

December 2025



Join the festivities!! RSVP! Today!



Happenings

Dec. 1-Evening Book Group
Dec. 8-Morning Book Group



Dec. 13- Holiday Brunch
-Long Hill Township Librar

Jan. 1, 2026-HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Jan. 5- Evening Book Group
Jan. 19-Morning Book Group





AAUW Wants You!

URGENT!!

NO BOOK SALE CHAIRS--NO BOOK SALE!

Our 2026 Book Sale Status from Bonnie Gould.

It looks like we may have enough support within our Branch to plan on having a 2026 Book Sale but ...

We are still looking, and desperately need, to have new Co-Chairs identified soon. We run the Book Sale mostly by Committee but we need someone(s) to keep us all on the same page. Until we have a Chair or Co-Chairs identified, we can't say for sure whether a 2026 Book Sale is a Go.

I plan on participating again in 2026 and have a wealth of Book Sale institutional knowledge to support new Co-Chairs.

But, given my age, it is not wise for me to carry on this responsibility on a co-chair or solo basis. Please think about joining our Committee as our Chair or Co-Chair and if you feel called, as I did, now so many years ago, please talk to me, Arlene, Ginny, Beryl, Teri, Jackie, Brigid, Karen ...



Bonnie
908 285 8385



More help needed!!

The AAUW of Somerset Hills is also in need of some interested volunteers for the following positions:

Branch President-2026

Vice President of Programs-2026

In addition, the following positions are needed for just the right people!

Programs Committee—help find our speakers and coordinate our program agenda.

Social Media/technology—website, communications etc...

If you are interested, please contact one of our current Board members.



Holiday Charity: Heartworks

Heartworks, founded by Bernardsville resident, Megan McDowell, is a local movement of women committed to replicating and sustaining the kindness and connection witnessed in the wake of September 11, 2001. Megan's brother-in-law John Farrell was killed in the Twin Towers and their family received so many acts of kindness following the tragedy. Inspired by the healing that takes place through receiving and giving, Heartworks offers hope to people experiencing a chronic illness with an acute need, an unexpected injury, a natural disaster, or unbearable grief, while taking part in our own self-growth. They are a local organization and have touched so many local families.

If you wish to contribute, please bring a check made out to HEARTWORKS to our December Brunch on December 13th and hand the check to Bonnie Gould, our treasurer!





Winter Holidays

Fun Facts

There are so many holidays in the winter. Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa are three that you may know. But, do you know about these?

Las Posadas

Duration: Las Posadas lasts for nine nights between December 16th to December 24th, representing the nine months the Virgin Mary was pregnant with baby Jesus.

Origin: The tradition is believed to have been introduced by Spanish missionaries in 1586 as a way to teach the story of the Nativity to the indigenous people of Mexico.

The Inns: The Spanish to English translation of Las Posadas is "The Inns". Each night a different family's home is appointed as the "inn" that will host the procession for the evening.

Villancicos: Participants often sing traditional Christmas carols known as "villancicos" which commonly narrate the story of Mary and Joseph's journey.

Piñatas: Festive piñatas filled with candy and shaped like seven-pointed stars are customarily broken open on the last night of Las Posadas (Dec. 24th, Christmas Eve). Traditionally, each point of the star represents one of the seven deadly sins. Participants take turns trying to break the piñata, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil.

Soyal

Duration: The Soyal Ceremony is held annually on the shortest day and longest night of the year, December 21st (winter solstice).

Origin: For thousands of years, the Hopi people have celebrated the return of longer days, shorter nights, and warmer temperatures with the Soyal Ceremony. This sacred tradition represents the second most significant ceremonial event for the Hopi people handed down from generation to generation for centuries.

Welcoming the Katsinam: During Soyal, ceremonial dances and activities are performed to welcome back the Katsinam spirits. These spirits are believed to protect and guide the Hopi people, sending their prayers for health and bountiful harvests into the spirit world on their behalf.

Pahos: Leading up to the ceremony, participants will make pahos, which are sacred prayer sticks adorned with beautiful feathers and pine needles. They are used to spread blessings for the well-being of the community.

Respecting Sacred Traditions: Hopi ceremonies, including Soyal, hold profound spiritual and cultural significance. An important part of respecting these traditions is acknowledging their sacred nature and understanding that certain aspects are never meant to be shared or replicated outside of the Hopi community.



Holidays continued....

Hogmanay

Duration: Hogmanay is celebrated annually on December 31st (New Year's Eve) and continues into January 1st (New Year's Day).

Origin: The origins of Hogmanay are unclear, but many believe the celebrations are influenced by ancient Norse and Gaelic observances of the winter solstice.

Fire Festivals: Many Scottish cities host spectacular fire festivals as part of their Hogmanay celebrations. The Torchlight Procession and the spectacular fireworks display over Edinburgh Castle located in the Capital of Scotland attract visitors from around the world every year.

Traditional Foods: Hogmanay is celebrated with a variety of traditional foods, including haggis (a meat dish), neeps and tatties (turnips and potatoes), black bun (a rich fruit cake), and more.

Auld Lang Syne Tradition: The singing of "Auld Lang Syne" at the stroke of midnight is a globally recognized New Year's tradition, that originated in Scotland during Hogmanay. The song, written by Scottish poet Robert Burns, reflects on the passage of time and the importance of preserving old friendships.

First-Footing: First footing is a traditional Hogmanay practice where the first person to enter a home after midnight on New Year's Eve brings gifts like whisky, shortbread, or coins. These gifts are meant to symbolize good fortune for the household in the coming year.

Makar Sankranti

Duration: The Makar Sankranti festival is held on January 14th each year. It is one of the only Hindu festivals that is observed according to the solar calendar, meaning it is celebrated on the same date every year.

Origin: Makar Sankranti celebrations can be traced back thousands of years. According to Hindu mythology, this is the day when the Sun God (Surya) begins his journey back to the northern hemisphere. Historically, this was associated with the arrival of longer days, warmer weather, and the beginning of the harvest season.

Regional Variations: The festival goes by various names in different regions of India, including: Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Magh Bihu, Uttarayan, Sankranti, Lohri, and more.

Kite Flying: One of the most popular customs associated with Makar Sankranti is kite flying. In many parts of India, people fly kites to celebrate the sun's return and the start of the new season.



*Wishing everyone a happy
2026!*

*May the new year be full of
good health, much joy and
peace for all!*

*Christmas Services
by Thomas Kinkaide*



MONTHLY PROGRAM LINE UP FOR 2025-2026

Something for everyone!

- **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. Library**
- **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-Bonnie Gould
1/19- The Old Man and The Sea by Earnest Hemingway-Pat Cahill-ZOOM
2/16- Frozen River by Ariel Laden-Susan Franz-ZOOM
3/16- All the Beauty in the World by Patrick Bringle-Susan Frantz-ZOOM
4/20- Two Nights in Lisbon by Chris Pavone-Merry LeBlond-ZOOM
5/18- **BOOK SELECTION**
6/15- Rise to Rebellion: The Revolutionary War by Jeff Shaara-Ginny Pasternak

Evening Book Group

If interested please contact Ginny Pasternak

9/8- Triangle: The Fire that Changed America by David Von Drehle-Ginny L.
10/6- The Only Woman in the Room by Marie Benedict-Ginny P.
11/3- The Lion Women of Tehran by Marjan Kamal-Michelle C.
12/1- My Life in Full: Work, Family and Our Future by Indra Nooyi-Sarah T.
1/5- Frozen River by Ariel Laden-Susan F.
2/2- West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge-Michelle C.
3/2- The Lindbergh Kidnapping Suspect No. 1: The Man Who Got Away by Lise Pearlman-Ginny P.
4/6- How to Age Disgracefully by Clare Pooley-Ginny L.
5/4- The Underground Library by Jennifer Ryan-Mary Jane W.
6/1- **BOOK SELECTION**