



Carletta Knox-Seymour
 AAUW Iowa President 2020-2022

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From the President

Greetings!

I would like to congratulate the nominees for elected offices, and appointees for their upcoming service to the state board. These women have all exhibited great leadership in their respective branches and current or past service to the state board. They will all be an asset. I am excited to work with all of them during my second year.

Two things I would like to address in this letter. The first thing I would like to bring to mind is the excellent presentation that Jessica Crawford of Self-Help International (SHI) brought to us at the conference. Her program, “Empowering Women & Girls through Education & Small Business: Self-Help International Programs in Ghana & Nicaragua,” was amazing. As you know, we were put into breakout rooms to discuss two questions. In my breakout room, our discussion led to thinking of ways AAUW can assist young girls in Iowa to empower them and help them to be more resilient, and ways to help women with micro loans. The question is, could AAUW even do something like that? In all likelihood, I imagine many of our branches are already doing or have done something similar, at least by way of scholarships. Each branch could take a look at their budget and figure out if such a thing like micro lending is doable. What would that look like? How much would a branch lend, and what would be the criteria? Of course there are financial institutions that do micro lending. But,

the thinking is, what can we do? Another thought was to lend a small amount of money to young girls to, for example, learn the floriculture business, which is the cultivation of flowers. The idea would be to help them develop a business plan. They will have to figure out what they would need in order to be successful. For example, they would have to find a small plot of land and work the ground in order to plant the seeds, and grow the flowers, etc... The whole purpose of this would be to show these girls what they can do with their own hands and earn money as well. The same can be done for women who are in very blighted neighborhoods. It may not be flower cultivating, but something that will give women a sense of being worthy.

The other thing I’d like to talk about is that this is Asian and South Pacific Islander month. With the hate crime going up exponentially for these groups of people, I would like us to focus on what our branches can do to help alleviate the discrimination, the flat-out hatred against this group. Our nation is in a crisis that we’ve not seen, at least not in any huge way that I can think of. Our democracy is hanging on by a thread. From one example to another, it appears that this nation is on its way to some form of autocracy. Former President Donald Trump insisted that Asians were to blame for the pandemic.

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AAUW Virtual State Conference, May 8, 2021

Ann Henninger Trax, AAUW Iowa Program Co-Vice President

Sixty-seven AAUW members from at least 15 branches from across the state of Iowa gathered Saturday morning for the 2021 AAUW Iowa State Conference. The following is a summary of the non-business meeting parts of the conference.

After words of welcome from president Carletta Knox-Seymour, U.S. Rep. Cindy Axne from Iowa's Third Congressional District talked about the pandemic's effects on women and ways that President Biden and Congress are trying to help. Several members gave anecdotes to support her point on the need for better access to child care.



Rep. Cindy Axne

Jessica Crawford, Africa Programs Specialist for Self Help International (SHI), presented information about their micro-credit programs in Ghana and Nicaragua which empower women by not only lending money for business ventures but also educating the women about financial matters. Teen Girls Club is a community club in Ghana for girls 10-18 years, which is coordinated and led by local women. The aim is to help girls develop self-esteem and learn income-generating skills, and to give them the tools needed to pursue academic goals. Links for more information about these programs is available on the Iowa AAUW website, as well as at www.selfhelpinternational.org.



Jessica Crawford

Following Crawford's talk the group broke into nine subgroups to discuss two questions:

- *SHI programming for women and girls is rooted in empowerment and resilience. Share your definition for those two concepts. What is empowerment to you? How do you define resiliency?*
- *In your work and/or life, how have you seen the provision of both education and resources help people to overcome challenges?*

Participants agreed that more than 10 minutes were needed for discussion, but from the selected responses

below, it seems that the allotted time yielded meaningful discussions.

Empowerment

- Having control over options in one's own life.
- Giving people a seat at the table so they have a say in things that affect them.
- Educating then advocating for oneself with strength.
- Being self-independent.
- Being OK with asking for help when you really need it.
- Small successes lead to bigger success.
- Mentors are key - need info and connections.

Resilience

- Being able to adjust to unexpected circumstances such as severe weather, illness or loss.
- Bouncing back from tragic situations/adversity, to move forward and recover physically and emotionally from negative circumstances.
- Being extremely flexible.
- It works with self-confidence so that one setback does not shatter you.
- It's not how many times you fall - it's how often you get back up.
- You don't give up unless you are dead!

Education and resources

- Education and resources help provide a way of informing individuals or groups of other ways to live life in an uplifting way. Gives the ability or capacity to gain knowledge to make better decisions.
- First generation college students may go to college because parents, who did not, know education is important for their children.
- Mentors and supporters help women in life, business, and running for office.
- Apprenticeships and internships often open new possible careers.
- By aiding and educating women, their families and communities are helped.
- Women in South Sudan were taught how to protect themselves using non-violent methods. They acted as mediators.
- Work experience during high school for people with disabilities and transition planning helped them to be successful after graduation.
- Programs to help foster children before they "age out" of the system help them to think about post-HS education possibilities and provide funding for some of that education.

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He did not have to do that, but he did. Unfortunately, Asian hate is what Black Americans deal with every day. No, they weren't enslaved, but they have been and are widely disrespected and discriminated against. The Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism (CSUSB), reported that Anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 145% in 15 of America's largest cities, while overall hate crime dropped by 6% in 2020. Fortunately, in April the Senate overwhelmingly passed the anti-Asian hate crime bill. But is that enough? Where is all this hate coming from? Did it really take only one man spewing frightful, dehumanizing, vicious words to get thousands of people to do such unfathomable harm to others? In other words, could this one man get others to do his dirty work and keep his hands clean? It appears everyday that this is a nightmare making its way into our everyday lives as a reality. We had better wake up to the autocracy that appears to be coming our way, and understand that the open hate against Asians is the same as the open hatred against Blacks, Native Americans, and anyone else that doesn't fit in. Now is the time to band together, and forget any petty differences we women of AAUW have against one another, but rather pick up our sword and shield and fight against any form of racism, discrimination, and just plain hate. Let's raise our banner of love, respect, and common decency for others. Let's raise it high!

Carletta Knox-Seymour



Clarion Branch Names Katie Stecher as Woman of the Year

Every year the Clarion Branch of AAUW recognizes a local woman who exemplifies AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. This year that honor goes to Katie Stecher. Katie held many nursing positions throughout north central Iowa, including work in several departments at the Iowa Specialty Hospital in Clarion. Beginning in the late 1990's she began working as a school nurse for the Clarion-Goldfield School District. During that time she triaged student health problems, conducted screenings, developed health plans for students with disabilities, and taught dissection units. She completed her master's degree in nursing through the University of Phoenix while working for the Clarion-Goldfield School District. Katie is a board member of ISH, and helped with telehealth there during the midst of COVID-19.



Katie Stecher, photo from the Wright County Monitor, used with permission.

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Dr. Barb Ramos, Professor of Teacher Education at Simpson College, gave us an informative look into COVID's effects on PK-16 education. She explained many of the difficulties students and teachers faced and ways they coped. As noted in Rep. Axne's talk, both better broadband and child care in Iowa were shown to need great improvement.



Prof. Barb Ramos

Although members saved travel time and money attending this virtual conference, we are looking forward to 2022 when we are hoping to meet in person. See you then!

Cedar Rapids Restructures Board

The Cedar Rapids branch found that it was easier to find people who were willing to serve the branch on a voluntary basis than to find officers. The Structure of the Board was changed to include an Advisory Board that partners with other officers to make Programming, Membership, Diversity and Inclusion shared responsibilities. While they were not elected, they were given a "vote of confidence" at the meeting.

AAUW Iowa Elects New Officers

At the annual meeting during the spring conference on May 8, the following officers were elected:

- Co-President Elect: Karen Agee (Cedar Falls-Waterloo) and Kathie Farris (Indianola)
- Program Co-Vice President: Patricia Newman (Ames)
- Nominating Committee Member: Elaine Kresse (Davenport-Bettendorf)

Membership Vice President is still vacant.

The following appointments were announced:

- Diversity: Janice Harris-Williams
- College/University Relations: Kimberly Folkers (Waverly)
- Public Policy Co-Chairs: Diane Kerns (Keokuk) and Dev Kiedaisch (Keokuk)

Two bylaws changes were voted on and approved. First, to establish that no member can hold two elected positions at the

same time. Officers will be limited to two consecutive terms of two years each. Second, a change in the year the treasurer is elected. Following this change, the president, program vice-president, and membership vice president will be elected in even years, and president elect and treasurer will be elected in odd years.

Fifty-Year Members were recognized:

- Deverie Kiedaisch (eNetwork)
- Irene Dodder Brucker (eNetwork)
- Marilyn Roverud (Decorah Area)
- Faith Sherman (Des Moines)
- Louise Conklin and Sheryl Bewyer (Cedar Falls-Waterloo)
- Helen Stahl (Davenport-Bettendorf)
- Karen Jessen (Waverly)



Cedar Falls-Waterloo Spring Fundraising Plans

Karen Agee, CF-W Branch President

Here are three ways that Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch members are raising scholarship funds this spring despite COVID cautions:

1. Our AAUW branch has an account at **Stuff Etc.** in Waterloo. Members can take clothes, shoes, and other items to the store to sell and give them the AAUW account number.



2. A Garden Sale will be held on Friday, May 14th. All proceeds will be used for activities, scholarships and advocacy that will benefit women and girls in the Cedar Valley. The sale, which will feature all garden-related items



and plants of all kinds, will be held at 2117 Rownd Street in Cedar Falls, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.

3. Last year's fundraising meeting was cancelled, so we are planning a "**Purseverance Auction**" on May 24th at our meeting at Gateway Park in Cedar Falls. Each member is asked to bring at least one purse with a surprise inside—and a hint on the outside as to what's hidden inside. There will be a \$5 minimum bid on every purse, so members will also bring cash for purchasing purses.



Are you Enthusiastic About AAUW?

We need you to serve as the Membership Vice President for AAUW Iowa for 2021-22.

Contact Carletta Knox-Seymour (carlettav@gmail.com, 319-206-5515)

