



IOWA INITIATIVE

A PUBLICATION OF AAUW-IOWA
VOLUME 104 NUMBER 4
November 2023

SAVE THE DATE

AAUW 2024 Spring Conference
April 12-13, 2024
Cedar Rapids Hilton Garden Inn



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President’s Letter

Karen Agee, Co-President

The AAUW Central States Regional Conference in St. Louis (Oct. 19-21) was inspirational as well as informative. Some highlights for me:

- Denise Lieberman, voting rights lawyer and director of Missouri Voter Protection Coalition, spoke fervently on how to fight erosion of voting rights and reclaim our democracy.
- Vanessa Wellbery of Planned Parenthood discussed her ambitious work for women in Missouri and Illinois, states with very different laws on reproductive rights and freedom.
- Karen Kedrowski of ISU’s Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics explained the causes and effects of the gender pay gap, especially on women of color; one slide showed that the more education women get, the farther behind we fall!
- Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Public Policy Director, outlined AAUW’s current fight to get the Equal Rights Amendment into the US Constitution.
- Sheritta Stokes wowed the crowd with educational outcomes of the 1619 Freedom School in Waterloo, IA.

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony told their stories and orated moments from their most famous speeches in Voices of American HERstory.

Links to some presenters’ slides and papers are available at <https://aauw-mo.aauw.net/swap-shops-sharing-branch-projects/>, with more coming soon.

National AAUW was represented by CEO Gloria Blackwell and Governance Board members. Their presentations demonstrated AAUW’s considerable reputation at the national and international levels.



The contingent of Iowa members was strong in St. Louis as presenters and Swap Shop session leaders. Some participants have mentioned being captivated by the well-researched Barbie display. There was lots of pink in this corner of the room featuring the svelte ‘trendsetter, role model, and influencer,’ now 64 years old. Also mentioned was the display of hundreds of photos over the last century—distinguished Women of Honor, indeed! Congratulations to our Iowa members who were able to travel to St. Louis for the conference. You, too, are women of honor.

Public Policy

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Co-Director

During the last session of the state legislature, the Firearms Omnibus Bill HF654 was introduced. This bill relates to carrying, transportation, and possession of weapons and programs about them. This bill passed the House on June 5 and was referred to Senate Judiciary. SF 543 was a bill for an act relating to the carrying, transportation, and possession of weapons by certain persons and in certain locations, and including effective date provisions. However, it did not pass out of Judiciary. There was a Fiscal Note prepared. The vote in the House was 62 Yeas and 37 Nays. There are several lobby groups against this bill, including: The Campaign to Keep Guns off Campus; Iowa Association of Community College Trustees; Rural School Advocates of Iowa; School Administrators of Iowa; Iowa Catholic Conference; Board of Regents, State of Iowa; Iowa State Education Association; Iowa Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Iowa Mental Health Advocacy; Iowa Association of Business and Industry; Interfaith Alliance; League of Women Voters of Iowa and many others. Those lobbying in favor were ABATE (A Brotherhood Aimed Towards Education); Iowa Minuteman Civil Defense Corps; National Rifle Association and the Iowa Firearms Coalition. There are several divisions to the bill.

The group called Everytown for Gun Safety is fighting for gun safety at all levels of government. Two of the groups they are working with are Moms Demand Action and Students Demand Action. For decades, gun sellers have exploited loopholes in federal law that let them sell guns online and at gun shows without conducting background checks. In newly proposed regulation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) under the Biden administration's leadership is setting a clear and common-sense standard for when gun sellers must become licensed dealers and run background checks. It is the next step in building on the life-saving Bipartisan Safer Communities Act passed last summer. Closing the loophole would be a huge victory for gun safety. Other news from the White House, just last week, the Biden-Harris administration unveiled a new Office of Gun Violence Prevention that will be based in the White House and advance the administration's ambitious gun violence prevention agenda. Another group The Smoking Gun has information regarding the cost to Americans from gun violence. Today's firearms are deadlier than ever before thanks to the gun industry's production of weapons that fire faster, hold more ammunition, are easier to conceal,



exploit loopholes, and can't be traced by law enforcement. The gun industry's marketing techniques endanger the public by appealing to minors, using militaristic imagery, exploiting fear and anxiety and other methods.

It is a fact that many gun deaths involve children. There are books available to teach children about gun safety. "There's Only One You: A Gun Safety Book for Children"; "Toys, Tools, Guns and Rules: A Children's Book About Gun Safety"; "Guns The Right Way: Introducing Kids to Firearm Safety and Shooting." As a general rule, a person should begin teaching children about guns when they first show awareness or interest. Always treat the gun as if it is

loaded. Keep guns out of the reach and out of sight of children by storing them securely and unloaded. This would include in a locked cabinet or a gun safe. It is the adult's responsibility to keep children safe and teach them safety when it comes to firearms. A shooting range is a good place to teach proper gun safety.

Several members of Iowa AAUW attended the AAUW Central States Regional Conference in St. Louis October 19-23 at the Drury Hotel. There were many topics of interest and a sharing of information and ideas among those attending. AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell was the keynote speaker. Her topic was "Advancing Equity Together: Manifesting AAUW's Mission for a Strong Future." She gave several examples of ways to accomplish this by research, education and advocacy. She also mentioned there are webinars available on such topics as how to engage elected officials. A main message throughout the conference was encouraging everyone to VOTE and to be informed as to where elected officials and those running for office stand on our public policy priorities.

A speaker who was of particular interest to me as Public Policy Director was Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Public Policy Director. She stated that everybody has a voice. She also encouraged those in attendance to join the Two-minute Activist. It is important also to have a relationship with the members of Congress and Voter Education is extremely important.

On Saturday I was asked to be the leader of one of the AAUW Counterpart Sessions which dealt with Public Policy. I shared information on our initiatives in Iowa such as our Lobby Day and monitoring legislation. There were approximately ten people that participated in my session.

Thank you to AAUW Missouri for hosting this event.

Midwest Regional Conference Takeaways

Dev Kiedaisch, Keokuk Branch

Trends and Challenges Facing Member-Driven Organizations, Lisa Maatz. Member loyalty has softened post-pandemic. We need to think about tasks, not roles. Technology and how you use it is key. Think and act locally—show relevance and allyship. Tell a story about what your work is doing—a story sticks with people. Ideas with potential to draw people—current event discussion groups, climate change, banned books. We can't come and do what we have always done. Come and do what people need.

Unconscious Assumptions and Implicit Bias, Deanie Brown. Caring about social justice isn't enough. We need to examine our own attitudes and beliefs.



Conference attendees from Iowa Elaine Kresse, Arlene Prather-O'Kane, Diane Kearns, Karen Agee, Mary Ann Ahrens, Janet Fife-LaFrenz, Maxine Lampe, Maureen White, Deverie Kiedaisch. Not shown are Karen Kedrowski and Sheritta Stokes, presenters from Iowa. Picture by Pam Kulp.

Advancing Equity Together: Manifesting AAUW's Mission for a Strong Future, Gloria Blackwell, CEO AAUW. AAUW is 142 years old. Our mission is research, education, and advocacy. We have provided fellowships for 135 years. AAUW at the United Nations supports



Gloria Blackwell and Diane Kearns

women around the world. "We are strong already, but together we are stronger." "We are battle weary, but we continue to fight." Women have 2/3 of student loan debt because of the pay gap.

It's Complicated: The Causes and Consequences of the Gender Pay Gap, Karen Kedrowski. Even though the gap at graduation is small or nonexistent, it widens with time. It is greatest for the highest wage earners.

Causes:

- Occupational segregation, i.e. engineers are 86% men and average earning is \$100,000/year and elementary teachers are 80.5% women and average earning is \$44,932/year.
- Women seek higher degrees which leads to greater student debt.
- Women are more likely to work part time, have gaps in work history, change jobs, promotions are delayed, and have smaller raises.
- Men are more likely to negotiate aggressively, self promote, talk over women, take credit for women's ideas, socialize/network with leadership, and belong to a union.



Karen Kedrowski

The long-term impact is that the whole family suffers.

What can we do:

- Work to ban the question of what your previous salary was.
- Research salaries and cost of living on Glassdoor to better negotiate salary.

Ending Period Poverty by Janai Harris. 1 in 5 menstruators miss school due to lack of period supplies. Missed school leads to delayed graduation and impacts education. It can cause cultural and social shame and mental health problems, affect school success, affect job success, lower confidence and decrease happiness. A person can't buy period supplies with SNAP benefits. Period supplies are taxed in 25 states as a luxury item. Find [More Chances Period](#) on Facebook.

1619 Freedom School Project, Sheritta Stokes. There is a persistent trend of fewer Black children reading at grade level in 4th and 5th grades than white children. In the first year of Freedom School, the students went from 18% proficient to 59% proficient by the end of the year. They exceeded the state benchmark by 42%. Freedom Summer School is now available to all students elementary through high school for 2 hours/day.

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The curriculum of 1619 Freedom School will be open source and free to anyone. For more information: <https://www.1619freedomsschool.org>.

Equal Rights Amendment, Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Public Policy Director. The Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1923. In 1972 it passed both the House and Senate and was sent to the states to be ratified. It has been ratified by 3/4 of the states. All that is left is for it to be affirmed by having the Archivist publish the ratified amendment.



Sheritta Stokes

Rep. Cori Bush in the House and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand in the Senate have introduced bills to ask the Archivist to publish the passed amendment. We need to ask our congress people to pass the discharge petition to publish the amendment. The discharge petition will push the bill

out of committee and onto the floor for a vote. Progress is being made.

The Ongoing Fight for the Right to Vote, Denise Lieberman. The Freedom to Vote Act would make election day a national holiday, allow same-day registration at all polling locations, and ensure at least two weeks of early voting for all federal elections. It also protects all election officials from undue interference, allows voters to present a broad set of identification cards for in-person voting, and bans partisan gerrymandering. AAUW members can work to improve voting rights by registering voters, encouraging people to routinely check their voter status, helping people who may be infringed by voter ID laws to obtain IDs, encouraging young people going off to college to register where they attend college or request an absentee ballot from their home site, giving people rides to the polls, advocating against laws that would increase voter suppression, and asking members of Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.



Women's suffrage display



Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony - Voices of American HERstory.



Jackie Brittingham and Jo Richey



Barbie the influencer display



Mary Ann Ahrens and Maxine Lampe

My Body, My Choice

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa President-Elect

At the age of 71 I tend to forget things that occurred 50 years ago, but I do remember very well how uncomfortable I was during my two pregnancies. I won't go into detail, since many of you have shared those same experiences. But I really wanted those babies! I was willing to endure the nasty side effects, the painful labor, and the increased risk to my health just so I could take those little bundles home.

But what if a woman does NOT want the baby? Perhaps another child will be an economic burden that endangers or limits the opportunities for the children she already has. Or the child would be a painful reminder of rape or incest. Who am I, or anyone else, to tell that woman she is *forced* to put her life at risk, to pay the extra doctor and

hospital bills, and to do the hard work of delivery (there is a reason it is called labor). Some will say the child could be put up for adoption. That solution does not give the woman back the months of discomfort, or ease the pain of delivery. Adoption does not pay the bills.

If this issue is important to you, please join me in finding solutions. This is an ad hoc committee approved by the Iowa AAUW Board. We will meet via Zoom to brainstorm actions and find other groups defending women's control over their own bodies. Working with these groups we will take action! One possibility is to provide free birth control to women across the state. What ideas do you have?

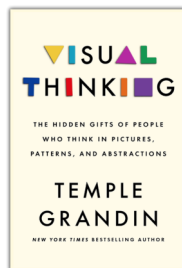
You can join us by contacting me at patricia.a.higby@gmail.com. Thank you!

Join Us! Visual Thinking Book Discussion

Elaine Kresse, Davenport-Bettendorf Branch

The Davenport-Bettendorf Branch has continued an AAUW tradition, an Adelante book discussion group. Adelante means "moving forward" in Spanish. As a command it means, go ahead and walk in." As an AAUW study group it means choosing books that may lead to action. Our study of the book, *It's Only Blood: a Global Perspective on Menstruation and Power*, by Anna Dalhqvist, led to donating sanitary products for local immigrants.

AAUW is a proud supporter of public education and open discussion. We are trying yet another outreach project not limited to branch residents. This is for AAUW members near and far. We are reading 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.



Because Penny Foy from Cedar Rapids and I, Elaine Kresse, from Davenport, are together in an online book discussion with others from around the world by email through the University of Iowa, we began discussing the possibility of such for us in AAUW. This has developed into an experiment. As a book discussion topic at the Davenport-Bettendorf Branch level, there will be a zoom with all invited on January 17th. Beyond that, our webmaster Lois Enger and Penny Foy are working to develop an email discussion of the book chapter by chapter.

We are still a little vague about how this will work. We need your help and expertise if you have advice. Lois has placed a discussion on our state website. She has asked Penny and me to try it out. We are asking the same from you. The book will be out this fall in paperback and it is probably available at your library. If you think you would like to be part of this online discussion, please go to <https://aauw-ia.aauw.net/discussion/> and register.

Tell Us about Your Good Ideas

Does your branch have a great idea for a project? Tell us about it. AAUW Iowa invites branches to apply for funding for special projects. Representatives of a branch are asked to use the AAUW Iowa Funds Application form to make this request. [Find that form on the AAUW Iowa website here](#). The completed form should be sent or

emailed to the president or co-presidents of AAUW Iowa, currently Karen Agee (karen.agee@uni.edu) and Kathie Farris (katfarris5@gmail.com). Branches will need to generate at least 50% of the funds for a project but may apply to AAUW Iowa for up to the remaining 50%.

AAUW Iowa Human Trafficking Prevention Project

Presented at AAUW Central States Regional Conference in St. Louis

Mary Ann Ahrens, HT Prevention Project Chair

How exhilarating it was to be part of the Iowa AAUW delegation at the 16 states regional conference in a personal, face-to-face event. **Reaching New Heights Together** was an appropriate theme for this powerful and informative gathering. Our AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell and Meghan Kissell, Senior Director of Policy and Membership Advocacy, were excellent additions to the conference. Several members of our Iowa delegation were involved in the programming, including Dr. Karen Kedrowski, Director of the Catt Center for Women in Politics at ISU in Ames. The conference was jam packed with information, ideas, and networking. Many priority issues were addressed and clarified. My cup runneth over with new knowledge!

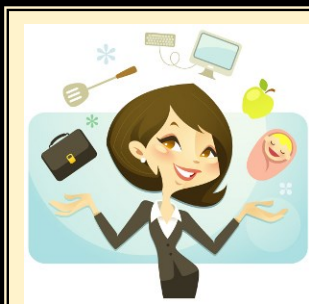
Our AAUW Iowa co-presidents asked Maxine Lampe and me to create a proposal to present information on our Human Trafficking Project and on the creation and development of our eNetwork Online Branch, of which I

was the founder. Our proposals were accepted, and we did a Swap Shop presentation on human trafficking and two online Swap Shop presentations on the development of our Online Branch. Our CEO was present at our human trafficking presentation which was an added benefit. We had great interest in the HT workshop, answering many questions. We also had our display, brochures, and additional information available during the conference.

Before the conference, Maxine gathered current ideas from the branches on how they were using and distributing the brochures. We now have a list of 47+ ideas which were shared at the conference, and we will share them with you below. Branches continue to be busy identifying people and groups with whom to share our information, which is exciting. Please keep in mind that some of the ideas are area/community specific which can also be helpful.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Little Free Libraires | Spouses/partners | House cleaners |
| Interfaith Alliance of Iowa | AAUW Iowa Life members | Iowa C/U institutions |
| Religious organizations | Neighbors | Co-workers/supervisors |
| Legislative clerk events | Barber shops | Davenport Equality Day |
| Iowa AI Exitto Program | Food Bank of Iowa | ISEA Executive Director |
| Convenience stores | Colleges/universities | Interstate Highway rest stops |
| AAUW Midwest Regional Conference | All Iowa legislators | Multicultural health coalitions |
| Mail carriers | AAUW National members | County Fair Democrat/Republican booths |
| Nieces and nephews | Children/grandchildren | Des Moines DART Transportation System |
| Local laundromats | Iowa Department of Education/
Transportation Division | Iowans for Public Education— Facebook |
| Public libraries/branches | Hospitals/clinics | 16-County Political Leadership Conference |
| Area truck stops | Beauty shops | Candidate political fundraisers |
| Annual class reunions | Senior centers | NAHT Legislative Advocacy Chair |
| College libraries | Political meetings | Iowa Office to Combat HT |
| The Way Up Conference | Retirement groups | |
| Retail stores | | |

Keep up the great work! Know you are making a difference in Iowa on this critical issue to SAVE LIVES!



They blame the low income women for ruining the country because they are staying home with their children and not going out to work. They blame the middle income women for ruining the country because they go out to work and do not stay home to take care of their children.

Ann Richards, Governor of Texas, 1991-1995

Cedar Rapids News

Linda Armitage and Maria Dean, Cedar Rapids Area Branch

History Makers' Gala

Cedar Rapids branch member Deborah Reed and her husband Ken Reed were among six Iowans who received history-maker awards for their service to the community at the African American Museum of Iowa's History Makers' Gala at the Hotel Kirkwood in Cedar Rapids on September 28th.

Open Minds, Open Doors

The Cedar Rapids Branch of AAUW was pleased to present our signature event, Open Minds, Open Doors on October 12, 2023. This conference is a collaboration among AAUW, Coe College, and Grant Wood Area Education Agency. It introduces middle school girls to opportunities through interactions with professional women in Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math fields.

This conference began in 1996 with an AAUW community action grant and initial collaboration between Coe College and AAUW. As the conference grew, Grant Wood AEA took on the administrative tasks of contacting schools and arranging presenters while AAUW members provided critical support for preparation, guidance, and implementation on the day of the conference. This year, 350 girls from 31 Eastern Iowa schools attended three Career Workshop Sessions, a panel presentation, lunch, and closing session.

We are thankful for the volunteer work of our branch membership as well as the 65 STEM presenters, and use of Coe College facilities and support staff.



Left—Ken and Deborah Reed



Right—Open Minds, Open Doors presenter check-in and facilities support



Left—AAUW members at the gala - Gwen Randall, Linda Topinka, Deborah Reed, Lillie Moore, Linda Armitage, Jeaneal Weeks.



Right—Open Minds, Open Doors workshop session

Des Moines and Grand View University Branch Activities

Planned Parenthood Program

Carolina Ramos and Gabriela Fuentes from Planned Parenthood did a program about “Reproductive Freedom in Iowa and Beyond,” on the Grand View University campus on October 24th. They were introduced by Grand View University student Emily Nguyen. The in-person audience included members of the Des Moines branch, the Grand View University AAUW Women’s Empowerment group, and the public. It was a hybrid event, and the zoom audience included members of the eNetwork branch and other AAUW members in Iowa.

Iowa has a new law banning most abortions after about 6 weeks. However, there is a legal challenge by the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, and the Emma Goldman Clinic. So abortion is currently legal up to 20 weeks while courts assess the law’s constitutionality. Currently in Iowa:

- A patient must undergo an ultrasound 24 hours before an abortion.
- A patient must receive state-directed counseling designed to discourage an abortion.
- The parent of a minor must be notified before an abortion is performed.
- Public funding is available only in cases of life endangerment, rape, incest, or fetal anomaly. The governor must approve each case of Medicaid – funded abortion (has not occurred in Iowa).
- An abortion may be performed at 20 or more weeks post-fertilization only in cases of life-threatening circumstances or severely compromised physical health.

Carolina and Gabriela welcome opportunities to speak to the public about reproductive rights. They may be contacted at GFuentes@ppncs.org and CRamos@ppncs.org.



Carolina Ramos, Emily Nguyen, and Gabriela Fuentes

Pink Out for Breast Cancer Awareness

The Grand View University student group did a pink out event on Friday October 27 to raise breast cancer awareness during breast cancer awareness month. Students staffed an informational table at the student center. The display board featured facts about breast cancer. Anyone who stopped by wearing pink was entered into a raffle to win a basket of pink gifts.



Grand View University students promote breast cancer awareness.



Carolina and Gabriela spoke to an in-person and zoom audience.

The Ongoing Pursuit of Equality

Sofia DiMartino, Editorial fellow, Cedar Rapids Gazette

Cedar Rapids member Linda Armitage was interviewed by a reporter from the Cedar Rapids Gazette. The following article appeared in the Gazette on September 10th. It is reprinted with their permission.

I first encountered Linda Armitage at a strategic planning session for the Hiawatha Public Library. I don't recall exactly what was said, or why we hit it off — but I do recall that she was smiling; Linda is almost always smiling. We got together every few months or so, chatting over massive salads at Black Sheep or spider rolls at Sushi House. Every time we met, Linda was insistent that I become acquainted with [AAUW — the American Association of University Women](#). I came to understand that Linda's connection to education wasn't purely driven by a desire to grow membership in her club; the club was an extension of her commitment to encouraging and fostering the pursuit of achievement by women.

Tell me about the way education has been important to your own life trajectory.

"I thank God every day for my first job. I started my career at the Des Moines Public Library right out of college. I was ready for a real job when I finished at Drake in 1970, and I was hired on the spot because of my experience working at the Drake Library. My first director in that position held a job open for me that allowed me to pursue my masters at the University of Iowa, so I did that as well. My education and opportunities were the best thing that could happen to any human being."

You have been an advocate for the education of others — including offering at times to financially support a semester of tuition for a student in need. Why is it important to you to help make education possible for others?

"My parents were not college educated. My father was a farm boy from northeast Iowa who got an 8th grade education, but was given opportunities in sales and insurance. My mother was editor of her high school paper but only went as far as high school. With their five children, my parents really emphasized education.

"Dad made a good living with his limited education, but could never take any time off with pay. When he was sitting around doing his taxes, he would say to each of us, 'I want you to go to college. I want you to have paid vacation!'"

Linda laughs at the memory.

"He started telling me this at the age of 8, and by 5th grade I knew I wanted to go. Teachers can help you if they know you have that goal in mind, and I got a lot of help."

Is there a specific mentor that comes to mind?

"There was a nun from St. Joseph's Academy in Des Moines. She was a music teacher, ran glee club and chorus ... She guided her class to aspire to a college education — the disci-

pline needed to get in, and how to be part of a real community of high school students."

How did you first get connected with AAUW?

"When I retired, I ran into a member at a legislative forum held by the League of Women Voters. She invited me to her home for a luncheon with other members, and after speaking at length with members I was impressed by the organization and wanted to join. I have been a member for about 11 years."

What are some of the initiatives AAUW is working on locally?

"For the last 23 years, we have put on the ["Open Minds, Open Doors"](#) conference for middle school girls. We do this in partnership with Grant Wood AEA at Coe College. The conference was the brainchild of a Coe College science professor who has now retired and become an AAUW member — AAUW helped to get the conference off the ground.

"There is a national-level leadership conference in Maryland; we can send students from Kirkwood, Mount Mercy and Coe. The cost for students to attend is covered by AAUW through a scholarship. Locally, we have been part of an effort to combat human trafficking, we engage with many events and activities related to Diversity Equity and Inclusion — I should also note that we celebrated Women's Equality Day on August 26th. This event is a commemoration of the day women won the right to vote, but we must acknowledge that not all women had the right to vote. Black women didn't have the right to vote until many years after white women were able to do so."

There are so many social organizations and clubs in existence. What sets AAUW apart?

"We are one of the earliest groups that came into effect to support women and girls getting themselves ahead. When this organization was established, it was very unusual for a woman to get her college degree. Back in the 1880s, women were considered to be a little insane or crazy if they were educated. They weren't normal. A band of women in Boston formed a group and that's how AAUW was started."

As women have achieved more parity in education and the workplace and as family dynamics and structures have shifted, AAUW has provided a point of connection.

"Our goal is gender equality in education, economic security and leadership. It served as a source of information for women in the days when radio hadn't even yet been invented. Over the years, it has adapted to serve as a support group for parenting, helping college grads with families who were navigating work life balance. We provide between \$1 million and \$5 million per year in grants and scholarships to support women pursuing education beyond the bachelor's."