



# AAUW Gaithersburg Branch

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

NEWSLETTER

February 2023

## February 2023

Gaithersburg AAUW VIRTUAL BRANCH MEETING!

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

Log in to Zoom meeting: 7:00pm

Presentation begins: 7:15pm

### PRESENTATION:

New Research on Healthy Minds from 2 Johns Hopkins Researchers  
We will hear from two professors working on brain research in the Department of Neurology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. They are actively researching as part of a large study called Healthy Minds for Life! The study is looking at ways to slow cognitive decline from a lifestyle and medical perspective.

### Speakers:

Anja Soldan, PhD, Associate Professor, Dept. of Neurology, Johns Hopkins

Corinne Pettigrew, PhD, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Neurology, Johns Hopkins

\*NOTE – The Zoom link will be sent to members and friends a few days prior to the meeting.

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Zoom

The AAUW Gaithersburg Branch Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday, February 14 at 7 p.m. via Zoom. The Zoom code will be sent by email. These meetings are open to all branch members.

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**Meeting information and more is on the BRANCH WEBSITE**

Go to <http://gaithersburg-md.aauw.net> for information about upcoming meetings and other events, and current and past newsletters.

## Presidents Message

### - Edie Allison

Happy New Year AAUW Gaithersburg

We can celebrate that Montgomery County women are joining the upper levels of the new state government. Maryland not only welcomed Governor Wes Moore, who was sworn into office on January 18, but also Aruna Miller, Maryland's first South Asian woman to be elected Lieutenant Governor. Ms Miller previously represented Montgomery County in the House of Delegates. She is also a powerful, visible role model for women in STEM, having earned a BS degree in civil engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology. Another woman who is well known to us, Senator Susan Lee, is expected to become the Maryland Secretary of State in the Moore Administration. In another first the Montgomery County Council will be majority female for the first time in history. The council will also be adding Latina, Asian and Black representatives, better representing the diversity of the county.

Another step toward gender equality is buried in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 that became federal law on December 29, 2022, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. This law clarifies that it is unlawful to discriminate against pregnant workers by forcing them out of their jobs unnecessarily or by denying them reasonable accommodations, such as more frequent bathroom breaks. The legislation was introduced in February 2021 and passed the House in September 2021 but was unable to pass the Senate until it was added to the Consolidated Appropriation Bill. This legislation, which was required to keep the Federal government operating through September 2023, is often a convenient vehicle for popular bills that failed to attract enough attention to receive a separate vote.

There have been other laws aimed at preventing discrimination against pregnant workers. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 generally ended the practice of companies finding pregnancy itself a basis for termination. This new bill clarifies the types and scope of accommodations employers are required to provide to allow women to protect their health and work to provide for their families. AAUW was one of 220 organizations that endorsed and advocated for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.



Another important women's protection has been languishing since the 1970s, the Equal Rights Amendment. I have mentioned before that in 2023 AAUW Maryland's support for legal acceptance of ratification includes sponsoring an art event with Artists4ERA. Expect more details in the next several weeks.

I remember the campaign against Equal Rights warned of such horrors as unisex bathrooms and the military draft being extended to women. These topics are no longer particularly terrifying as women can hold most military positions and many bathrooms are open to anyone. However, American women continue to need legal support to achieve equality. News reports about the recent Supreme Court abortion decision highlighted the fact that women are not mentioned anywhere in the U.S. Constitution, meaning that any legal protection for women must be separately tested in the courts. The ERA amendment would correct this.

## A Guest Column From the AAUW Maryland President, Tracy Lantz Recognizing the Value of AAUW Maryland

### - Tracy Lantz

AAUW Maryland Greetings! I hope you have a joyful holiday and enjoy new beginnings as we enter 2023. Today I want to take time to address an issue that many of you have shared with me. While most members understand the value of activity in their local branch, occasionally I hear people ask, "Why should I belong to the state organization?" Well, I think there are lots of reasons that AAUW is organized with local branches associated under a state umbrella. Here are just a few:

- AAUW Maryland provides a legislative presence through our public policy initiatives and involvement of all our members - fighting for issues important to our members.
- Our Maryland state leaders participate in MLAW (Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women) to effectively work with other women-focused organizations for a more powerful voice in the state legislative process.
- We can rely on statewide e-mail communication on issues of importance to AAUW. These emails also connect us with the activities of other branches from the mountains of western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, reaching the borders with our neighboring states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, DC, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- The Marylander itself is an excellent source of news and branch events for the entire state organization. We also have an outstanding website to keep you connected, <https://aauw-md.aauw.net/>.
- Our statewide meetings bring branch issues and projects to a statewide audience. Our meetings provide critical interaction and mutual learning opportunities for our branches.

This affords us opportunities to educate others on issues of importance to women and girls.

- We speak with a stronger voice to national AAUW when we work together as a state organization. We are powerful as a state organization when raising funds for important initiatives including NCCWSL (National Conference for College Women Student Leaders)
- The state organization provides support for our individual branches as they take on issues unique to their members and communities.
- The statewide organization allows us to organize collaborative events of importance such as the Artist4ERA exhibit.

For me, Maryland AAUW is also important for the connections I've made with wise women - and men - from across the state, many of whom have become friends over the years, and the ability to maintain these friendships through being a member of AAUW Maryland. Time and again, I've gone back to these colleagues to ask for advice, to hear their perspectives on important issues, and to educate myself about the policies and legislation that affect women and girls in our state. And through the activities and programming at the state level, we continue to learn together. That's why I've valued being a member of AAUW Maryland for more than two decades.

## 2022 HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

On a lovely December day, nine AAUW ladies and two spouses gathered at the Carrabba's Italian Grill for our AAUW holiday luncheon. Although the group was small, the talk was loud and the laughter hearty. We all sat at one long table and managed conversations up and down the length. Unfortunately, Santa did not make it this year, but as you can see from the picture, a good time was had by all.

This gathering was part of the yearlong celebration of our Branch's 50th anniversary and one of our founders – Anne Fraker - was able to attend.

As part of our free-wheeling conversations, there was discussion on the future of our Branch. We are in need of new membership, so if you have friends who might be interested, please invite them to our monthly (still Zoom) meetings. And, of course, the status of the Book Sale came up. Although it is a lot of work, it is a focus of our chapter and the source of our Scholarship funds.

Our thanks to Liz for organizing our outing.



*L – R: Barbara Brooks, Anna Fraker, Jim Harris, Mary Wykes, Marilyn O’Connell, Linda Pickle, Alice Wong, Elizabeth Schwartz, Merrill Hessel. Photographer Liz Hessel*

## LETTERS FROM BRANCH SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

The Gaithersburg branch funded scholarships for several disadvantaged women students at Montgomery College in 2022. We are sharing letters from three students telling of their challenges and accomplishments: Barbara Canales, Thy Nguyen, and Andrea Gaspare.

Dear AAUW- Gaithersburg

My name is Barbara Canales, and I am the recipient of the AAUW Gaithersburg Scholarship for this year. I want to express how appreciative I am in the work that you do in making scholarships like this possible for students who are pursuing a higher education. As a first-generation student, I tend to have moments where I feel that I am not capable of solely focusing on my studies. I sometimes feel like I should put a pause on my education and help my parents with bills by working a full-time job. These types of thoughts cause me to stay up thinking of ways how to balance my work, school and my social life while also helping my parents in any way that they need. While that may be all overwhelming, the AAUW scholarship can help me by paying for a textbook or a code for class. The scholarship could also be used for paying for a class that may help me to get a certificate that can help my family financially.

I have a year left until I finish my associate degree in Biology at Montgomery College. For the past year, I have challenged myself by stepping out of my comfort zone. I've presented at the Maryland Collegiate STEM Conference in April 2022 where I measured the amount of species richness and abundance at Burnt Mills Special Park. I had the opportunity of working with Professor Kiersten Newtoff who worked with me to be more comfortable with public speaking. As the Secretary of the Rockville Student Senate, I have advocated for funding for the new building at the Takoma Park campus and I have advocated for more general funding to go to Montgomery College, so that renovations like the one happening in the Takoma Park campus are possible.

Going to Montgomery College is one of the best decisions I've made because it was one of the

most important steppingstones in my journey of becoming a Physician Assistant. In high school, if you told me that I would present at a STEM conference, I wouldn't believe you. However, the faculty and professors at Montgomery College cheer for you along the way and moments like this are only possible through your contributions that allow me to spend more of my time in extracurricular activities gaining experience that helps me as a student pursuing medicine.

Thank you, AAUW Gaithersburg, again for your generosity, and I hope to see you this year!

Dear AAUW Gaithersburg,

I am writing to you today because I am extremely grateful for the opportunity and scholarship you have given me to attend Montgomery College. I come from a low-income family and immigrated here from Vietnam to Gaithersburg, Maryland.

In 2021, both my mom and younger brother moved to the US during Covid. My mom and my brother unfortunately speak little to no English which makes it hard for them to work and being able to communicate with others. We've been living on savings for a while now. In high school, I studied really hard and found passion in computer science. I was admitted to my dream school, the University of California, Irvine, but unfortunately due to our financial situation and my health, I am unable to attend the school of my dreams. That's when I decided to commit to study Montgomery College to help my family learn English as well as to save up for a bachelor's degree. I am currently a freshman.

## LETTERS FROM BRANCH SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

I attended Quince Orchard High School in the year of 2021 to 2022. I look forward to learning new things and continuing my education in college. I have not yet look into clubs because I am still trying to adjust to my schedule, however when I can, I will hopefully be able to join one at Montgomery College.

I hope to be able to get experience as well as knowledge and the good education that Montgomery College has to offer. I want to thank you again for your generosity and providing me with the opportunity to continue my education.

Sincerely, Thy Nguyen.

Dear AAUW Gaithersburg,  
First, I like to extend my gratitude for your generous gift. I am originally from the city of Gaithersburg and was born and raised in Maryland.

After graduating with a GED in 2020, I hoped to start college during the fall of that year. Howev-

er, I could not start college immediately because of my health condition. Thanks to the inclusivity and flexibility that Montgomery College provides, I enrolled and began classes in the spring of 2022 under the Architectural Technology program of study. Montgomery College offers accommodations for students with disabilities and provides financial aid for economically challenged students.

This scholarship will help me to achieve my current career goals by helping me pay for the subsequent classes I need related to my program of study. I hope to graduate with an Associate of Applied Science in the spring of May 2024. Afterward, I hope to start my career as an architectural designer or drafter.

Thank you for helping me get closer to my goals and have an equal opportunity to achieve my fundamental right to education.

Kindly, Andrea Gaspare



*Branch member Liz Hessel with Montgomery College student Andrea Gaspare.*

IN MEMORIUM - Judy Wymer

We have only recently learned that Judy Wymer, long time member of the Gaithersburg AAUW died on January 30, 2022, at her home in Gainesville, Florida. Judy joined AAUW in 1981 and during her participation with the Gaithersburg branch she was active in the Gourmet Group, Great Decisions and Women's HerStory. In 1995, Judy was one of the AAUW Educational Foundation Gaithersburg Honorees, in recognition of her service to the branch.

Judy, a native of Rio, Wisconsin, earned her BS degree from Beaver College in Glenside, Pennsylvania, and her MS in Education from Northwestern University.

In memoriam – Fred Marks

Our Branch sends condolences to long time member, Patsy Marks, and family following the death of her husband, Fred Marks, in late December. Fred frequently provided Certificates in Calligraphy for Special Branch recognition events and he often attended Branch social events, such as Holiday luncheons and dinners. Patsy and Fred lived in Gaithersburg most of their married lives but moved to Frederick just as Covid started.

A memorial service for Fred will be held Saturday morning, April 15, at the Pathway Baptist Church in Gaithersburg.

You may send notes to Patsy at 5957 Quinn Orchard Rd. #140-6, Frederick, MD 21704.

## GREAT DECISIONS

- **Mary Wykes, Coordinataor**



The Great Decisions interest group will meet at 2:30, Friday, February 17 via Zoom to consider the timely first topic in the 2023 Study Guide—"Energy Security" by Carolyn Kissane, Associate Dean of the NYU School of Global Affairs. Our

Branch President, Edie Allison, a retired geologist, will lead our discussion. New members are always welcome.

Mary Wykes, Coordinator  
301-717-1040  
Mary[dot]wykes[at]aol[dot]com

## HERSTORY INTEREST GROUP Saturday, February 11, 2 pm

- **Maria Roberts**

In February, Herstory interest group will discuss the life of a mystery woman. If you identify her correctly at the start of our February 11th meeting, you will earn a prize.

Here are some hints: she was kidnapped at age 10; she was won by her husband-to-be in a gambling game; she took part in a loooooong

venture; she and the leader did not speak the same language. Please come to Herstory where we will discuss her life and significance. Saturday, February. 11, at 2pm in the Parkview Club Room of Asbury Methodist Village. For directions, please email Meroberts27700[at]cs[dot]com



### 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 EVENTS**

HerStory – In person	Saturday, February 11- 2:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – Zoom	Tuesday, February 14, 2023 - 7:00 p.m.
Great Decisions – Zoom	Friday, February 17 - 2:30 p.m.
Branch Program – Zoom	Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – 7:00 pm

The American Association of University Women  
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