



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.

Maxine Lampe, AAUW IA President 2012-2014

This month our guest editor is Dr. Janet Heinicke. Janet is president of the Indianola branch and is currently serving as International Relations Director for AAUW Iowa:

“It’s not MY problem!”

Those words are the recurrent theme of a fable, an analogy I heard told recently by veteran storyteller, Maureen Korte. In this ancient tale a king and his advisor who are serenely eating spoonfuls of honey accidentally spill a drop of honey on the ground below their castle window high up in the air. An ant eats the honey; when told of the incident, the king waves his arms and smugly says “It’s not MY problem”. Shortly later a gecko sneaks up on the ant and devours him; when told about it, the king again waves his hand, dismisses the issue and says again “it’s NOT my problem”. A cat attacks the gecko, a dog attacks the cat and, the king blithely continues his sweet repast, replying to the comments of the advisor each time with “it’s NOT MY problem.” Finally the cat’s owner and the dog’s owner begin to argue, and then fists fly; villagers join in the melee, and next thing you know, sticks are thrown, then bricks, and stones and finally the village is set afire. The next morning, as he surveys a ruined and destroyed village, the king turns to his advisor and says *“You know, maybe it WAS my problem!”*

As we consider international issues in our branches or as individuals, we can find ourselves like the king surveying the world from the safety of a “figurative” windows, high above the melee of global issues. It’s tempting to say to ourselves **“It’s not MY problem!”**

There are at least three global issues that AAUW can be concerned about. First, far too many girls in today’s world today lack access to even the most basic education. If we consider the number of refugee children in the near east, or on the African continent, the numbers are frighteningly large. If continued throughout the coming decade, the reality is that a there will be a generation of girl children who will grow up lacking the necessary educational skills needed to survive in the 21st century. (In case you missed it) the fall 2013 issue of our AAUW Outlook magazine reports that

“Across the globe women and girls are routinely denied the chance for any education. More than 60 million girls are out of school and at least 100 million girls currently enrolled will drop out of school before completing primary school. One consequence is that women continue to be underrepresented in government; they occupy just over 21%

of the world's parliamentary seats. Another is that all too often girls and women suffer from inadequate health care. Medical complications for pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death among girls ages 15 to 19 worldwide. Investing in women's opportunities shows surprising economic and cultural benefits. An extra year of primary education can boost eventual income as much as 10 to 20 percent".

Other statistics indicate that women, when they earn income reinvest it in their families. They buy books, malaria nets and medicines, using as much as 90% of their income for such reinvestment.

Not our problem? As Gloria Blackwell, AAUW's Vice President of fellowships, grants and global programs says" borders are blurring and what happens "over there" has a profound affect on what happens in our country too". In addition to the efforts being made by AAUW through its' partnership with the Clinton Global Initiative, The Virginia Gildersleeve Fund as well as Women Graduates USA each have specific program activities related to access to education for girls. (**Women Graduates USA will host a telephone conference March 29th at 11 a.m. EST. focused on access to education for Afghan Girls. See their web site <http://www.WG-USA.org>.**)

The correlation between lack of education and the desperate consequences of its' lack is especially apparent in the issue of human trafficking. **Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery where people profit from the control and exploitation of others.** Defined under federal law, victims of trafficking include children involved in the sex trade, adults 18 and over who are coerced or deceived into commercial sex acts and anyone forced into services such as domestic workers held in home labor against their will. Victims of human trafficking in the United States include U.S. Citizens or foreign nationals, adults or minors, men and women, Foreign born victims in the US may be either documented or undocumented. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center in a Data Breakdown Report from the years of 2007 to 2013 reports that there were **89,360 calls to its' hotline** in this six year time period. The number includes calls made from Omaha, Keokuk, Des Moines and West Des Moines, Carroll, Marshalltown, Cedar Rapid, Iowa City, Washington and Fort Madison. Polaris Project, which is one of the most reliable organizations working in this area, writes that "**Human Sex trafficking is considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries.** It is estimated that 100,000 children are in the sex trade in the United States each year. (You can access an overview about human trafficking at <http://www.polarisproject.org/jhuman-trafficking/overview>) This is OUR problem too!

One other problem merits our close scrutiny. The relationship of war to the well being of women seems obvious. Statistics verify the fact that in **times of war it is women who are the most vulnerable victims of violence; that women are most likely to suffer.** Recent policy decisions both in the US when VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) was approved in the US congress, as well as in some policy decisions which will be considered at the coming CSW, Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations) have broadened the definition of violence against women to include acts of violence which occur during war to civilian populations. Finally, in the creative space, writes Subhra Mazumdar from India, artistic expressions of gender violence and safety are emerging. She writes that art has emerged as yet another way of sensitively portraying

the gamut of emotions an issue like gender based violence evokes. You can read more about this in the women's feature service <http://www.wfsnews.org/> .

At the beginning of this year I challenged each branch to devote one program this year to an international issue. There is still time to meet the challenge! These are BIG problems; they are problems to which we are all connected . We cannot, like that story book king shrug our shoulders and say "NOT MY PROBLEM! So let's straighten our organizational shoulders and see the problems of women and girls around the world as OUR problems too! I'm glad to help. Reach me at 515-961-3174 or at janetheinicke@earthlink.net.

Janet Heinicke, International Relations Representative for Iowa AAUW

Remember the March 21st registration deadline for the State Conference. The Initiative should be in your hands soon! However, you can see State Conference information on the website and download a registration form from there. 4 branch members registering together will get a \$5 per person discount. Also please be planning your costume for the parade of branches. See you in Des Moines in April.