



# IOWA INITIATIVE

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## SAVE THE DATE

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



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## President's Letter—2023: Where Has It Gone?

Kathie Farris, Co-President

2023 seems to have flown by us as we reach December. It is fun to look back and see what has happened to us as we have gone through the year. We can celebrate at a branch level, a state level, and even a regional level this year.

As **branches**, our activities have been as varied as our membership. Members of the Palo Alto Branch worked with the Chamber of Commerce and downtown merchants to put up decorative pots. The Des Moines and eNetwork branches co-hosted a Planned Parenthood program at Grand View University. It was attended by AAUW members from both branches, students from the AAUW Women's Empowerment Club, faculty, and the public. The Indianola branch co-sponsored two local election events with the Simpson College Culver Public Policy Center and the *Indianola Independent Advocate* newspaper. On October 24, four candidates for the Indianola City Council participated in a forum where they gave formal remarks and met the audience of 30 in an informal meet and greet. On October 26 an audience of over 100 listened to six Indianola School Board candidates answer questions important to voters in a forum. The Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch was a co-sponsor (with LWV and other groups) of monthly



legislative forums in the spring and candidate forums for area school board and municipal elections this autumn.

For **AAUW of Iowa**, January started with alerts from our Public Policy Director Diane Kearns regarding relevant issues at the legislature followed by Lobby Day at the Capitol in February and a lively presence in the Rotunda for Equal Pay Day in March. We revised and funded the Human Trafficking brochure developed by the eNetwork Branch and set aside funds in this year's budget for other worthy projects by the branches. Plans are being made for an outstanding state conference in April 2024: the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration!

The AAUW of Iowa board also sent generous funds to **AAUW Central-States Region** to support the October 2023 conference in St. Louis and sponsor two presenters from Iowa, Karen Kedrowski (Carrie Chapman Catt Center, ISU) and Sherrita Stokes (1619 Freedom School in Waterloo). Lots of other Iowans participated and presented, too. We are so proud! In fact, the conference was so successful financially that the \$1K in jumpstart funds can be returned to us for initiatives here in Iowa.

It has been a joy to be active in AAUW in 2023!

## Public Policy Going Forward

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

The holiday season seems to be coming rather quickly. Enjoy Thanksgiving with family and friends. My article this time will be brief. I just wanted everyone to put a couple of dates on your calendars. The Iowa Legislature will convene on January 8. I have scheduled our Lobby Day for February 7 from 9 :00 to noon. We will be meeting in Room 305 in the Capitol. This is the same room we had last year. The Chief Clerk has put this on the Social Calendar.

I have been participating in the Iowa Gun Safety Coalition Zoom meetings and the AAUW State Public Policy Chairs. The issues discussed at the Gun Safety Coalition revolved around the fact that we need to continue the conversation. It is likely that the Omnibus Gun Bill will be brought back to the legislature in 2024. The Coalition recommended reaching out to lobbyists against the bill. That list can be found on the legislative website. The bill number was HF654/SF543. They also recommended contacting legislators and the use of talking points and social media as to where legislators stand on this issue. It was stated that the bill has problems, especially regarding insurance-related issues as it applies to schools and guns on school property. Targeting members of the Senate Judiciary Committee was also recommended. Senator Brad Zaun (District 22) is Chair of that committee, Julian Garrett

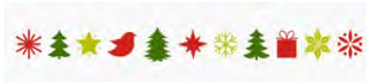


(District 11) is Vice Chair and Nate Boulton (District 20) is Ranking Member. Another suggestion was contacting lobbyists for insurance companies. Letters to the Editor regarding this legislation were also suggested.

The AAUW State Public Policy Chairs Zoom meeting recently stated the U.S. House of Representatives can move forward now since a Speaker was chosen. The House and Senate are far apart on Education bills. AAUW has signed on with various coalition partners. There are some student -focused events happening in Washington that need to have a mechanism to get students involved.

Another topic was Voting Rights. AAUW is committed to open and fair elections that are broadly accessible to all voters, nonpartisan voter education efforts that will promote equitable political participation and representation in appointed and elected office, and expanding voting rights.

AAUW State Public Policy Chairs stated that the guidelines for Title IX are not happening, but probably will be in January 2024. It is a complicated issue. There is a rule change clarification for schools regarding sports. There was to be a virtual Call to Action November 13 but this was a tentative date. New rules are anticipated regarding student debt. Next year, 2024, is an election year. Stay informed as to where candidates stand regarding AAUW Public Policy Priorities.



### Palo Alto County Branch News

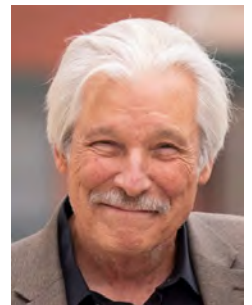
On Thursday, October 26, Stephanie Henrick, the Executive Director of Centers Against Abuse & Sexual Assault (CAASA), Morgan Campbell (CAASA Sexual Assault Victims Advocate for Palo Alto and Emmet Counties), and Peggy Stolley (CASSA Grant Writer) were guests at our branch meeting. Stephanie serves as the director covering 19 counties in northwest Iowa.

Stephanie gave a presentation and answered questions regarding CAASA. Her presentation included services CASSA provides, ways to be supportive, what to do if assaulted, types of sexual abuse and violence, rights of abuse and assault victims, and CASSA needs. She asked for donations and if anyone was interested in serving on the CAASA Board.

Our branch can help CASSA by making up folders that CASSA distributes with brochures and information. We plan to do this at a future meeting.

### Art Roche from Iowa Gun Safety Coalition to Do Virtual Program

The Des Moines branch has arranged for a program from Art Roche, the chair of Iowans for Gun Safety, on January 2 at 7:00 pm. We invite members and friends from all over Iowa to join in and hear important information that we will need to mobilize efforts to oppose the Omnibus Gun Bill, which is likely to be introduced early in the next legislative session. See Art's guest article on p. 3 of this newsletter. We encourage you to follow up on his recommendations for actions to take, and then tune in on January 2. Use this link to join:



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXcyREhjcjI0ZlNQMUMtZjJlCU0RQQT09&omn=83364406067>

## Iowa Gun Safety Coalition and the Omnibus Gun Bill

Art Roche, Iowans for Gun Safety

The Iowa Gun Safety Coalition was formed by Iowans for Gun Safety for the purpose of continuing the strong alliance that was formed to oppose the Reckless Gun Amendment in 2022. The coalition is not an official nonprofit corporation like many of its member organizations. The organizational members of the coalition have broad goals, and safe gun legislation may not be in their top tier of interest. But for all of these organizations, it has bubbled to the top recently because of the acceleration of gun violence in Iowa. During several very productive zoom meetings, the coalition has settled on two urgent goals. One is to defeat the Omnibus Gun Bill, and the second is to encourage voters to elect candidates who favor gun safety legislation. The combined power of the members of the coalition and the membership of each of the coalition organizations is huge. We believe that we can accomplish both of these goals.



Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director, provided an excellent summary of SF 543, the Omnibus Gun Bill, in the November 2023 *Iowa Initiative*. That bill will almost certainly be taken up by the next legislative session that starts on January 8. It was passed by the House and now needs to pass the Senate Judiciary Committee in order to go to the Senate for a vote. There are some elements in the bill that insurance companies and their insured clients (public and private schools, school boards, the Board of Regents) find troubling. For example, the bill would allow guns to be stored in cars on the grounds of schools and other public buildings, and in school vehicles carrying students if the school has a policy of allowing staff to carry guns. (School districts in Spirit Lake and Cherokee have these policies.) Insurers would be prohibited from refusing to insure school districts on the district's policy to

allow armed school staff. Community colleges and the three Iowa Regent universities could not adopt policies that stop people from carrying or keeping guns in a locked personal vehicle on the school's grounds, as long as the weapon is not visible from outside the vehicle. The bill includes a provision for mandatory gun safety education from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade based on National Rifle Association curriculum and materials. (NRA is the largest gun industry lobbying organization in the US.)

We think any of these provisions should be enough to derail this bill, but the majority party may well proceed full steam ahead unless citizens speak up. Between now and January 8, the Iowa Senate Judiciary Committee members need to hear from many Iowans expressing their negative opinion about the Omnibus Gun Bill, SF 543. Their names and contact information are here:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/committee?ga=90&groupID=697>

There are 18 members. If you can't phone or email all of them, the top three are the most influential members. If you know any of the members personally, they should also be contacted. Your message can be simple- "Please don't advance the Omnibus Gun Bill, SF 543. I especially object to ... (and here state your main objection, whatever it is—guns on school property, NRA curriculum in our schools, whatever it is.)" Always include your name, address, phone or email, and a request for a response.

Then, please contact your own state senator, regardless of party, with a similar message.

We think this will move fast through the Senate, so it's important that you act now. I'm happy to hear your comments and answer your questions on this and related topics. (563-581-6521, rocheart3@msn.com)



A half dozen actor/victims lay fallen among headstones at a die-in in Washington Park in Dubuque, representing the 130 gun



deaths in the US every day. Gretel Winterwood is the actor in the photo on the right.



## Des Moines Branch Invites You to Two Book Studies

Ann Gale and Joanne Page, Des Moines Branch

In January and February, members of the Des Moines branch will lead two virtual book discussions. Members all over Iowa are invited to join us for both events. Note that different zoom links will be used for the two book discussions.

***Sing, Unburied, Sing.*** On January 9, at 7:00 p.m., Amy Getty from the Des Moines branch will lead a book study of *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, by Jesmyn Ward. Dr. Amy Getty is an English professor at Grand View University, and she used this book in one of her classes last fall. It was a popular one with students, and now our members will have an opportunity to discuss it. The novel focuses on a family in the fictional town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. It was named by the New York Times as one of the ten best books of 2017. Use this zoom link to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXcyREhjcjI0ZlNQMUtmZjIjCU0RQQT09&omn=89105732790>

***The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels.*** In February, Joanne Page will lead a discussion on *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels*, by Jon Meacham during two evening sessions. Presidential historian and *New York Times* best-selling author Meacham wrote this book after the election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency. Foreseeing potential trouble ahead, he explored contentious and fraught times in our past when the future of democracy was at stake. It has never been

certain that the American experiment with democracy would continue. Beginning with the Founders and continuing through periods of strife and division in the 19th and 20th centuries, he explored differing ideas about the nature and scope of America with a close look at many of the leaders who stepped forward with hope in those dark times.

On Tuesday, February 6, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., we will discuss the Introduction through chapter 4, covering the ideas of the Founding Fathers, the Civil War and Reconstruction period, and into the early 20th century presidencies when America faced questions about the “melting pot,” and struggled to expand the suffrage to women and racial minorities. Two weeks later, on February 20, also from 7:00 to 8:00, we will discuss chapter 5 through the conclusion, focusing on the New Deal, the New Frontier, the Great Society, and those who felt marginalized in each of those eras.

You may have heard of “Jim Crow,” “the Red Scare,” and “McCarthyism,” but how much do you know about the extent of those crises and how they have affected our present lives? Please get the book and read it and come prepared to learn from our shared memories about how America grew up. Meacham gives us hope that America is strong. Find out if you agree. Use this link to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83247795463?pwd=RVFudFBNaEVuZzBrR0liZkIjPRFV3QT09>

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## College/University News

Elaine Kresse, College/University Director

This fall we offered membership in the eNetwork branch to our college and university representatives. If you are a representative of an AAUW college, please take advantage of that offer. If you are an AAUW member, remember we are counting on you to contact the colleges in your area and ask them why they haven't joined AAUW. Remember the benefits. Two staff can be National members, plus the added benefit of the eNetwork and state membership for this year. Remember, too, that for all of us, membership is now for 12 months from the date we join.

What else? Access to programs and research and the opportunity for a student or staff to attend NCCWSL (National Conference of College Women Student Leaders) and for their students to register online as student members at no cost.

Early Bird registration for NCCWSL is December 1. Students

do not send any money with the application if they are applying for the National scholarship to the conference. This is important. Last year we had a student pay, and then she didn't get a scholarship. If a student does not get a scholarship, they will still be allowed to register at early bird prices even though early bird has closed because their application was in time.

Please be thinking about the Distinguished Faculty Award. [The application is on our website.](#) In this climate of attack on public education, we need to be lifting up faculty. Only one will win the award, but we can honor them by having nominated them and recognizing their talents.

We have still not restored our AAUW college and university levels to pre-Covid numbers, but we are on our way up. Thanks so much for your work in reaching out to administrators and faculty in our Iowa schools.

## Human Trafficking Prevention – Bird’s Eye View

Mary Ann Ahrens, HT Project Outreach Chair

Recently, I received the *2023 Women Graduates-USA Human Trafficking Report* by Jeanette Westbrook from AAUW Iowa leader, Florine Swanson, also a member of that organization. One of their goals includes human trafficking prevention. Their global perspectives (shared in part) help to expand our understanding and knowledge and reassure us of the critical nature of this crime and the importance of outreach in Iowa.

Our recent global conflicts have left tens of millions of people destitute, homeless, isolated, and vulnerable to human trafficking, especially women and girls. Sophisticated technology to identify, track, control, and exploit victims is being used.

Human trafficking has been around for thousands of years. It remains one of the world’s most hard to control criminal and human rights violations known. The illicit profits from sex trafficking paid by men for sex with trafficked women is USD 100 billion each year. (Vienna-2021) HT is ruining the lives of our sisters (and brothers). Even losing one life is too many...but millions...is unthinkable. It is unacceptable and cruel to let this continue to happen. Thanks for stepping up! As you will see, it takes our global community.

Globally, the bright spot is that legislation, policies, and momentum have begun to swing toward data-based strategies and laws that can decrease human trafficking with a focus on demand by buyers and increasing and enforcing penalties for traffickers in various parts of the world.

The U.N. Convention on Transnational Organized Crime developed the Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking of persons, especially women and girls. The U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime initially developed the *Blue Heart Campaign* to assist victims. Internationally, *blue* is a symbol of awareness, victim sadness, and cold-hearted traffickers. Our federal government established the *Blue Campaign* to create awareness and educate the public, vulnerable communities, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize indicators, and to respond appropriately to possible cases. *National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is January 11 which is Wear Blue Day*. Our Secret Service doubled the size of their ambassadors and is providing education to children and adults on personal and Internet Security with a whopping 676% increase in serving stakeholders this year. The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center trains enforcement officers representing over 90 Federal Agencies. The Federal Office to Combat Human Trafficking

is in the Department of Homeland Security. The Iowa Office is in the Department of Public Safety. In 2022 a new codified act from Congress called *Countering Human Trafficking* will coordinate efforts among offices and agencies. It will reduce the complexity and size of government.

This follows the Federal government’s first congressional legislation on human trafficking in 2000. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act has stimulated state actions to establish laws. In 2006 Iowa Senator Maggie Tinsman spearheaded the passage of Iowa's first human trafficking law. The Iowa Office to Combat Human Trafficking was not established until 2017. Iowa legislators continue to make progress on human trafficking, resulting in increased penalties in 2023. Our 2024 Iowa advocacy will ask for \$5 million in human trafficking victim assistance services funding which does not exist today.

Recent legislation passed by the European Union, Canada and the state of Maine endorses the *Equality/Nordic Model* to combat demand and decrease HT which they recognize as the best policy. The model’s approach is to repeal laws that criminalize people in prostitution, provide exit programs for survivors, and reduce the demand by increasing and enforcing penalties to hold buyers and exploiters accountable.

In May of 2023 Canada held a three-day Defend Dignity Virtual Conference entitled “Inspire Change: Canada Sexual Exploitation Summit.” It provided an opportunity for networking, strategizing, moving forward together, and taking collective action. It included a Youth (14-18) Summit and 70 speakers recruited from every sector of society to present the latest research, innovations, and lessons to help leaders. There certainly is “light at the end of the tunnel” through these actions!

**LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL:  
WE (BIRDS OF A FEATHER) ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!**

### **Books by survivors to enrich your understanding of the impact of human trafficking**

- *In Pursuit of Love* by Rebecca Bender
- *Paid For* by Rachel Moran
- *31 Years in the Desert* by Castanita Fitzpatrick
- *Women Unsilenced* by Linda MacDonald

### **Book by researchers**

- *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* by Melissa Farley and Jeanne Sarson

## Indianola Branch Tours Harkin Institute

Kristine Nielsen

The Indianola Branch of AAUW took a tour of the Harkin Institute, a nonpartisan public policy research institute located at Drake University in Des Moines. Its official name is The Harkin Institute for Public Policy and Citizen Engagement. It was founded in 2013 on the premise that good public policy is best achieved when policymakers have access to high quality information, political processes are open and well understood, and citizens are informed and active participants. Senator Tom Harkin's career was focused on:

- People with disabilities
- Retirement security
- Wellness and nutrition
- Labor and employment

The building was created based on principles of universal design, in order to accommodate people with varied needs. The building was just incredible. The Board Room was a great example of how the rest of the building functioned. It had couches, diversified chairs and tables that could be raised and lowered. The lighting was able to accommodate different types of meetings. The public restrooms made so much

sense. Of course, braille was used throughout the building, even to display braille pictures. All the informational displays had a scan so almost everyone could participate. I want to thank the new director Matt Reese for a wonderful introduction and Daniel Van Sant for our two-hour tour and his passion for his job.



*Matt Reese introducing guests to the Harkin Institute*



*Daniel Van Sant with members after the tour*



## Work Together to Protect Rights of Women and Girls

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa President-Elect

Legislatively, Iowa has become an embarrassment for many of us. In January we can expect an Omnibus gun bill to be quickly introduced and passed. It will end many of the last gun safety measures, allowing guns to be purchased and carried freely across the state. Perhaps even on school properties. On a second front, if the courts fail to rule to allow the new abortion bans, we can expect an Iowa constitutional amendment on our ballot to protect abortion. I'm sure the language will be just as twisted as on the last amendment guaranteeing gun rights. Also, our schools are trying to adjust to new laws that

pay parents \$7,000 per child to take them out of public schools, and into private ones.

How do we react to these threats to women and girls? I propose we collaborate with other groups to magnify our voices. Part of this collaboration is with Planned Parenthood and other organizations seeking to protect the rights of women to manage their own bodies. But I need help! Can you assist by joining meetings (often Zoom) of other groups, and sharing what you hear with us? Please contact me so that together we can make Iowa a place to be proud of! [patricia.a.higby@gmail.com](mailto:patricia.a.higby@gmail.com)

## Contraceptive Update Webinar

The Family Planning Council of Iowa will hold a contraceptive update on December 12, from 9:00 to 10:30 am. This virtual presentation will include recently approved contraceptive methods, new research on extending the duration of LARCs, and an update on emergency contraception. Nursing continuing education credits will be available. The intended audience is health care professionals. Please register using the Zoom link below.



[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUod-CsqjMjGNxjCHW8W-9xwwhZo\\_t2PER](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUod-CsqjMjGNxjCHW8W-9xwwhZo_t2PER)

Contact Family Planning Center of Iowa Executive Director Allison Smith with questions at [asmith@fpcouncil.com](mailto:asmith@fpcouncil.com).



## Waverly Branch Presents a Program on Ending Period Poverty in Zambia

Malinda Groth Mick

The October program of the Waverly branch featured speaker Rabecca Ndhlovu, a Wartburg College student and Wartburg-Davis World College Scholar from Zambia who received a Projects for Peace grant to return and carry out a program for girls that would teach them about menstrual health and how to make menstrual pads.

Twenty-five girls participated in the program in Zambia. They received sewing kits and washing buckets to create and maintain their own menstrual pads. The girls who attended were very receptive to learning and creating the pads for themselves. However, there were some challenges as well. Attendance varied on a day-to-day basis so that girls were often



at different points of completion of the pads. In addition, the project was organized with one school, so only girls of that school could attend. It also was in an urban area, so they were unable to reach girls who lived in rural areas.

Despite the challenges, it was a successful program and the girls were excited to teach their friends who did not attend about what they had learned and teach them to sew pads for themselves. Rabecca would like to be able to continue this project and is seeking donations to do this again. If you are interested in contributing to a GoFundMe of the project, please visit <https://gofund.me/f4342ec6>. Rabecca also shared pictures and more information about the project on the GoFundMe site.

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## Tama-Toledo Branch Assists with Poverty Simulation

Berleen Wobeter

Members of the Tama-Toledo branch of AAUW enthusiastically responded to a volunteer request to help facilitate two, "In their Shoes" Poverty Simulation Workshops presented to South Tama County Community School District educators as part of their professional development training. Dr. Tammy Faux and senior social work students from Wartburg College, Waverly, IA led the workshops held at STC schools.

The poverty simulations represent the circumstances of real families and the real problems they face living with



*Educators as students in school while family members in background complete necessary tasks at the bank and other simulated businesses and agencies.*

economic challenges and many other related barriers to success they encounter.

Our members graciously volunteered, knowing we were assisting the development of awareness, sensitivity and knowledge in our public school educators, but

we also walked away with valuable lessons learned. For example, we experienced the frustration of having to wait for services when the needs were immediate. We learned time is a luxury when multiple problems need to be solved, schools can be a safety net for families in need, and children from families in crisis face multiple distractions that hamper their educational success.

The voices of people in poverty often go unheard and we can advocate on behalf of those in need. With our new awareness, our advocacy work with government officials and school leaders will be more genuine and informed, compelling us to respond to this urgent need as we focus on improving educational outcomes for all students.



*Tama-Toledo AAUW members with Dr. Faux and Wartburg staff*