

# LAKE/SUMTER NEWSLETTER

November 2021



*Lake/Sumter branch of AAUW is committed to a diverse community that stimulates a culture of learning and understanding and enhances a member's experience. We aspire to create an inclusive and equitable branch that represents, supports, and celebrates diversity of all kinds.*

## President's Message



Greetings to our Lake Sumter members,

The General meeting held on Saturday, October 16, featured a dynamic program arranged by our Program co-chairs, Ann Marie Lombardi and Diane Jacobson. We are pleased that

so many of you could participate in hearing from four of our College Scholar recipients via Zoom. One young woman joined on her phone from her job at an outdoor market. The wonders of technology gave us a glimpse of one student's life. The appreciation of our financial support, and the goals these young women have set for themselves, are strong, positive reminders of why we strive to raise funds and offer these scholarships.

In addition to the opportunity of looking to the future with these young women, Debi Gerard, gave a stirring presentation of the Sheriffs Camp Program for youth ages 8 – 18. There is good work going on in our community and state. Thank you to YOU, our members, for participating in that effort.

When we look at what our branch of AAUW offers to our members in terms of support, social activities, and intellectual stimulation, as well as outreach into the community, we all have reason to stand proud. Thank you for your continuing involvement.

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For December, an in-person holiday gathering is in the planning stages. Hope you will join us. Diane Jacobson provides details on page 7 of this newsletter.

We all have an opportunity to join in the drawing for the beautiful necklace donated by Gold in Art Jewelers in support of our scholars, using the form in our membership kit. Need a form? Call Kathy Mason or follow the link to our website found in this newsletter.

We want to remember two of our AAUW branch members who passed away this month. Connie Konatsotis, long time chair of Tech Trek, and Barbara Meyer, also a long-time member. As is our custom, a donation in their memories is sent to National AAUW for the Greatest Need Fund.

We look forward to meeting with you all, at in person meetings in 2022. Wishing you and yours, good health.

Busy holidays, including parties with family and friends, are fast approaching. With this in mind, we decided to combine our **December and January newsletters into a single edition**. Please send information for THIS combined edition to Beth at [aauwsnews@gmail.com](mailto:aauwsnews@gmail.com) by DECEMBER 3rd.

Katie & Gay, Co-Presidents

## The Future of our Branch

The last two years have been challenging for organizations of every type, and no less so for our branch. In the face of the pandemic, our leaders kept our branch together to continue doing what we've been doing in our mission-driven work. Now we want to move forward in an active and planful way, so branch leadership has designated 2021-22 a planning year to better prepare us to advance our mission and pursue our vision into the future. So, while continuing to maintain regular functions, our branch will devote this program year to planning for our future.

As is true of many beneficial efforts, these may be difficult, but to quote Einstein, *In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity*.

As members of the Lake / Sumter branch of AAUW, we have real opportunities to direct our future. And because these are planning efforts, they will require only short-term commitments and small involvements but their impact on the future of our branch will be huge.

So, what kind of planning efforts are we talking about? Here are some examples:

- Using AAUW National's Branding Guide, a few volunteers will design the look of our branch. The color palette, logo, and other design features chosen will appear on all publications and documents from our branch, enhancing our presence in the community

- A few volunteers will develop a plan to harness the power of social media to stay connected, lift our branch's on-line presence, and expand our membership base. As a planning group, the time commitment will be intense but short.
- Our branch's current strategic plan was developed during the 2017-18 program year and has not been revisited since. So, it's time. In contrast to other opportunities, we'd like this planning process to be more rather than less inclusive. All interested parties are invited to contribute their ideas to our strategic planning process.

Co-Presidents-elect Anne Sobocinski and Linda Carpenter will be coordinating this effort on behalf of co-Presidents Katie Haviland and Gay Birchard and the rest of our Board of Directors. So, get in touch with them.

## **Members Who Make Our Branch Work**

### **Tech Trek**

Tech Trek is an activity for girls the summer they complete seventh grade. The national, state, and local branches of AAUW support this endeavor which encourages girls to take an interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). A STEM camp is held each summer for one week on a college campus. Due to COVID, the girls participated in a virtual camp this past year.

Each fall the Tech Trek chair contacts middle schools in Lake and Sumter County and asks for their support in nominating girls. Each school can nominate up to five girls. A process occurs whereby the nominated girls complete applications for the state committee. In the spring the local branch's Tech Trek committee is asked to interview the local candidates and rank them for selection by the state. The girls chosen from each branch are then given a fully paid camping experience compliments of the local branch.

The local branch funds these girls through grants, donations, and our general fund. In January the participants are invited to the local branch's general meeting to share their projects and insights into what camp meant to them.

### **Tech Trek Co-Chairs Laura McLaughlin and Liz Schweers**

#### **Laura McLaughlin**



I was born and raised in Charleston, West Virginia, where I attended public schools. Following graduation from Charleston High School I went on to complete a degree from Mary Baldwin College (now University) located in Staunton, Virginia in 1969. The Vietnam war was at its peak at that time, and I was selected by the American Red Cross to join a program titled Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas. All of us young women were commonly known as Donut Dollies. I spent 13 months in country returning home after a life changing year.

It took me several years to find my passion in life. After years of various sales jobs, I discovered real estate, became a realtor, and as an important adjunct a property investor. Much of my effort was spent renovating residential homes in the historic district in Jacksonville, FL, where I lived for 35 years.

I moved to The Villages in 2016 and joined AAUW in 2019. Due to the pandemic, I have not had an opportunity to meet many members. Regardless, I am enthusiastic about co-chairing the Tech Trek Committee as I see that this endeavor potentially can change the direction of young girls' lives here locally.

### **Liz Schweers**

I'm the little old lady from Pasadena, CA, my birthplace. Most of my formative years were spent in Santa Barbara, CA, where I also completed my first two years of college at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Eventually I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business Teacher Education from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. This degree was almost a guarantee that I would be unemployed in my field. That and raising four children as well as moving 26 times (starting in CA, then HI, AK, NM, WA state, IN, IL, Germany, and finally landing in FL).



My typing/shorthand skills allowed me to work my way through most of my college days where I was employed as secretary to three deans. Upon graduation with my bachelor's degree, I went on hiatus for 13 years raising a family. During those years I served as LWV State secretary and was nominated to be State president, BUT WE MOVED.

I did have a few teaching assignments—overseas with DODS as a middle school English teacher and Reading Specialist, working for the German government teaching English to British kids attending German schools, and stateside teaching business subjects to adults in a Florida business college. I was an administrator at two military bases for private colleges offering a graduate degree to military personnel. My last employment was as a contractor for the State of Florida at a high school where I worked with low-income students on a work/study program.

I have resided in The Villages for nine years and been a part of AAUW since 2010 where I have worn the hats of Hospitality, co-President, Membership, and now co-Chair Tech

Trek. Pre-COVID-19 I was an active tutor with Tutors 4 Kids and taught English as a Second Language.

## Fundraising

### Adopt-A-Precinct Poll Worker Initiative



Our branch can raise \$4,400 for Tech Trek Florida by participating in Sumter County's Adopt-A-Precinct Program for the 2022 elections. The Adopt-A-Precinct Program provides the opportunity for clubs to raise funds to support their fundraising goals while supporting the election process.

For the program, we will need 12 to 15 AAUW members to volunteer as poll workers on two important election days:

**August 23, 2022**, and **November 8, 2022**. Watch for information about this program which will be coming your way by email soon.

### Gift Card Initiative

As the holidays approach, you can do your shopping and benefit our branch at the same time by using **ShopWithScrip** for all your **Gift Card** needs!

Shop With Scrip offers a platform to buy gift cards; our branch will automatically get a percentage of every card sold through the program. By participating, our branch will earn a few hundred dollars annually for our General Fund.



Order your gift cards through the Lake/Sumter AAUW ShopWithScrip account to benefit the branch! Contact Diane Jacobson [diandchas@gmail.com](mailto:diandchas@gmail.com) to find out how

## Scholarship Jewelry Drawing



We are off to a good start with donations to the scholarship funding for the students who are selected for the last two years of college when they will earn their baccalaureate degrees. Thirty members have already contributed over \$1,500. If you have not yet contributed, now is the time, before the holidays when we are busy with other activities. The lucky winner will be selected on February 19, 2022, and will receive the multi-color gemstone necklace in 14 karat yellow gold. It includes a pink tourmaline, an emerald, and a diamond bezel on an 18-inch sparkle chain. It has been donated by **Gold in Art Jewelers**.

For each \$10 you donate, a ticket in your name entered on the form below will be entered in the drawing. Forms can be found on our website.

<https://lakesumter-fl.aauw.net/files/2021/09/2021-AAUW-Jewelry-Form-.pdf>

We will email you a Thank You as a receipt for your donation and will call on February 19, 2022, to tell you if you or one of your friends is the lucky winner.

To be entered into the drawing, submit your donations with the form by February 9, 2022.

QUESTIONS?

CALL: (850) 556-7986

## Programs

### General Meeting: Saturday November 20



November 20 we again meet via Zoom. The program begins at 10:00 a.m. and prior to the program and meeting we will have social time for all who sign in beginning at 9:30. Our speaker Dr. Lillian Lopez, Migrant/Homeless Resource Advocate for Lake County Schools has agreed to present her program "Migrant Education Program Title 1, Part C". She will enlighten us through a Power point slide presentation and welcomes comments and questions at the end of her presentation.

After the presentation our Presidents will hold a business meeting to keep members informed about branch activities.

## October General Meeting Follow Up

On Saturday, October 16, special guest Debi Girard, the Donor Relations Officer with the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches, gave a very informative presentation.



We were quite impressed with the work they continue to do to improve the lives of at-risk children through its seven Florida locations and comprehensive programs.

If you would like to know more, please go to [www.youthranches.org](http://www.youthranches.org)

And, we will have printed materials available during our next in-person meeting...hopefully in January!

## Holiday Luncheon: Saturday, December 11



Save the date, invite a friend and join in the fun! Let's get together face-to-face and have a good time. Holiday Luncheon and Ugly Holiday Sweater Celebration. December 11 starting time 11:00 a.m. The cost for a 3-course luncheon meal will be \$35 complete. (Alcohol drinks extra.) The menu will be announced soon. Prepaid reservations will be taken by Diane Jacobson by mid-November. The Oaks on 44 Restaurant at Continental Country Club in Wildwood is the venue for the event.

## Public Policy

If you are like me and you want to help register people to vote in the elections coming up, you should know that you must re-take the quiz to be certified to do so. There have been some recent changes to the election rules, therefore we all must re-take that quiz and ace it to get our certification updated. Even if your re-certification is not due yet, you still must take this new version of the quiz. If you aren't sure whether you have taken the right test, get in touch with the League of Women Voters. The good news is that our certification will then be valid through 2023.



I will be keeping you informed about Lobby Days and the state convention in April as I get information.

# Great Decisions



Great Decisions has announced nine topics for 2022: Changing Demographics, Outer Space, Climate Change, Russia, Myanmar and ASEAN, The Quad Alliance, Industrial Policy, Drug Policy in Latin America and Biden's Agenda.

We will meet on Monday mornings for 1 hour 20-minute sessions on January 10, 24, 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28 and March 7, and 14. There will be two sessions beginning at 9:00 am and 10:30 am. at the Sumter County Villages Annex Conference Room, 8033 East CR 466, The Villages. This group participation program is free to all AAUW Lake/Sumter branch members. (Nonmembers are asked to make a \$20 donation to participate.)

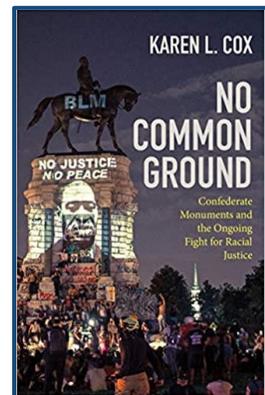
If you already contacted Diane Jacobson to order your booklet that's all you need to do to be included in the program. For those who would like to order their own material it is available at [www.fpa.org](http://www.fpa.org). Direct questions or to sign up for the sessions contact Diane Jacobson [diandchas@gmail.com](mailto:diandchas@gmail.com)

## Great Read from the Diversity Committee

This month's Great Read is *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* by Karen L. Cox. The following information is drawn from the book's publisher, The University of North Carolina Press.

*When it comes to Confederate monuments, there is no common ground. Polarizing debates over their meaning have intensified into legislative maneuvering to preserve the statues, legal battles to remove them, and rowdy crowds taking matters into their own hands. These conflicts have raged for well over a century--but they've never been as intense as they are today.*

*In this eye-opening narrative of the efforts to raise, preserve, protest, and remove Confederate monuments, Karen L. Cox depicts what these statues meant to those who erected them and how a movement arose to force a reckoning. She lucidly shows the forces that drove white southerners to construct beacons of white supremacy, as well as the ways that anti monument sentiment, largely stifled during the Jim Crow era, returned with the civil rights movement, and gathered momentum in the decades after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Monument defenders responded with gerrymandering and "heritage" laws intended to block efforts to remove these statues, but hard as they worked to preserve the Lost Cause vision of southern history, civil rights activists, Black elected officials, and movements of ordinary people fought harder to take the*



*story back. Timely, accessible, and essential, No Common Ground is the story of the seemingly invincible stone sentinels that are just beginning to fall from their pedestals.*

Written by an historian, this book provides a broader view of the events Mitch Landrieu addressed in his book, *In the Shadow of Statues*. In today's terms, it offers positions on "both sides;" as such it represents a rich two-sided historical treatment of what has been presented traditionally as a one-sided narrative.



Linda Carpenter

## Activities

### Singles Group



On Sunday, October 17, 15 members of our branch singles group met at the home of Jan Barone for a covered dish early Thanksgiving potluck and to celebrate Dorothy Dobbs' 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Liz Schweers also has an October birthday. But she said hers wasn't "as special" as Dorothy's, so she was just helping blow out the candles.

Happy Birthday, Dorothy!

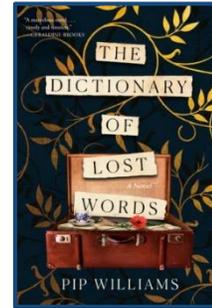
**Saturday November 13:** We will tour the Mote Norris 1892 historic home at 1195 W. Magnolia Street in Leesburg, followed by lunch in downtown Leesburg. This home was moved from its original location by Leesburg Historical Society and is only open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month.

We will meet at 9:30 a.m. at Colony Recreation Center near the pool and carpool to downtown Leesburg. The house is open for touring from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The luncheon place TBD when Karen Pickelsimer has a final count of ladies going and volunteer drivers. Please RSVP to Karen Pickelsimer at [ksimer@hotmail.com](mailto:ksimer@hotmail.com) or call 352-775-9683

**Thursday, December 2:** We will have lunch at Wolfgang Puck Restaurant, Brownwood Hotel. For reservations contact Dorothy Dobbs (205-527-3000) or Liz Schweers (850-247-9489).

## Book Club

The Book Club will meet via Zoom at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 17 to discuss *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams. If COVID cooperates, our meeting on Wednesday, December 15 will be our annual holiday luncheon. More information on this event will be provided to book club members by email.



All members are welcome to join the book club and may do so by contacting Kate Manion via email at [kmanion52@gmail.com](mailto:kmanion52@gmail.com).

The books we are reading this year, the meeting dates, and the names of the presenters are listed below.

Date	Book	Author	Discussion Leader
Nov. 17	The Dictionary of Lost Words	Pip Williams	Jeannie Hamilton
Dec. 15	HOLIDAY LUNCHEON		
Jan. 19	The Four Winds	Kristen Hannah	Barb Blatchford
Feb. 16	The Life She Wished to Live: A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings	Ann McCutchan	TBD
Mar. 16	The Barbizon	Paulina Bren	Linda Carpenter
Apr. 20	The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell	Robert Dugoni	TBD
May 18	Klara and the Sun	Kazuo Ishiro	Blanche Boyne
June 15	The Personal Librarian	Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray	Mary Place
July 20	The End of the Ocean	Maja Lunde	Christine Loken-Kim
Aug 17	SELECTION OF BOOKS FOR 2022-23		



We are hopeful we can resume in person meetings with the New Year. And check out information about our annual holiday luncheon included in this newsletter. Busy holidays, including parties with family and friends, are fast approaching. With this in mind, we decided to **combine our December and January newsletters into a single edition.** Please send information for **THIS** by **DECEMBER 3rd.**

Editor: Beth Hicks  
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#### AAUW Websites

National: <https://www.aauw.org>  
State: <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net>  
Local: <https://lakesumter-fl.aauw.net>