



WORDS TO THE

WISE²

WOMEN IN SEARCH OF EDUCATION AND EQUITY

Volume 30, Issue 4

December, 2025 - January, 2026



MISSION

To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

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

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December Meeting

Current Public Health Code of Ethics

Dr. Cee Ann Davis, Speaker

Saturday

December 13, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Benham Room

**Handley Regional Library
100 West Piccadilly Street**

In December we welcome another long-time branch member, **Dr. Cee Ann Davis**, who will share her considerable knowledge of public health ethics. In October 2024, she was recognized by the American Public Health Association for Outstanding Practice in Public Health Ethics. She has served for that organization as an Ethics Section Governing Councilor and Policy Committee Chair.

Dr. Davis has taught at Virginia Commonwealth University, William and Mary, Mary Baldwin Murphy Deming College of Health Sciences, and Shenandoah University, teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in Public Health Ethics, Comparative Health Ethics, and Women's Health, among others. She also serves in leadership and advisory roles in other national organizations supporting the nation's health: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the Women's Preventive Services Initiative.

Come join us to share an informative presentation and some holiday fellowship!

January Meeting

The Laurel Center

Dr. Faith Power, Speaker

Saturday

January 10, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Benham Room

**Handley Regional Library
100 West Piccadilly Street**

Dr. Faith Power, Executive Director of the Laurel Center, will offer a compelling program on the work of the Laurel Center, Winchester's domestic violence shelter. Founded in 1981, the Center empowers those affected by domestic and sexual violence by providing emergency housing, advocacy, outreach, support services, education and awareness and works to stop the cycle of domestic and sexual violence. The Center recently expanded, with the construction of a new Emergency Shelter and Outreach Center and the renovation of a railroad freight building for use as a workforce training center for its clients. Dr. Power oversaw those accomplishments.

Come hear Dr. Power speak in January about her work against domestic violence.

Board Meeting

Wednesday January 21, 2026

Zoom 6 p.m.

All members are invited to attend.
(Contact Marsha Gochenour for Zoom details.)

Program Note:

If the weather outside is frightful, it will be delightful to meet by Zoom through the winter. We'll make that call the day before a meeting and get a notice out to everyone about the change and information about signing on to the Zoom meeting.

Editor's Note:

There will be no Newsletter in January. Check emails for further information.

February Meeting

Saturday, February 14, 2026
Douglass Community Center
program held in conjunction with
Winchester NAACP

The Green Book

Planning continues with the Winchester NAACP for our February presentation of Sharon Dixon's *Green Book* program. The *Green Book* was an essential guide for African Americans during segregation as folks who had moved north during the Great Migration sought lodging, food and other services when they went to visit relatives remaining in the South and as they traveled in other parts of the country where discrimination denied them the basics of comfort.

NW District Meeting via Zoom

Saturday, January 31, 2026

Watch your inbox for further information closer to the time of the meeting.



President's Message

Tess Thome

Join us in welcoming **Dr. Cee Ann Davis**, one of our own AAUW Winchester Branch Members, who will present a program December 13th, 10 a.m. in the Benham Room, HRL, on Public Health Ethics. After her presentation, we will have a short member meeting. This is just a time to hear from the different board members about what is happening and update you on activities and opportunities.

Please make sure you update your calendars with all the programming that is coming up in the next few months. Note that this is the newsletter for both December and January. We also have some future activities that we have included in this newsletter so that you can hold the date.

Hold the date of January 31st, (time to be determined). There will be a Zoom for the 2nd NW District meeting. We will send out an email with the details since there will not be another newsletter before this takes place.

The State Conference this year in Glen Allen, VA, "*On the Front Lines: Defending Education and Equity for Women and Girls*" is such a timely topic! Please plan to attend April 17-18th. There has never been a better time to stand up for this cause and learn as much as we can on what we can each contribute to "defending education and equity for women and girls."

Finally, we really need a dedicated person to step up and be our DEI representative. Becki

Bronson is doing a great job, but she has a very full plate with programs. She is willing to help transition this position to someone. Please reach out to Becki or me to learn more about the position.

I hope you have a very Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays!

See you on December 13th!



Tess Thome
President
Winchester AAUW

Treasurer's Report

Marsha Gochenour

As of September 24, 2025:

\$674.87	Checking
266.65	Woman of the Year
0.00	AAUW Funds
282.74	NCCWSL/AAUW@SU
225.00	Dr. Amy @ SU
1,155.00	Orndoff @ SU
2,119.27	Froehlich Memorial Scholarship (local)
4,000.00	CD, 1-year
<u>2,213.21</u>	General Savings
\$10,936.74	Total

November disbursements: \$25.00 Stone House Foundation (speaker donation); \$220.00 Liability Insurance; \$2,000.00 Shenandoah University for two Froehlich scholarships.

Giving Tuesday

December 2, 2025

The global day of generosity and action, or Giving Tuesday, continues to be a major source of fundraising for non-profits. AAUW National Board will again be matching donations to the AAUW Funds account

throughout the month of December. We encourage members to go online and make direct contributions to the fund. You can also follow the link and instructions in the many emails AAUW sends.

If you prefer to keep your donations local, you may make contributions to any of our local scholarships by sending a check to AAUW-Winchester Branch, c/o Marsha Gochenour, 201 Crest Circle, Winchester VA 2262.

CLEO

(Classy Ladies Eating Out)

Marsha Gochenour

Monday

December 1, 2025

6:00 p.m.

Red Bowl Sushi and Hibachi Grill
420 Gateway Drive #9



Monday

January 26, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Café del Sol

50 Featherbed Lane

Call Marsha (533-8069) if you plan to attend the dinner so she will have a head count.

Evening Book Group

Marsha Gochenour

No December 2025 Book Group

Monday

January 19, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Zoom



The Great Alone

Author: Kristan Hannah

Alaska, 1974: Unpredictable. Unforgiving. Untamed. For a family in crisis, the ultimate test of survival. Ernt

Allbright, a former POW, comes home from the Vietnam war a changed and volatile man. When he loses yet another job, he makes an impulsive decision: he will move his family north, to Alaska, where they will live off the grid in America's last true frontier. Thirteen-year-old Leni, a girl coming of age in a tumultuous time, caught in the riptide of her parents' passionate, stormy relationship, dares to hope that a new land will lead to a better future for her family. She is desperate for a place to belong. Her mother, Cora, will do anything and go anywhere for the man she loves, even if means following him into the unknown.

At first, Alaska seems to be the answer to their prayers. In a wild, remote corner of the state, they find a fiercely independent community of strong men and even stronger women. The long, sunlit days and the generosity of the locals make up for the Allbrights' lack of preparation and dwindling resources. But as winter approaches and darkness descends on Alaska, Ernt's fragile mental state deteriorates and the family begins to fracture. Soon the perils outside pale in comparison to threats from within. In their small cabin, covered in snow, blanketed in eighteen hours of night, Leni and her mother learn the terrible truth: they are on their own. In the wild, there is no one to save them but themselves.

Monday

February 16, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Zoom

The Nature of Fragile Things Susan
Author: Meissner

The balance of our 2026 Books:
(order and location to be determined)

- **The Confidante: The Untold Story of the Woman Who Helped Win WWII and Shape Modern America** by Christopher Gorman
- **The First Ladies** by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

- **First Lie Wins** by Ashley Elston
- **Florance Adler Swims Forever** by Rachel Beanland
- **The Frozen River** by Ariel Lawhorn
- **The Good Earth** by Pearl S. Buck
- **Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Selby Van Pelt
- **A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win WWII** by Sonia Purnell
- **My First Thirty Years: A Banned Memoir** by Gertrude Beasley

Membership

Laurie Gaulke

Ahhh, the cozy winter season has arrived. Gathering with a friend or two, meeting for a meal, enjoying a play...

Whether you enjoy getting together over a book and a meal in our monthly book club, going out for dinner in town, popping into our other social events each season, or being inspired each month on Saturday morning with a dynamic speaker, I have a cozy "challenge" for you.

First – check out the events and group through January. Love our book club? Share the latest book group list with your bibliophile friends, neighbors, family members. Invite them to join you at the next book group. Do you and your friends love going out for dinner? Invite one or two to join you for CLEO.

Let them experience, meet, enjoy and get to know us personally. My point is NOT to begin a conversation extolling the

virtues & values of AAUW; our band of sisterhood will take care of that. Women are seeking authentic connections.

Sooo, how's your calendar looking this winter? CLEO with a plus one? Book group buddies joining you? Movie night with a neighbor at a thought-provoking film plus dessert afterwards?

Jane Parrish has moved!

Jane has downsized and moved into the Willows at Meadow Branch, 1881 Harvest Drive, Winchester, Va 22601. She would love a card or call to see how she is doing.

Diversity Equity Inclusion Belonging Accessibility

Rebecca Bronson

Oregon Public Policy Chair Trish Garner hosted a mini workshop, *Courage to Listen, Willingness to Act: Moving Inclusion Forward* on Tuesday, November 18. She noted our shared commitments - equal opportunity, fairness, liberty, civil rights, and justice – and had participants complete a survey to reveal current attitudes and approaches to difficult conversations.

In breakout groups we discussed ways to better engage in challenging conversations related to the value of diversity. The Braver Angels website was suggested as a resource for effective strategies to communicate across political differences.

The Holiday House Tour



Sponsored by

Preservation of Historic Winchester

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Hours of Operation: Noon-4 p.m.

Tickets: Tour tickets are \$30 for advanced sales and \$35 at the door and are now available online here:

Holiday House Tour Tickets

Locations:

- Ambler Hill –
223 Amherst St.
- Thornhill Manor –
407 S. Washington St.
- Lemley Price House –
302 S. Loudoun St.

Admission: \$30 for Advanced Sales and \$35 at the door
You can also purchase tickets beginning Nov. 26 at Kimberly's and the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center. Tickets can also be purchased at PHW's Bough & Dough Booth during Winchester's Winter Village weekend.



From the National website:

Economic Security

Economic empowerment is essential to gender equity. When women get equal pay — and equal opportunity — they, their families and all of society thrive. Economic security for women is non-negotiable for a flourishing society.

Caregiving - Critical policies like pay equity, paid family, medical, and sick leave, quality and affordable dependent care, and a full range of reproductive health care services support students to complete their education and achieve economic security.

Retirement Security - A lifelong pay gap culminates in the fact that women have significantly less income than men during their retirement years. AAUW advocates for policies that advance women's economic security in retirement, including strengthening Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Reproductive Freedom - To ensure economic equity, AAUW advocates affordable access to a full range of reproductive health services — including contraception and abortion care — for all women regardless of location.

CALENDAR

December 13	December Meeting, <i>Public Health Ethics</i> , Benham Room, Handley Library, 10:00 a.m.
January 10	January Meeting, <i>The Laurel Center</i> , Benham Room, Handley Library, 10:00 a.m.
January 19	Book Group, Zoom, 6 p.m., <i>The Great Alone</i>
January 20	Deadline for February issue of <i>Words to the WISE</i> ²
January 21	Board Meeting via Zoom, 6 p.m.
January 26	CLEO, Café Del Sol, 6 p.m.
January 31	Northwest District Meeting via Zoom

Save The Date! You Can Make Your Hotel Reservation Now!



The Northwest District branches (Greater Richmond, Winchester, and Fredericksburg Area) cordially invite you to the 101st AAUW of Virginia State Conference, at the Drury Plaza Hotel Richmond, 11049 W Broad Street, Glen Allen, Virginia.

Join us for afternoon tours and evening entertainment on Friday, April 17, 2026. Then on April 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., we'll spend the day together with interesting speakers, informative panels, catered lunch, and irresistible raffle baskets to support AAUW Greatest Needs Fund.

You can now make reservations at the Drury Plaza Hotel by visiting the following link: <https://www.druryhotels.com/bookandstay/newreservation/?groupno=10150185> or by calling 1-800-325-0720 and referencing the group number, 10150185. (The default dates may show as April 16-April 20; just adjust the dates for your preference.)

To assure availability at the group rate, reserve your room as soon as possible. Reservations made after Sunday, March 15, 2026, will be subject to prevailing rates and availability. Hotel amenities include free parking and complimentary wi-fi throughout the hotel. Hotel guests also receive a complimentary hot breakfast and complimentary evening drinks and snacks. On-site facilities include a business center, fitness center, and pool.

Stay tuned for further details.

Any questions? Email Mary Anne Graham, Northwest District Representative, at maryannegraham@comcast.net.

2025 Mary Froehlich Scholarship

Rosemary Green

Two recipients of the 2025 Mary Froehlich Scholarship have been chosen; with information they have shared about themselves below. Each will receive a \$1,000 award to go toward her tuition. We have invited Amanda and Abigail to attend one of our meetings, so we may be able to greet them in person at our next meeting or in the spring.

Abigail Atkins,

Pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing

Continuing my education is very important to me. I have been blessed with two amazing parents who have always pushed me to never limit myself, to strive to succeed, and to never let setbacks stop me from pursuing my dreams. I want to continue my education to achieve a higher education and I love learning. Learning grants us with so many amazing opportunities. With continued learning, especially in the nursing field, there are endless opportunities. Also with continuing my education I get to help others and I believe that is my calling and it brings me great joy. My career plans and goals are to get my Bachelors Degree in Nursing. After I achieve this goal I would love to work in a pediatric unit with children and help and encourage them in their greatest time of need. My parents are a huge part of why I am who I am today. They have shaped me and provided for me in ways I will forever be grateful for. My mom and aunt are also nurses so growing up watching them help and care for others is a lot of where my love for nursing came from. But my biggest inspiration to become a nurse is my brother. He was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes at eleven years old. Watching my brother and how much this illness impacted his life, left a lasting effect on me. I saw how much the nurses cared for him and wanted to help him, inspiring my drive to pursue this career. I hope one day I can have that same impact on a child and their families lives the way those nurses had on ours and I can help children just like my brother get through one of the hardest times of their lives. I would be so grateful to receive an AAUW scholarship to help me complete my degree at Shenandoah University. My parents work very hard to help me afford college, but college is still very expensive. I would be honored with this scholarship so that I can make college a little more affordable for my parents and myself, and also stay out of as much debt as possible.

Amanda Amburn

Pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in English

From Shenandoah to The Future

When I was a kid, I remember filling out a Doctor Seuss themed "Big Book About Me." At the back of the book, I distinctly remember there being a section to fill out what your future job might have been. Me, being the artistic kid I was, ended up circling most of the more creative ones. Animator, fashion designer, writer, the list went on. The younger me didn't expect to actually do those jobs, she just chose them based on what sounded fun. Adulthood always felt so far away, until it didn't. As I got older, it got harder to actually settle on a career. Nothing felt like it stuck, and even after obtaining my associates degree, I still feel somewhat uncertain of potential job prospects.

I'm now a transfer student at Shenandoah University. I will only be here for my last few years of schooling. Admittedly, it took me a while to settle on this specific university, which is a bit ironic. I hadn't even considered any other colleges and had no interest in going to a big, well known University like Harvard. I ultimately chose Shenandoah University due to prior exposure. However, the main reason I chose Shenandoah was because it was the same university my grandfather went to. He was someone I looked up to. Someone I loved talking to. The two of us would talk on the phone constantly, always discussing the newest episode of something we watched on the History Channel. I distinctly remember he enjoyed the writing I would share with him, which

only pushed me to get better. He was one of my role models and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. My only regret is not being able to share the news of me being accepted to Shenandoah with him after his passing.

Even so, I intend to obtain my English degree so I can then become an editor. I enjoy writing, though I found I enjoy the editing process much more. The next five years are admittedly rocky-looking. As stated before, at least two of them will be spent finishing up my education. This is something I fully expected. However, in order to do that, I will need to be able to pay my way through school. As a result, I have been trying to apply to as many scholarships as I can, including this one from AAUW. That's usually how this goes. The other three? The most likely scenario is I try to find a job outside my chosen career to try and save up money. I have no confidence I'll be able to find a job in my preferred line of work straight out of college, especially with the rise in A.I. Even so, I'm still determined to find an editing job. AI cannot replace human creativity, which is why it is so desperately important to have a set of human eyes.

November Meeting Report

Becki Bronson

As you'll recall, we began our programming year at Orrick Chapel in Stephens City with a talk from Brenda Nelson on Robert Orrick, the most prominent African American citizen of his day. In the early 20th century, Mr. Orrick was instrumental in providing a place for church services for his community through the construction of what became Orrick Chapel. In November we continued our appreciation for that history through **Linda Simmons'** talk on her cousin, **Mildred Lee Grove**, whose Stone House Foundation now maintains Orrick Chapel, along with several other historically significant buildings in Stephens City.

Linda brought photos and mementos of Mildred Lee's life and shared her own memories of her cousin. Mildred Lee's life was marked with trial as a tuberculosis patient, but she persevered to become a person of significant standing who was always ready to help others in need. Today Linda shepherds Mildred Lee's foundation and continues her tradition of service.



Linda Simmons

Mildred Lee Grove and a Local Family History

Julie Sayre

On Saturday, November 8, 2025, our AAUW Winchester Branch attended long-time member **Linda Simmons'** presentation about her cousin, **Mildred Lee Grove** (1902-1997), founder of The Stonehouse Foundation, and an early member of our AAUW Winchester branch. The history itself was interesting and woven throughout Linda's narrative was her awareness of the legacy of coming from a "line of strong women." Linda shared details regarding her family story, the history of the Stonehouse Foundation, and the many decades of change in Stephens City.

While primarily focused on Mildred Lee Grove, Linda wove the history of Stephens City, and her extended family, through their collective experiences and contributions. We learned of the divisiveness in families brought about by the Civil War and its aftermath. Linda shared the journey from slavery to freedom and entrepreneurship of Robert Orrick, who became a leading citizen of the town. The chapel in Stephens City – that bears Orrick's name – experienced financial challenges in the 1930's. Mildred Lee Grove, a strong advocate for African Americans in Stephens City, brought support to Orrick Chapel through the Stonehouse Foundation, which adopted and maintains it. [About the Foundation](#) | [Newtown History Center](#) | [Stephens City](#)

Linda provided a rich history of the Grove-Steele family, bringing to life their involvement before, during and after the Civil War (the link below includes information about their family and others relevant to the town's history): [People of Our Past | Newtown History Center | Virginia](#)

Linda's history also noted that Stephens City, including her family, were considered "good neighbors" to the African American community there. Related to this, she shared information about her family's likely involvement in developing a local Rosenwald School. These schools were built throughout the south to educate African Americans, including one in Stephens City [Stephens City Rosenwald School Historical Marker](#), as well as one in Berryville.

Linda shared details of Mildred Lee Grove's life, and ways her life reflected developments throughout the last century. Ms. Grove was educated at Hollins College, Richmond Polytechnic, New York University and the University of Virginia, focused primarily on the study of English and Social Studies. Initially, she was an educator, including a teaching position at Handley High School for several years. Ms. Grove contracted tuberculosis (TB) and was treated at the Catawba Sanatorium for several years. During this era, a TB diagnosis led to being socially shunned. Though Ms. Grove was engaged to be married, her fiancé eventually left, and she never married. Linda related, however, Ms. Grove's "wide circle of educated friends," and that she eventually took on the position of "visiting teacher," the precursor of today's truant officer, a reflection of her interest and activism in social issues and social work.



Mildred Lee Grove

Ms. Grove had the heart and mind of an activist, advocate and philanthropist. Linda cited the example of her cousin's account at Bell's Clothing in Winchester, so that she could fund apparel for the sons of local families in need. Linda also noted Ms. Grove's membership in our local branch of the AAUW at its founding in 1931, and "most social organizations in Winchester."

Linda shared interesting details of her extended family. She noted their tendency to be "up to date" owning several "firsts:" the Polaroid Land Camera; a tape recorder; and a color television. And Linda recalled that Ms. Grove gave her her first computer. Linda highlighted the flexibility of her family in adjusting to modern inventions. For example, extended family were in the business of selling buggies to the local residents; over time, this evolved to involvement in automobile sales.

Linda noted that Ms. Grove worked to the very end of her long life, even while bedridden. Throughout her life, she shared oral histories with Linda and others, to preserve her memories. We appreciated Linda's sharing this rich and remarkable family history and how they shaped developments in Stephens City.

For more information about Mildred Grove and the Stonehouse Foundation, as well as related local history, please go to: newtonhistorycenter.org Newtown History Center, 5408 Main St., Stephens City.

The following two paragraphs are from the Stonehouse Foundation Website and give a great summary of what you will find at the Newtown History Center. Several of our AAUW members commented that they wanted to go visit this Center in Stephen City.

The Newtown History Center offers museum exhibits and tours focusing on the people and events of Stephens City, Virginia's long history. In addition to the exhibits located in the main museum, there also are interpretive displays in other buildings that discuss the town's wagon making industry and an early twentieth century general store.

The Newtown History Center is more than a museum that tells the story of the ordinary people who lived and worked in an old Virginia wagon road town. It is a collecting institution with a mission to preserve, document and interpret the material culture and lore of the town of Stephens City and its surrounding area. It is also a repository of documents and photographs relating to the history of the town, its inhabitants and their families. We serve tourists, school groups, research scholars, local patrons as well as professional genealogists and "ordinary" family history enthusiasts. If you have a question about the history of Stephens City, we can probably answer it.

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