



February 2026

## UPDATES

Volume 67, Issue 6

### From the President...

Cathie Boivin, Co-President

Our program chairs, Beth Boivin and Amy Crolius, have arranged speakers this year to support the theme of "Women Breaking Boundaries." I have personally found these women to be very inspirational. Back in the middle of the 20th century, I was growing up in a small Texas town then as I entered my teens we moved to Istanbul, Turkey. I knew women who worked outside the home, but they were largely secretaries, nurses, or teachers. My mother had a few part time jobs, but she was mostly a stay at home mom. STEM wasn't an option. My parents did encourage their three children to pursue careers of our choice, but I never envisioned myself as a police officer, a lawyer, a fire fighter, or an engineer. Not being particularly interested in mathematics and having a profound interest in history and languages, my career path was set fairly early on.



So I ask myself- was this modeled behavior? Would I have chosen another career if I had been encouraged to concentrate on chemistry, physics, or calculus? It's hard to say. Our young men and women now have vastly more options than most of us had when we were young and impressionable.

Interestingly enough, the teaching profession is still heavily skewed towards women with approximately 77-78% female to 22-23% males in the profession for grades K-12. In colleges or universities, the ratio is more equal (49.8% women to 50.2% men), but men tend to get more full time, tenured track positions than do women.

Our first program of this year highlighted a young woman police officer, Julia Cole, from the Culpeper Police Department. She discussed her job and her challenges as the lone woman in her department. Firefighter Lauren Charles stated in her presentation on January 21, "According to the National Fire Protection Association, as of 2020, women make up 12% of federal wildland firefighters." She talked to us about her challenges being one of only a few women in her field, her opportunities for advancement, and her feeling that she serves as an representative for all women who enter this field. There are now some programs in forestry which aim to educate then employ women in this field, notably WTREX and Women's Conservation Corps. Our February program will feature Lauren Elliff, a recent graduate of the University of Virginia, who is

**AAUW National Website:** <https://www.aauw.org/>

**AAUW-VA Website:** <https://aauw-va.aauw.net/>

**Springfield-Annandale Branch Website:** <https://sprann-va.aauw.net/>

### AAUW Mission Statement

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

*Vision: Equity for all. Values: Non-partisan. Fact based.*

### AAUW Diversity Statement

*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 socio-economic status.*

## **From the President...**

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now working as a mechanical engineer. Our April program will be presented by two women scientists are employed by the Smithsonian. These fine young women represent the success of the STEM initiative and are examples of what organizations such as AAUW strive to achieve by encouraging and supporting women in their chosen careers.

However, in STEM fields men still dominate with over 70% of these positions held by men. As we look at these statistics, we have to question why these STEM jobs are still disproportionately male. Could it be that our young women encounter a form of bias as there are fewer role models in books that feature highly achieving women? There are even fewer examples of black or Latina women in science fields.

Our branch used to sponsor a STEM seminar on a weekend where girls could sign up for various workshop sessions with women who were working in scientific or math based fields. We stopped this initiative, not because we no longer believed in it, but because our public schools began to direct young women towards these career options and training. It is encouraging that young women are receiving the support and encouragement for careers in scientific, medical, or mathematical based jobs, not just through groups like ours, but through our education system. These women represent the future for our country which is made stronger by invaluable contributions from all of its citizens, male or female.

## **2000-2025 History Documentation - Seeking Information**

Judy Titterton, Acting Historian

If you have any historical Newsletters, Approved Budgets, Board Meeting Minutes, or Membership Directories as listed in previous newsletters, please contact me.

## **Inclusion Committee Updates**

Irene McGhee and Ann Sauberman, Co-Coordinators

The Inclusion Committee met on Wednesday, January 7 via Zoom to finalize the timeline and materials for the 2026 Inclusion Awards. The Inclusion Awards flyer is attached to this edition of Updates and will also be shared to the membership via email. Committee members encourage everyone to share the flyer with neighbors, friends, and family members who know high school juniors at the eligible schools - those who may be interested in applying or who can help spread the word to others.

## **Program Updates**

Amy Crolius and Beth Boivin, Co-Vice Presidents of Program



On **January 21**, we welcomed Lauren Charles, a Fire Effects Monitor, who provided insights into her work using fire as a tool for ecological restoration. She discussed how historic fire suppression has contributed to more severe wildfires and highlighted modern management strategies such as prescribed burns. Lauren also spoke about workforce demographics, sharing that women make up only 12% of federal wildland firefighters, and reflected on the challenges of building command presence in a male-dominated field. It was a wonderful evening with this remarkable young lady, and we already invited her to come back in 5 years and share about the path of her career!



# Program 2025-26: *Women Breaking Boundaries*

February 25 at 7 p.m. via Zoom



**Lauren Elliff** is a recent graduate of the University of Virginia, holding a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in German. While at UVA, she was a member of Alpha Omega Epsilon, a professional and social sorority for women in engineering and science.

Since July 2025, she has worked as a mechanical engineer for Framatome, Inc. in Lynchburg, Virginia. Her current position is as a Mechanical Product Development Engineer in the Fuel division, focusing on the design and manufacture of commercial nuclear fuel. Before joining Framatome full-time, she spent the previous summer interning on the same team and continued her internship part-time throughout her final year of college.

## Remaining Program Dates for 2025-26:

February 25, 7 p.m. (Zoom) - Program  
March 21, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Spring Fling  
April 22, 7 p.m. (Hybrid) - Program  
May 30, 12 p.m. - Picnic



## Spring Fling is March 21

We're excited to share that **Spring Fling** is less than two months away! Be sure to mark your calendars for **Saturday, March 21**, when we'll once again gather at the Springfield Golf and Country Club. This year's event will be a brunch and will feature **Olivia Campbell**, New York Times bestselling author of *Women in White Coats: How the First Women Doctors Changed the World of Medicine* and *Sisters in Science: How Four Women Physicists Escaped Nazi Germany and Made Scientific History*.

The cost remains the same as last year at \$50 per person. A registration flyer will be emailed to all members during the first week of February.

If you're interested in helping with the silent auction or volunteering in any capacity (big or small—we appreciate it all!), please contact Beth Boivin at [elboivin@gmail.com](mailto:elboivin@gmail.com).

## AAUW-Virginia Updates

### 2026 AAUW Virginia State Conference April 18, 2026

The Northwest District is hosting the next AAUW-VA State Conference—the first conference of our second century. They have secured the venue so please Save This Date—**Saturday, April 18, 2026**, at the Drury Plaza Hotel Richmond in Glen Allen, VA 23060. There will also be pre-conference activities on Friday, April 17, 2026. Further information will be distributed as it is available on the [AAUW Virginia webpage](#).



## Membership Updates

Deborah Dodd and Debbie Gilligan, Co-Vice Presidents of Membership

We are steady with our membership with 62 members. Carol Grace, who is a new member, has taken on the position of treasurer replacing Sharon Draper after 8 years as treasurer. Thank you Sharon!

## Public Policy Updates

Susan Burk, Public Policy Chair

### General – Virginia Proposed Constitutional Amendments

The Virginia General Assembly is off and running in 2026 and our new Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General have hit the ground running. Last year, the GA passed three constitutional amendments that would:

- protect reproductive rights,
- restore voting rights for people with felony convictions who have completed their sentences, and
- remove a ban on same-sex marriage which is still in the VA constitution but has been unenforceable since the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 ruling.

Additionally, and most controversially, House Joint Resolution 4, a proposed fourth constitutional amendment would create a narrow, temporary exception allowing the GA to redraw one or more congressional districts outside the standard decennial cycle under specific circumstances. Under this last proposal, VA lawmakers could act if another state redraws its congressional map mid-decade for reasons other than complying with a state or federal court order. The exception would apply only to congressional districts, and would expire in 2030. The first three amendments will appear on the ballot in November 2026. The redistricting amendment could be addressed in a special election in April.

### Paid Family and Medical Leave, etc.

Prospects have never looked brighter for legislation to establish a state-run program to provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave for birth or adoption of a child, caring for a sick family member, or if someone has a serious medical condition. Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-Fairfax) has sponsored such legislation for a number of years and AAUW-VA has lobbied vigorously for its passage. The program would be funded by a payroll tax paid by employers and employees and would cover up to 80 percent of a person's average weekly wage. Last year, the bill made it out of the House and Senate but was vetoed by the Governor. This year, Governor Spanberger, in her address to the General Assembly said the following:

## Public Policy Updates

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“.....we will create a statewide paid family and medical leave program....guarantee paid sick days....increase access to Virginia’s child care subsidy program....and.....raise the minimum wage to 15 dollars an hour.”

Now is the time to let our delegates and senators know that these are AAUW-VA’s public policy priorities, we support them and other measures, and we are counting on our elected officials to get them over the finish line.

### 2026 AAUW-VA State Lobby Day February 5 in Richmond

Sending emails and making phone calls are all effective ways to communicate with our state elections officials. We have the opportunity to visit them and/or their staffs when AAUW-VA members travel to Richmond to lobby our state legislators in person on Thursday, February 5, 2026. A block of rooms has been reserved at the [Hampton Inn in Richmond](#) for those members planning to travel to Richmond the day before. Our state VP for Public Policy, Diane Schrier, has arranged for a representative from The Commonwealth Institute (TCI) to speak to us at the hotel the evening of February 4 (topic TBD), and a light dinner will be served. You should have received a registration form from Diane to indicate whether/when you will be in Richmond and with whom you plan to meet. We will need to schedule our own meetings with delegates and senators. Please let me know if you received the registration form and are planning to join our lobby group. I am happy to provide suggestions for meetings. With so many new delegates, this is a great time to acquaint them and their staffs with AAUW-VA.

### March 3 Election Day for the Braddock District School Board

Long-time School Board representative, Rachna Sizemore Heizer, recently won the election to replace James Walkinshaw as the Braddock District Chairman. (Walkinshaw replaced Congressman Gerry Connolly.) And in another “it’s a small world after all,” Rachna’s daughter, Laura Sizemore from Lake Braddock HS, was one of the past winners of Springfield-Annandale’s Student Inclusion Awards.) Early voting for this election has already started. [Visit this link](#) to find voting times at the Fairfax County Government Center and Burke Centre Library.

## Other Branch Activities

### Movies at Midweek

All branch members are invited to Cinema Arts theatre the **third Wednesday of the month** to see a film, followed by lunch at nearby First Watch. This month the movie date is February 18. Details of the selected film are sent via email to all branch members by the Friday of the previous week.

### Book Groups

All members are invited to join the branch book groups! The **evening book group meets via Zoom at 7 p.m. the first Thursday of the month** and the **morning book group meets in-person at 10 a.m. the second Thursday of the month**. Full selections and schedules for the year can be found in the Membership Directory.

#### Evening Book Group

The Evening Book Group will meet on **Thursday, February 5** to discuss *A Different Kind of Power* by Jacinda Ardern. Beth Von Holle will be the reviewer.

#### Morning Book Group

The Morning Book Group will meet on **Thursday, February 12**, to discuss *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon. Wendy Cleland-Hamnett will be the reviewer and Jo Domingues will host at the Kings Park Library, located at 9000 Burke Lake Road in Burke, VA.

## ❖ Other Opportunities

### School of Rock Fundraiser

Join the Alexandria and Mt. Vernon AAUW Branches on **Friday, February 6, 2026**, at the Little Theatre of Alexandria for an evening of fun and fundraising. Enjoy a reception at 7:00 p.m. followed by the high-energy musical School of Rock musical at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$45, with proceeds supporting AAUW's mission to empower women and girls. If you'd like to go as a group from Springfield-Annandale, contact Helen Cassidy.

### ❖ Branch Calendar: February 2026

February 5	<a href="#"><u>Lobby Day</u></a>
February 5, 7 p.m.	<a href="#"><u>Evening Book Group - Zoom</u></a>
February 12, 10 a.m.	<a href="#"><u>Morning Book Group</u></a>
February 17, 1 p.m.	Board Meeting - Zoom
February 18	<a href="#"><u>Movies at Midweek</u></a>
February 25, 7 p.m.	<a href="#"><u>Women Breaking Boundaries - Zoom Program</u></a>
February 24	UPDATES Articles Due for March Issue

**UPDATES Articles for March  
due February 24**



Alexandria Branch



Mt Vernon Branch

Alexandria and Mt. Vernon AAUW Branches

Invite You to Attend a Fundraising Event at the

LITTLE THEATRE OF ALEXANDRIA

600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria

Friday, FEBRUARY 6, 2026      7PM RECEPTION    8PM PERFORMANCE



**Tickets: \$45**

School of Rock is a rocking, high-energy musical that will have “fists of all ages and sizes...pumping” (Vanity Fair)! Watch a wannabe rocker turn a class of misfits into a band of rockstars. With a score that’ll make you groove, this show is a blast!

**Please join us in supporting AAUW's goals to  
empower women and girls. Tickets**

**Patsy Quick (Mt. Vernon): [pnquick@cox.net](mailto:pnquick@cox.net) or**

**Susan Werner (Alexandria): [susan.werner1@verizon.net](mailto:susan.werner1@verizon.net)**



# 2026 AAUW “Inclusion in Action” Student Award

The Springfield-Annandale Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) proudly announces the opening of nominations for the **2026 Inclusion in Action Student Award**.

## ABOUT THE AWARD

This award recognizes high school juniors who actively promote **inclusion and belonging** within their school communities. Students will share their story through an **original, student-created video** highlighting real actions they took to make their school and community more inclusive.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Must be a **high school junior**, who attends one of these high schools: Annandale, Fairfax, Lake Braddock, Lewis, Robinson, Thomas Jefferson, West Springfield, or Woodson.

## PRIZES



**\$1000**



**\$750**



**\$500**

Honorable Mentions may also be awarded with a certificate.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Demonstrate how you promote inclusion and belonging in your school and community.
- Between 2 to 4 minutes in length.
- Landscape/horizontal video that fits a screen, uploaded to YouTube.
- Original work only — photos, footage, narration, and editing must be yours. Can use video editing tools to help create the video (or can record with narration over a slideshow in a presentation platform)
- Submissions will be evaluated primarily on content, but feel free to be creative!

## HOW TO APPLY

### Information and Application:



<https://forms.gle/GaEiqYD2iP5vaphqZ>

### Submission Deadline:

**April 7, 2026**

Prizes will be awarded in May 2026.

Questions? Email Beth Boivin at [elboivin@gmail.com](mailto:elboivin@gmail.com)