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# U P D A T E S

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Issue 9

## President's Message

Cathleen Boivin, Co-President



One of the important themes that came out of our Student Inclusion Awards at the April Program meeting for our young scholars was Courage. Courage isn't always about heroism or bravado, but standing up for the greater good when it might not be advantageous or easy to do so. Besides the pleasure of being in the company of other members of our branch, our meeting was an opportunity to hear about the efforts of four young women to reach out and support others in their school and community. Their school experience has been markedly different than high school was when we were young, or even when our children were teenagers since it has occurred during the enforced isolation we've all experienced during the past four years.

These students were largely deprived of educational and social interaction with their peers for the bulk of their formative teen years. The camaraderie we associate with students in schools has been severely strained due to Covid.

**President's Message** continues on page 2.

AAUW National Website: <https://www.aauw.org/>

AAUW-VA Website: <https://aauw-va.aauw.net/>

Springfield-Annandale Website: <https://sprann-va.aauw.net/>

Like us on Facebook. Search *Springfield-Annandale AAUW*.

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### AAUW Mission Statement

*To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. Vision: Equity for all. Values: Non-partisan. Fact based.*

### AAUW Diversity Statement

*In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.*

**President's Message** *continued from page 1*

Those of us who worked in the educational field used to ponder what it would be like if there were no more “brick and mortar” schools. Would it be possible to give students a well-rounded education if tuition was provided virtually? Due to the pandemic, we tested that theory and proved that attempting to connect teachers and students via the computer is alienating. My niece is a young teacher and, like many other educators, experienced the sensation of viewing students as darkened out blocks on a monitor grid instead of individuals in a classroom. We’ve all experienced this strain during the past few years. This sensation of feeling rather anonymous and trying to make meaningful connections was apparent in the essays written by our winners. These young women, like so many of us, have experienced depression and loneliness and this has shaped their world.

Our four winners came from different high schools and diverse backgrounds. Two of our honorees found a degree of connectivity with others through crafts, namely crochet. They have created items to be shared with others as symbols of caring and support. One school has a thriving crochet club. Besides companionship, they mentor each other and help them learn new skills. Their output is donated. They hope these items are received by other young people who need a reminder that they are thought about and supported. Significantly, two of our young winners addressed incidents where they intervened or reported bullying in their schools and helped fellow students even when doing so might not have been perceived favorably by a peer group. This takes a great deal of courage. Yes, there is something very right about the way these teens are finding strategies of dealing with their world and encouraging positivity.

Our branch has been dedicated to the idea of inclusion and the celebration of diversity. We give scholarship funds each year to students who exemplify these ideals and demonstrate how they have implemented these principles in their schools.

As **Maya Angelou** said, “In diversity, there is beauty and there is strength.” AAUW respects and celebrates the diversity of our members and those differences form the backbone of our organization.

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/governance-tools/dei-toolkit/>

I read recently that Virginia has finally passed the new history standards for our schools’ program of studies.

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/04/20/virginia-social-studies-standards-approved/>)

These standards are reviewed every seven years. You may be asking yourself how much more history can we possibly cram into ten months of study? Through a long and unusually drawn-out discussion about “whitewashing” history, a decision was reached to teach more about our complicated and contentious issues of racism and intolerance in our country. The curriculum will include more information about diverse cultures and practices. Many of these expanded topics were expressed by members of the community. There will be a mention of Indigenous Peoples’ Day, added information about labor history, and enfranchisement. As a former World History teacher, I applaud any attempts to further understanding of the past and how we will shape our future.

Just a few years ago, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of women obtaining the right to vote in this country. We are all well versed on the amount of courage it took for women to take this stand despite imprisonment, brutality, and political repercussions. Women filled in the roles vacated by men during the First World War, made munitions, farmed, and kept the country going while the men were away fighting for freedom from tyranny. Limited suffrage was granted to many women after the Armistice.

We celebrate our young winners of the Student Inclusion Awards and look forward to the contributions they will undoubtedly make in their choice of major and careers as they move into adulthood and support their communities.

In the twenty-first century, we, in AAUW, continue to lobby for equity in access to jobs, pay, and rights for women and minorities. It still takes courage to stand up and defend those who cannot advocate for themselves. We were motivated to join AAUW because we understand that when women work together towards a common goal, they can make a positive difference for all.

## Springfield-Annandale Member Named as Virginia Honoree

Sandy Lawrence was one of AAUW of Virginia's Named Honorees for 2023. This is AAUW of Virginia's highest award and is given to individuals who have contributed to the AAUW mission at the Branch, State, and National level.

As a member of the Woodbridge Branch, Sandy was the President for six years and Public Policy Chair for five years. At the state level, Sandy was on the Board of Directors for twelve years, including four years as Co-President, six years as Northern District Representative and two years as Vice President of Programs. She has been the Voting and Election Chair since 2018 and has saved the state approximately \$700 annually through her use of commercial election software.

At the National level, Sandy was Chair or Co-chair of the Strategic Communications Task Force for four years. Their task is to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for AAUW's communications to advance its mission. She is a member of the AAUW Action Fund Lobby Corp, which lobbied Congressional members most Thursdays when Congress was in session.



Sandy Lawrence

## Student Inclusion Awards – April Program Meeting

Judy Baldwin, Student Inclusion Award Committee Chair

Four high school Juniors were honored for their efforts to create inclusion in their schools at the April 20 Program Meeting.

Marilyn Hernandez Alvarez from John Lewis High School talked about using a hobby to make a difference in girls' lives, crocheting octopi in a project that made them feel that someone cared about them.

Madeline Huott of Lake Braddock Secondary School also used crochet to reach out to girls who needed a place to belong, to feel included, by starting the Crochet Club where they can learn to crochet, work on projects and talk.

Also from Lake Braddock, Hayley Gaylord talked about standing up to bullies who were trying to torment a friend who doesn't fit into the "typical teenager" persona.

Sydney Berkeley created a marketing campaign called "Bruin Nation is Diverse" which she and two friends presented to Lake Braddock administrators and their marketing class.

This award is presented to Juniors so they can put it on their college and scholarship applications next year and to encourage them to continue their efforts. The \$500 prize can help with application fees.



Left to right: Hayley Gaylord, Madeline Huott, Sydney Berkeley, Marilyn Hernandez Alvarez

This was the first time since before the Pandemic that in-person activities were rewarded. For the past three years, an essay contest had been substituted. Traditionally the committee has worked with counselors from the four area high schools – Annandale, Lake Braddock, John Lewis and West Springfield – but with no submissions from Annandale and West Springfield this year and a good number from Lake Braddock where committee member Elizabeth Gibbons teaches, they will seek teachers at the other schools to introduce the program next year.

Refreshments followed the presentations and members and awardees and their families had the chance to get acquainted. Deborah Dodd provided the delicious punch.

Judy Baldwin chairs the Student Inclusion Award Committee. Members are Helen Cassidy, Betty Marie Fields, Elizabeth Gibbons, Irene McGhee, and Ann Sauberman.

## Spring Fling

Ann Sauberman, Spring Fling Chair

On **May 5**, many of our Branch members and friends will enjoy our annual Spring Fling at the Springfield Golf and Country Club. After a wonderful silent auction full of great items to bid on, we will enjoy a delicious lunch. After lunch, Renee Wynn, our Keynote speaker will share many stories about being a Chief Information Officer for NASA. Space exploration is in the news continually and Renee will enlighten us on many issues concerning the Space program.

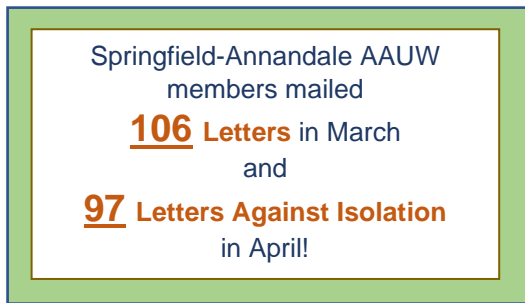
I would like to thank all those who have signed up to join our Branch to support our annual AAUW fundraiser. A thank you also goes to all our many volunteers. This event needs many hands to make it successful. Looking forward to seeing you and enjoying a great spring day and raising money for the many projects the National AAUW supports. If you have any questions, please let me know.

## June Program – Picnic

Irene McGhee, Program Co-Vice President



The installation of officers will occur at the June Program Meeting at Occoquan Regional Park, 9751 Ox Road, Lorton, on **June 17**. The Board has agreed to pay for member lunches. Registration is required, as is your choice of sandwich or salad. Friends are invited; the guest cost is \$20.00 each. I will send out the menu choices soon. We will be using an easier-access pavilion from the parking lot that is close to the restrooms. Looking forward to seeing you all as we conclude this 2022-2023 Year.



## Public Policy

Susan Burk, Public Policy Chair

**AAUW-VA State Board Elections.** Keep an eye out for your ballot coming **May 6** to elect new AAUW-VA State Board members. Please vote so we can reach a quorum.

**Title IX.** Our State VPs for Public Policy recently shared a communication from AAUW's new Senior Director for Policy and Member Advocacy, Meghan Kissell, MSW, regarding proposed changes to Title IX regulations on athletic eligibility for transgender students. National is evaluating the proposed changes and is expected to provide guidance to states. I will share that when I receive it. Ms. Kissell's letter is attached at the end of this newsletter.

**Virginia History and Social Science Standards.** Thank you to all who contacted the Virginia Board of Education to register personal and AAUW-VA concerns about the proposed Virginia History and Social Science Standards. On April 20, the Board voted unanimously on the Standards of Learning, the

state's outline and principles for academic subjects to guide what's taught in public school (<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/history-and-social-science/standards-of-learning/review-revision-of-the-history-social-science-standards-of-learning>). What has been a typically routine process drew an unprecedented level of attention and criticism this year. As reported in the Washington Post:

*“The board and Education Department worked through four versions of the standards, reviewed thousands of public comment submissions, and listened to days of debate over the best way to teach history in the commonwealth. They faced criticism for “whitewashing” history, prioritizing politics and acting without transparency. The final contents of the standards reflect a more comprehensive approach to history. The standards will require, for the first time, that Virginia students be taught about racism, and specifically they note that the country’s history is complicated and nuanced. But, the lengthy and contentious process to arrive at this version underscores the deep division and political tension coursing through education policy in Virginia and around the country.”*

**2023 Virginia General Assembly Elections.** Every State Delegate and Senator will be on the ballot November 7. Redistricting and the large number of incumbent retirements (<https://cardinalnews.org/2023/04/10/the-next-general-assembly-wont-look-much-like-the-current-one/>) make it very important that you confirm your current legislative district (for both Delegate and Senator) and identify the candidates who will be running to represent you. In some cases, there will be primaries in June. It is not too early to gather this information. There have been no changes to Virginia’s early/no-excuse voting by absentee ballot or in-person. The witness signature requirement for absentee ballots has been repealed by legislation passed by the VA House and Senate and signed by Governor Youngkin. Instead, voters must note their date of birth and last four digits of their social security number. This will go into effect July 1, but will not be in effect for the June primary. Check out <https://www.vote411.org/> to find your district. And look for more information in future newsletters.

**Be a Two-Minute Activist.** Sign up as a Two-Minute Activist (<https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>) today and keep up-to-date on AAUW’s policy work with their letters, comments, testimony and legal briefs to learn more about AAUW’s positions and advocacy efforts.

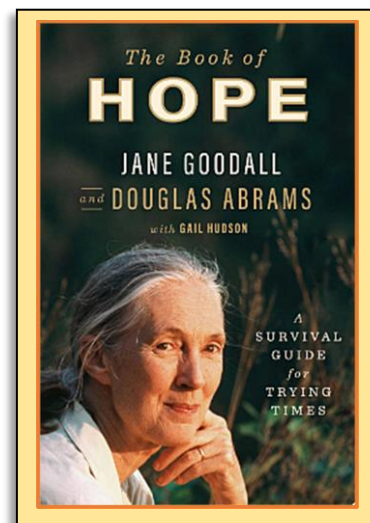
## Evening Book Group – Virtual

The Evening Book Group will meet via Zoom for the next meeting on Thursday, **May 4**, 7:00 P.M. The topic book is *The Book of Hope*, by Jane Goodall. Beth Von Holle is the scheduled reviewer.

*In this urgent book, Jane Goodall, the world's most famous living naturalist and Doug Abrams, internationally-bestselling author, explore--through intimate and thought-provoking dialogue--one of the most sought after and least understood elements of human nature: hope. In The Book of Hope, Jane focuses on her "Four Reasons for Hope": The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit.*

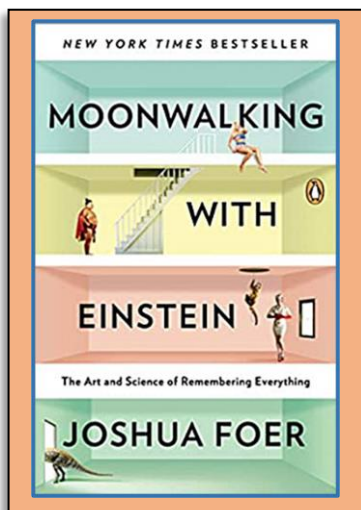
On **June 1**, the Evening Book Group will meet at Debbie Gilligan's house to meet and greet and discuss the final details of next year's Evening Book Group's Reading List.

Contact Debbie Gilligan for more information.



## Morning Book Group – Live

The Morning Book Group will meet on **May 11**, 10:00 A.M. The topic book is *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything*, by Joshua Foer. Jo Domingues is the scheduled reviewer with Irene McGee hosting.



*Moonwalking with Einstein recounts Joshua Foer's yearlong quest to improve his memory under the tutelage of top "mental athletes." He draws on cutting-edge research, a surprising cultural history of remembering, and venerable tricks of the mentalist's trade to transform our understanding of human memory.*

On **June 8**, the group will hold a luncheon at Deborah Dodd's house. This luncheon is for the purpose of planning next year's Morning Book Group's Reading List.

Contact Jo Domingues for more information.

## Movies at Midweek

Ginny Wells, Movie Maven

Movies at Midweek will take a break in May and resume on **June 21**, my "Farewell Maven Day". Then no meetings in the summer. The new co-mavens, Helen Cassidy and Beverly Wise, will alert you to the September movie date.

## Dates to Remember

May 4, 7:00 P.M.	Evening Book Group Meeting – Virtual	<a href="#">page 7</a>
May 5, 11:00 A.M.	Spring Fling	<a href="#">page 4</a>
May 6	AAUW-VA State Board Elections	<a href="#">page 5</a>
May 11, 10:00 A.M.	Morning Book Group Meeting – Live	<a href="#">page 7</a>
May 25	June UPDATES submissions due to Judy Titterton, Editor	
June 1	Evening Book Group Meeting – Live	<a href="#">page 7</a>
June 8	Morning Book Group Meeting – Live	<a href="#">page 7</a>
June 17	Branch Picnic	<a href="#">page 5</a>
June 21	Movies at Midweek	<a href="#">page 7</a>

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“All things seem possible in **May**.” — Edwin Way Teale

“**May**, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive.” — Fennel Hudson

“You have to remember to be thankful. But in **May**, one simply can’t help being thankful that they are alive, if for nothing else.” — Lucy Maud Montgomery

“Mornings in **May**, echoed with the call of cuckoos, sunlight glowed through fresh green canopies of trees.” — Meeta Ahluwalia

“I’ve got sunshine on a cloudy day. When it’s cold outside, I’ve got the month of **May**.” — Smokey Robinson

“Be sure to get your June UPDATES input to me by **May 25**, Noon.” — Judy Titterton, Editor



Senior Director for Policy & Member Advocacy, Meghan Kissell, MSW letter:

For those that I didn't have a chance to meet on the SPPC call this Wednesday, allow me to introduce myself as your new Senior Director of Policy & Member Advocacy. This is an exciting time to jump in as there are several high priority issues both in Congress and in the states that I know are of great interest to you and our members as a whole.

While there's a lot more discussion on how we'll work together, I want to flag for you new proposed Title IX regulations that were released on April 6 from the Department of Education on athletic eligibility for transgender students ([Dept of Ed fact sheet](#)). These proposed changes come as we are seeing policies around the country that categorically ban those students from participating on sports teams consistent with their gender.

Given that access to athletics is a key component of educational equity under Title IX, last year [AAUW called on the Department of Education](#) to issue regulations that affirm and protect the inclusion and participation of all students, including transgender and nonbinary students, in school athletics.

We will work with our partners to fully evaluate the proposed rule to ensure it is consistent with our principals and evaluate if there are changes that might further strengthen the proposal.

There will be a 30-day public comment period from the date of publication in the Federal Register (likely early next week), so look for work information about how to engage.

Meghan Kissell, MSW (she/her)  
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)