



Iowa Branch Connector
November, 2014

A Monthly Electronic Bulletin for AAUW Leaders in Iowa

The Value of Affiliation with AAUW: *By joining AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance.*

Welcome to this monthly electronic publication. You are invited to share this information with other members and branch leaders by forwarding it to them, or providing a hard copy.

Maureen White, AAUW Iowa President, 2014-16

The November Connector is written by Jennifer McNabb, AAUW Iowa Web Manager and Amy Getty, AAUW Membership Vice President to assist branches that may be interested in establishing a presence for the branch on various social media sites.

Choose your Social Media:

The type of social media your group uses should fit your goals. If you want more of a conversation with users, Facebook may be for you. It allows you to have followers, and each of those followers can decide to “like” or comment on your posts.

If you are more interested in making professional connections, LinkedIn would be more your style. A LinkedIn page can help you network with other professionals and make connections based on business relationships.

Twitter uses shorter communications, no more than 140 characters at a time (this includes spaces). It allows a huge number of posts to fly, fast and furious, but holds less of a connection that Facebook, mainly because the tweets are so short.

Finally, if you have many images you would like to share and no text, then you might try Instagram or a photo sharing account. You can also use an account like this in conjunction with Facebook and other sites that allow posting of text.

There are many different types of social media out there – go to the one where the people you want to see in your group congregate.

What Next?

Once you have chosen the type of social media that makes the most sense to your group, decide as a group the kinds of things you would like to post. AAUW national has a very active Facebook feed. You can decide to repost that feed as items pop up that you think your group would be interested in. The key to social media is to find someone who can devote time to finding these posts and sharing them. Perhaps you can make three or four

people in your group administrators to the account. You want to post frequently, but not so often that your followers get tired of you.

In addition to AAUW, there are numerous sites out there that post issues on gender equality that you may want to re-post or Tweet about. Feministing, Ms Magazine, Bitch Media, Upworthy, Human Rights Watch, Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, Planned Parenthood Action, etc. Your group can decide how comfortable you are with various topics and focus in on your policies and priorities.

How do I find Followers?

Encourage the people in your group already on social media to like or follow your page or tweets. Ask them to invite others to like or follow you as well. In addition to members of your group, you should consider inviting your friends (even if they can't join your group or live far away) to follow or like you as well. The more people who see each posting, the more chance it has to be shared or retweeted to many others.

It may help to think of each post like a balloon – the more people who see it, the more it expands. It grows bigger and bigger, and floats out to audiences you might never have dreamed would see it when you posted it. While this is the usefulness of social media, it can also be its curse. Be sure not to post anything that you think could be misconstrued or seen as a detriment to your group's image.

Posts

Your posts can be about materials that you find on the Internet, with your commentary, or it can be new and interesting announcements from your group.

If you post news about your next meeting, invite people to come to it. Post interesting pictures to grab people's attention, and tell them why this meeting will be exciting or interesting. The trick is to make it go viral so people are compelled to act on it in the "real world" not just like it and then forget it. Tell a story about your event, not just the facts of when and where it will be.

If you want a great example of this recently, think of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. It got millions of people not just to get up and dump ice water on their heads, but also to donate millions to ALS research.

Be brief! People on social media are barraged with hundreds, if not thousands, of posts each day. They most likely will not take the time to read more than a brief couple of lines of text. That is why pictures and videos should help tell the story for you.

When your event or meeting is over, or while it is happening, post or Tweet pictures from it to your page. The more people can see what they missed, the more likely they will be to attend the next event. Also, be sure to tag the people who were there – people like to be reminded of what they did, and their friends might like to join them the next time.

Conclusions

Basically, using social media is all about creating excitement and a buzz about the issues that are important to your group. Know that it is very easy to get people to like or follow your organization. It is much harder to get them to translate that interest into “real world” actions. If nothing else, though, your use of social media will get your organization on people’s radar, and hopefully get you a few more people involved in each activity.