodbridge**

**FOUR STARS**

**Alexandria, Mt. Vernon, and Vienna Area**

**TWO STARS**

**Suffolk**

**ONE STAR**

**Fairfax City**

We encourage branches to apply for stars **before the current program ends on June 30, 2021**, so that our national office will recognize their prior activities. To submit your application for one or more stars, go to [Five Star](#). Several of the stars can be achieved without further effort based on branch activities in 2019 through June 30, 2021; others require a few more actions to complete.

A new AAUW Five-Star National Recognition Program will commence after July 1, 2021. Branches will not lose stars earned under the current program. If you have questions – please contact me!

*Suzanne Rothwell  
Co-President*

## Wytheville AAUW Member Wins!

**Nancy Wills**, a member of the Wytheville Branch, submitted one of the eight winning paintings, **Blue Bottles**, featured on AAUW notecards! AAUW sponsors an annual art contest to give women artists the attention they deserve. Only 30% of artists represented by commercial galleries are women, and women working in arts professions are paid almost \$20,000 less per year than men.

After a 31-year career as a medical school physiology professor and research scientist, **Nancy** retired in 2015 and moved to the Blue Ridge Mountain region of Southwest Virginia to care for her elderly father. Shortly after arriving, she joined the Wytheville Branch. In the past five years, she has served as public policy chair and will become the branch treasurer in July 2021. She has particularly enjoyed contributing to the annual STEM training event for middle school girls as well as the other activities of the branch.



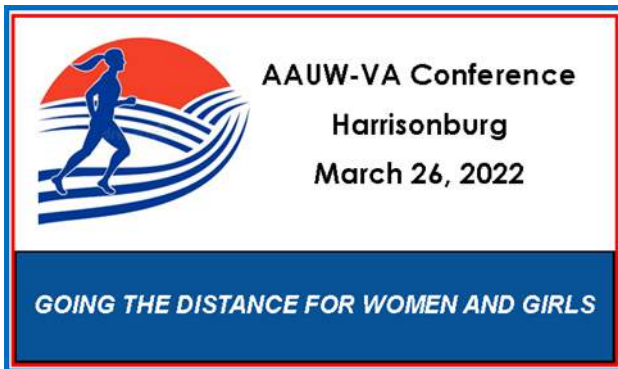
After retirement, **Nancy** was finally able to pursue her long-delayed interests in watercolor painting and recreational travel. Initially, this led to attending painting workshops. During the year of covid, she feels fortunate to enjoy instruction in watercolors via Zoom with regional and nationally known artists.

Nancy says **Blue Bottles** was inspired by a watercolor workshop in the Loire Valley of France. The scene is the interior view of the kitchen window of a centuries-old farmhouse. "I was inspired by the dual challenges of learning to paint glass and the unusual perspective of the scene."

**Nancy** is happy to be a part of AAUW and to support the many issues that make a difference for women e.g., the ERA.

*Anita Aymer  
Southwest District Representative*

(Continued from front page) **One Giant Step Towards the New Normal**



**Part 2**, the April 30 virtual Annual Business Meeting, is designed so any member can attend using Zoom and have input into our organization’s business without traveling from home.

The Fall 2021 and the Winter/Spring 2022 *Visions* will include more detailed information on the conference programs, lodging, and registration.

Have a great AAUW program year as you get to the new normal.

*Nadine James*  
VP for Program

## YOUR INVITATION TO THE 2022 AAUW OF VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Members of the three **Northwest District Branches - Harrisonburg, Greater Richmond, and Winchester** - enthusiastically invite you to join with us on Saturday, March 26, 2022, at the award-winning Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg for AAUW of Virginia’s first in-person annual conference in three years. We are working with **Nadine James**, VP for Program, and the State Board to create an engaging, informative agenda affirming AAUW’s continuing dedication to **“Going the Distance for Women and Girls.”** There will be opportunities for us to re-connect and celebrate with one another our post-pandemic experiences and renewed activities. The conference schedule will allow members to arrive and return home on March 26, or if you prefer, you can arrive the day before and stay overnight on March 25. Accommodations are being held for you at the Hotel Madison, which is located on the James Madison University campus and within easy walking distance of the restaurants and museums in the friendly city of Harrisonburg’s historic downtown center. Look for program and reservation details in the Fall issue of the *Vision*.

The Northwest District is looking forward to welcoming AAUW of Virginia members to our long-anticipated reunion next spring in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

Sylvia Rogers  
Northwest District Representative



**HOTEL MADISON and**  
**SHENANDOAH VALLEY CONFERENCE CENTER**  
710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801  
[\*\*\(540\) 564-0200\*\*](tel:5405640200)

# Branches in Action

The **Alexandria Branch** was active in the city's 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment celebration committee. Public Policy Co-Chair **Diane Schrier** worked on the newsletter and Co-President **Lane Stone** supported the database of what was to have been a year filled with events. Then covid happened. The pandemic could not stop Alexandria Celebrates Women from getting a plaque marking the site of the courthouse where suffragette foremothers were put on trial. The judgment led to the infamous Night of Terror. The branch applied for and received an AAUW-VA mini-grant to donate to the effort. This historic marker is at the intersection of Prince and St Asaph Streets. We hope you will drop by the next time you are in Alexandria.

*Lane Stone  
Co-President*

*Carol Dabbs  
President*



Gail and Lane

In 2021, the **Arlington Branch** operated virtually, often with a larger attendance than at earlier in-person events.

Members focused on discussions exploring diversity, inclusion, and equity.

- In January, led by new branch member **Krysta Jones**, members discussed racial equity in Arlington and how to integrate equity into our lives and branch.
- In February, members watched and discussed **Ibram Kendi's** TED Talk, "The Difference Between Being Non-Racist and Antiracist."
- A small group followed up with the Arlington LINKS branch to consider joint activities.

Programs reflected AAUW's strategic objectives in education, economic security, and leadership.

- Financial Advisor **Ann Summerson** spoke on women's financial security at the March annual meeting.
- In April, the branch had Arlington women Regional Science Fair winners share their projects and heard **Dr. Argie Navvada**, a prominent NASA scientist, speak on women and STEM.
- Two college scholarships and an Educator of the Year award were awarded in May.
- This summer, members will collaborate on a virtual Tech Day Camp with Thinkabit Lab at Virginia Tech.

The **Hampton Branch** continued to meet on Zoom for the 2020 -2021 AAUW season. The Zoom coordinator is branch member **Dr. Sarita Gregory**. The January event featured former Virginia Delegate **Jennifer Carroll Foy** who focused on the challenges and experiences she dealt with as related to equity/diversity issues at VMI and as a magistrate judge and public defender.

Branch members and friends had fun enhancing their artistic skills with a virtual art lesson: Paint N Sip in January.

Promoting Equity Conversation series continued in February. The speaker was **Eola Dance**, the acting superintendent of Fort Monroe National Monument.

**Ms. Dance** talked about her educational experiences and shared the history of Fort Monroe. The Promoting Equity Conversation series continued in March discussing the book *CASTE-The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

Branch members attended and supported member **Dr. Sarita Gregory**, co-producer of Unmasked Peninsula: Forum on Racial and Gender Discrimination, held virtually on April 23 and April 24, 2021.

The Zoom meeting on May 27 discussed supporting the Transitions and Survivors of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking shelter with needed supplies. The members would like to plan a fun activity for June to end a very full and rewarding AAUW year.

*Joan Jenkins  
President*



# Branches in Action

Another year has ended with the **McLean Area Branch** successfully conducting all its meetings by Zoom. The final event was a celebration highlighting individual members and their contributions, great programs through Zoom, and honoring the High School Science Fair winner. Two drawings were held. One was a free membership drawn from all who renewed by May 1, 2021. The other was Amazon gift cards for members.

The branch canceled the 2021 book sale due to the pandemic, but that has not stopped members from raising money for AAUW and scholarships. Thanks to the generosity of member **Erica Scherzer** and her husband Max who donated signed Washington Nationals keepsakes, the branch will offer the opportunity to own one of these treasures as a fundraiser. Look for McLean AAUW GoFundMe page this summer on the branch website and Facebook page.

*Naz Basit  
Co-President*

The **Newport News Branch**, though small, has continued to make significant contributions to AAUW Funds despite having minimal activity this past year. The branch expects that it will again find meaningful ways to follow AAUW-directed programming in 2021-2022. The branch of 14 consists of seven life members and another five who have more than 40 years' membership individually.

*Marilyn Riddle*

Zoom meetings have become the go-to plan for **Norfolk Branch**; members have become quite fond of meeting this way. The interesting monthly programs have also drawn guests from other branches. In February, **Dr. Deborah Waller** from Old Dominion University (ODU) gave an exciting story on "Biological Crime Scene Investigating." Members learned that insects are important in many ways to mankind, and at the March program with **Brett Smiley**, Assistant Director of Gift Planning at ODU, members learned that scholarships are the most important goal of the university. The April meeting provided an excellent experiment when the branch joined the **Portsmouth Branch** for an enlightening program on the new African American history course being piloted across Virginia this year. In May, the branch's Book Group members gave reviews of the interesting books they read during the year.

Branch members enjoyed participating in several national AAUW webinars, the Southeast District meeting, and the outstanding AAUW of Virginia Conference.

Sadly, a Lifetime member, **Julia Pace**, passed away last month. She suggested the name for the *Virginia Vision*, and the branch misses her vision very much.

*Wilma S. Robinson  
President*

Members of the three **Northwest District Branches - Harrisonburg, Greater Richmond, and Winchester** - are pleased to invite members to the in-person portion, Part 1, of the AAUW of Virginia 2022 State Conference on Saturday, March 26, 2022, at the award-winning Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg. It is particularly exciting because this will be AAUW of Virginia's first in-person annual conference in three years. Please see VP for Program **Nadine James's** article on the front page for more conference details.

Meanwhile, as this program year ends, Northwest District branch members have been enjoying programs on such topics as *Practical Solutions for Plastic Pollution* with **Elly Swecker** (Harrisonburg); *Working Towards Unitive Justice*, with **Sylvia Clute** (Greater Richmond); and *The Value to Students of an AAUW/University Partnership*, with **Larissa Fitzgibbons** and **Beth Dickman**, past presidents of AAUW at Shenandoah University (Winchester). Branch book groups have continued to meet monthly via Zoom, and while not the same as engaging in person, participants in the virtual get-togethers report lively discussions about their reading selections. Successful fundraising events were conducted virtually in support of the Winchester Branch and Greater Richmond Branch scholarship awards, while Harrisonburg directed donations to a shelter serving the needs of homeless persons in the area. With the relaxing of restrictions imposed because of the pandemic, all Northwest District branches have greeted the coming summer months with in-person celebrations and sharing of experiences and insights gained during the time of covid-19.

Have a great new program year, and we look forward to welcoming you to our reunion next spring in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

*Sylvia Rogers  
District Representative and  
Chair of the AAUW of Virginia 2022 State  
Conference Local Arrangements Committee*



# Branches in Action

The **Portsmouth Branch** hosted a virtual meeting on April 19, 2021, featuring **Christonya Brown**, history and social studies coordinator, Virginia Department of Education. **Ms. Brown** discussed the African American History course that has been piloted in 16 school districts this year, including Portsmouth. Representatives from the **Norfolk and Suffolk Branches** joined the meeting. The book group will continue to meet monthly through the summer. Members look forward to resuming branch meetings (hopefully in person) in September or October.

*Phyllis Shannon  
President*

**Reston-Herndon Area Branch** members continued Zooming through activities this spring. Featured speakers for membership meetings included **Dr. Sherri Burr** who spoke about her research into the "Complicated Lives" of enslaved and free black women in antebellum Virginia. Author **Linda Harris Sittig** spoke about her recent book *Counting Crows*, the latest in her Threads of Courage Series. Members looked forward to a conversation later in May with **Kerrie Wilson**, CEO of Cornerstones, an organization that for 50 years has been working to meet the needs of the community.

Members also completed the annual survey which documented not only their record participation in branch book, streaming, and Great Decisions groups but also noted strong participation in programs from AAUW National, AAUW of Virginia, and other branches.

Members are looking forward to being able to get together in person and are planning an outdoor Friendsgiving celebration in September.

*Janine Greenwood  
President*

The **Roanoke Valley Branch** continues to work diligently on sorting and organizing donated books in preparation for the upcoming book sale in August. Although the last two sales were canceled due to covid, the branch was able to present five scholarships to graduating seniors at the annual scholarship meeting in May.

In March, members enjoyed a virtual program entitled "Women in the Park Service" presented by **Betsy Haynes**, a park ranger from Booker T. Washington National Monument. Members look forward to visiting the monument as soon as covid restrictions are lifted.

The diversity interest group continues to meet monthly

and has been delighted to have members from other state branches participate in the gatherings. The group facilitated a virtual diversity bingo program in April.

Because of virtual capabilities, members have continued book group discussions and keeping in touch socially and are hoping to resume the Epicurean lunch group soon.

*Pat Hales  
Co-VP for Program*

The **Smith Mountain Branch** has been busy! Activities were either conducted via Zoom or wearing masks and socially distanced. **International Study Group:** In February, the branch had a book discussion on *The Caliph's House: A Year in Casablanca* by Tahir Shah and *A House in Fez: Building a Life in the Ancient Heart of Morocco* by Suzanna Clarke. In March, members had a lively talk on Moroccan architecture, and arts and crafts.

**Classics Book Group:** In February, members discussed *The Joy Luck Club*, written by Amy Tan. What a lively presentation it was, including a mahjong game setup and other props! In April, the group discussed *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith.

**Outreach:** Members of the branch and **Mike Carter** of Carter's Fine Jewelers joined Girl Scout Troop 98 and their leader **Angie Shirley** for their meeting in Rocky Mount, VA, on March 7 to conduct required activities for the Science of Style badge. The five 8th and 9th-grade scouts were successful in completing the requirements for the badge which will be purchased for them by the branch. **Branch Meetings:** At the March meeting, members were treated to a program presented by **Brittany Webb-Lane**, park ranger at the National Park Service's Booker T. Washington National Monument.

**Brittany**, a Rocky Mount native, shared her educational background, how she chose her career working in the park service, what she does to keep history alive for the visitors to the monument, and why she describes herself as "an ordinary person with extraordinary dreams."

*Laura Southall  
Newsletter Editor*

The **Southwest District** held a meeting on May 16, featuring **Sue Joyce**, M.Ed., an instructor from the University of North Carolina Greensboro, who introduced members to an evidence-based, step-by-step process to examine personal and professional bias. Implicit bias is within each of us. With **Sue's** approach, members were able to identify the origins and attempt to eliminate biases. The

# Branches in Action

conversation was enlightening, and the participants were able to share personal and professional experiences which created self-reflective awareness. The Zoom workshop was opened to branches across the state which added richness to the dialogue.

*Anita Aymer  
District Representative*

One aspect of the pandemic was meetings on Zoom which turned out to be a blessing for members who did not have to travel to meetings. **Springfield-Annandale Branch** adapted their Spring Fling fundraising luncheon to an online meeting featuring **Shu-Chen Cuff**, founder, and owner of the Gin Dance Company. She was able to show performance clips and do demonstrations that would not have worked in a country club ballroom. On Zoom, everyone had a front-row seat. Another meeting featured four women who are retired from the military including **Cheryl Spohnholtz**, AAUW-VA Membership Chair, who was one of the first women to graduate from the Naval Academy, and **Mary K. Johnson** retired from the Air Force who spoke from her home in Arizona. Another meeting involved a panel of teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools plus a band teacher who discussed teaching during a pandemic. The final meeting of the year will center on the branch itself with the installation of officers, talks with the winners of the Student Inclusion Diversity Award essay contest, celebration of the branch's Five Star status, and plans for next year.

*Judy Baldwin  
Co-President*

The **Vienna Area Branch** finished the program year strong and happy because we were together! The May 11 meeting was a BYO picnic lunch at a local park. More than 25 members gathered to celebrate the branch's first in-



person gathering in more than a year, install board members, cheer for Named Honorees, and enjoy beautiful spring weather (and no cicadas crashed the party). **Kristin Moyer**, a 50-year AAUW member, and **Nadine James**, our indefatigable AAUW Funds chair, received special recognition for their achievements. It was a joy to be together!



Vienna Area Branch members gathered safely for a year-end picnic at Vienna's Glyndon Park.

The branch has not abandoned Zoom yet; it works so well for members and guests for whom traveling to a meeting is a challenge due to distance or other factors. Members also enjoyed attending programs at sister branches across Virginia. Planning starts soon for the next program year, with the happy prospect of more in-person gatherings.

*Laurie Cole  
President*

As this year winds down, I am pleased to say that the **Virginia Beach Branch's** transition to Zoom meetings went smoothly. In celebration of Women's History Month, members discussed women's achievements and the work that is yet to be done. In April, in honor of Earth Day, the branch had **Karen Forget** from Lynnhaven River NOW speak to us about the health of our waterways. Since the branch did not hold its usual May banquet, the branch had speakers discuss the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Project (CVOW), the largest project of its kind in the country. Also, the branch offered \$1,000 scholarships to two women studying occupational therapy at Tidewater Community College, **Andrea Bender** and Katrina **Garrou**. A planning session will be held this summer to discuss activities for the coming year.

*Jeanette Olson  
President*

# Branches in Action

The **Winchester Branch** had monthly meetings via Zoom and a hang-out time every Monday evening. The May meeting was held outdoors at the home of a new member. It was wonderful to see everyone! Program topics included as follows: September—Northwest District meeting; October—everyone voted; November—**Martha Wolfe** spoke on her new biography of author Mary Settle; December—social via Zoom wearing holiday sweaters and having violin music courtesy of a member; January—Webinar and discussion: “Holding Space: How to Start and Continue Conversations on Race, Equity, and Inclusion”; February—Northwest District meeting on criminal justice; March—state conference (10 members attended); April—“Emerging Professional Women” (two recent graduates of Shenandoah University).

Mary Froehlich  
President

The **Woodbridge Branch** continued new and long-standing projects. Programs from January to March added herstories to the newsletters' gallery. The branch's new artist member led a field trip to the Workhouse/Lucy Burns Museum.



Karen Wolf viewing Julie Dzikiewicz's artwork, depicting the "Iron-Jawed Angel" Lucy Burns

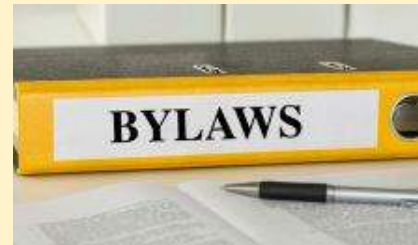
Five members virtually judged the regional science fair's middle school female projects, awarding nine students cash prizes. A member's "Marketing Math & Science for Girls" letter-writing campaign is underway. **Paige Epler** questioned the portrayal of girls in ads for companies - gender stereotyping - and began contacting them. Branch members joined in by adding their names to the letters for impact; two members with three community leaders chose the winner of the memorial scholarship the branch inaugurated for a member's daughter, and the VA-AAUW DE&I mini-grant project is starting conversations with book groups. Exciting news - Pink Space Theory, a com-

munity sponsor with whom the branch is partnering, was awarded a \$10,000 AAUW Community Action Grant! In May, on Zoom, the branch presented the third named gift honoree to a community leader involved with branch projects for 30 years; met most of the science fair winners; and included alumnae members and a graduating science fair winner.

Susan Bardenhagen  
VP for Program & Membership, DE&I, Newsletter,  
and C/U rep.

The **Wytheville Branch** conducted its 2020-21 year via Zoom. Members are looking forward to an in-person June meeting outdoors at a local park to begin discussing the 2021-22 year. The branch had one more Zoom scheduled on May 16. **Sue Joyce** conducted an unconscious bias workshop. Other Southwest AAUW branch members attended as it is also a district meeting. This year has been difficult and disappointing, but the branch hopes that the upcoming months will be more normal. Members are planning a fall STEM program at Wythe Community College for area middle school girls. Hope that everyone has a terrific summer.

Julie Kause  
President



## Branch Bylaw Changes

Branches must contact me to discuss any proposed changes to their branch bylaws so that I have an opportunity to review and provide advice on such changes before approval by the branch board or adoption by branch members.

I look forward to working with you on such changes, or with other questions or issues regarding AAUW bylaws.

Carol Dabbs  
Bylaws/Resolutions Chair



## “Women Make the Difference!”



### The 2021 State Conference and Annual Business Meeting

Indeed, **Women Make the Difference!** Over 100 members from 23 of our 24 branches attended the virtual 2021 State Conference and Annual Business Meeting on March 13-15, 2021. The conference featured many inspiring and knowledgeable speakers who discussed how **Women Make the Difference!** through our resilience, strength, determination, flexibility, focus, clarity, and creativity. Visit the [conference section](#) on our website to find **resources from the conference**, including recordings and speakers' slides of some of the presentations, which would make good branch programs.

**Day One** of the conference began with the presentation of our prestigious **Woman of Achievement Awards to State Senator Janet Howell and Scientist Ana Luisa Tío Humphrey** for having made outstanding educational, civic, and cultural contributions to the advancement of women. **Senator Howell** and **Ms. Humphrey** spoke of their experiences as women in their different fields. **Senator Howell**, second in seniority in the Virginia Senate, spoke of the challenges of being a state senator since 1992, and her legislative priorities, which are education, children and families, and equal rights for women. **Ms. Humphrey**, currently a sophomore double-majoring in astrophysics and physics at Harvard College, discussed her experiences as a Latina scientist who has won multiple national, international, and state awards for her research, including the prestigious Regeneron (formerly Westinghouse) Science Talent Search.

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The Keynote Speaker was **Dr. Kelly Dittmar, Director and Scholar at the Rutgers University Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics and Associate Professor of Political Science, who presented a program on how Women Make a Difference! in U.S. Elections.** She provided statistics and analysis that revealed



the progress made and need for continued progress of women as candidates and elected officials. Women as a percentage of all elected state and national officeholders rose from under 10% of national offices in 1990 to just under 30% in 2020. **Dr. Dittmar** referred to her book, *A Seat at the Table*, which drew on interviews with women senators and representatives, to demonstrate that women of diverse backgrounds add a different perspective to policymaking than men, and to encourage currently marginalized persons of all backgrounds to become involved in policy issues and run for office. **Dr. Dittmar** discussed how the financial impact of the pandemic is falling on 5.4 million women, who are either losing or resigning their jobs to care for and educate their children at home. This has resulted in many falling into poverty, food insecurity, and domestic violence.

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**Dr. Diane Hodge**, director of the School of Social Work in Radford University's Waldron College of Health and Human Services, and **Susheela Varky, Esq.**, director of the Center for Family Advocacy and Legal Assistance for Victim-Immigrants of Domestic Abuse at the Virginia Poverty Law Center, expanded on **Dr. Dittmar's** comments in their session on **What Difference Does Poverty Make in the Lives of Women!** They examined the intersectional complexities of poverty's impact on women's ability to achieve economic independence for

### Through Advocacy, Education, Litigation

The Virginia Poverty Law Center (VPLC) breaks down systemic barriers keeping low-income Virginians in the cycle of poverty

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themselves and their family, as well as the many myths of poverty. They discussed that more women than men are in poverty; women of color are in the poorest category; those in poverty do not prefer to receive government handouts than to work; and the lack of childcare and affordable housing, among other factors, make it difficult for the impoverished to improve their situation. Domestic violence impacts women at similar percentages at all economic levels.

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**Kim Churches, AAUW's chief executive officer** since 2017, congratulated AAUW of Virginia as the first state to achieve five stars in the AAUW Five-Star National Recognition Program. She provided an overview of some of AAUW achievements in 2020: the organization reached over 30,000 people through 35 webinars; awarded \$3.6 million in fellowships and grants; more than 180,000 women were trained in salary negotiation skills; and 142 colleges and universities, including 29 minority-serving institutions, are offering AAUW Start Smart training. In 2021, more than 400 college women registered for a virtual NCCWSL; the Member Services Database will be replaced in September with a more user-friendly system; and the current AAUW Five-Star Recognition Program will be replaced by a new program as of July 1.

**Kim** also advised that women's economic security and educational equity are increasingly greater priorities because the pandemic has resulted in more women than men losing or resigning their jobs to stay home and educate their children. She called on members to fight, to educate ourselves, to be actively anti-racist, and to advocate for real and sustainable change. **Kim** stated that our message for 2021 is "Embodying Equity;" and "to be anti-racist is lifelong work for us all." She advised that we should examine our own biases and make progress using the AAUW Equity Toolkit.

**The AAUW-VA Annual Business Meeting** followed Kim Churches. In addition to regular business matters, Caroline Pickens, AAUW-VA Funds Chair, presented the first **AAUW-VA Named Honoree Awards to Marion Stillson (Reston-Herndon Area), Patricia (Trish) Wallace (Greater Richmond), and Neola Waller (Virginia Beach)**, for their outstanding contributions to furthering AAUW's mission and priorities in the state. Moreover, Leslie Tourigny and Suzanne Rothwell, AAUW-VA co-presidents, presented **AAUW-VA Recognition Awards to Susan Burk and Denise Murden, AAUW-VA co-vice presidents for public policy; Cyndi Shanahan, AAUW-VA diversity, equity, and inclusion chair; and Barbara Woodlee, AAUW-VA college/university chair**, for their achievements and on-going commitment to expanding the role of their positions to the benefit of AAUW members and residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Day Two** began with **Women Make A Difference! in Military Service to Our Country**, presented by **Lieutenant Colonel Marilla Cushman, USA, Retired**, who served almost 25 years in the U.S. Army before she joined the **Military Women's Memorial Foundation**, where she is now vice president of development. **Ms. Cushman** provided a virtual tour of the memorial, followed by an overview of women's military service from the days during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars when women had to disguise as men to serve, to currently when women are making progress in almost all positions in the military.

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**Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., EdD, Superintendent of the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS)**, spoke on **Equity in Education Makes the Difference!** from his experience at the helm of a diverse school system composed of over 16,000 students from more than 145 countries, who speak 132 languages—72% are non-white, 10% are students with disabilities, 32% are learning English, and 61% are economically disadvantaged. **Dr. Hutchings** spoke of the impact of dual pandemics on students – covid-19 and racial inequities. He described the system's strategic plan to dismantle systemic racism and establish clear priorities and programs to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, as well as ensure that all students graduate ready for college, careers, and life. He reflected on the challenges faced by students and education staff and urged that bold leadership and leaning into an area of discomfort is necessary to change society to end systemic racism. **Dr. Hutchings** said: "We can't go back to the way we were on March 13, 2020. We weren't doing it right!"

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A panel of elected women officials moderated by Leslie Tourigny presented their views on how *Women Make the Difference! As Elected Officials in Virginia*. The panel included:

- **State Senator Jen Kiggans**, a former Navy helicopter pilot and the first female military veteran to serve in the Virginia General Assembly, was elected in 2019 to represent Virginia's 7th Senate District;
- **Chair Phyllis J. Randall**, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair-at-Large, who is the first person of color in Virginia's history to be elected chair of a county board; and
- **Mayor Deanna Reed** of Harrisonburg, who was first elected to the Harrisonburg City Council in 2016, was selected in 2021 by her fellow council members for her third consecutive term as mayor. She is the first African American female mayor in Harrisonburg's history.



State Senator Jen Kiggans



Chair Phyllis J. Randall



Mayor Deanna Reed

They discussed what motivated them to seek elected office; their political role models; the challenges and opportunities they have faced as women-elected officials; their successes; and the unique skills that women bring to governing. Each of the officials was inspiring as they urged us to take action to influence politics by being an authentic and strong voice for those who have no voice, serve our community, and encourage younger women to enter politics.

**Day Three** of the conference opened with **Audrey Davis**, the Director of the Alexandria Black History Museum, presenting a program on *Alexandria's Social Justice Initiatives*. Ms. Davis spoke movingly of how the museum is housed in a building constructed in 1940 as the first separate but equal library for African Americans in the then segregated city. She described the famous Alexandria library sit-in in 1939, which is often cited as one of America's first sit-ins by African Americans against racial segregation, and discussed the Museum's project on *The Legacy of George Floyd: Documenting Alexandria's Response* to the tragedy. Ms. Davis also highlighted the *Community Remembrance Project*, in partnership with the Equal Justice Institute (EJI) in Montgomery, Alabama, to memorialize documented victims of racial violence throughout history and foster meaningful dialogue about race and justice today. Two lynchings were identified to have occurred in Alexandria; the city is working to understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and to work toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.

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Next, members heard a presentation on *What a Difference! A Virtual Trip to the Booker T. Washington National Monument Makes*, by Park Ranger **Brittany Webb-Lane**. Ranger Webb-Lane presented an informative program on the life and legacy of Booker T. Washington, along with a virtual tour of the monument that honors his birthplace in Franklin, Virginia. This is where Dr. Washington was born a slave in 1856, but left a free man. **Ranger Webb-Lane** explained how Dr. Washington walked from his home near Roanoke to Hampton, Virginia, to attend what became Hampton Uni-versity, and paid for his education by working as a janitor. He became a renowned orator, author, educator, advisor to U.S. presidents, and founder of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). She recommended we read Dr. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* and described her local programs with AAUW branches on Dr. Washington.

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The final program of the conference was on ***Gender-Based Violence, Institutional Betrayal and the Carceral State***, presented by professors and authors: **Dr. Angela J. Hattery, PhD, Professor of Women & Gender Studies and Co-Director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence at the University of Delaware;** and **Dr. Earl Smith, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of American Ethnic Studies and Sociology at Wake Forest University, who teaches classes in sociology, African and African American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies at George Mason University and the University of Delaware.**

**Drs. Hattery and Smith** explored the intersection of gender-based violence and racism. **Dr. Smith** reviewed several high-profile cases of sexual abuse of young people in collegiate and professional sports and other fields, emphasizing that such abuse is institutionalized and not being addressed. **Dr. Hattery** expanded on how institutional betrayal to hold the perpetrator responsible and protect potential victims is the second victimization. She stated that 25-35% of women in the U.S. and worldwide experience some sort of gender-based violence; the CDC ranks gender-based violence as a significant health threat; and half of all women murdered in the U.S. are killed by an intimate partner, which is largely preventable.

The presenters urged that members hold the military's top leaders responsible for ending institutionalized revictimization of women who report sexual abuse/violence. They also urged AAUW members to take the necessary actions to have the Department of Education reverse the new Title IX regulations approved by the Department of Education under the leadership of Betsy DeVos, which regulations provided enhanced protections for perpetrators at the expense of victims of sexual assault.

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**Special Event – Poetry Reading by Zahria Ford:** The conference closed with a powerful poetry reading by Zahria Ford, a Loudoun County Rock Ridge High School sophomore who won the Northern Region branch of the 2021 Strong Men & Women in Virginia student writing contest with her poem “Colors,” which can be found on our website in her biography.

*Suzanne Rothwell  
Co-President*

*With special thanks to Mary Froehlich, Jane Parrish, Sherry Lloyd, and Pat Kadel (Winchester Branch) and to Neola Waller (Virginia Beach) for the articles they published in their branch newsletters on the conference, which were resources for the preparation of this article.*

## Be Careful in Election Season Not to Be Partisan in AAUW Activities!!

While we are often reminded that AAUW is a nonpartisan organization, it sounds contradictory when we also hear that our work has always been political. With state and local elections on November 2, it is a good time to revisit what AAUW defines as political and partisan, and how to stay on the nonpartisan side of the divide.

Political work can be characterized by shared values, working toward a common goal, and a result that is best for the community. Put simply, being political is a way to influence legislation and regulation through government



or public affairs, while partisan activities have a firm adherence to a party, faction, or person.

This means that we can work on issues that are consistent with our values and mission and which are in line with our public policy priorities, engage equally with candidates and elected officials from different political parties, and participate in voter registration and education regardless of individuals' political party identification. What we **cannot** do is endorse or strongly advocate for candidates in partisan races, encourage voter registration with a particular party, fundraise for partisan candidates, or coordinate with partisan campaigns or political parties.

*Leslie Tourigny  
Co-President*

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- [viriniageneralassembly.gov](http://viriniageneralassembly.gov)



## AAUW National Voting Results



- **Julia Brown** has been re-elected to serve as board chair for three more years.
- **Malinda Gaul** was re-elected as board vice chair, and **Elizabeth Haynes** and **Joseph Bertolino** will retain their board seats. All are three-year terms.
- AAUW's public policy priorities were approved by 92% of voters.
- The ballot initiative to eliminate the membership degree requirement received 63% of the vote, which was just below the two-thirds majority needed to enact a bylaw change.

22.8% of all eligible national and branch members voted. In Virginia, 64.8% of members who voted were in favor of the amendment to eliminate the membership degree requirement.

*Suzanne Rothwell*  
Co-President