



American Association of University Women
Lake/Sumter Branch, Inc.
Learn – Connect – Support

September 2025

President's Message



Oh my goodness what a summer it has been! Sarah Reagan has chosen not to serve as president this year. Because of our current bylaws we could not elect another co-president. But, as luck would have it, past president Gay Birchard has graciously offered to be my

assistant. And so the year begins!

Welcome back everybody! We are excited about moving forward into our new AAUW year. Many new and exciting plans have begun. Kathy Howe and Laura McLaughlin have some wonderful programs planned for us. But our most exciting plans are our Dine to Donate events. This will be our major new fundraising project. Watch for more information on that from Leslie Flanders and Ann Marie Lombardi.

Last year we sent 13 upcoming eighth grade girls to Tech Trek, more than any other Florida branch. In fact the state AAUW has arranged for a zoom meeting to learn about how we did it! Hopefully this will continue to be our legacy!

We need all of our members to attend meetings regularly, read the newsletters, help with fundraising and participate in all of our social activities. We are looking forward to a very fun filled and successful year.

Betty Rohan, President & Gay Birchard, Assistant to the President

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501(c)(3) and You

Because of our wonderfully generous donors we had a successful 2024-25 year supporting Tech Trek and our scholarships. You all made that possible and we are grateful

We are starting a new year and the time to donate is now! No gift is too small, if we all give what we can our drive will be a success! Please consider AAUW when you set up your required distributions from your Contact us for more information.



IRA.

Beth Hicks

Getting To Know our New 2025-2026 Board of Directors



L-R Mary Anderson and Bobbie Peters, Membership; Sarah Reagan; Betty Rohan, President; Laura McLaughlin and Kathy Howe, Programs; Sandy Plano and Dee Sherman, Secretaries. Not pictured: Sue Laluk and Elizabeth White, Presidents-Elect.

LEARN

Meetings and Programs

NOTE!! Our Program Co-chairs have been working diligently to provide a varied and interesting agenda for the 2025-26 year. There are some **significant changes to location of meetings**, so please mark your calendars as follows.

Laura McLaughlin and Kathy Howe, Program Co-chairs

September General Meeting

Saturday September 27, 2025

MOYER RECREATION CENTER

note the change in location

Doors open at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and conversation

Program begins at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: John Lusard from Seniors vs Crime

Our speaker will explore how artificial intelligence is impacting citizens, especially seniors. The presentation will highlight how AI is used to create convincing voices, images, and messages that make scams believable. He will touch on practical tips for prevention and awareness.



October General Meeting

Saturday, October 25, 2025

NOTE!! THE PALACE IN LEESBURG!!

414 WEST MAIN ST.

LEESBURG, FL 34748

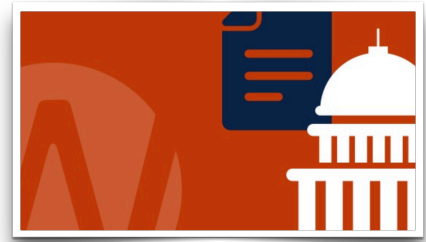
Doors open at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and conversation. Program starts at 10:00 a.m.



Our members will have the opportunity to interact with students from Beacon College. Beacon is an accredited award-winning liberal arts institution of higher education, which uniquely serves the educational needs of *neurodivergent* students.

Public Policy: Principles and Priorities

AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. As AAUW members nationwide we are asked to focus advocacy efforts on principles established by AAUW national. Last May focuses and priorities for 2025–2027 were delineated. They intentionally are described as bold and grounded.



The first paragraph reads:

AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination on the basis of age, disability, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, religious beliefs, pregnancy or parental status, or socioeconomic status, and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals.

Monthly zoom meetings are held with national AAUW that provide updated information and suggestions relevant to our principles. This section of the newsletter shares with members what's going on and maybe what we can do to further what we stand for.

I'm Lisa French and I agreed to attend the meetings and pass along the essence of messages received. We are all bombarded with information and it is difficult to winnow and decipher it all. I will try to pair the principles with content of the meetings and local concerns. This is new territory for me so we will see how it goes.

Lisa French, Public Policy Chair

Embracing Community (formerly known as DEI)

While our purpose is unchanged, we have renamed our committee:
DEI is now known as Embracing Community.



This change preserves our intent to provide stimulating learning opportunities for our members around diversity, equity, and inclusion while also using somewhat more neutral terms to describe our focus. The new name also reflects the trajectory of our work over the last five years, from direct learning about racism and its impacts to learning how to address our differences in positive and productive ways.

This year's programming will feature three avenues for members to pursue learning around Embracing Community.

➤ **Opportunities Clearinghouse**

This program, new this year, will provide listings of upcoming online and in-person learning events that members can pursue independently. Opportunities will be published in the newsletter each month.

This month, we introduce **Braver Angels** (<https://braverangels.org/>), an organization whose mission is “bringing Americans together to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic mission.” While Braver Angels’ focus is largely on political differences, the skills the group teaches apply much more broadly.

Their programming includes numerous formats. Their **short, free eCourses** “provide an effective and ‘safe’ way to interact with people in difficult situations.” Offered online, each course takes about 40 minutes to work through.

eCourse: Depolarizing Within (<https://braverangels.org/register-for-an-ecourse/?ecourse=DW>)

This course helps you become more aware of your own inner polarizer, learn to be critical without stereotyping or showing contempt, and build skills to respond constructively when conversations turn toward ridicule or dismissiveness.

Braver Angels also offers **free podcasts**. Public Health On Call, Episode 906 addresses **Here to Understand: How Braver Angels is Orchestrating Tough Public Health Conversations** is described this way:

In 2016, the nonprofit Braver Angels was founded to bring together diverse groups of people to try and figure out why productive communication has become so difficult. During the pandemic, the conversations got even harder. In this episode: Braver Angels is bringing together questioners and supporters of public health to hear each other out with a goal of humanizing, understanding, and remembering that “everyone is worth listening to.”

Listen to this episode here: <https://tinyurl.com/5edmy7v3>

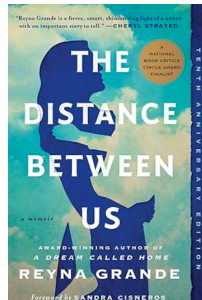
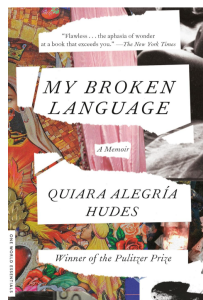
➤ **Great Reads**

In each month's newsletter, we will continue recommending books that relate to our purpose. But this year, we will focus on “heritage months” to provide members opportunities to learn about an array of marginalized groups. Great Reads will kick off our program year with a recommendation related to Hispanic Heritage Month.

GREAT READS

from the Embracing Community Committee

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH (September 15 - October 15) honors the achievements, history, and culture of Hispanic communities. Diverse cuisines of Latin America include such dishes as Mexican tamales, Puerto Rican mofongo, and Peruvian ceviche. Traditional Latin American music and dance include mariachi, salsa, and tango. Prominent Hispanic music artists and authors include Shakira, Celia Cruz, Isabel Allende, Junot Díaz, and Sandra Cisneros. Here are some suggested readings:



My Broken Language: A Memoir by Quiara Alegría Hudes– (Jan., 2022)

The Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright (co-writer of *In the Heights*) reflects on her upbringing in a sprawling Puerto Rican family in an ailing Philadelphia barrio. Weaving together Hudes’s love of music with the songs of her family and the lessons of North Philly with those of Yale, this is a dive into home, memory, and belonging—narrated by an obsessed girl who fought to become an artist so she could capture the world she loved in all its wild and delicate beauty.

The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande--(March, 2013)

In this inspirational and unflinchingly honest memoir, Grande describes her childhood torn between the United States and Mexico, being left behind by parents who immigrated. As her parents make the dangerous trek across the border to “El Otro Lado” (The Other Side) in pursuit of the American dream, Reyna and her siblings are forced into the already overburdened household of their stern grandmother. When their mother at last returns, Reyna prepares for her own journey to live with the man who has haunted her imagination for years, her long-absent father.

My Name Is Emilia del Valle by Isabel Allende--(May, 2025)

A return to Allende’s sweeping historical fiction, this novel is a riveting tale of self-discovery and love. In San Francisco in 1866, an Irish nun, abandoned following a torrid relationship with a Chilean aristocrat, gives birth to a daughter named Emilia del Valle. Raised by a loving stepfather, Emilia grows into an independent thinker and a self-sufficient young woman. To pursue her passion for writing, she begins to publish pulp fiction and then turns to journalism, seizing on an opportunity to cover a brewing civil war in Chile. While there, she meets her estranged father and questions her identity and her destiny.

➤ Book Discussion

We will also continue our book discussion program with a gathering in February. We have not selected the book, location, or date yet, so stay tuned for more information.

Jacquie Latzer & Linda Carpenter
Embracing Community Co-Chairs

Book Club: An Invitation to All Readers

YOU are invited to join the AAUW Book Group and to suggest a book(s) for group discussion.

BOOK submissions:

Please submit your recommendation(s) of a book(s) **that you have read and feel would stimulate discussion** to **Katie Haviland** (katiehaviland1@gmail.com) **by September 5th.**

Include: Title, Author, a brief write up

We will compile the recommendations for members to review.

Book selections: Judy Reinhardt is hosting a potluck lunch for anyone interested in joining the group discussions and selecting the readings. If you cannot attend the potluck, please consider recommending a book and joining the monthly discussions.

Potluck DATE to review recommendations: Saturday, September 13th at 11:00a

Please contact Judy if you plan to attend and what you will bring to share.

942 Misty Court, The Villages, FL 32162

(630) 272-0628

jlrcrna@gmail.com

IF you cannot attend the potluck and would like to be on the meeting and/or reading email list please respond to:

Katie Haviland (katiehaviland1@gmail.com)

Our first Discussion Date: Wednesday, October 15 at 10:30a

Location: Sheriff's annex corner of 466 and Morse Blvd

Book: A Street Cat Named Bob (and How He Saved My Life) by James Bowen

James is a street musician struggling to make ends meet. Bob is a stray cat looking for somewhere warm to sleep. When James and Bob meet, they forge a never-to-be-forgotten friendship. *A Street Cat Named Bob* is an international sensation, landing on the bestseller list in England and the NY Times

October discussion leader: Carolyn Pasquale.

by Katie Haviland for Kate Manion, AAUW Book Discussion Group Facilitator

Day Trips

Our Travel Committee plans two trips every year



Our fall trip was announced this past June and July with notice that reservation spaces were going fast. Our outing is on Workman Transportation bus and is now SOLD OUT for the October 13 All About Elephants guided tour of the Two Tails Ranch. We will see elephants, zebras, tortoises, an ostrich, emu, and camel. We will be able to touch some of the animals and see a demonstration with an elephant. Participants will visit Ocala for lunch on our own. We leave together at Lake Sumter Landing and should return around 4:30 PM. Angela Vickers will send out reminder information to those with reservations closer to the October departure.

The Travel Committee is always looking for suggestions of nearby places of interest for our fall and spring outings. Sometimes we carpool and sometimes we use a transportation company. Carpooling allows for easier visiting and is less expensive as each passenger chips in a \$5 contribution to the driver. Why not join our committee or offer your trip suggestions for another good outing?

Angela Vickers
Carolyn Pasquale
Terri Slotterback
Kate Manion

CONNECT

Membership

Over 100 members!

Now, the challenge is to keep it there and above. There are 17 of our 101 members whose dues are in “grace” meaning they are about 3 months late. Please help us out by paying Barbara Fieldman by check \$105 and mail it to her at 810 Maybank Loop, The Villages, 32162.



Mary Anderson and Bobbie Peters, Membership Co-chairs

Webmaster and Website

We are so fortunate to have member Vicki Bealman as our new webmaster. She is in the process of making some website changes that we think you will find very pleasing and informative. Vicki comes to us with a real understanding of technology and how it can help us with our daily lives.



ChatGPT: A Helpful Tool for Lifelong Learning and Everyday Life

Artificial intelligence is making headlines everywhere, and one of the most widely used tools is ChatGPT, an online program that can answer questions, explain concepts, and even help draft letters or recipes. While some may think it's only for students or tech professionals, we are discovering creative ways to use ChatGPT to make life easier, more engaging, and more fun.

For example, ChatGPT can:

- Answer everyday questions: Need a quick explanation of a medical term, a refresher on history, or tips for fixing a computer issue? ChatGPT provides clear, accessible answers.
- Support hobbies and interests: From genealogy research to gardening advice, ChatGPT can spark new ideas or provide background information.
- Encourage lifelong learning: If you love to learn, use ChatGPT to explore new topics, practice foreign languages, or dive into book recommendations.
- Assist with daily tasks: It can help draft emails, create shopping lists, or even suggest healthy meal plans.

Like any tool, it's best used with care: fact-checking is important since AI can occasionally make mistakes. Still, with curiosity and a little practice, ChatGPT can be a valuable companion for lifelong learners of all ages.

For AAUW members, who have always championed education and access to knowledge, ChatGPT offers a modern way to stay informed, engaged, and connected.

Dr. Vicki Bealman, Lake Sumter branch Webmaster

Social Interest Groups

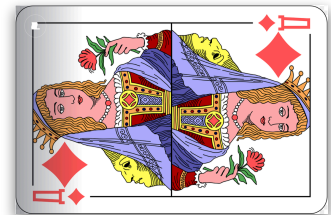
“Nine and Dine” Golf



If you are interested in playing fun and friendly executive golf with a new **AAUW Friday morning golf group**. You should probably have played a little golf already sometime in your life. Please text or call Leslie at 859-321-7171 to be included on the Nine and Dine Golf Contact List. We will begin sometime in October. Oh, and it's all about the “Dine”!

Friendly Bridge

At this point in time, we are inviting one of our members to volunteer to lead the bridge group.



Mahjong



Please contact Barbara Fieldman (Bfieldman@gmail.com, 321-663-1858) if you are interested in playing AAUW Mahjong

AND

If you have an idea for a social interest group you would like to submit, please contact Betty Rohan, our president. We are always happy to add more social opportunities for our members.

SUPPORT

Tech Trek



Our Lake Sumter branch enabled 13 girls to attend the week-long 2025 Tech Trek Summer Camps which were held at Stetson University in Deland and Florida Atlantic University in Jupiter. It was unanimous among the attendees that the camp was an amazing experience and each of the girls thanked Lake Sumter AAUW for the opportunity to attend.

Once again, the Professional Women's Night was a favorite among the girls but other highlights of the camps were the Forensic Science and Marine Biology courses. The girls had the opportunity to participate in hands-on experiences such as dissecting a sheep's eye and building clay coral reefs and Rube Goldberg machines. One of the girls was excited about the engineering class and said "We built a bridge and it held 14 lbs. when it only had to hold 3 lbs." In addition to participating in courses and STEM activities, the girls also had opportunities to make friends and engage in some extracurricular activities. Some photos of the girls our branch sponsored are shown below.



Scholarships

Thanks to your fundraising and the generosity of so many, we have been able to award scholarships to 8 new students this year. Additionally, we continue to support our 4 winners from last year. All monies have been distributed to the colleges and universities and all of the students are enrolled for the fall semester.

“Scholarship Awardee Spotlight”



This month we would like to introduce you to one of the awardees. Evelyn Oyanedel is finishing her last semester and will be graduating with her nursing degree in December. Evelyn is from Chile and is the youngest of 6 children. She went to Timpview High School in Utah and graduated from there in 2009. She is now enrolled in Lake Sumter State College. She is the first one in her family to attend college. She has always had a passion for the medical field and taking care of people.

She commutes two hours each way to attend classes and is deeply passionate about cardiology. She made the decision to leave her job as a Medical Assistant in order to focus on her studies full time and looks forward to beginning her career as a nurse after graduation. She is very grateful for the scholarship from the Lake Sumter AAUW branch.

Susan Gold and Gretchen Lewis
Scholarship Co-chairs

Fundraising: “Dine to Donate or D2D”

Invite 3 or more of your non-AAUW friends to lunch or dinner at Arnold Palmer on Tuesday, October 14th! Then write AAUW on each of your bills when they are presented to you by the server. It's that easy to help us raise funds this year for our branch in support of Tech Trek and Scholarships. AND, there will be 4 more dates throughout this membership year at different country clubs **all owned by the Suleiman Family** who are graciously contributing 20% of your food bill to our branch.

(Coupons, ad promotions, etc. cannot be used with the 20% bill donation.)

On your way out of the restaurant look for the red lock box on the hostess station. If you drop \$5 in the box, the hostess will present you with a \$10 food voucher for your next visit.

Leslie Flanders, Fundraising Chair



American Association of University Women
Lake/Sumter Branch, Inc.
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Thanks for reading this newsletter! And, thanks to all of the contributors! I so appreciate them getting their articles to me **by the 20th of each month.**

Leslie Flanders, Newsletter Editor

AAUW Websites

Local: LakeSumterAAUW.org
State: aauw-fl.aauw.net
National: aauw.org