



IOWA INITIATIVE

A PUBLICATION OF AAUW-IOWA
VOLUME 104 NUMBER 1
July 2023

Meet Us in St. Louis

Karen Agee and Kathie Farris
AAUW Iowa Co-Presidents 2022-2024

Haven't there been a lot of ups and downs lately? After numerous low points for AAUW public policy initiatives in the Iowa Legislature, an Iowa Supreme Court ruling looked favorably on women's health care autonomy, but then US Supreme Court rulings last week failed to affirm diversity efforts in higher education and followed up with a ruling on student debt that will exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the systems that hinder the advancement of women and girls.



Nevertheless, we will continue informing ourselves and others about public policy issues that matter to all of us. And the upcoming "Celebrating AAUW: Reaching New Heights Together!" Central States Regional Conference in St. Louis, MO, this fall will keep us moving on key issues. We can drive down to St. Louis on Thursday, Oct. 19, before the conference begins at 1:00 PM. Rates at the Drury Hotel will be \$221 (plus parking) for a room that sleeps 2-4. Early registration will start soon (not on July 1 as earlier announced) and run till September 16, and the \$200 early conference fee will cover meal events, too. This year we will mail in our reservation with a check or pay online with a small convenience fee. The conference will end at noon on Saturday, Oct. 21. Go to the conference pages of the AAUW of MO site soon for updated information: <https://aauw-mo.aauw.net/aauw-midwest-regional-conference/>

In addition to keynote and other speakers, we shared news last month about the conference Swap Shops. Each branch is invited to apply to present one or more short sessions sharing how we do what we do and how it works. There could be as many as 64 of these speedy sessions available for both sharing and gathering great ideas! We can offer displays or presentations in a variety of formats.

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Find the [Swap Shop Application](#) at the bottom of that conference page, supply the information, and send it to Diane Ludwig any time July 15—August 15. Because our Iowa branches have many productive ideas to share—projects with schools and other groups, international programs, interesting book studies—we have lots of ways to let our branches shine. Branch officers and committees and members can submit multiple proposals.

And let's mark our calendars for October 19-21.



October 19-21, 2023
St. Louis, Missouri

Some highlights:

- Karen Kedrowski on Pay Equity
- Lisa Maatz on Organizational Structure and Strategies
- Deanna Brown on Unconscious/Implicit Bias
- AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell
- Missouri Library Association on Censure, Cancellations, and Bannings
- Rachel Gonzales on United Against Gun Violence
- Janai Harris on Period Poverty
- Meghan Kissel on Title IX, AAUW Public Policy
- Zenobia Harris on Giving Birth in America

AAUW Supports Reproductive Rights

Alert — Special Legislative Session!

The Governor is convening a special session of the legislature, July 11, as a result of the Iowa Supreme Court decision on abortion last month. Contact your legislators regarding this as reproductive freedom is an AAUW priority. You can also follow the session on the legislative website at www.legis.iowa.gov.

Sign Petition in Support of Reproductive Rights

The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa encourages you [to add your name](#) to those who have already signed their online petition.

Rally for Reproductive Rights

The Reproductive Freedom Coalition will hold a [rally for reproductive rights](#) in the rotunda at the Capitol in Des Moines at 9:00 a.m. on July 11. It is sponsored by Interfaith Alliance of Iowa, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Iowa, Progress Iowa, and other partner organizations. They invite the public to join them as they demand state legislators reject any abortion bans and further restrictions on abortion care.

ACLU Iowa Opportunity

The American Civil Liberties Association of Iowa is providing a way for citizens to work together with other people in your area to help protect reproductive rights. Erica Dubin-Barz, ACLU of Iowa Community Engagement Associate, says, “The ACLU of Iowa is building a campaign to protect reproductive freedom in our state. The organization is seeking Iowans who are willing to take action and organize locally to preserve reproductive rights over the next year and beyond.” To learn more and get involved, [sign up here](#). Signing up on this list will provide you with volunteer opportunities to help protect reproductive rights. You will also get an invitation to a Zoom presentation of a welcome webinar for new reproductive rights volunteers. Contact info@aclu-ia.org for more information.



AAUW of Iowa

Position Statement on Reproductive Rights

Issued July 6, 2023

AAUW has advocated for women and girls since 1881. AAUW of Iowa and its 16 branches throughout the state work to guarantee gender equality, individual rights, and social justice, supporting (as stated in our 2022-2024 public policy statements)

- **Universal access to quality, affordable health care**, including mental health care, **comprehensive family planning services**. . .
- **Self-determination of one’s reproductive health decisions** and **opposition to targeted regulation of abortion providers**. . . .

The AAUW of Iowa opposes any legislation that strips Iowa women and girls of their reproductive freedoms. We therefore urge Iowa legislators to reject further restrictions on abortion care.

An Easy Way to Email Your Legislator

ACLU Iowa offers an easy way to email your legislators. Complete your contact information [at this link](#), click on **next**, and then go to a well-worded email to your representatives in the Iowa Senate and House of Representatives.

Letter to the Editor of the Des Moines Register

The nonpartisan American Association of University Women has advocated for women and girls since 1881. AAUW of Iowa and its 16 branches throughout the state work to guarantee gender equity, individual rights, and social justice. AAUW of Iowa supports universal access to quality, affordable health care, including family planning services.

It also advocates for the self-determination of one’s reproductive health decisions and opposes targeted regulation of abortion providers.

AAUW of Iowa opposes any legislation that strips Iowa women and girls of their reproductive freedoms. Therefore, we reject further restrictions on abortion care by the Iowa legislature.

Karen Agee and Katherine Farris
AAUW of Iowa, co-Presidents

AAUW Iowa Hosts 2023 Equal Pay Day at the Capitol

Mary Ann Ahrens, Chair

In March of each year since 1996, Equal Pay Day has been observed throughout the country. What better time “to be seen and heard” by AAUW Iowa members in the Capitol Rotunda than through the hosting of our annual Equal Pay Day Event. On March 20 members gathered at the Capitol to visit with legislators, staff, visitors, and media to let them know that “We Are the Face of Pay Equity!” Our group passed out “Pay Day” candy bars with attached facts printed on each. We strolled through the Rotunda with small baskets filled with candy bars to visit with people and remind them of the importance of equal pay for all people.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is one of the next pieces of legislation that needs to be defended and passed.

During our event at the Capitol, both Representative Sharon Steckman and Senator Nate Boulton took points of personal privilege to address the entire House of Representatives and the entire Senate with an AAUW Iowa Equal Pay Day message. We provided the legislators with information in advance and invitations to join us in the Rotunda to create a greater awareness of the importance of wage disparities. Our members, visible and present, were Kathie Farris, Jan Mitchell, Maxine Lampe, Ann Gale, and Mary Ann Ahrens. We were assisted with promotion

by Matt Sinovic, CEO of Progress Iowa, and Diane Kearns, Public Policy Chair.

As you go about your program planning for 2023-24, why not include a program or a public observance of Equal Pay Day with media coverage in your area of the state? Nationally each year Equal Pay Day has been scheduled at different dates in March. Starting this year, Equal Pay Day will be on March 15 (Saturday in 2024) each year until 2027. Circle that date on your calendar. Keep in mind that any month works for an observance.

Having said that, the only available date in 2024 at the Capitol to observe AAUW Iowa Equal Pay Day is Monday, March 18 from Noon to 3 pm. So, circle the second date as well. We also encourage your members to join us in Des Moines. We can always use more members at the Capitol because it continues to be important to be visible and “heard” and to demonstrate our commitment to our pay equity priority. We Need YOU!

Today, women have become a significant addition to our workforce in many arenas for families to survive financially. Obviously, the pay disparity is much more visible in women’s and families’ lives. Currently, depending on the source, the disparity is between 77 and

83 cents to the dollar! For women in their twenties, it is 89 cents to the dollar. In Iowa our current disparity is 71 cents. The minimum wage in Iowa has not been changed for 16 years. This is unacceptable. The earnings gap is \$500 billion a year which is particularly noticeable when women retire. Women would have an additional \$1.6 million in retirement income if they invested all the money lost to the gender wage gap!

This dilemma is not just a women’s issue. It is a family issue of survival in dignity. For 142 years AAUW members have fought long and hard for our rights. We will continue to do so to survive and thrive with new strategies in the pursuit of pay equity.



From left: Ann Gale, Representative Jennifer Konfrst, Mary Ann Ahrens, Maxine Lampe, Representative Heather Matson, Jan Mitchell.

Algona Branch Discusses *Cuba* by Ada Ferrer

Janie Montang, AAUW Algona

An exceptional book club discussion occurred in Algona June 1 at the Public Library. Chris Louscher, AAUW member and leader for the discussion, invited Algona High School students Melani Fiallo, 9th grader, and her aunt, Andrea Fiallo, 11th grader, to take part in the event.

Originally from Havana, Cuba, Andrea arrived in Algona three years ago, after spending two years in Mexico, awaiting the opportunity to come to America. She and her parents then “walked” into America. Andrea said, “Everyone wants to leave Cuba.”

She likes living in Algona and plans to go to college when she graduates. She said she had to repeat one year of high school because Cuba would not release her school records. Andrea is no longer a resident of Cuba, having relinquished her Cuban citizenship. Although she still has relatives in Cuba, she does not anticipate visiting.

While in Cuba, her father was an economist and her mother an accountant. They now work at the Hormel plant in Algona. She said the family likes it here, indicating the “good money” they make and the opportunities it provides their children. Her niece Melani, also from Havana, has only been here for one year. She, too, likes being here and has just made the cheerleading squad for next year.

Andrea indicated Cubans today do not look highly upon the Castro regime and the results of his rule. She also said the new president is no better. She feels he is looking out for himself, rather than for the people of Cuba. From her opinions, one could surmise she does not see a positive future for Cubans. Even though education is free in Cuba, she does not feel students are getting a strong education and there are sharp limitations on how many students can enter universities in given fields such as engineering,

medicine, etc. She said there is no technology and wages are very low.

With the girls were their English as a Second Language teacher Morgan Kuecker and Jennifer Davis with the Latino Community Initiative. They both added insight into the numbers of Cubans now residing in Algona and future plans to help them meld into the community.

Prior to the girls speaking, AAUW book club member Ginger Geelan described the historical events from the first half of Ada Ferrer’s book, *Cuba*. In addition to reading the book (or instead of reading it), many members had watched Netflix shows *Cuba Libre* and *Cuba and the Cameraman* to gain additional insight about our neighboring country. This preparation aided members in posing pertinent questions to our guests.



Front Row, Left to Right: Morgan Kuecker, Algona High School teacher for English as a Second Language, Melani and Andrea Fiallo. Back Row: Helen Scuffham, AAUW member; Jennifer Davis, Latino Community Initiative; Netti Renshaw and Marilyn Deal, AAUW members.



Melani Fiallo, Andrea Fiallo, AAUW members Kathy Gerber, Chris Louscher, and Ginger Geelan.



Melani Fiallo and Andrea Fiallo

Ready, Set, Go!

Human Trafficking Prevention Up and Running

Mary Ann Ahrens, Project Chair

Since the beginning of the year AAUW has been busy preparing to introduce the state board approved Human Trafficking Prevention Outreach Project. Human trafficking is a particularly critical issue and a great branch outreach opportunity to create change and benefit the people of Iowa. This idea was initiated by the AAUW Iowa eNetwork Branch. It became a reality and was unveiled at our AAUW Iowa State Conference in Des Moines. The conference theme--*Our Time is Now*—could not have been more appropriate for the introduction of the project. Individuals and branches took home supplies of the “very sharp-looking” educational brochures printed in both Spanish and English. We have brochures available. Just email maahrens@mchsi.com or call 319-240-5904 for a supply.

As you plan for 2023-24 programs and projects this summer, be sure to include human trafficking in the mix. This type of outreach project is a simple one for today’s busy people. It is a matter of identifying individuals or organizations and providing the brochures for their use. Share the brochures with your family, with relatives and their children. Don’t hesitate to use Facebook. Contact area chambers of commerce, businesses, and clinics, and leave small supplies of brochures with them for distribution. Reach out to students, employees, and faculty you know at schools and colleges who could use this information to educate others, create an HT project, make a presentation. Share the brochures with work associates. People at meetings, houses of worship, and hotels provide other kinds of outreach opportunities... and the list goes on. This summer many group activities, festivals, parades, county fairs, community celebrations, concerts, competitive events, and RAGBRAI are going on. What a great opportunity to distribute brochures.

Nationally, Iowa ranks 23rd in human trafficking. This does not by any means indicate that Iowa does not have a problem. Human trafficking uniquely affects Iowa given our proximity to major metro areas (St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Minneapolis) and the intersection of Interstates 35 and 80. It exists in small and large communities among all ages and genders. However, women and girls make up the largest segment and the target today is 12 – 15-year-olds particularly with increase in the use of social media via chat rooms on any platform (gaming systems, TikTok). This is unacceptable. How many more lives must be ruined or lost in Iowa to illegal trafficking?

The *Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery*

located in Ames is the first and oldest statewide volunteer organization devoted exclusively to ending trafficking in all its forms. It has an 18-member board from across Iowa that oversees its work and operates on private donations. Check out www.IowaNAHT.org to review its resources. Former Iowa Representative Maggie Tinsman chairs their Legislative Advocacy Committee, is a Quad Cities AAUW Branch member, has helped with our project, and is responsible in part for the recently passed legislation that appeared in the May 2023 *Iowa Initiative*.

It takes a village and AAUW has been a national village since 1881. Let us together join the fight to stop human trafficking and continue to build the careers of women and girls! **Summer reading:** *Silenced No More: Surviving my Journey to Hell and Back* by Sarah Ransome (Harper One). A survivor tells the shocking inside story of her time trapped in Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell’s sex trafficking ring.



DID YOU KNOW...	SABÍAS...
<p>This hand signal could SAVE YOUR LIFE or the life of another! This HAND SIGNAL is a signal for HELP by someone being trafficked!</p> <p>“In IOWA?” you ask. YES! Trafficking is taking place in small and large communities. “Why should I care?”</p>	<p>Esta señal de mano podría SALVA TU VIDA o la vida de otro! Esta SEÑAL DE MANO es una señal para AYUDA por alguien que está siendo traficado!</p> <p>“¿En IOWA?” usted pregunta. ¡SÍ! la trata es que tiene lugar en pequeñas y grandes comunidades. “¿Por qué debería importarme?”</p>
<p><i>“During this horrific experience I lost my identity. I never felt safe, was drugged and always watched. I had to stay grounded and use my own voice. Make sure you are with the right advocacy group. It helped me heal. Never give up hope,”</i> urges Renee, an Iowa Human Trafficking Survivor.</p> <p><small>Photo Provided by Renee</small></p>	<p><i>“Durante esta horrible experiencia perdí mi identidad. Nunca me sentí seguro, estaba drogado y siempre vigilado. Tuve que mantenerme conectado a tierra y usar mi propia voz. Asegúrese de estar con el grupo de defensa adecuada. Me ayudó a sanar. Nunca pierdas la esperanza,”</i> insta Renee, una sobreviviente de trata de personas en Iowa.</p> <p><small>Foto proporcionada por Renee</small></p>
<p>Human trafficking is second only to drug trafficking as the most profitable form of transnational crime.</p> <p>FIND OUT what it is, how you can recognize it, who is being trafficked and how you can help children and adults in your area who may be victims.</p>	<p>La trata de personas solo es superada por el narcotráfico como el más rentable forma de delincuencia transnacional.</p> <p>DESCUBRE qué es, cómo puedes reconocerlo, quién está siendo traficado y cómo puede ayudar a niños y adultos en su área que pueden ser víctimas.</p>

Davenport-Bettendorf News

Elaine Kresse, AAUW Davenport-Bettendorf President

The Davenport-Bettendorf Branch has had a very busy and successful 2023. We hosted two bipartisan forums co-sponsored by the Eastern Iowa Community College. We held an International fashion show which by request will be repeated in 2024, and we raised funds to open a new inner city MLK park in Davenport. Sometimes people say, "What does AAUW do?" This is the answer.

Our theme for the coming year is "Connecting the Doers! Talking to Power! Promoting the Future!" We are realizing we must work with the doers in the community. We must be active with legislation. And, of course, we support our schools and youth—especially through our scholarship funds.



At the international fashion show held on March 19th.

We will be especially active this summer encouraging people to read Temple Grandin's new book, *Visual Thinking: The Hidden Gifts of People Who Think in Pictures, Patterns, and Abstractions*. We are not sure what we will do with the information as yet, but we know the first step is getting people to read it.



Kay Pence, Ryan Sadler, Maggie Tinsman, Janice Harris Williams, Jane Duax, and Suzanne Hawkinson break ground for the Martin Luther King playground next to the NAACP office.

Public Policy News

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Co-Director

As everyone is aware, the Iowa Legislature has adjourned until January. It was a disappointing legislative session regarding the priorities of AAUW from attacks on LGBTQ people, to book banning in the schools, to SNAP changes on benefits and loosening of child labor law restrictions. Within this past week there has been a glimmer of hope for reproductive rights in Iowa as the Iowa Supreme Court in a 3-3 decision blocked enforcement of a law that attempted to ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. This marks a major victory, at least for now, for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland and other pro-choice forces. This centers on the so-called fetal-heartbeat law that was passed by the Iowa Legislature in 2018, and then blocked by the courts in 2019, all before the US Supreme Court ruled in 2022 that the US Constitution did not guarantee a

right to abortion. It is fairly certain that this will be brought to the legislature in the next session in January and possibly before that if the Governor calls a special session. There are several state and federal offices up for election in 2024, including the President, so the election cycle begins again. Everyone stay informed on how various candidates stand on issues of importance to AAUW. I will be joining the National Public Policy Webinar on June 22. During this webinar, we will discuss issues related to how we use our public policy priorities and why we work on certain bills. The new senior director of Policy and Member Advocacy, Meghan Kissell, will share an overview of the federal landscape, revealing what's on the horizon relating to women's economic security and higher education. Everyone have a safe and fun summer.

Cedar Rapids News

Seven Cedar Rapids members attended the AAUW Iowa Spring Conference in April, and found a lot of areas of interest.

Their annual May luncheon featured recognition of their new 50-year members--Millie Peshek, Trudy Sundermann, and Jackie Haveman--and a talk by guest Cynthia Ukah, author of *A Marriage Made in Heaven: Love, Tragedy, Faith, and Recovery*.



Above: Seven members came to the state conference – Sue Jorgensen, Linda Armitage, Jeaneal Weeks, Millie Peshek, Mamonate Nyane. Back row: Penny Foy, Anne Kiche.

Right: At the May luncheon—Anne Kiche, Cynthia Ukah, guest author, Mamonate Nyane, Helane Golden, Linda Armitage, Trudy Sundermann, and Sue Jorgensen.



50-year member Trudy Sundermann was recognized at the



College/University News

Elaine Kresse, AAUW Iowa College/University Chair

Our time is now! This is especially true as I continue to ask for your help. Beginning with Covid our college participation dropped. At that time, we dropped to 7 participating schools. We are inching our way back. We will only regain our long-standing role in Iowa Institutions with individual members carrying our mission and vision to the schools.

The Waverly Branch was able to send two students, Hannah Dutcher and Soniya Tamang, to the National College Conference for Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL). They worked with the students to apply for National registration scholarships. Grand View College (Des

Moines Branch) sent Sammy Swacker through the school's AAUW student group (Women's Empowerment Club) and Brigid Ernst, a faculty member. Your jelly bird egg donations gave each student attendee \$50.50 for spending money. We need to stay in touch with these young women and all scholarship winners. We need to listen to their stories. They are our future.

It takes a village. Only with your help will we rebuild.

Thank you all for reaching out to help us reconnect and grow! Please do visit your colleges and don't hesitate to contact me.



Brigid Ernst and Sammy Swacker at NCCWSL

Membership Matters!

Kim Folkers, VP Membership – AAUW Iowa

Growing challenges to equity for many in our state and beyond make it more important than ever to be a member of AAUW, where our mission is clearly focused: Equity for All!

While there have been some challenges with AAUW National's conversion to a new database, we seem to be seeing the "light at the end of the tunnel" and a number of Iowa members have already successfully joined or renewed their membership online using the [Community Hub](#).

Just a reminder on renewals - If your membership expiration date was 6/30/23 you should have received an email from National with your own unique password and instructions for online renewal. Be aware that some branches may have chosen to have members go through the renewal process locally, in which case you would not have received the National email. Either way, hopefully you've completed the renewal process and your membership will continue into the new year.

If your expiration date is later in the year, be on the lookout for an upcoming renewal email from National closer to that date or for information sent from your branch.

If you have questions on any of this, don't hesitate to email me at kimberly.folkers@wartburg.edu.

Additional Membership Tips:

Customize Your Preferences in the Community Hub

In addition to ensuring you are actively subscribed to AAUW emails and communications, Community Hub offers other tools to tailor the communications you receive from AAUW National. To update your preferences, login to the [Community Hub](#) and choose MY PREFERENCES. Then EDIT to make changes.

New and Renewing Members Get Ms. Magazine for Free!

As you join/renew for FY24, please note the exclusive offer to receive one free year of *Ms. Magazine*, which includes four print issues along with digital updates! [Sign up today!](#)

Keokuk Branch Celebrates Juneteenth

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of the last remaining enslaved African Americans in the United States on June 19, 1865. Keokuk held a week-long festival beginning on June 19. Members of the Keokuk branch of AAUW joined other community members in marching in a Juneteenth parade on June 23rd.



Several organizations were represented in the Juneteenth parade.



Above: Sandy Seabold, Mary Dennis, Dev Kiedaisch and Louise Orozco. Below: Louise Orozco, Janet Fife-LaFrenz, Mary Dennis, Diane Stanley, and Diane Kearns

