

E-mail:

## INDIVIDUAL PROJECT/ PROGRAM/ EVENT:

**Note: Any program since last year's deadline of March 15 is eligible.**

**Category: (Please circle or highlight the category for which this program is being submitted.)**

- Women - ~~Education~~ - Community - International - Cultural - Diversity

**Title:** Brightening the Future of the Students in the Schenectady Community

**Describe your project/ program/ event in 150-300 words. Be sure to include:**

- how the project addressed AAUW's mission (15 points)
- **branch goals** in doing this program (10 points)
- **specific action steps** in planning this program (15 points)
- involvement of **other community groups** (if any) (10 points)
- **number of members** (5 points) and **nonmembers** (5 points) **in planning and in putting on the program**
- steps taken for **community visibility** (10 points)
- **number of members** (5 points) and **nonmembers** (5 points) who attended or benefited
- **number of new members** who joined (if any) (5 points)
- measurable **impact on the community** (10 points)
- **lessons learned** for future programs/ projects/ events (5 points)

**Attach copies** of newsletter and newspaper articles about this project/ program/ event.

(No more than 4 pages maximum)

Mail or email the original of your entire application with supporting materials to:

- Peggy Kelland, AAUW-NYS Program Vice President
- 13 Susan Lane, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

[smkell45@aol.com](mailto:smkell45@aol.com)

Questions? (845)297-0507

Schenectady Branch Project, *Brightening the Future of the Students in the Schenectady Community*, is multi-faceted and was generated when AAUW released its Spring/Summer 2008 report on educational equity, "Where the Girls Are." The study cites evidence that disparity in educational opportunity is based, not on gender, but on economic status and race/ethnicity. Our primary goal this past year had been to become more visible in the community, but since 74% of the Schenectady City students fall below the poverty level and many are so-called minorities, our focus changed. We decided to make visibility a secondary goal. It was more important to have an impact on the children in our community.

Our first step was to work in conjunction with the Schenectady Junior League in a project to provide backpacks and school supplies for the elementary children in the Schenectady Schools. In addition to collecting money and materials, we also helped to fill the backpacks and distribute them directly to the students on opening day. (See *Visions* articles and AAUW acknowledgement that was put into thousands of backpacks.)

With funding in schools so restricted, another component of the project was to provide the students with live theater. (See attachments.) We received grant money from Stewart's and the Schenectady County Initiative to sponsor performances from TheaterworksUSA to nearly 900 students.

We also created a mentoring program in three of the elementary schools. We planned what would be involved with the Reading Teacher and/or volunteer coordinator in each of the buildings. There are ten of us who mentor in grades 1-5 once a week for an hour. Each one-hour period is divided into two sessions, and in each one, the mentor works with one or two students at a time in the areas of reading and/or math. We have been mentoring since early Nov., plan to continue until June, and hopefully will extend this program to next year. Some of our members have also volunteered to go to one of the schools to read aloud to the children on Dr. Seuss Day on March 5.

When we first began at one of the schools, which was created as a result of a charter school closing, we found the library to be devoid of books and the classrooms lacking in materials. Jumping at the chance to help rectify this situation, we began a book drive. We contacted Friends of the Library, a volunteer group that monitors used books no longer in use in the public libraries, and they permitted us to choose 200 from their collection to take to the school. Coupled with the 250 new or gently worn books our AAUW members contributed, we donated a grand total of 450 books to this school, some going to the library and others directly into the classrooms.

On March 18, we are having a luncheon forum in which local administrators, including the Superintendent of the Schenectady Schools, will address the economic and racial/ethnic disparity they feel exists in their schools. With looming budget cuts that will no doubt impact ability to retain teacher-student ratio and programs, this issue of educational equity is a matter of great concern. We have invited a reporter from the *Gazette*, Schenectady's primary newspaper, to attend the discussion and hope this will result in a feature article.

One of our other related projects addresses the older student. For the first time, we have created a scholarship for a female student at Schenectady Community College, and one of the criteria will be financial need.

Did we increase our visibility? Absolutely! Working with Stewart's, Schenectady County Initiatives, the Junior League, Friends of the Library, the teachers, and the administrators in local districts, people now know our name and what we can accomplish. The names and numbers of AAUW members directly involved in these activities are found in the attached *Visions'* articles. Are we able to provide specific numbers of how many people we worked with or how many children were affected? No. Did we generate some new members? Sadly, no. Did we have a measurable impact on the community? Without a doubt, we have improved the learning opportunities of many of the students. Next year, we are considering the possibility of extending our mentoring to include young women who also have learning opportunities curtailed due to economic status and race/ethnicity, perhaps partnering with Literacy Volunteers. We have made a difference this year!

*Excerpts taken from Presidents' Notes in Visions, the Branch newsletter*

**Operation Back-to-School Sept. 2008**

We joined the Junior League of Schenectady in Operation Back-to-School in the summer. Combined with partial proceeds from '07 and '08 Niska-Days, and individual contributions by some of our members, in June our Branch made a donation of \$850 to help purchase school supplies for the children in three schools in Schenectady. The following members provided support with a gift of school supplies (Maxine Borom, Nancy Phillips, Pat Terry, and Joan Welch) or a financial contribution (Annette Billmeyer, Ann Bish, Evelyn Currie, Mary Delory, Pam Haller, Ann Hicks, Jane Jennings, Nancy Ottati, Gerri Pinkerton, Dottie Potochnik, Ellie Rowland, and Nancy Walden). To those who participated, know that you made some children very happy and certainly better prepared to face this school year.

*Pam Haller 399-8580 Haller915@aol.com*

**Operation Back-to-School Oct. 2008**

As a branch, we received a letter of appreciation from the Junior League this summer, and each individual who contributed also received a personal thank you and acknowledgment of her tax deductible contribution. Some of our members volunteered to fill bags with school supplies on August 26 and distribute them to the children at Yates, Hamilton, and Fulton Elementary Schools on September 4. We worked hand in hand with representatives from other organizations. In addition, the following thank you letter from the Junior League, recognizing participation of all the groups in this worthwhile project, was included in each of the approximate 1,000 backpacks:

*The Board of Directors, members, and friends of the Junior League of Schenectady would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support of "Operation Back to School."*

*Fidelis Care  
SCA Tissue North America  
The Carlilian Foundation  
Stewart's Holiday Match  
Schenectady County Youth Bureau  
The Rotary Club of Schenectady Foundation*



*AAUW, Schenectady Branch  
Junior League of Schenectady Past Presidents  
Wal-Mart  
Berkshire Bank  
28<sup>th</sup> Annual WGY Christmas Wish Campaign  
First New York Federal Credit Union  
Selkirk Cogen Partners L.P.  
SEFCU Foundation  
Troy Savings Bank Foundation  
Griffith Dardanelli Architects, P.C.  
Schenectady Business & Professional Women  
Parcel Post Plus*



This was a clear indication that we CAN partner with other organizations, have an impact in our own community, and achieve visibility at the same time. And what better way to do it than to respond to AAUW's, "Where the Girls (and Boys) Are" Report on Educational Equity, based upon economic status and race/ethnicity, and support the children in our schools!

*Pam Haller 399-8580 Haller915@aol.com*

**Children's Plays – Oct. 2008**

On Wednesday, October 1, 2008 the Schenectady AAUW will present two performances of TheatreworksUSA's new musical production of NATE THE GREAT based on Marjorie Weinman Sharmat's popular series of children's books. The performances for elementary children will take place at 9:30 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. at Schenectady High School Auditorium.

Once again this year we have received generous support from the Schenectady County Initiative Program and the Stewart's Foundation. This support enables AAUW to keep ticket prices affordable for as many children as possible.

*Toni Walsh & Helen MacDonald*

**Backpacks and Children's Play Nov. 2008**

In September the following women helped pack backpacks and distribute them to the students of the Schenectady Schools: Pam Haller, Nancy Phillips, Gerri Pinkerton, Dottie Potochnik, Ellie Rowland, and Joan Welch.

*Pam Haller*

## **Children's Plays Nov. 2008**

On Wednesday, October 1, eight hundred and ninety-four children (and over one hundred chaperones) from nine elementary schools arrived by car, bus, and on foot to attend Theatreworks USA's musical production of NATE THE GREAT at Schenectady High School. Our volunteer ushers: Arlene Gollmer, Pat Gregory, Pam Haller, Ann Hicks, Arlene Maranville, Nancy Phillips, Gerri Pinkerton, Robin Eddy, Bobbi Richardson, Joan Welch, and Faith Weldon were there to greet and seat them. Thank you all. We couldn't have done it without you. Special thanks to Gerri Pinkerton and Arlene Maranville who took the stage to introduce AAUW to the audience.

It was a highly successful day. Nate the Great was an exceptionally good production, and the children enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Once again we are grateful to grants from the Schenectady County Initiative Program and the Stewart's Foundation for enabling AAUW to bring professional live theatre to the children of Schenectady County at a reasonable cost. As always, the cooperation from the staff at Schenectady School of Fine Arts was outstanding. And it didn't rain!

Toni Walsh and Helen MacDonald

## **Become a Mentor! Help a Child! Nov. 2008**

In conjunction with

- AAUW's Research report that shows deep divisions in education existing between racial/ethnic and class lines, and
- Operation Back-to-School where we helped to provide school supplies for children in the Schenectady schools,

we hope to establish a link between our Branch and some of the Schenectady schools. We will begin with Hamilton, Yates, and Keane (new) elementary schools. We plan to organize teams of our members for each school who would be willing to donate some time each week working with individual students. As one teacher commented to us, "A volunteer could merely sit and read to a child from a picture book or listen to the child read aloud. It's the one-on-one time that would mean so much to our students." This would require no formal teaching background, although some of us who are retired teachers might wish to do more in the mentoring.

We all lead busy lives so in order to provide a school with mentors 1/2 -1 hour per week, we will establish teams of 3-4 women. Each individual would not have to commit each week, unless she wanted to. Instead, the members of a team could rotate depending upon each person's availability, as long as the team were responsible for guaranteeing that at least one member goes to the school in any given week. Perhaps only one person on a team would be available, but it is also conceivable that for some weeks, more than one person (or everyone!) on a team might be able to work with the children.

If you have questions or would be interested in volunteering your time and effort to work directly with a child whose teacher has determined would benefit from the attention of some caring adults, please call or email Pam Haller at 399-8580 or [Haller915@aol.com](mailto:Haller915@aol.com). Once we get a sense of who would be interested, we will begin to put together teams and match you with the school you prefer. We hope this will evolve into an ongoing working relationship between our Branch and the Schenectady schools. With your help, we can have a positive impact on our community.

*Pam Haller and Gerri Pinkerton*

~~Dec. 2008 - Jan. 2009~~

### **A TIME FOR GIVING**

We hope you will be able to attend the holiday breakfast at Glen Sanders Mansion on Dec. 6. In keeping with our tradition of helping others during the holiday season, we will be collecting items for the children at the Family Life Center (women and children's facility of City Mission). Currently there are 5 babies less than a year old, one child 6 years old, two children 8 years old, and one child 9 years old. In our continued efforts this year to reach out to the children in our community, please consider bringing one or more of the following items:

- unisex clothing for babies (one-piece outfits)
- infant toys (rattles, pacifiers)
- hats, scarves, gloves for children
- educational games/puzzles
- children's books
- coloring books/crayons
- disposable diapers

Bring as many gifts as you wish! They should be wrapped or in a gift bag. Please label each gift on the outside of the pkg. ("INFANT" or "CHILD" and the item(s) included.) If you have something to contribute but do not plan to attend, please send it with someone who will be going. Thank you for your generosity.

### **MENTORING PROGRAM**

Nine of us have volunteered to mentor at three elementary schools, Hamilton, Keane, and Yates. The volunteers are Robin Eddy, Pat Gregory, Pam Haller, Donna Northrup, Gerri Pinkerton, Nancy Phillips, Toni Walsh, Joan Welch, and Jean Wildgrube. We have met with the school coordinators to establish our schedules and what we will be doing. Each two-three person team will go to the school once a week for an hour. Sometimes, perhaps only one person on the team will be available to volunteer a particular week; other times it might be the entire team. By the time you receive this issue of Visions, tutoring will be well underway and we will be working directly with children who will benefit by some one-on-one time.

No formal teaching background is required. We would welcome any additional volunteers so if you have questions and might be interested in working directly with children with academic needs, please contact us.

### **CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

Hamilton and Yates are both well-established schools with a supply of books and educational materials and games accumulated over the years. However, Keane, formerly St. Luke's on Albany Street, is another story. It was recently acquired by the Schenectady Schools, along with two other buildings, in large part as a response to the charter school closing. Totally unexpected, the enrollment at Keane jumped dramatically the week school opened to classes with 29 children each. Needless to say, the original budget allocation for materials has been stretched. The staff began with a totally empty building devoid of supplies. More teachers have been hired to reduce initial class size. Those of us who volunteer at Keane are very aware of the scarcity of teaching materials and children's books and educational games. For that reason, if you have access to any children's books or educational games (appropriate for elementary-aged children) in good condition that you would be willing to donate, please bring them to a general meeting, or contact the Keane volunteers (Pam Haller 399-8580 or [Haller915@aol.com](mailto:Haller915@aol.com), Robin Eddy 346-1683 or [reddy5@nycap.rr.com](mailto:reddy5@nycap.rr.com), Jean Wildgrube 374-1003 or [JWildgrube@aol.com](mailto:JWildgrube@aol.com)). Also, if you are aware of any community book sales that might be selling children's books, please let us know. Thank you.

**Feb. 2009**

### **Breakfast**

In December, we also had a memorable holiday breakfast. In addition to the beautifully decorated room, a small group of women (Barbara Aldi, Gerri Pinkerton, Jean Wildgrube, Pam Haller) made centerpieces for the tables. Eleven were sold to those attending and the proceeds (\$155) will be used for our newly-created scholarship fund.

At the breakfast, we also collected gifts for the children who live at the Family Life Center of City Mission. Of special note was the effort of one of our long-standing members, Evvie Currie. Although she was could not attend the breakfast, she went out of her way to drop off gifts for the children ahead of time. The response of the guests was overwhelming! We ended up with so many gifts, the two huge collection boxes overflowed, and we had just as many outside them as inside. We're sure your generosity delighted the children.

### **Book Drive**

Our book drive for Keane Elementary School was very successful. Some members contributed an assortment of books, both new and gently used, ( Barbara Aldi, Pat Buczkowski, Robin Eddy, Pam Haller, Marguerite Pileggi, Jean Wildgrube). We might add that Marguerite has a special fondness for Keane since she, herself, was a student in the first kindergarten class there. She has even mentioned that she would like to visit someday while we're mentoring and take a walk down Memory Lane.

In addition to individual contributions, with the help of Dottie Potocknik and Ellie Rowland, we were able to secure a donation of 200 books from the Friends of the Library to take to Keane. This is a group of volunteers who raises funds to maintain the libraries' programs in Schenectady County. They were very generous in releasing some of their collection of books that would ordinarily have been used for fund-raising. Between this group and individual members, we provided Keane with nearly 450 books!

### **Mentoring**

Our mentoring program is in progress. Two of us are mentoring at Hamilton (Ellie Rowland and Toni Walsh), five are at Keane (Robin Eddy, Sondra Grady, Pam Haller, Gerri Pinkerton, Jean Wildgrube), and three are at Yates (Donna Northrup, Nancy Phillips, Joan Welch). Each of us who participates as a mentor can confirm that it is a rewarding experience, both for the child and adult. There are always children in need who would benefit from one on one time. If anyone else is interested in devoting one hour per week to working with children, please contact Pam Haller (See below.)

Pam Haller 399-8580 [Haller915@aol.com](mailto:Haller915@aol.com)

### **Scholarship and Read Aloud March 2009**

At the Branch level, we would like to announce that we have established a scholarship fund for a worthy student at Schenectady County Community College. The Scholarship Committee, chaired by Sondra Grady, is in the process of establishing criteria for the award which will be presented in May.

Continuing our focus on educational equity this year, a thank you goes to four of our members who have volunteered to read aloud to classes at Keane Elementary on their "Dr. Seuss Day" on March 2. They are Robin Eddy, Betsy Forkas, Donna Northrup, and Dottie Potochnik.

The rest of the articles for Visions have not been published yet.



## JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SCHENECTADY

*Women building better communities*

July 18, 2008

Pamela Haller  
Co-President  
AAUW – Schenectady Branch  
22 Richland Drive  
Scotia, NY 12302

Dear Pamela Haller:

**Re: *Operation Back to School***

Thank you for your generous support of the Junior League's 2008 Operation Back to School project. Because of you, approximately 1,200 students at Schenectady's Elementary Schools will receive a backpack filled with all the supplies they need to start the year off on the right foot!

Your \$850 contribution will help purchase school supplies for needy children in the Schenectady City School District. This letter confirms that the League is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. You received no goods/services in return for your generous contribution.


We will be filling the bags with school supplies on Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>. At 10:00 a.m., we will begin filling the bags at Yates Elementary School. Then at 6:00 p.m., we will fill the bags at Hamilton Elementary School. We expect that it will take approximately two hours to fill the bags at each school.

We would be thrilled if you or someone from your organization would like to join us as we distribute the packs to the children on the first day of school. Please let us know if you are available to come to Yates Elementary School on the morning of September 4<sup>th</sup> and then at Hamilton Elementary School from 1:00 pm -2:00 pm. Of course, cameras are more than welcome.

In total, the Junior League acquired more than 42,200 items for the students that were identified by their teachers as critical for the school year. We know from past experience, seeing the faces of the kids (and those of their parents) on the first day of school is priceless. Therefore, we cannot thank you enough for making such a big difference in the lives of these children!

We hope to see you on August 26<sup>th</sup> or September 4<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Denise Murphy McGraw at 434-9000 or by email at [dmurphymcgraw@blklobby.com](mailto:dmurphymcgraw@blklobby.com) to advise her of your availability.

All my best,

  
Denise McGraw  
Co-Chair

  
Patty Rowledge  
Co-Chair

PO Box 857, Schenectady, NY 12301 (518) 370-1902



A member of The Association  
of Junior Leagues International Inc.



**JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SCHENECTADY**  
*Women building better communities*

**The Board of Directors, members and friends of  
the Junior League of Schenectady would like to  
thank the following individuals and organizations  
for their support of  
"Operation Back-to-School"**

**Fidelis Care  
SCA Tissue North America  
The Carlilian Foundation**

**Stewart's Holiday Match  
Schenectady County Youth Bureau**

**The Rotary Club of Schenectady Foundation, Inc.  
Junior League of Schenectady Past Presidents  
American Association of University Women – Schenectady Branch  
Wal-Mart  
Berkshire Bank  
28<sup>th</sup> Annual WGY Christmas Wish Campaign  
First New York FCU  
Selkirk Cogen Partners L.P.  
SEFCU Foundation  
Troy Savings Bank Foundation  
Griffith Dardanelli Architects, P.C.  
Schenectady Business & Professional Women  
Parcel Post Plus**

*Thank you letter included in  
each of approximately 1000  
backpacks that acknowledged  
contributions by local  
organizations*





Media Release -  
lists contributing  
organizations, including  
AAWW

Hj, halsar315

Check Mail

Search Mail

NS

Today on AOL

New Mail (42)

Old Mail

Drafts

Sent

IMs

Spam (6)

Recently Deleted

Contacts

Calendar

My Folders

Saved Mail

Search The Web

Keep as New Reply Forward IM Action Delete Spam

8 min ago More Details

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SCHENECTADY

Media Advisory

Junior League to bring backpacks, school supplies to students of Schenectady City Schools

Run entirely by volunteers, Capital Region's largest effort of its kind will provide supplies to more than 5,500 children

(Schenectady) - On the first day of school, Thursday, Sept. 4, students at all 15 Schenectady city elementary schools will receive backpacks filled with school supplies from members of the Junior League of Schenectady. In addition, students at Fulton, Yates and Hamilton elementary schools will receive backpacks filled with all the supplies needed for the year as identified by their teachers.

The Junior League invites the media to one of two events on September 4, where volunteers will distribute backpacks to students:

- 10:00 am at Yates Elementary School, 725 Salina Street, Schenectady; or
- 1:00 pm at Hamilton Elementary School, 7th Avenue/Webster Street, Schenectady.

Now in its sixth year, Operation Back-to-School has brought school supplies and backpacks to more than 2,500 children throughout Schenectady including students at Van Cortlandt, Lincoln and Hamilton schools. This year is the first year the program has expanded to include all of Schenectady's elementary school children.

The project is made possible through almost \$65,000 in grants from the following generous sponsors: Fidelis Care, SCA Tissue, Stewart's Holiday Match, Schenectady County Youth Bureau, Carlman Foundation, Rotary Club of Schenectady, AAJAW, Berkshire Bank, WGY's Christmas Wish, SEFCU, Troy Savings Bank, First New York Federal Credit Union, Griffin Dardanelle Architects, Salik K Cogen Partners and Schenectady BPW.

"The goal of Operation Back-to-School is to motivate children about learning. We all remember how excited we were when we got our new notebooks and fresh pencils in September—we felt like anything was possible," Operation Back-to-School co-founder Denise McGraw said. "Our hope is that the children of all the Schenectady elementary



22 Richland Drive  
Scotia, NY 12302  
October 8, 2008

John Sardos, Principal  
William C. Keane Elementary School  
1252 Albany Street  
Schenectady, NY 12304

Dear Mr. Sardos:

AAUW, Schenectady Branch, is in the process of soliciting volunteers to help mentor in the Schenectady schools. It is our intent to create 3-4 member teams who would be available for approximately one hour a week to go into the schools to offer assistance to the children and teachers. Many of us are retired, certified teachers. We will be grouped in teams so that if one or two members were unavailable in any given week, there would still be someone from the team who could participate.

Dana De Marco, your Literacy teacher, tells me that you might be interested in the services of some of these volunteers. I would be happy to arrange to have a team assigned to your school. How you would make use of the women would be up to you; however, we do ask that they work directly with the children.

Please let me know if you would be interested in us providing some volunteers and we can schedule a meeting between them and you (or your volunteer coordinator) to clarify schedules and responsibilities.


This year we are offering our services to three schools, Hamilton, Yates and Keane. It is our hope that this can be the beginning of an ongoing working relationship between AAUW and the Schenectady schools. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pam Haller".

Pamela Haller  
Haller915@aol.com  
399-8580  
Co-President AAUW  
Schenectady Branch

*Sample letter  
to principals*



**AAUW**  
Schenectady Branch

22 Richland Drive  
Glenville, NY 12302  
November 14, 2008

Friends of the Library  
Schenectady Library-Central Branch  
99 Clinton Street  
Schenectady, NY 12305

Dear Friends of the Library:

A few months ago I sent a letter to the principals of three Schenectady elementary schools asking if they would be interested in having teams of AAUW members work with children in need. One of the teams, of which I am a member, was assigned to Keane Elementary, formerly St. Luke's on Albany Street. This school was acquired by the district in response to the closing of the charter school.

Although the effort and enthusiasm for beginning the year on the right foot were evident, we saw a disheartening lack of materials when we visited. This is probably due to the fact that three new schools had to be added and there was a great increase in enrollment resulting in very large class sizes at the beginning of the school year. Funds were limited. Those of us who are former teachers were especially saddened by the lack of books available in the school library. The shelves were bare with the exception of a few, very few, books. We were told that children in the younger grades were being walked down to the Duane Street Branch to sign out books. There were obviously not any to sign out at the school library.

I mentioned this situation to my Branch board of AAUW on Nov. 7. The very next day, I received word that one of them, Dottie Potchnik, had contacted Ellie Rowland, who in turn contacted the President of Friends of the Library. On Wednesday, November 12, I was informed that we had been granted permission to choose 200 books to take to the Keane Library. Dottie and I met on the morning of the 13th. She boxed while I chose the books. I then delivered them, along with my own personal donation of an additional 166 books that I had purchased at the Book Barn, Whitney's Book Corner, Saratoga Library, and two Craigslist sites this past week.

I want you to know that the Keane staff and children are delighted to be filling their bookshelves with your generous donation. I have been told by the Remedial Reading teacher that the children want to thank you so don't be surprised if you receive some letters from them shortly.

On behalf of the members of AAUW who are working very hard to overcome disparity of educational opportunity based upon economic status and race/ethnicity, we want to applaud you for your willingness to support projects such as these. Your continued commitment to our community represents the gold standard for the rest of the organizations and volunteers in the area. Thank you so very much.

Yours truly,



Pamela N. Haller

Co-President

AAUW Schenectady Branch