



Empowering Women
Since 1881

AAUW Gaithersburg Branch

NEWSLETTER

October 2020

October 2020

VIRTUAL BRANCH MEETING!

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Log in to Zoom meeting: 7:15pm

Presentation begins: 7:30pm

TOPIC:

Student Stories from Our 2020 Scholarship Recipients

Thanks to the generosity of many branch members, we were able to continue our branch tradition of providing scholarships for women students attending our local institutions of higher education: Montgomery College and Universities at Shady Grove. We look forward to hearing the personal stories and aspirations of several scholarship recipients at our next branch meeting. Please join us for this always fun and interesting meeting.

NOTE: All members will receive an email with the Zoom registration information. You will need to register for the meeting rather than accept an invitation email. Please forward the registration email to any friends and family who may be interested in the October meeting.

Virtual Board Meeting

Tuesday, October 13 at 7:00pm

Log in to Zoom meeting: 6:45pm

Board meetings are open to all members. If you plan to attend, please email Heather Reichardt, hjr1234@gmail.com, to receive a Zoom meeting registration email.

SAVE THE DATE

POST ELECTION ZOOM SOCIAL HOUR+

Friday, November 6 at 6:30pm

Let's get together to dissect the election results, whatever they may be, and chat about our voting experiences (and anything else) from this year. Feel free to bring your snacks and drinks!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Edie Allison

October, which I normally look forward to as a time of colorful trees and benign weather, has seemed to take on additional strains involving the requirements for Coronavirus-constrained branch activities and a Presidential election that has worried people of every political persuasion. But we have had a successful start to the AAUW year, and Maryland and other states are taking steps to enhance voting accessibility.

We had fifteen participants in our first Zoom branch meeting, and everyone seemed to enjoy group conversations and the presentation by art appraiser Alvah Beander. Our October Zoom program will provide an opportunity to get to know the recipients of our scholarship funding to Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove. This is an inspiring annual program as we meet the next generation of successful women.

While virtual meetings lack the warmth and camaraderie of in-person gatherings, they are still a pleasant way to catch up with friends and acquaintances. Virtual meetings also create greater opportunities to participate in informative and educational meetings, as well as interactive discussions with government or organizational decisionmakers. And there is no driving required. This branch will try to share more virtual programs focusing on women's issues and social inequities illuminated by the pandemic as well as social gatherings or cultural events. I hope you will register for the Montgomery County Board of Education candidate forum on October 5. There is more information later in this newsletter. In addition, expect announcements about programs from our sister branches and AAUW Maryland, which has active public policy, and diversity and inclusion programs.

Women's equity issues have not gotten much attention from the federal government this year and probably will not be on the agenda for the rest of this year as Congress faces elections, the September 30 deadlines for funding the government, and calls for Coronavirus stimulus funding and disaster assistance.

The 2020 Maryland legislative session was perhaps more productive. We can celebrate the passage of several bills important to women for which AAUW Maryland advocated.

- A Maryland salary history ban has been enacted through the efforts of Senator Susan Lee, who had introduced the bill over several years. Maryland AAUW members met with legislators during AAUW MD Advocacy day 2020 and hundreds of

members have sent emails in support of the legislation. Preventing a potential employer from requiring a job candidate to provide their salary history assures that women can be paid a salary commensurate with the job rather than past salaries.



- Another bill clarifies strangulation, a type of physical assault often seen in domestic violence and women's murder, as a first-degree felony, strengthening prosecutions.
- Other laws make victims of "date rape" eligible for a protective order, and remove convictions for drug possession and theft if they are the result of the victim's human trafficker.

Next year AAUW and other organizations will work to establish a Maryland family and medical leave insurance program, legislation that did not pass in 2020. The 2021 Session of the Maryland General Assembly will also require our attention lest education and equity for women get lost in the push to deal with huge budget deficits. AAUW Maryland and other state branches will help keep us informed and offer opportunities to get involved.

A Mail-in-Voting Offer for Our Homebound Members

If you are concerned about whether the U.S. Postal Service will get your ballot to the Board of Elections in a timely manner and do not have an easy way to get to a ballot drop box, Liz Hessel and I will be happy to come by your home and collect your completed ballot (masked and maintaining a safe distance) and deliver it to the drop box at the Montgomery County Board of Elections office. To get our assistance, please call me (301-231-0109) as soon as possible.

Montgomery County Board of Education Candidate Forum

This branch joins other AAUW branches in the county and the Maryland AAUW in sponsoring the October 5 Montgomery County Board of Education candidate forum. Two candidates will face off for each of three seats on the nine-member Board.

Sunil Dasgupta and Lynne Harris will compete for the at-large seat.

Michael Fryar and Rebecca Somondrowski will compete for the District 2 seat.

Shebra Evans and Steve Solomon will compete for the District 4 seat.

The Board is composed of seven elected members, a student elected by secondary school students and the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joshua Starr. The board has two at-large members and a representative for each of five geographic districts. Board members representing all districts are elected by the entire county electorate. [To determine which Education district you are in, see the County Board of Elections maps page.]

The forum provides an opportunity for voters to consider how potential Board members will approach some coming issues. One potentially contentious issue is how to revise school boundaries. Half of county schools are overcrowded while there are empty seats in the other half. In addition, some schools have a

larger proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals compared to the county average. The school board commissioned a county-wide analysis of school boundaries.

The Interim Boundary Analysis is available on the school district website. Community discussion of and potential action on the study has been delayed because of the coronavirus health crisis.

Another issue for potential Board members would be how to implement and pay for the recommendations of Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, which recommends increasing early childhood education, increasing teacher salaries, and assuring all students have high quality and diverse teachers and access to advanced courses.

Even though many of our members do not have children or grandchildren in the county public schools, we are all paying for the schools, and we all support educational equity. The candidate forum will help inform our vote.

More information about the forum and the link to register is on the branch website, Gaithersburg-md.aauw.net.



BOOK SALE NEWS

- Liz Hessel, Chair of Book Sales

The coronavirus has delayed our annual book sale until next year when hopefully customers will feel safe again to attend. However, we continue to collect, filter and sort books, assessing each before putting them into storage. We carefully evaluate each to determine its likelihood of selling and its value.

You may recall that at the front of the book-sale room we have a special section called "Better Books." These are the books that sell above the general price of \$3 or less. They include first editions, rare books, books with a high initial selling price, and books on narrow topics with a small print run. Sales of the better books make a valuable contribution to the overall profit of the book sale. We continually scan incoming books for suitability for this section. If you or a friend has poten-

tially valuable books, your donation of these to our sale would help raise our scholarship funds. Mention this as you chat with others about the book sale.



Also, remember to mention to potential donors that we sell DVDs, CDs and audio books--popular items with our customers. Though we are confined to our homes now, we still can help the book sale by reminding friends and neighbors that we remain actively collecting donations. Pick-ups can be arranged by contacting Liz Hessel at 301-840-1258 or liz@meral.com.

NEWS FROM THE DISTANCE: LOIS LIGGETT

We miss those friends who have moved away, so we are seeking the latest news from those we can reach. Here is a message from Lois Liggett. You will remember Lois particularly for instigating the gigantic jump in available books that made our book sale the marvel that it is. In 2012, after serving as branch president, she and her husband, Walt, moved to their dream home in Montpelier, Vermont. Here is what she has to say.

Since January 2020 Walt and I finally understand the meaning of retirement. No volunteering. In the past eight years we have served on boards of directors for two nonprofits, sponsored mental health courses, chaired missions task force for church, and managed a Montpelier food pantry garden producing 500 pounds of veggies a year. Now our mission is limited to family affairs, gardening, and supporting a nonprofit that sponsors asylum seekers. The Sudanese fellow (a former refugee) we mentored for the last two years has done well. He is a U.S. citizen and owns a business in Montpelier. Occasionally he comes over and cooks us a Sudanese meal. I'll never forget the first time he did this about two years ago. He brought all the food and took over my kitchen.

Why the change in our activity level? Age and health decline for both of us. I have had lung cancer return after ten years and am being successfully treated with immunotherapy. Walt has Parkinson's, so he has slowed down.

LETTERS TO SHARE

- **Mary Wykes**

Thanks to our Program VP, Heather Reichardt, for arranging the informative and helpful Zoom practice session before our September branch meeting. It was wonderful to see former president Lois Liggett join us from her home in Montpelier, Vermont. We appreciate her continuing her membership in our branch. The excellent program

On the bright side, we are still very functional. We have two gardens, one in our back yard and one at a community garden. We grow about thirty different fruits and berries and veggies, including mushrooms and chestnuts. This was a very good year for shitake mushrooms! We gave away lots of mushrooms to friends and neighbors. Some of them are now interested in growing their own, so we gave them tutorials.



In October we venture away from Vermont to travel by car to Kentucky for a week to attend a grandson's wedding. The wedding was postponed once because of covid.

I enjoyed the September meeting featuring the art appraiser. I will see you on future Zoom AAUW branch meetings.

Heather arranged for September was well attended as a result of the practice session held the week before.



GREAT DECISIONS

- **Mary Wykes, Coordinator**



In view of covid-19 restrictions, the Great Decisions Group has decided to suspend meeting temporarily.

For members following the Foreign Policy study guide, the October topic is "The Philippines and the U.S.: Change with Continuity?" by Julio S. Amador III, executive director of the Philippine-American Educational Foundation. and Derek Baladjay, master's candidate at the De La

Salle University in Manila. Branch member Aurora Sevilla, originally from the Philippines, had planned to lead the discussion.

I am checking to see if the Asbury Great Decisions group will be presenting this topic via Zoom and, if so, whether our members might join them. I will let our group know whether this will be possible and, if so, details of time and connection.

LITERATURE GROUP

- **Mary Wykes**



The Literature Group is not meeting at this time because of covid-19. Jean Young has decided not to continue as our coordinator, but when we are able to meet in person again, she will be happy to have us meet at her home in the Villas at Asbury Village. We are glad she plans to continue as a member of the group. We appreciate the great job Jean has done during the many years she has been our coordinator. We need a volunteer to take over for Jean. Please contact Mary Wykes (mary.wykes@aol.com) if you are willing to be the group coordinator in Jean's place.

In a recent phone visit with long time-member Sandra Finnerty, I learned that she broke her leg in a recent fall in her home. Her husband has been taking care of her. We wish her a speedy recovery. I am sure she would appreciate hearing from our members. Her home number is 301-253-6170 and her ad-

dress is 10908 Kingstead Road, Damascus MD 20872.

I hope all of you have used some of the covid-19 lockdown to do some reading. My daughter recently joined a book club of neighbors and she has been sharing their selections with me. Some titles I have enjoyed are Doris Kearns Goodwin's "Leadership," Delia Owens' "Where the Crawdads Sing," Jeanine Cummins' "American Dirt," Bob Woodward's "Rage," and now I'm reading Cokie Roberts' "Ladies of Liberty."

I would love to hear from any of you with recommendations for good reads, as well as a volunteer to replace Jean as our coordinator.

AAUW GAITHERSBURG BRANCH

Website: gaithersburg-md.aauw.net

Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

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AAUW GAITHERSBURG CALENDAR OF ZOOM MEETINGS

AAUW Maryland Fall Meeting	Saturday, October 3 - 10 a.m.
Board of Education Candidates Forum	Monday, October 5 - 7 p.m.
Board Meeting	Tuesday, October 13 - 6:45 p.m.
Branch Meeting	Tuesday, October 20 - 7:15 p.m.
SAVE THIS DATE:	
Post-Election Social Hour	Friday, November 6 - 6:30 p.m.

The American Association of University Women
Gaithersburg Branch
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Gaithersburg, MD 20877