

THE BRANCH CONNECTOR

January 2008

American Association of University Women Iowa

A monthly tool for Branch leaders to stay connected to other Iowa branches, their state officers and leaders and their national officers and staff. *(A tool to share with others in your community who want to stay connected)*

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Greetings and Best Wishes for a New Year!

As 2008 begins, when the bright household decorations are put away, and the work for a new year begins, it is tempting to think only of the tasks which now demand attention, that need to be done, and the lists that got put on the shelf during the holidays! The human dimension of what we do together, as a group of educated women, our mutual respect, and care for one another is the important “glue” that often holds groups together. So may your year, 2008, be one that is rich not only in getting “the work done” but also in “growing together” in new appreciation for the gifts of educated women in Iowa .

Announcements and News from Association Headquarters

In the AAUW EdEq#10 recently forwarded to you, the following announcements appear:

- We have a new Executive Director; her name is Linda Hallman.
- Please encourage all of your members to complete the every member poll by January 25. It is available online and in the Fall/Winter edition of the AAUW Outlook.
- Membership vice presidents and finance officers who have not already reviewed their membership counts should update immediately. Changes are reported through the AAUW Member Services Database. This means that if you have had new members, members that moved or have dropped their membership since the original submission was made at the beginning of the fiscal year, these records should be changed.
- Another important and available tool from the Association is the Woman to Woman Voter Turnout publication; a manual for community based Campaigns to mobilize women to vote. Any branch leader who plans on doing a voter turnout campaign can request a hard copy of this manual by emailing VoterEd@aauw.org.

NEW ASSOCIATION MATERIALS TO BE PRESENTED AT STATE CONFERENCE

Our own Regional Director, Mryna Sandvik, Cedar Falls branch, reminds us of a change in program direction this year. In Iowa immediate past Association President, Nancy Rustad, will conduct a **leader's workshop on Friday April 11 with a new tool, an Association produced DVD titled "Calling All Leaders". The workshop will be held** in connection with Iowa's annual conference, April 11 and 12. The unique aspect of this plan is that now every member has an opportunity to learn about "mission based programming" at a spot located geographically close to home! You won't want to miss this first-ever opportunity for every branch member to get leadership training! It's a great opportunity for the Association to come to us!

What's coming your way soon?

About a third of Iowa's branches have conducted a focus group meeting. Branches scheduled for focus group meetings in January include Des Moines and Loess Hills. February dates have been set up for Iowa City, Indianola, Davenport, Algona, Tama Toledo, Washington, and Ames.

An interim report of findings thus far was submitted to the board at its January meeting and is available for branches upon request.

Spring Conference. April 11 and 12. Simpson College, Indianola.

Conference theme: "Common Goals, Uncommon connections"

Sandra Keist Wilson, State Program Vice President presented plans for the spring annual conference to the State Board of Directors at its' winter board meeting. Featured speakers will include Nancy Rustad, Immediate past Association President, and Senator Maggie Tinsman. There will be an interesting panel discussion Friday night about the "Ages and Stages" through which women travel as they make life decisions. Mary Brubaker, well known radio and television personality will be its' moderator. There will four concurrent workshops on Saturday repeated twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Registration is set at an "early bird" price of sixty dollars for the two days of conference, with registration fees set at forty dollars per day if one registers for one day only. These fees include all meals and, if credit is desired, a continuing education credit (CEU) will be available through the Office of Adult Education at Simpson College. There will be NO CHARGE for the CEU. Such credit can be used as a means of certification in several professions. **Registration deadline APRIL FIRST.**

Announcement of Latinas Al Exito Grants to Occur at Conference

Jan Mitchell and Pam Swarts, Diversity Co Directors, have announced that recipients of grants applied for through the Community Action Grant awarded to Iowa AAUW and the Marshalltown branch will be announced at annual conference. An orientation session for these branches will occur at the annual conference.

862 women are AAUW members in Iowa; another 300+ are Members at Large. This is a slight increase over previous numbers,

Public Policy Action; Letter writing campaign

Public Policy Director Sarah Hanuske, with the aid of her committee members and the sixteen branch Public Policy chairmen in the state has been extraordinarily busy this month. They have

encouraged branches throughout the state to launch a letter writing campaign to senator Charles Grassley urging his support and assistance in getting the Fair Pay Equity Bill out of committee and into the debate in Congress so that action can occur on this important matter. In addition Sarah and committee member Sue Jorgenson attended the recent Luncheon and Learn meeting sponsored by the Iowa Status of Women Commission.(Any person can attend these valuable meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for March.) As your state president I would like to call to your attention the convergence between issues which appear on the Commission Legislative agenda in Iowa and the Public Policy of our association. You may act in support of these issues, in the name of AAUW since they have been approved by Association convention action. (Knowing about support of these issues could be pertinent to your state legislator.)

- 1) participation in the STEM program, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)
- 2) support for restoration of funds to the federal Child Support protection Act of 2007
- 3) amending the Code of Iowa chapter 74.26 so that it aligns with federal law that prohibits persons who have been convicted of a domestic violence misdemeanor or who are subject to a no contact order from possessing firearms
- 4) Working toward gender balance on boards and commissions of political subdivisions of the state.

Convention Action to be Asked: State Dues Increase

When the next issue of the *Initiative* is published it will contain information about a proposed dues increase. Consideration of this proposal will come before the conference delegate body at our 2008 annual conference. The proposal, approved by the State Board of Directors, asks for a two dollar increase of dues, effective 2008-09, making the total state dues \$10. This is the first request for an increase in state dues in thirteen years. As this matter is discussed in the coming two and a half months before annual conference, you and your members may ask, “Why is this dues increase needed?” Here are a few reasons to consider.

- The dues paid to Iowa AAUW stay “inside the state”. Such funds enable many “possibilities” to become “realities”. Consider, for instance what Iowa AAUW might be able to do with an annual increase of approximately \$1600. What possibilities can you think of?

Iowa AAUW could increase our conference programming and pay for services that at present we go without or hope to have donated;

Iowa AAUW could work strenuously at opening our conference to other womens’ organizations, convening a “Summit” on womens’ issues;

Iowa AAUW could encourage and recognize extraordinary branch work. (Other states have branch grants available to assist in the start up costs of local ideas and programs.)

Iowa AAUW could enhance and encourage network with other womens’ organizations;

Iowa AAUW could increase our visibility throughout the state;

Iowa AAUW could provide more personalized services to branches, reviving or reinventing the branch visitor program, or the speakers' showcase;

Iowa AAUW could let womens' voices be heard throughout the state!

- While dues have increased at the national level, there has been no change in state dues since 1995. Inflation increases are generally figured at 3% a year. If we figure our \$8 dues compounded starting with 1996, at an inflationary rate of a modest 2.5%, the current dues would be \$11.04. At 3% inflation rate the dues today would be \$12.05. Using a membership total of 800 conservatively figured at the 2.5% inflation rate we have lost revenues which total more than \$16,000.
- Operational costs, even at the modest level in which Iowa AAUW operates, have increased. These increases are most noticeable in the area of transportation, and communication costs, such as printing and postage.
- New initiatives are needed, so say our members when we ask them what is needed in their branch. These needs are especially apparent in program and new member recruitment. However any new initiative brings new costs. There seems to be a consensus that personal contacts with experienced leaders but such contacts cost not only in terms of personal time but also in terms of real dollars and cents expenditures for travel.
- Common wisdom for most business practices suggests that sufficient funds should be on hand in savings to cover one year's operational costs. There are such funds in Iowa's savings account. However, if this rule of thumb is applied, maintaining an account equal to one year's operational costs, then no funds are available for new initiatives.
- The proposed increase is modest, less than a cup of coffee in many places.

Please consider this question thoughtfully, just as the State Board of Directors did prior to taking this action. I send the issue to you two months prior to the annual conference so that you and your branch can do so. Please be assured that your questions will be treated respectfully should you send them on to me. (My contact information appears at the beginning of this issue of the Connector.)

Have you visited Iowa's web site lately. See www.aauwiowa.org Five Iowa branches have links to their own web site! Have you thought about a link to YOUR branch?