

NUTMEG NEWS

Biannual Internet newsletter for CT AAUW - February 2003

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

AAUW Convention in Providence will Be Exciting!

Plan to attend the national AAUW Convention in Providence, Rhode Island, from June 20th to June 23rd. The theme for the convention is: **Women in Charge: Bold, Innovative, Collaborative**. It will focus on advancing community activism, coalition building and leadership. The convention will offer plenary sessions, workshops issues forums and events to help attendees expand their individual and organizational abilities. Past convention goers will affirm that attending a national convention will give you great pride in AAUW, and a whole new outlook about the organization. It is also a lot of fun. Approximately 1200 AAUW members are expected in Providence and it is absolutely mind boggling to be among that many women activists during the plenaries and business meetings.

Membership

Our lifeline as an organization is our membership. If I, as President, had a Wish List for 2003 about membership it would contain:

Increase membership by a net 5%. This can be done by identifying newcomers who want to make friends and get involved in your community; find newly retired individuals who suddenly have some free time, look for young mothers who are looking for adult conversation, and also seek out young professionals interested in networking.

- Recruit 10 new college/university members. Sometimes these potential members are hard to find, so sponsor an Eleanor Roosevelt Walk-Run fundraiser on campus. Also looks for administrators that are interested in the fellowships and grants given by Association and the scholarships awarded by local branches.
- Recruit members-at-large as branch members. Contact the MALs who live in your communities and invite them to your branch events. Sometimes they are not aware of the benefits of joining a local branch.
- Recruit younger members. This can be done by planning dialogues on social justice issues and projects that promote educational equity for young girls. Also research in your area where the good day care is located and share that with younger women as a service of AAUW.
- Increase diverse membership. Welcome, encourage, empower and nominate diverse women to membership in your branch and to branch leadership positions.

Gender Equity: "The Continued Saga"

Across our country the vast majority of girls shy away from technology-related classes in school. Only 15% of those taking the Advanced Placement exam for computer science are girls, according to the College Board. In a recent survey the data showed that male college students were twice as likely as their female

peers to rate their computer skills as above average and five times more likely to pursue careers in computer programming.

While overt discrimination against girls in schools appears to be rare, students, teachers, and advocacy groups say that work remains to be done in lifting the subtle barriers that still limit young women from having information and opportunities to explore technology-rich classes. Those roadblocks range from some teachers who grew up in an era when careers were often starkly delineated along gender lines to outdated school counseling material. AAUW has created a document called Tech Check, which could help branches, and school districts gather some data on this issue.

Experts also suggest that because most school districts are now occupied with the demands of standards-based reform and high-stakes testing, trying to get schools to think more critically about gender stereotyping and increasing the number of girls in technology-related courses can be difficult. Our AAUW Report, Tech-Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age, states that "Girls are an untapped source of talent to lead the high-tech economy and culture." It continues that teachers and those who write curricula "need to cultivate girls' interest by infusing technology concepts and uses into subject areas ranging from music to history to the sciences in order to interest a broader array of learners."

If we really believe in our mission—AAUW promotes equity for all women and girls, lifelong education, and positive societal change—then we cannot be silent about this issue. We need to help schools find mentors for girls who are interested in technology related careers. We must support school district, which are trying to infuse technology into their curricula. We must help create a technological environment for young women that is "girl-friendly."

Marcelline A. Barron, President CT AAUW [top](#)

MEMBERSHIP

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

AAUW has a membership dilemma. So does almost every other organization with which we are familiar. However, this is one instance in which there is no joy in togetherness.

Branch officers and members talk often about ways to retain good members and recruit others. I am passionate about the need to find solutions to this mystery. Outlined below are some strategies for building a strong, dynamic branch. Many of these ideas were adapted from an e-mail I received from Diane Regan, Membership Vice President of the Bowling Green, Ohio Branch of AAUW.

Strategy #1: Every member of a Branch belongs to the Membership Committee, and should be expected to recruit new members whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Every event you attend or trip you make to the store or library presents an opportunity. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with people you meet at places such as museums and concerts. Have the goal of building local membership always

in front of you. **See every person—male or female—as a potential member simply because the person supports the mission of AAUW.** Don't limit your vision of who is right for membership. Remember our statement of inclusion and share it!

Strategy #2: Find an immediate and significant way to get new members really involved. It has been proven over and over again that members who get involved quickly **remain**; those who have nothing to do within the organization soon drift away.

Strategy #3: When your membership has dipped below the critical mass, set a goal for increasing it, and work toward it in every way you can think of. Let no Branch program go by without using this goal to increase interest in the organization, which will--in turn-- lead to increased membership. Nothing helps motivate people to reach a goal better than setting one and constantly working toward reaching it.

Strategy #4: Even though your Branch may be struggling to meet a short-term goal for membership, go ahead and set a long-term goal as well; **and always keep that goal in view.** Consider using the old United Way ploy of filling in marks on a thermometer poster to show progress.

Strategy #5: Be a cheerleader! Bolster the enthusiasm of your members when you see their energy waning. Enthusiasm is contagious and usually results in a shift of responsibility. Before long, members will see membership as a collective responsibility.

Strategy #6: Look for members everywhere! If you live in a university community, approach the Director of your local Women's Center to join; that's a powerful message to other women who use the Center's resources. Place AAUW literature about membership and benefits on display in the Center.

Strategy #7: Talk to your spouse or significant other about becoming a member. In the case of the Bowling Green Branch, Diane's spouse promised to become Member #100 when they reached 99 members. Breaking the gender barrier proved to be a very exciting motivator for many of the members.

Strategy #8: Celebrate your successes, both big and small! If you set a goal of 7 members this year, but only recruit 5, rejoice in the 5! Recognition of achievements and sharing fun times are two activities that will ultimately lead to increased inquiries from strangers about how they can join your branch!

Jeannette Phillips, Membership Vice President [top](#)

PUBLIC POLICY

As we enter 2003, women are facing a number of attacks on the gains they have struggled for. This is the **30th anniversary of Roe v Wade** and a time for celebration, but also a time for another hard fought battle is also under fire: **Title IX**, the right of women to have an equal opportunity in education. We urge you to fill out the **Survey of Priorities** enclosed with your January Newsletter. You can give your Survey form to your Branch PP representative, your Branch President or your Branch Secretary.

THANK YOU!
Willadean Hart & Mary Jane Janick, Co-Chairs, Public Policy

INTERNATIONAL

Via our Maine AAUW members I have learned that there is an opportunity to put Nova Scotia on the map. For further details please visit <http://www.cfuwwoolfville.ca> with the Canadian Federation of Women Workers. * This might also be of interest for AAUW member along the extensive USA/CANADA border.

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--Loretta James, Director, International Affairs

A Tribute

IN TRIBUTE TO VIRGINIA SAENGER: We were very saddened to learn of the passing of New London Branch life member Virginia Saenger on January 27, 2003. Virginia joined the New London Branch in 1975, just a few years after she, her husband, Alfred, and three daughters moved to Connecticut from the Bronx. Although she carried a full time position with the Waterford Tax Collector's office, she was very involved with the community at large. She was very active in the League of Women's Voters and the West Farms Land Trust, of which she was a founder, as well as AAUW.

Virginia was the consummate AAUW member. She served as branch president 1984-1989 and again 1991-1993. Other branch roles she assumed were Membership vice-president, Diversity chair, Public Policy and Cultural Area. Virginia had strong leadership qualities, which led her to being tapped for state AAUW positions. On the state level she served as Corresponding Secretary 1986-87, Chair of the Nominating Committee 1994-95, and Recording Secretary 1995-97. She was a well known figure at state meetings.

Virginia expended so much energy for AAUW. Ever dedicated and efficient, she set up and managed a telephone tree to encourage members to attend the monthly branch meetings. She valued historical records of the branch and arranged for a rental storage for such records. To encourage membership growth, she created and printed handbills of the yearly programs for public posting, and she even carried membership application forms wherever she went. Possessing a great fondness for reading, she was the mainstay of the branch book discussion groups, taking responsibility for arranging schedules, meeting places, and discussion leaders. Interest was so great that two separate book discussion groups were formed, both of which she attended faithfully.

Virginia has left her imprint on so many aspects of what AAUW is all about. She was always so supportive branch community projects and a benefactor toward the broader fund raising goals of the Education Foundation and the Legal Advocacy Fund. Whether we knew her from committee work, serving on a Board, riding to state meetings with her or just attending branch meetings, **she touched every one of us and amazed us with the level of her commitment to AAUW.** How much we will miss her. [top](#)

FROM OUR LOCAL BRANCHES...

Creating Coalition with Area Community College: An exciting coalition is happening between our branch - Storrs-Willimantic - and Quinebaug Valley Community College!

This past fall, our branch decided to reach out to QVCC, which has two campuses within our area - the main campus in Danielson and a branch in Willimantic. Our original thought was to connect with the college and together develop a joint project focused on validating women as well as providing encouragement and support for them to pursue further education. In addition, our branch planned to work towards establishing a scholarship to be awarded to a woman who graduated from QVCC and was continuing her education at a 4-year college. Representatives from our branch and QVCC began brainstorming ideas for projects. After several meetings we decided to co-sponsor a daylong conference on gender issues for juniors and seniors from area high schools. At this time, it was unanimously agreed that student input in the planning of such an endeavor was crucial for its success. Thus, students from both Windham and Killingly High Schools were invited to join the planning team and added much energy and insight. The project began to take shape and form. Topics to be addressed were narrowed down to three:

- Raising Consciousness of Gender and Transgender Issues
- Understanding Body Image

(The impact of the perception of the 'perfect' body image on self esteem, confidence and health)

- Exploring Career Inequities and Options

(Glass ceiling; pay inequities - traditional careers, non-traditional careers, parenthood)

Each topic will become a workshop and be held three times over the course of the day in order to ensure each student has the opportunity to participate in all three.

Students from 6 area high schools will be invited to attend. The Conference will begin with a panel of women from a variety of backgrounds who will address pertinent questions submitted by students on their application forms. Following this, students will divide into three groups and begin rotating through the workshops. Facilitated discussions are planned to take place during lunch. After lunch, students will get together into school groups where they will develop action plans to take back to and implement in their own school. The final portion of this conference will be sharing of those action plans with the entire group.

Much work has yet to be done before this conference is ready. However, seeing how much we have accomplished so far together is inspiring. It's awesome to see a coalition at work - the combination of varying energies, knowledge and expertise of those who are participating is powerful. And there is a secondary benefit for our branch and the Association in general. Before we began this outreach, few faculty, staff or students at QVCC and none of the high school students knew about AAUW. Now several do. Perhaps some will join us!

--Pamela Thompson, Storrs-Willimantic Branch President

Bridgeport Area Branch Co-Sponsors Women's Resources Fair: The Bridgeport Area Branch
--Laurel Anderson, Bridgeport Area Branch President

GET OUT THE VOTE

A WARM THANK YOU!!! from Connie Bennett, Congressional District II Coordinator. The Get Out The Vote project for Connecticut Congressional District II was a success thanks to all those who donated their time, efforts and ideas. We reached out to thousands of voters in Connecticut. Over 12,500 voter guides were mailed and over 500 voter guides distributed at various events. We were able to reach 1,546 women by telephone. Approximately 90 volunteers participated in this wonderful project. Since Congressional District II is geographically large, volunteers were solicited to lead the voter guide mailings and telephone banks in three separate locations in the district. Visibility events included attendance at 5 Candidate Forums, a local New London event called Boats, Books and Brushes Festival, Libraries and participation of three area colleges. Local college students were recruited to assist with telephone banks and voter guide mailings. Six AAUW branches participated with the project. The following organizations partnered with AAUW for the voter education campaign: League of Women Voters, Hispanic Alliance, Neighbor to Neighbor, Connecticut One, American Federation of Teachers, Local libraries, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Three Rivers Community College, Quinnebaug Valley Community College and Eastern Connecticut State University. There are several individuals whom I would like to give special thanks to. These individuals were the ones who were key players in the success of the Get Out The Vote project. volunteered for leadership positions and spent many hours dedicating themselves to the success of the project. They are as follows:

Cora Pelletier, Voter Guide Chair, New London

Mary Ann Kistner, Team Leader, Lower CT Valley

Pamela Thompson, Team Leader, Storrs/Willimantic

Candy Buebendorf, Voter Guide Mailing Chair, New London

Virginia Saenger, Telephone Tree, New London

Nancy McDonough, Telephone Bank, New London

Sandra Kreczko, Co-Grant Writer- Bridgeport

Betty Thomson, Fiscal Agent, Greater Meriden

Mary Jane Janick, Email and Telephone Coordinator, Ridgefield

Elaine Bono, Telephone Bank, New London

Mary Poola, Telephone Bank, New London

Thank you once again to all of you who came to various events and helped with the project. Through your efforts we were able to recruit several new AAUW members, one in Willimantic and two in New London. We were able to provide knowledge of the mission of the American Association of University Women and bring visibility to the organization in the community. We educated women on the importance of voting. [top](#)

That's it for this month. Any problems, comments, suggestions for the newsletter?