

October 2025



October Branch

Program:

**"Climate on a
Schoolyard's Edge"**
10/7-10:00 am



Come join us as we visit the Unity Charter School in Morrystown where science teacher Erin Colfax will give us a tour and talk about climate change and how their school is teaching students about it. Lunch will follow at The Frog Restaurant. (Pay as you go)

Coming next month!

November 11

**A presentation on DEI
To be held on Zoom.
The speaker will be
Edwina Sessions,
AAUW-NJ Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion
Director**

Happenings

**Oct. 6-6:00 pm-Evening Book
Group**

Panera, Basking Ridge

**Oct. 7-10:00 am-Program-
Morrystown**

**Oct. 20-9:00 am-Morning Book
Group**

**Nov. 3-6:00 pm-Evening Book
Group**

**Nov. 11-6:30 pm-Monthly
Program-DEI-Zoom ONLY**

**Nov. 17-10:00 am-Morning Book
Group**

Annual Awards Luncheon

The AAUW Annual Awards Luncheon was held on September 9th at the Vintage Tavern in Berkeley Heights. Along with many AAUW members and their guests, in attendance were recipients of our RVCC Scholarships and our (funds dispersement) beneficiaries. The recipients of our scholarships were Kelly Ronca who is studying Liberal Arts and Donna Soccio who is studying Paralegal Studies. Both attend RVCC. Michael Marion of Raritan Valley Community College was in attendance with the scholarship winners. Please read their lovely biographies.

In addition, several of our local libraries and a local school district were represented as well. They included the following: Rachel Burt, Bernards Township Library; Mary Fran Daley, Bernardsville Public Library; Marie Crenshaw, Clarence Dillon Library; Albie Ashbrook, Long Hill Township Library; Darryl Voorhees, Warren Township Library; Richard Liguori, Somerset Hills School District.

Annual Awards Luncheon - **What a Great Group!**



THE 2025 AAUW SOMERSET HILLS NAMED GIFT HONOREES

*Presented by Teri Passarello
(the 2010 and 2024 Named Gift Honoree)*

Today, I'm here to recognize the 2025 AAUW Named Gift Honorees. This is a recognition that branches and individuals can give through contributions to AAUW Funds. In this case, it is the AAUW National Greatest Needs Fund.

Each year at our annual meeting, we take a moment to celebrate an AAUW Somerset Hills member by naming a Named Gift Honoree. This recognition highlights the dedication, service, and spirit of women who have contributed to our branch and to AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls.

This year, our branch felt called to do something a little different. Over the past three years, we have lost a number of cherished members — women who were part of our branch family, who gave generously of themselves, and who helped shape our community. Rather than honoring one individual this year, we have chosen to honor all of them together.

So, who were these women?

Each of these women contributed in her own unique way, leaving a legacy that touches all of us in AAUW Somerset Hills.

As we remember them, it's natural to feel a sense of loss—but also a sense of gratitude. They were women who believed in the power of education, who supported each other, and who made our branch a little brighter, a little stronger. And, some had a knack for keeping our meetings lively—sometimes with gentle debates, sometimes with unexpected humor—reminding us that even serious work can be done with a smile.

We honor their dedication, their kindness, and yes, their individual quirkiness. But more importantly, we celebrate the joy they brought into our lives; they left a mark that can never be erased.

As we reflect on their lives, let's also remember the laughter, the camaraderie, and the small moments of light they shared with us. It's those moments—the human moments—that remind us how much they truly mattered and how their spirit will continue to inspire us.

Each of these women brought her own talents and gifts. Some were leaders, some serving on committees or helping guide programs. Others offered steadfast support behind the scenes. Some of them may have been the first to greet you at a meeting or to lend a hand when something needed doing.

Though I can't begin to capture the full story of each woman's life in just a few minutes, what matters most is that we pause to remember their presence and to recognize the legacy they have left behind. Their lives remind us that AAUW is not just an organization — it is a community. It is friendships, shared purpose, and the power of women working together.

So today, we recognize and honor:

**Marcella Strutt
Florence Cox
Dorothy Collins
Connie Smythe
Mary Lynn Norris
Eileen Heiser
Eileen Jaffe
Lilly Kwong
Gen McCarthy**

*Together, these women represent decades of membership, support, ideas, and encouragement. Each one helped to carry forward AAUW's mission, whether through leadership, volunteerism, or the quiet gift of just showing up. We are grateful for all they gave to our branch, and we remember them with love and respect.
Let us dedicate this honor to them — and let us also dedicate ourselves to carrying on the values they embodied: a commitment to learning, equity, and community. May their memory inspire us as we continue the work of AAUW, together.*

The AAUW Named Gift Honoree is a recognition that branches and individuals can give through contributions to AAUW Funds.

When a branch makes contributions of \$750 or more in a year, it earns the opportunity to designate one or more Named Gift Honorees.

The branch then selects a member (or members) to honor — not with money, but with recognition.

It's a way to say thank you to members who have given outstanding service, leadership, or support to the branch or to AAUW's mission.

The honoree's name becomes associated with AAUW's educational and equity funds, symbolically linking their contributions with the larger mission of advancing equity for women and girls.

In most branches, this is the highest honor a member can receive from their local AAUW.

Somerset Hills AAUW Scholarship
Academic Year 2025-26 RVCC Recipients

Kelly Ronca

Liberal Arts

I had spent so many years of my life cursing my past, and yet as I matured, I realized I hadn't made any progress to better any of it. I was stuck in this never-ending abuse/victim cycle. That very day, I stepped over what I call the 'invisible line'. I vowed to myself that I would no longer be who I was and would take active steps to better myself and my situation. I sought out counseling, read self-help books, joined group therapy, volunteered my time and focused on myself. Little by little, my life got better. I developed friendships, got married, had children, engaged with others, continued to volunteer and finally, returned to school to continue my education.

I am currently seeking a liberal arts degree at RVCC. I work full time for the United States Postal Service and I am also a full time (now) single parent. Two summers ago, I returned to college after spending 20+ years at home raising my family. While I love my job and loved being home raising children, my passion has since turned to learning American Sign Language (ASL).

Age: 55 GPA: 4.0

Donna Sozzio
Paralegal Studies

I am presently a literacy volunteer and on the committee in my hometown for the stigma free council.

We are trying to get all of our town to sign the pledge for being stigma free for mental health and substance disorders. This way our residents will more likely ask for the help they need. I have also been a Red Cross volunteer and served in Alabama when there were tornados. It was the best experience I ever had as I learned the victims thought of themselves as survivors which was awesome to me. I looked up to these individuals and learned important lessons from them. I want to help the less fortunate by using my skills and education to help those children get the help and support they need with their individualized education plan. Sometimes you need to advocate for your rights and I want to be there for those children.

My majors are paralegal studies, criminal justice and liberal arts. I have one year to go and look forward to getting a bachelors degree from Stockton University in liberal arts. I also want to be volunteer as a teachers aide in Newark. I want to help those students wherever I can.

I am a survivor of multiple types of abuse and have a learning disability. I suffer from mental health issues. I live way below the poverty line and feel this has made me a stronger person. The funds will help me in so many ways. It will certainly help with my tuition and books. It will also help me with the tools I need for my visual arts class which can be very expensive.

I am grateful to any scholarship I can receive because without this money I will not be able to attend my last two semesters. I am begging you to help me fulfill my dream of completing college at sixty-nine years of age.

Age: 69 GPA: 3.0

Welcome New Members!

*Tammy Benc and Karen
Marty*

*Both women have been
book sale volunteers in
the past, and now have
joined our Branch!!*

**Book Sale
Committee
Meeting!**

Bonnie Gould will be holding a meeting to begin planning the 2026 Book Sale at her home on October 23 at 10:30 am.

Please contact Bonnie if you would like to attend.
bonniegould@verizon.net

New members welcome!

*Falling Into
Nature
by
Georgia O'Keefe*



**MONTHLY PROGRAM LINE
UP FOR 2025-2026**

Something for everyone!

- **October 7, 2025- "Climate on a Schoolyard's Edge" and lunch in Morristown**
- **November 11, 2025- DEI - via ZOOM**
- **December 13, 2025- Holiday Brunch-Long Hill Township Library**
- **January 10, 2026- "Louis Bamberger"-Long Hill Township Library**
- **February 4, 2026- Travelogue with Robin Marion- "Across the Pacific in a Canoe!" Long Hill Twp. Lib.**
- **March 10, 2026- "Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia" - Bernards Township Library**
- **April 14, 2026- "Ladies at the Crossroads" - Bernards Township Library**
- **May 12, 2026- "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" - Bernards Township Library**

**More details will be provided in our monthly Flyers.
Some details may change!**



Interest Groups

There are many groups that meet which may be of interest to our members. Choose one or more!!

- **Great Decisions**
- **Morning Book Group**
- **Evening Book Group**
- **Gourmet**
- **Book Sale Planning**

Gourmet group meets monthly at the home and date selected by the host. Kathryn assists the host in menu selection and item assignment to participants. Costs are divided per head and is usually between \$22 – \$30 per person depending on the elaborateness of the menu.

Contact: Kathryn Daut (908-647-0350) / Bonnie Gould (908-285-8385)

Great Decisions: This group meets 8 times beginning in January of each year.

AAUW members
and their significant other/friend gather
in person to discuss
topics taken from the Great Decisions book purchased in advance.

Contact: Brigid Coakley at annisbear32158@aol.com or 908-477-5822

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

- **America at a Global Crossroads**
- **The Evolution of U.S. Leadership in the Global Economy: Dilemmas and Choices**
- **Competition, Cold War, or Conflict? Navigating U.S.-China Relations in Tense Times**
- **India: Between China, the West, and the Global South**
- **International Climate Cooperation in an Era of Geopolitical Turmoil**
- **The Future of NATO and European Security**
- **AI and American National Security**
- **American Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead**

Morning Book Group

If interested please contact
Jackie d'Allesio

9/15- How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Dying, Addiction, Depression and Transcendence by Michael Pollan

10/20- Triangle: The Fire That Changed America by David Von Drehle

11/17- The Glass Maker Tracy Chevalier

12/8- West With Giraffes by Lynda

Rutledge

1/19- The Old Man and The Sea by Earnest

Hemingway

2/16- Frozen River by Ariel Laden

3/16- All the Beauty in the World by

Patrick Bringle

4/20- Two Nights in Lisbon by Chris

Pavone

5/18- BOOK SELECTION

6/15- Rise to Rebellion: The Revolutionary War by Jeff Shaara

Evening Book Group

If interested please contact Ginny
Pasternak

9/8- Triangle: The Fire that Changed America by David Von Drehle

10/6- The Only Woman in the Room by Marie Benedict

11/3- The Lion Women of Tehran by Marjan Kamal

12/1- My Life in Full: Work, Family and Our Future by Indra Nooyi

1/5- Frozen River by Ariel Laden

2/2- West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge

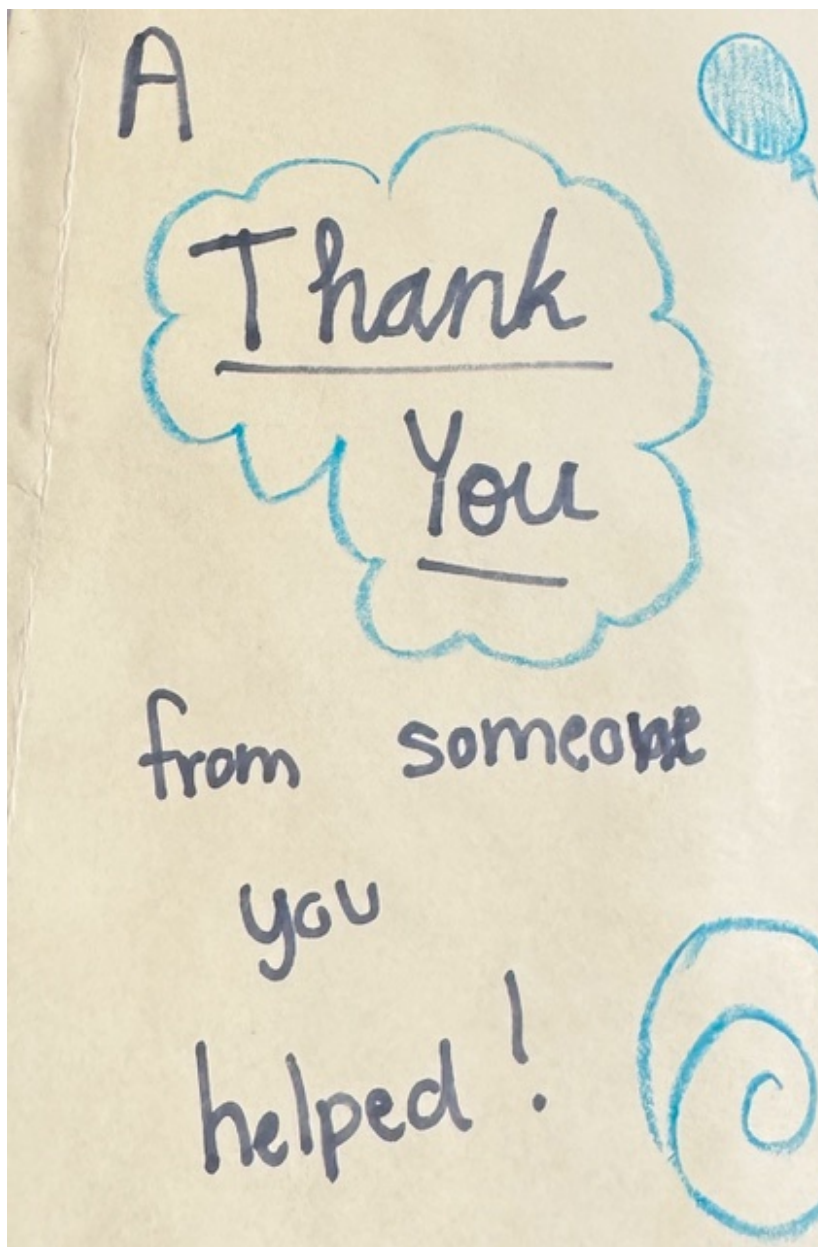
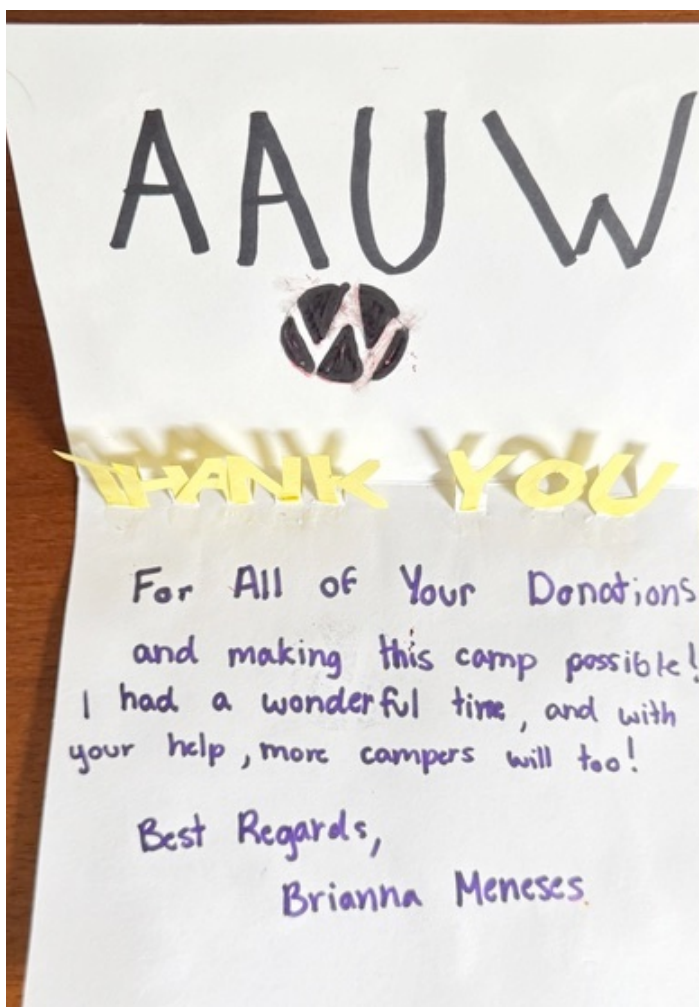
3/2- The Lindbergh Kidnapping Suspect No. 1: The Man Who Got Away by Lise Pearlman

4/6- How to Age Disgracefully by Clare Pooley

5/5- The Underground Library by Jennifer Ryan

6/1- BOOK SELECTION

Fan Mail!



AAUW National and State Information

Visit their websites for webinars and a calendar of events.

AAUW NJ: <https://aauwnj.org/>

*"We Value Diversity
United We Stand"*

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 socioeconomic status. (last revision June 2018)

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

*Our mission for
Higher Education and Economic Security*

AAUW empowers women and girls by championing their success in higher education and pushing for bold policy solutions to create lasting change. For more than 140 years, AAUW has led the fight for gender equity in higher education and beyond. With a strong record of advocacy and action, AAUW continues to break barriers and defend the rights of women in education and the workplace.



AAUW's research highlights the barriers women face in education and the workplace, driving policy change and societal progress.

*The fight for fair pay and economic opportunity
for women—and the battle continues: Women still
get just 83 cents for every dollar paid to a man.*