



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

December 2024

It seems like the world starts celebrating Christmas right after Halloween--too early for me! Shopping! Wrapping! Baking! Decorating! Writing cards! Attending special events! It all becomes too much, doesn't it? The time of quiet waiting and preparing our hearts becomes all too complicated and frantic.



My favorite time of the season has always been the twelve days of Christmas from December 25 through January 6 (Epiphany). For me it is a time that finds the pace a little slower. It is a good time to ponder the real meaning of the season, reflect on the past year, and plan for the coming year.

As we plan for our future as an organization we face real challenges. Some challenges are internal challenges such as declining membership. This is a challenge we do not face alone. It is an issue across the state and across the country. On the national level the challenges are the attacks on the rights of women and girls, attacks on the rights of the LGBTQ community, and the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Our advocacy and action as members of AAUW are needed now more than ever! We will need resolve, commitment, creativity, and courage in meeting the challenges before us. Please take time during the twelve days of Christmas to reflect and plan both on a personal level and as a member of AAUW. Then join me in the new year ready to work for and to do our part (no matter how big or small) for equity for all!

Wishing you Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love
Merry Christmas

Karol

Upcoming Events:

December Events

Volunteer Event at Mother's Refuge

December 17, 2024

3-7 pm

3721 S Delridge Road

(White House on the corner)

From 40 HWY, north on Hardy to Delridge.

January Meetings

AAUW Book Club

January 14, 2025

"The Tide Between Us" by Olive Collins

Led by Jolene Cerveney

Board Meeting

January 14, 2025

6:00 PM

First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall

Branch Meeting

January 28, 2025

6:30 PM Gather

7:00 PM Program

A representative from the Independence School District will speak on the ISD Academy programs, focusing on STEM

AAUW Independence Scholarships 2025 ~ Karol Palmer

Sue Shineman, Gail Metcalf Schartel, Karol Palmer, and Carol Brown met on December 6 to discuss our scholarship program. Patt Braley, Lois Domsch, Kathy Vest, and Joyce Gillespie were unable to attend but were included by email. Recommendations/motions will be presented at our January meeting.

Updates About Finances and our Upcoming Fundraiser

Financial Report ~ Patt Braley, Financial Officer ~ Since we had only 1 or 2 transactions in November, I am planning to wait until next month for a combined financial report.

Happy Holidays!

Pizza Ranch ~ Joyce Gillespie, Fundraising Chair ~ no date yet for the March Pizza Ranch event.....hopefully will let you know early February.....

Congratulations, Branch!

We did it again!!! The branch has met all AAUW-MO Action Plan expectations for the FUND. We've surpassed our donation goal and we're over 50% participation of our members. Way to go! Our efforts will help national continue its work towards equity for women and girls.



Public Policy ~ Kelley Reetzke

Greetings!

This video was part of the December Public Policy meeting. It is about the upcoming legislative session; good and bad. The item is long, sometimes scary, but interesting.

[Framing the Future. 2024 Fall Conference. 2025 Voting Rights Legislative Priorities.](#)

Or copy and paste the URL directly into your browser.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nMwBRendB1KL9z4OiNYWYWQzBdKdNHac/view?usp=sharing>

After listening to this piece, I updated the search parameters on [FastDemocracy.com](#). Fast Democracy makes it easy to track legislation in Congress and all 50 states, so you don't miss legislative bill actions that are important to you. It's easy to use. Next time you have a few minutes, check it out.

AAUW's response to the national election results was swift and powerful.

November 6, 2024

WASHINGTON – Today, the AAUW (American Association of University Women) responded to Donald J. Trump's reelection as 47th president of the United States.

“The election results are extremely sobering, especially on the heels of a hyperpartisan, gridlocked Congress,” said Gloria L. Blackwell, CEO, AAUW. “AAUW is committed to holding all elected officials accountable about women's rights, bodily autonomy, and access to education and economic opportunity, particularly for women of color.”

[Read the full statement](#)

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Public Policy (Continued) ~ Kelley Reetzke



The League of Women Voters and AAUW Two-Minute Activist are encouraging the following actions.

Urge President Biden to instruct the US Archivist to certify and publish the ERA in the Constitution!

Follow this link: <https://www.lwv.org/take-action/president-must-immediately-publish-equal-rights-amendment> and scroll to the bottom to find the prepared letter to be sent to President Biden.

Tell the White House and Congress: Affirm the Equal Rights Amendment!

The demand for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is long overdue and more urgent than ever. Without the ERA in the U.S. Constitution, advances in women's rights that we took for granted are at risk of being weakened or even reversed.

[Take action now for the ERA:](#) Scroll down the page to see what you can do with the click of the mouse.

Be safe and if personal joy is difficult, borrow someone else's. (It's a thing).

CALL TO ACTION--Publish the Equal Rights Amendment Karol Palmer

On December 3, I attended the digital town hall, "Publish the ERA." It was presented by human rights activists and lawyers and a physician. It also featured Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator from New York.

"Publish the ERA" is a push to have President Biden notify the U.S. Archivist to certify and publish the ERA before he leaves office in January. As many of you probably already know, the two requirements in Article V of the Constitution for ratification of the ERA have been satisfied!

- It must pass each congressional chamber by two-thirds. DONE in 1972!
- It must be approved by three-fourths of the states (38). DONE in 2020 when Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA.

Procedural barriers have plagued the publication of the ERA for years and will continue to do so in the future even when the ERA is published. However, that is NO excuse not to press for its publication NOW! Do you think its chances will be better under the next Trump administration?

(Continued on the next page..)

CALL TO ACTION--Publish the Equal Rights Amendment (Continued...)

Please go to the website listed below and share it with friends and family members. It is full of information about the ERA. It has a TAKE ACTION section from which you can easily sign a petition, call, send a letter, text, and/or post on social media. You can also watch the video of the [Digital Town Hall: Biden Publish the ERA](#) which I would highly recommend. This is the moment! Go to:

bidenpublishtheera.org

AAUW Independence Branch November 19, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Jane Campbell, Patty Chadwick, Lisa Cox, Joyce Gillespie, Karen Johnson, Kathy Kelley, Jan Keeler, Karol Palmer, Sue Raymond, Kelley Reetzke, Gail Metcalf Schartel, Judy Tyson,

Guests Present: Emily Valverde, Jarvis Sackman

At 7:00 p.m. Karol Palmer called the group together. Sue Raymond introduced the evening's speakers Emily Valverde and Jarvis Sackman from the Hillcrest Transitional Housing Program.

Emily Valverde explained that the Hillcrest Transitional Housing Program (HTHP) covers the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan area and extends into Kansas and to the Iowa border and has been in existence for nearly 50 years. Facts she shared included:

- HTHP serves the homeless but is not an emergency set-up.
- There are multiple HTHP campuses servicing adults in apartment units for 90 days.
- Those chosen for the program must not have drug or alcohol addictions and must be employed 35 hours or more per week.
- Individuals meet with budget counselors who focus on creating a budget based on needs rather than wants.
- During the 90 day period they are provided an apartment with free rent and utilities.
- Individuals meet with case managers weekly to help them build life skills on building credit, how to read a lease, how to navigate family issues, etc.
- Sundays are community nights where all meet to discuss care of property and have the opportunity to meet, share a meal and discuss issues common to all.
- At the end of the 90 days, individuals graduate with savings that help them find a home on their own.
- The program has an 83% success rate and there is a waiting list of 200 people each month.
- HTHP also has a youth program set in a more dorm-like setting for 16-24 year olds. The participants also have housing provided and are put on a budget. They work 10-15 hours a week and may also be in school. The youth program prioritizes education and community is emphasized. Youths are taught life skills on how to navigate job interviews, apply for scholarships and educational programs. This program can extend beyond 90 days.

AAUW Independence Branch November 19, 2024 Meeting Minutes (Continued...)

It was explained that other services, including dental and medical referrals are made as needed for participants in the program.

Jarvis Sackman and Emily provided anecdotes about success stories and the outreach of the programs. It was noted that the great source of support comes from two Hillcrest thrift stores, one in Overland Park and one in Lee's Summit. The stores provide 50% of the operating budget, with \$0.83 of each dollar going directly into programs.

Members of AAUW were told there were multiple ways to support the organization's programs. Sponsoring an apartment is one method. Each apartment costs approximately \$5,000 per year to operate. Most of the apartments are sponsored by area churches and other philanthropic organizations. Individuals who sponsor apartments are encouraged to provide groceries, clothing and other items to the residents. They also are called upon to clean and prepare the apartment for the next resident at the end of 90 days. Volunteering in the thrift stores is an option as is sponsoring food drives, cleaning apartments, providing meals for the Tuesday night life skills meetings, sending cards of support, and volunteering office skills for the organization.

The group thanked the speakers and helped load food collected by members into their vehicles.

Karol Palmer called the business meeting to order at 7:50. She explained that Patt Braley was unable to attend but encouraged anyone who had contributions to AAUW get them to Patt directly.

Sue Raymond then discussed the branch's role at the Mother's Refuge Christmas Party on December 17th. She explained that members were needed from 3-7 p.m that evening where approximately 150 people would gather to receive gifts from those who had adopted a family. Branch members were asked to provide bottled water, lemonade, hot chocolate and cookies during the party. There was discussion of helping children decorate cookies but it was pointed out that such an endeavor would require too much of those who volunteered. Sue indicated she would find out more information and share it via email.

There was a brief discussion of the candy bar fund raiser held in the past with a suggestion it be delayed until January.

Jane Campbell thanks Sue Raymond, Joyce Gillespie, Patty Chadwick, and Kelly Reetzke for the evening's refreshments. Karol Palmer and Gail Metcalf Schartel volunteered to provide refreshments for the January 28th meeting.

Lisa Cox asked that items for the December newsletter be given to her by December 7th.

Jan Keeler won the door prize from Karen Johnson.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Metcalf Schartel