



EMPOWERING WOMEN SINCE 1881

INDEPENDENCE BRANCH

Empowering women since 1940

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AAUW advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy.

President's Message-May

Our Next Chapter

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your AAUW Independence president this year. I have learned a lot over the past year but feel I have much more to learn in the coming year. I am grateful to each and every one of you for your guidance and support. You are so appreciated! Over the summer, share your ideas with me and the other officers on ways to add to our membership, on special outings in which you would like to participate, and on programming. Get involved with college/university relationships, DEI, fundraising, public policy, and STEM, just to name a few.



Aware of it or not, each of us writes pages for others to see. It is our actions, words, and deeds that become our compositions. Members of an organization are no exception. Together, they write an entire chapter in their organization's history. A successful organization is comprised of dedicated leaders and members. At our May meeting, three newly elected (and returning) officers, Patt, Kathy, and Karen were given pens as they were installed. These pens can contribute to the writing of our branch's next chapter when they use them to fulfill the duties and tasks of their positions. However, the officers do not write our next chapter alone. Everyone within our branch contributes to the writing process, page by page, year by year. Members, work with your officers and support them so that the chapter composed this next year is our best chapter ever written!

Karol

Advocacy and Equity-A Winning Team

Upcoming Events:

~ June 25 ~ **AAUW Board Meeting** ~ 6 pm at First United Methodist Church.

This will be a “brown bag” dinner meeting. Feel free to bring your dinner or a snack, and

Karol will provide dessert. All members are invited, as well as current board members.

We will be planning for the 2024-25 year. Bring your ideas. Hope to see you there!

~ June 30 ~ **AAUW Dues Deadline** ~ Total Amount - \$98.00 (National \$72, Missouri \$10, Branch \$16)

******Sending checks to Patt Braley is recommended since the online system has been working inconsistently. Checks can be sent to Patt Braley, 500 NW Murray Road, Lee’s Summit, MO 64081.**

~ July 22 ~ **Pizza Ranch Fundraiser** ~ 5-8 pm ~ At least 7 members are needed to assist at this event. Please contact Joyce Gillespie, Chair, at joyceannegillespie@yahoo.com

Barbara Leabo--AAUW Woman of Achievement

A Life Well Lived

The Independence Branch honored Barbara Leabo posthumously as our Woman of Achievement at our meeting on May 11, 2024. Seven members of Barbara’s family were present. Barbara, who passed away on April 6, 2024, served faithfully not only as a passionate member of AAUW but also as recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and most recently as Membership Vice President and College and University Chairperson for the Independence Branch. She was a Branch Century Club Member. Barbara truly loved going to the campus at Blue River Community College and registering young voters. Barbara’s granddaughter, Addie, shared that her grandmother taught her “to help your community and make a difference. . . . to VOTE because you have the right to and not every woman who came before you was that lucky.” Barbara was a long-time teacher in the Blue Springs School District where she influenced hundreds of students. Her son, Todd, stated that he still meets people today who remember her as an amazing teacher and tell of her positive impact on their lives. After retiring from teaching, she remained active in the Independence community working at Scandinavia Place and at the Mid-Continent Public Library. She also served in Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Boys Scouts, and Junior Service League. Barbara was a great friend to her Kappa Alpha Theta sorority sisters from her alma mater, Washburn University. Barbara was an active member of Trinity Episcopal Church, Daughters of the King, Altar Guild, and volunteer at the Mustard Seed Thrift Store. The branch presented Barbara’s family with a set of wind chimes in her memory. As member Sue Raymond said, “We will miss her but remember her with joy.”



Open Up AAUW Vote

The open membership initiative did not pass. Changes to AAUW's bylaws require 2/3 majority (66.6%) to pass. AAUW members voted 65.1% to approve the measure, just shy of passing. Over 55% of our Missouri members voted and 73.6% voted in favor of the initiative to open AAUW membership by eliminating the degree requirement. This statement is from the AAUW Board of Directors: "We understand that this outcome may feel exclusionary to some. But AAUW's history is one of continual change and growth, even in the face of challenges. That same resilient spirit must guide us now as we seek to fulfill AAUW's purpose to advance equity for women and girls."

Karol Palmer, AAUW Independence President

Century Club 2023

Lois Domsch, Chair, with additional input by Karol Palmer

Although the AAUW FUND and Century Club year runs from January 1 to December 31, we recognized the following Century Club donors at our May 2024 Luncheon:

Branch Century Club (\$100 cumulative donation to any of the following: 1) national AAUW Fund; 2) ISD Foundation Scholarships; 3) AAUW Independence "As Needed" fund)

Patt Braley

Patty Chadwick

Barbara Leabo

Karol Palmer

Christina Nagel

State Level Century Club (\$100 to national AAUW Fund)

Jan Keeler

Melissa Morawitz

Sue Raymond + Branch

Gail Metcalf Schartel + Branch

Judy Tucker + Branch

State Level Century Club Plus (\$250 to national AAUW Fund)

Jane Campbell + Branch

Sue Shineman + Branch

Lois Domsch + Branch

Our branch donated \$1773 to the AAUW National FUND and \$1030 to the Branch "Greatest Needs Fund." We also had 66% participation of our branch members for the National FUND.

Thank you to everyone for their generosity and support for AAUW!

AAUW MO Star Award 2023-2024

During the state conference on May 4, in Columbia, AAUW Missouri recognized mission-focused branches in the Branch Action Plan/Star Award program for this year. The Independence Branch received an award of 10 Stars which is the highest level of achievement. Congratulations! We all should be proud of our branch's hard work and dedication!

AAUW Missouri State Meeting-2024

The Missouri State Meeting was held in person in Columbia, Missouri, on May 4. Sue Shineman, Patt Braley, Gail Metcalf Schartel, and Karol Palmer attended from the Independence Branch. The Independence Branch was recognized with a Ten Star AAUW MO Star Award and for having 65% of our

members giving to the AAUW Fund. Sue Shineman was installed as the State President and Lois Domsch as the State Finance Officer. Presenters included:

Gloria Blackwell, AAUW CEO; Denise Lieberman from the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition; Dr. Carol Gilles from the Right to Read Coalition; Alice Kitchen, State Chair, with a Public Policy update; and Deb McArthur, State Chair, with College/University relations.



Elected Officers for 2024-26

On May 11, the following officers were installed for the 2024-26 term:

Membership Vice President—Karen Johnson

Financial Officer—Patt Braley

Corresponding Secretary—Kathy Kelley

These officers will be continuing through 2024-25:

President—Karol Palmer

Program Vice Presidents—Sue Raymond and Patty Chadwick

Recording Secretary—Gail Metcalf Schartel

AAUW Independence Student Scholarship Award Winner

Molli Jones, Senior at William Chrisman High School, was the 2024 recipient of the AAUW Independence Student Scholarship. Her essay follows:

For almost 18 years I lived with my parents. During these years there were a lot of ups and downs. Everything from moving and being homeless to winning awards for academics. I have been a Girl Scout since 1st grade. In my troop, I would lead the younger scouts into being best persons they could be. I would make the lessons for each week alongside always being there to listen to them when something was bothering them. Since 1st grade, I also have been helping with the Missouri Council of the Blind at their conventions while also helping and being a member of the Allied Workers of the Blind. During conventions, I help those with low to no vision navigate and transverse the hotel and convention area, alongside helping them with things like ordering at a restaurant.



I originally wanted to become a biomedical engineer. I learned of this job in 6th grade during a job fair we had. I fell in love with the idea of helping people, especially helping with one of my favorite things, technology. In my sophomore year, I took a class called Applied Biomedical Science, there we did several experiments with bacteria including things like gram staining. In that class I fell in love with the idea of using bacteria to diagnose an illness. I was the youngest person in that class since all my peers were juniors or seniors. That year I impressed my teacher since I was able to separate and identify 2 different bacteria without any errors since other students did their projects with teacher's permission. Ever since that class, I have fallen in love with the idea of helping people through bacteria and this is why I now want to become a medical Lab technician in a hospital so I can do just that.

Since September, I have lived with my two roommates. We have an apartment which we split all the bills. Each month the bills are around \$600 for each of us. Since I am a full-time student I only make around \$600 a month. This means that I have no money saved back for college. Times have been ever-changing but I have stood against the waves and have kept pushing on. I am not in contact with my parents which means that I have to find a way to pay my bills and pay for college. No matter what happens I plan to getting through and pushing towards my dreams.



Public Policy – May 16, 2024 = Kelley Reetzke, Chair

Election Results

On May 15, 2024, the results of the election were revealed. The initiative to open AAUW's membership did not pass. The vote was very close. [View the election results here.](#)

Public Policy Wins!

The White House announced and celebrated [President Biden's executive order](#) to strengthen the recognition of women's history in sites across America, honoring the legacy and contributions of women and girls to the country. [Watch the celebration here.](#)

The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) [recently issued new guidance on workplace harassment](#). It provides clear standards to prevent and address harassment targeting any protected characteristic. By implementing policies, training, and reporting procedures, employers can uphold the right of all workers to a safe, respectful environment free from unlawful harassment.

On April 19, the U.S. Department of Education issued comprehensive protections against discrimination in school through their final Title IX rules. The new regulations clarify that student survivors of sexual harassment, pregnant and parenting students, and LGBTQ+ students have equal educational opportunities free from sex discrimination. The new rules take effect on August 1, 2024. [Read our press statement here.](#)

November Election

With election season upon us, the fight for women's rights is at a critical juncture.

It is imperative to get women to the polls!

AAUW works tirelessly to ensure women voters have the information they need to cast their ballots, producing voter education materials and issue guides, hosting webinars, and making clear the issues that most affect women and girls.

When more women lead, policies prioritizing issues like paid family leave, reproductive rights, and college affordability rise to the forefront.

Student Debt Crisis

On April 16, the U.S. Department of Education released a draft proposal to address the student debt crisis. The plans follow a series of sessions as part of a negotiated rulemaking process and focus on the ED's authority under the Higher Education Act. The rules are currently in an open public comment period through May 17th. We need to make sure that the final rules are broad, comprehensive, and inclusive to ensure all borrowers receive relief.

[Sign the petition now](#) to improve college affordability and relieve the disproportionate student debt burden on women!

Have a great summer!

AAUW Independence Branch April 23, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Pat Bounds, Patt Braley, Jane Campbell, Patty Chadwick, Jolene Cerveny, Lisa Cox, Lois Domsch, Joyce Gillespie, Karen Johnson, Kathy Kelley, Jan Keeler, Karol Palmer, Sue Raymond, Kelley Reetzke, Gail Metcalf Schartel, Sue Shineman, Judy Tyson, Kathy Vest

Guests: Molli Jones, her parents and a friend

Karol Palmer recognized Kathy Vest, to introduce the recipient of the Branch's scholarship recipient. Kathy introduced Molli Jones, a senior at William Chrisman High School who was selected for the scholarship. Kathy shared that Molli was a Girl Scout in addition to being an excellent student. She asked Molli to introduce her family and talk about her aspirations and achievements. Molli introduced her parents, Betty and Tom Jones and a good friend. She said that her original aspiration was to study biomedical engineering, creating devices to assist those with physical limitations. She said that she had taken medical-relates classes at Chrisman since her freshman year in addition to participating in debate, marching band, Scholar Bowl, wrestling and being a Girl Scout Ambassador. She has worked with the Missouri Council for the Blind since elementary school, in large measure because her father is blind. She has taken classes for dual credit and will spend the summer between high school and college studying to become a phlebotomist. In the fall she plans to study at UMKC to earn a Bachelor of Science in Biology Clinical Laboratory Sciences.

Kathy presented Molli with a certificate of recognition and Karol presented a number of gifts to Molli. Molli affirmed she would be present on May 8 at 6 p.m. when William Chrisman held the senior awards assembly.

After a short break, Karol began a sharing session on memories of Barbara Leabo who died earlier in the month. Karol read some of the accolades shared on Facebook about Barbara. Others shared their memories of Barbara's impact on the community and on AAUW. Karol said windchimes had been ordered inscribed with 'In loving memory. A life that touches others lives on forever.' Barbara's husband and children have been invited to attend the May 11th luncheon where the gift will be presented to them. Per the family's wishes donations for an AAUW scholarship in her honor have been received.

Jolene reported that her scholarship description and application shared with Blue River Community College was rejected by the college. ScholarWise will not allow gender-specific scholarships to be on their site.

Karol then called the business meeting to order.

FINANCIAL: Patt Braley reported that \$400.24 had been received at Pizza Ranch and another \$130 would be coming from the restaurant. Joyce Gillespie said that summer dates for another Pizza Ranch fundraiser would be July 22 or July 29. A show of hands indicated that either date would be acceptable. Patt later reminded members that annual dues of \$98 were due by July 1st. She said that the national on-line site could be used or members could give her checks.

AAUW Independence Branch April 23, 2024 Meeting Minutes (Continued)

PROGRAMS: Sue Raymond reminded everyone of the May 11 luncheon at the Bingham Waggoner Carriage House from 1 -3 p.m. The luncheon cost is \$22 and the meal will be catered by Hy-Vee. Sue said that program ideas were needed for the coming year.

AAUW FUND RAFFLE: Lois Domsch said that raffle tickets were available for a 3' x 3' quilted wall hanging in memory of Grace Butler. Funds raised will go to the AAUW fund.

HOSPITALITY: Karol thanked Lois Domsch, Gail Metcalf Schartel and Kathy Vest for providing refreshments.

AAUW ELECTION: Sue Shineman reminded members to cast their votes on the AAUW Board and the membership requirement issue before 11 a.m. CST May 15th.

STATE MEETING: Karol announced that Patt Braley, Gail Metcalf-Schartel, Sue Shineman and herself would attend the MO AAUW State Conference in Columbia on May 4th. Early registration ends April 25th. Sue Shineman said that committee members were needed for state committees. She noted that all many branches in Missouri as well as other states were having difficulty in filling board and committee positions. This is a concern being addressed by succession planning from the state level.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Newsletter items are due to Lisa Cox by May 19th.
- Gail Metcalf Schartel reported that she had been able to sell more of the books and gave Patt Braley a check for \$53. She reported she still had more to list.
- The Board will meet on June 25th at 6 p.m. in the church.

A question about national scholarships was posed. It was explained that the endowment for AAUW scholarships is permanent. The interest from the endowment, approximately \$7 million annually, is awarded in scholarships.

Patt Braley reported that the Branch investment account was stable. She said that a CD will come due and be renewed. She said that in the next budget, separate line items for Pizza Ranch and Barbara Leabo will be created. The funds from Pizza Ranch are for scholarships and other projects, including STEM projects.

Karen Johnson announced that Karol Palmer won the door prize.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Metcalf Schartel

AAUW Independence Branch May 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Patt Braley, Jane Campbell, Patty Chadwick, Lisa Cox, Lois Domsch, Joyce Gillespie, Kathy Kelley, Jan Keeler, Karol Palmer, Sue Raymond, Kelley Reetzke, Gail Metcalf Schartel, Kathy Vest

Guests: The family of Barbara Leabo

After enjoying lunch at the Bingham Waggoner Carriage House, Karol Palmer greeted all and began by paying tribute to Barbara Leabo, A branch member who touched the lives of many people. She related comments from members of the branch and the family about the many ways Barbara lived a full life. She presented a set of windchimes to the family which were engraved with Barbara's name and part of a poem. The family accepted the gift and thanked all for including them in the day's luncheon.

Once the Leabo family departed, Karol started the official business meeting of the branch. She called upon Lois Domsch to report on Century Club news. Lois related that the Independence Branch had given \$1,773 in contributions, exceeding the required contribution of \$30 per member. She noted that members had also given \$1,030 to the Branch fund. She recognized the following members:

Missouri Century Club: Melissa Morawitz and Jan Keeler

Branch Century Club: Christina Nagel, Karol Palmer, Patt Braley, Patty Chadwick Jane Campbell, Lois Domsch, Sue Shineman, and Barbara Leabo

Missouri and Branch Century Club: Judy Tucker, Sue Raymond, Gail Metcalf Schartel

Missouri Century Club Plus: Sue Shineman, Jane Campbell and Lois Domsch

She explained that \$1,773 went to National and State but the \$1,030 stayed with the Independence Branch. The Branch had 65% of members give which exceeds the percentage required for the Financial Five Star rating.

Karol explained that she, Sue Shineman, Gail, and Patt Braley had attended the AAUWMO Conference in Columbia on May 4th. She called upon Gail and Patt to discuss programs held during that Conference.

Gail shared information by Carol Gilles about the Right To Read: Supporting Missouri Libraries. She noted that the number of books called upon to be banned in Missouri rose from 40 in 2022 to 1,264 in 2023, placing Missouri in the top three states calling for books to be banned, joining Texas and Florida. She listed percentage of content objected to and a proposed law that would have fined anyone up to a \$2,000 fine or one year in jail for providing such a book. The law has not been enacted but the election of library board members who favor books bans has increased. She suggested that everyone to take action by joining the Right to Read Coalition (no cost, but membership shows the numbers opposing such bans), staying informed, speaking up, being an ally to teachers and voting!

AAUW Independence Branch May 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes (Continued)

Patt shared information on Deb McArthur's presentation on college and university activities. All branches should continue to reach out to area colleges and universities to become known on campus. Finding someone at each campus to become a liaison. Having activities on campus to include students, possibly having meetings on campus and generally working to introduce students to AAUW. Patt recounted her own experience as a student, being reached out to by AAUW and being recognized throughout her high school career and being sponsored by the AAUW Kansas City Branch. Eventually she remembered AAUW and became involved, thus showing that this early contact could yield future involvement. Gail noted that it would be a good idea to maintain email addresses for those students who signed up at Blue River Community College to receive mailings of the newsletter and other events to encourage their participation.

Karol spoke on Alice Kitchen's presentation on AAUW's participation in gaining signatures for the Citizen's Ballot. She also reviewed Denise Lieberman's presentation on voting rights and the proposed changes currently being discussed in the Missouri Senate, SJR74, would gut the petition process to put items on the ballot. Karol also noted that Sue Shineman was sworn in as President and Lois Domsch was sworn in as Finance Officer for Missouri AAUW. Lois was also noted as an Outstanding Member of AAUW. The Independence Branch

received 10 Stars on the Missouri Star Award.

Announcements included:

- Pizza Ranch Fundraiser will be on July 22 from 5-8 p.m.
- Board meeting will be held on June 25 at 6 p.m. at the church
- Dues must be received by June 30th and giving checks to Patt Braley is recommended since the on-line system has glitches.
- \$2,500 had been received for the Barbara Leabo Scholarship fund. *[After receiving more checks from Gary Leabo on Saturday, the total that has been banked to date is \$2,985.00.]* Sue Raymond suggested we learn of a specific interest of Barbara before proceeding with the scholarship.
- Newsletter items are due to Lisa by May 19th.
- Voting on the issue of changing education requirements for AAUW must be completed by 11 .m. on May 15th.

Karol then presented each member present with a carnation in recognition of their contributions to the chapter.

She called Kathy Kelley and Patt Braley forward to be installed as corresponding secretary and finance officer for 2024-2026. In addition, she noted that Karen Johnson would be Vice President/Membership.

The meeting officially ended at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Metcalf Schartel