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In This Issue:

Review Our Goals.....	p. 2
PTA and Equity.....	p. 3
Be an Advocate.....	p. 4
Technology Update.....	p. 5
Legal Advocacy Fund.....	p. 5
Branch Action.....	p. 6
Cross Border Report.....	p. 7
Ed Foundation News.....	p. 8

AAUW Programming: Making Connections

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As members of AAUW and branches, we must make conscious connections among all our AAUW programming areas. Our mission is to promote education and equity for all women and girls and we need to step back and realize who the *all* really are.

In the 1990s, AAUW has led with research about how girls are being treated in schools. The Initiative for Educational Equity, which grew out of the first AAUW report, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, is still very much alive and well. In 1998, AAUW has supplemented that report with findings about *Single Sex School* education and *Gender Gaps*, the newest report on the technology gap between boys and girls. Most of us realize the width of the technology gap as we struggle to overcome it in our own lives.

If young girls, on the threshold of graduation from high school, do not have the tools to take them into the 21st century, we must help to promote their education. We can't miss the chance to take AAUW's mission forward.

Several of the district conferences addressed the issue of Single Sex Schools. There has been a lot of interest expressed for a workshop at convention. We'll try to give everyone a good overview of this issue so you can put it into your branch programming for next year. If your branch is ready to get going now, contact me for the names of members who have done the ground work for a presentation.

We are working now to develop programming to help utilize the newest *Gender Gaps* research. By the state convention we will have some how-to's ready for you to take back home. We can put this new research to good use in programs that will educate our members and our communities. The increased visibility helps to spotlight our AAUW goals and programs.

Keep in mind that a technology workshop for your branch members is the first step toward raising consciousness about the technology information gap and addressing the needs of girls in your communities.

We need to make conscious connections between the pieces of AAUW programs. Link a Public Policy program to the Initiative. Link Cultural Interests to the Educational Foundation. Link Diversity to International Relations. Linkages give additional credence to our issues and lets members work together, forging strong bonds and sharing the work load.

Reach out to other branches for information on successful programs which can be duplicated in your part of the state. Come to Corning for convention. We'll update you on the Sister-to-Sister Summits that have taken place in New York, some by groups of branches (Long Island's District 6 and Western NY in the Buffalo Area), and some by individual branches (Cortland and Northern Westchester).

Your state AAUW leaders stand ready to work with each branch to ensure a successful year of diverse branch programming.

From the President: **Review Our Goals**

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Photo of
Kay Kraatz

As Sarah Weddington (the lawyer who won *Roe v. Wade*) said at the Conference of State Presidents, "You need to be consistent in your goal. You can compromise on the amount of time it takes to accomplish it, but not the direction." We've set our goals for our state, our branches. Take time to review, are you still on course?

Education & Equity: *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, released by the Education Foundation in October has the endorsement of the National Education Association, National School Board Association, American Association of Colleges of Teachers, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The report has descriptions of activities for branches that can build on previous initiatives (math and science programs, Sister-to-Sister Summits, etc.) The AAUW Tech Check for Schools is an opportunity for our branches to work with schools, using a self-assessment guide.

National Women's Equity Act for the 21st

Century: This is a document sponsored by the National Council of Women's Organizations with extensive consultation from Nancy Zirkin of AAUW that is a blueprint for legislative action. The act is intended to be a statement of what is important to women in 1998 - an updated activist Declaration of Sentiments. Several of the pieces are being pursued in Congress. The Guiding Principles are: Equality for Women and Girls in Education, Equality for Women in Employment, Equality for Women in Taxes, Equality for Women in Retirement Security, Equality for Women in Health Care, Equal Access to Media for Women, and Equality for Women in the Criminal Justice System.

Kudos: The American Association of University Women is the recipient of the National Business Women's Network Achievement Award for our contributions to educational equity for women and girls.

Membership/Dues Increase: New York State, participating in the Association's Membership Initiative received _____ new members. I am hoping that we can better serve our current members and continue to recruit new members. We are recruiting members from our visibility on the state web page.

There has been much concern and discussion regarding the proposed dues increase that will be voted on at the Association Convention, June 1999. New York State will have time at the state convention for a town hall discussion. MAR Director

Marilyn Leist will also address the issue at our Winter Board Meeting.

Cross Border Issues: This was the 4th regional conference sponsored by AAUW (Northern NY branches) and the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) held in Kingston, ON. Details are in this issue of *FOCUS*.

Leadership: Your New York State AAUW Board will meet in Schenectady to assess the current state of our strategic plan and reviewing the 21st Century Agenda. The NYS Board of Directors welcomes your comments/concerns. We, along with our committees, are here to serve you and to represent you to the Association. We are reviewing the possibility of establishing a NYS AAUW on-line meeting chat room.

Welcome to the Web:

To date, seven branches have taken advantage of NYS AAUW's offer to host branch webpages: **Ithaca, Oswego, Mohawk Valley, New York City, Skaneateles, Southern New York, and Syracuse.** You can look at their webpages at our New York State site:

<http://www.northnet.org/nysaauw>

If your branch is looking for some World Wide Web visibility, please take advantage of our offer. Check the pages of the Fall *Leadership Portfolio* for details.

Girls' Ice Hockey Update:

Good news for girls and young women looking to play ice hockey here in New York State. The Saranac Lake Central School now has a girls' club ice hockey team which is receiving some support from the district and is looking for other high school girls teams to play. Ithaca's high school has a girls' club team also looking for competition.

The Winter Empire State Games in Lake Placid in February will feature exhibition games for the scholastic (high school) and full games for the women's division. Girls will have a full tryout series like other sports when girls' hockey is played next summer on Long Island. Thanks, NYS AAUW!

Reach For the Stars: Membership Matters

Inez Alston, Membership Vice President 716/763-1226 - 713ipa@madbbs.com

Is your branch reaching for the stars this year? There is still time to meet the criteria and be recognized as an AAUW 5-star branch for 1998-99. The Membership Star requires one of the following to be accomplished between Feb. 1, 1998 and Feb. 1, 1999:

- A net 5 percent increase in branch membership, or
- Maintenance or increase of February 1, 1998 branch membership total plus one of the following:
 1. recruitment of a new college/university institution member; or 2. establishment of a new student affiliate satellite group or branch satellite group; or
 3. maintenance of a current student affiliate satellite group.

Once we get these members, we must work to keep them. A very good strategy to use the **Programmembership Plan**. The program and membership committees work together to develop timely and meaningful programs. The Educational Foundation's newest report, *Gender Gaps*, provides one timely area of branch programming. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics names computer scientist, computer engineer, and systems analyst as the top three occupations with the fastest employment in projections for the decade 1996-2006. Based on prestige, salary, stability and growth, *Money* magazine recently ranked computer engineer and computer systems analyst number one and two on its list of the 50 hottest jobs through the year 2005. Exploring technology is an important and useful program issue that would appeal to AAUW members.

Try Mixing Equity and PTA

Mary Grainger, Ithaca Branch Education & Equity Chair - mmgithaca@aol.com

Our experiences in the **Ithaca Branch** have shown that PTA equity committees can be an effective way to increase attention and activity related to Educational Equity. What started small is now growing.

As the mother of three daughters, I suggested to the PTA program committee at the elementary school that speakers be invited to talk about gender bias in education. With Cornell and Ithaca College close by, experts are not hard to find in this and many other subject areas. The programs were usually well attended and generated concern for the future from parents of girls and puzzling questions from parents of boys (who figured they had the more challenging parenting issues!)

When my oldest got to middle school, I made a similar suggestion. The speaker drew a large crowd who asked many questions and expressed concerns. Ten parents were interested in continuing the discussion about equity issues and the unique issues of adolescent girls. Thus the Boynton Middle School PTA was born!

Three years later, the committee has monthly meetings attended equally by parents and school staff. Each meeting includes planning for future events, funding sources, etc., as well as a time for announcements of related events in the community. The high involvement of staff (including the principal and associate principal!) means that most issues about the school environment are taken almost immediately to the staff meetings, which occur on regular basis within the middle school.

A grant from Ithaca College helped improve the resources for students, parents and teachers available through the library. An equity committee parent sat on the resource selection committee.

The committee has arranged events and programs for both parents and students, taking advantage of local authors like Joan Brumberg, (The Body Project), and Bunny McCune and Deb Traunstein (Girls to Women, Women to Girls).

In late winter, students and staff will watch role-playing skits identifying typical episodes of discrimination, harassment and violence which occur throughout the life cycle, followed by small group discussions about how to avoid these traps from the student's perspective.

Next on our agenda is helping Ithaca's other middle school, the alternative and the regular high school launch equity committees of their own. Many community members have seen the positive results of these equity committees and are interested in seeing expansion. AAUW resources and the spirit of Educational Equity have been critical to the progress being made in Ithaca.



It's Easier Than You May Think: Be an Advocate!

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With the elections behind us, we must continue to advocate for those issues that are critical to the needs, services, and rights of women, children, and families. Advocacy is responsible public participation. Democracy doesn't work without us.

It is more than likely that the issues that were contentious in the 105th Congress will be brought up again before the next Congress. These include:

- Health care legislation that will ensure that doctors, not insurance companies, make health care decisions;
- Equal opportunity programs in higher education and in business;
- A woman's right to make her own reproductive decisions without governmental interference;
- Improving public schools, as well as funding for more programs to meet educational needs.

To be effective advocates, we must be informed about the issues and what is happening to them at all levels of government. For information at the federal level, there are several sources:

- Encourage members with Internet access to use the AAUW home page (www.aauw.org) to click on Public Policy Program and use the *Two-Minute Activist* feature.
- Develop strategies for sharing e-mail *Get the Facts* with members who do not have the technology.
- *Action Alert* is AAUW legislative newsletter published 10 per year. The cost for members is \$20.00 from P.O. Box 96793, Washington, DC 20090-6793.

To lobby in support of particular issues, write or call your local legislator, including the names and numbers of the bills. Writing your legislator is the best means of communication; however, calling the legislator's district office can also be effective, as the legislator's aide is both knowledgeable and helpful. (While e-mail is inexpensive and fast, some legislators will neither read nor respond to e-mail correspondence. Petitions also have limited effect.) Advocacy is not just a once-a-year event, but an on-going commitment for as long as the issue is not finalized by the passing of a favorable bill.

Have you thought about writing the editor of your local newspaper to publicly recommend support of or opposition to a particular bill? When you write or speak on behalf of AAUW, be sure you represent the position adopted by AAUW.

There are many guidelines and suggestions for being an effective advocate. To learn more, a meeting for AAUW members and friends is scheduled for January 27 at 10:00 a.m. at the Albany City Public Library, 161 Washington Avenue, Albany. You are welcome to attend this informative and stimulating meeting in the Capital District. At the New York State AAUW Convention in Corning in April there will be an exciting and fruitful follow-up panel discussion on advocacy.

We are living in a time when it is crucial for us to take a leading role in advocating for those issues that benefit women, children and families. Our legislators need to hear from us.

Be an advocate!

WHAT A FANTASTIC DAY!: The Hofstra Sister-to-Sister Summit

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My congratulations to the planning committee and Long Island Interbranch on a job well done at the Sister-to-Sister Summit held at Hofstra University on November 6. Many people under the guidance of a superb leader put together a day that will be long remembered by 145 very special girls on Long Island.

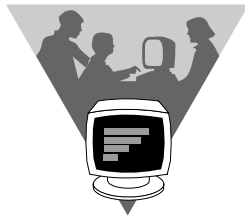
The girls arrived at the Hofstra Student Center promptly at 8:30. After an opportunity to socialize, the girls quickly moved into small groups in chat rooms to discuss their concerns with their peer facilitators. The girls came together in the Plaza Room to share their information in larger groups. Highlights of their discussions were shared with the group at large. The graffiti walls were a great idea - there was a lot of positive feedback.

Chaperones and guests met in the auditorium with Dr. Charol Shakeshaft, a very engaging speaker, who conducted a workshop on "Building Resilience, Supports for Adolescent Stress."

I was pleased to see the ethnic diversity in all the groups. The students got along well with each other. There were several young students who displayed their leadership talents. Many of the girls came away with a more positive self-image. There appeared to be a spark ignited to continue the day's activities in local organizations and schools. There was 100% attendance and as many students again who were turned away, showing the great need for this kind of event in every community.

Technology Update:

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Have you checked out the new branch webpages yet? At the District III meeting, our Internet Editor, Donna Seymour, helped organize six new branch webpages from the template she created. All in an hour! Impressive! They can be viewed at the NYS AAUW webpage (www.northnet.org/nysaauw). Our goal is to have a page for every branch with basic information about who to contact for membership or local programming information. Details of how to do this can be found in the Fall 1998 *Leadership Portfolio* or the Communications webpage.

Did the **Gender Gaps** study get media coverage in your area? As I left home on the morning of October 14 I found a front page story in my newspaper and a report on NPR! The report focuses on emerging gaps in areas such as technology that threaten to disadvantage girls as they confront 21st-century demands. "Girls have narrowed some significant gender gaps, but technology is the new 'boys' club' in our nation's public schools," said AAUW Executive Director Janice Weinman. "While boys program and problem solve with computers, girls use computers for word processing, the 1990s version of typing." Read the complete press release at the AAUW website (www.aauw.org) or order a copy by calling 800/225-9998, ext. 487.

Also in the news, older Americans are apparently not computer shy. Forty percent of Americans over 50 have computers at home, and 25% of them have access to the Internet. This is from a survey conducted by the nonprofit group SeniorNet and online broker Charles Schwab as reported in *USA Today*, Oct. 19. "SeniorNet Online," according to their web page (www.seniornet.com), "is an electronic community which provides opportunities for collaborative lifelong education among older adults...for the purposes of reflecting on their life experiences, exploring and entertaining new ideas, restructuring their knowledge, reformulating their values, sharing their perspectives and contributing to the rest of society." Doesn't this sound like AAUW's mission?

Let NYS AAUW members lead the way in promoting education in computer skills for all women -- including girls in schools, senior citizens, and all of us!

NYS LAF: At the Crossroads

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At the present time 35 of our 53 branches have sent contributions to support the Legal Advocacy Fund. We are 18 branches short of meeting our 100% participation goal! The deadline for sending contributions is January 15, 1999. This date has been established to assure that your branch qualifies for the LAF Star, based on the February 1, 1999 membership figures.

Effective January 1, 1999, the LAF recognition year for 1999 will change to January 1 - December 31. Contributions LAF receives in January and February will still count toward 1998-1999 totals.

One of the litigants you will help with your contribution is Shelley Weinstock. Weinstock continues to face delay in the litigation process as Columbia University has not yet produced documents that were requested by Weinstock and later ordered by the court to be produced. These documents include tenure files for similar tenure candidates and candidates who were granted tenure. Weinstock was an assistant professor of chemistry at Barnard College of Columbia University from 1985 to 1992. The provost of Columbia University denied Weinstock tenure in May 1993 despite recommendations from the Department of Chemistry of both Barnard and Columbia, the Appointments, Tenure, and Promotion Committee, the President of Barnard, and an *ad hoc* committee assigned to evaluate her candidacy. With support from Barnard's president, Weinstock appealed the decision, but the appeal was denied. She was terminated. After filing charges with EEOC, Weinstock filed suit in state court in February 1995. She alleges sex discrimination in the denial of tenure and seeks reinstatement. The LAF board adopted this case in June 1995 and awarded \$10,000 in additional support at its June 1998 board meeting. Weinstock has been awarded \$42,000 in total support.

Old habits and prejudices die hard; so, even with laws on the books that prohibit discrimination, it has been necessary to win equity through the judicial process. Your contributions to the Legal Advocacy Fund help build a body of law that will eventually eradicate discriminatory practices in the workplace!

Branch Action: AAUW at Work in NYS

Greater Rochester Area Branch honored members for their years of membership, including 9 women who have been AAUW members for fifty years or more: Daisy McCarthy, 57 years; Mildred O'Loughlin, 54; Catherine Withey, 53; Mary Catherine Simmons and Ruth Watanabe, 51; and Sylvia Levinson, Lucile Stalker McDowell, Marion Weston Neun and Anna Marie Rauber, 50 years.

Mid-Island Branch held its 5th book and author luncheon for EF with authors Reed Coleman and Lois Beachy Underhill.

North Shore's annual house tour raised money for their EF fund.

Nassau raised funds for scholarships to local high schools and held an art lecture on Mary Cassatt.

Massapequa's Book and Author's Luncheon featured a speaker from the Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation.

Smithtown held a Candidate's Night with the LWV and held an Art Auction to raise Educational Foundation money.

The **Schenectady Branch** held a "Meet the Candidates" night for candidates running for Congress and the State Legislature. Their popular AAUW Children's Plays kicked off the 1998-99 season with a presentation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Many branch members trekked to Seneca Falls to hear Hillary Rodham Clinton, and the branch is learning more about the work of the Schenectady Task Force Against Domestic Violence.

Islip Area's "Non Candidate Forum" was well received. Branch members representing 6 candidates from three Assembly Districts researched their candidate and factually presented the candidate's position on AAUW Issues. When the presentations concluded the actual candidates had an opportunity to make additional comments. It was gratifying to hear that they felt that they were accurately presented - they had never seen a program like this.

North Shore Branch heard about "Gender Bias and Style," an intriguing talk demonstrating the impact of dress on the public attitude toward women, and their branch is well represented on the Task Force of Women on the Job where the Fair Pay Act legislation is being advocated in Albany and Washington.

Northern Westchester sponsors the *Fair Play Newsletter*, focusing on gender issues in nursery school, pre-K, preschool and kindergarten.

The **Cortland Branch's** Sister-to-Sister Summit was held on November 14.

Syracuse Branch members held a Forum on Youth and Violence, a panel discussion with area teenagers, in November.

Support Jerrie Cobb

The NYS AAUW Board of Directors unanimously voted to add our endorsement for aviator Jerrie Cobb (age 67) to join in NASA's study of the common effects of aging and space travel.

Jerrie Cobb began training for the space program in 1959, was the first woman to qualify as an astronaut, and logged over 10,000 hours of flight time. She and 12 other women were denied the opportunity to fly because NASA deemed women unsuitable for space travel. NASA still won't let Cobb fly – even though she is qualified, fit and ready to serve the space program and science.

The treatment of the "Forgotten Thirteen Mercury Astronauts" points out the discrimination against women in the early 60's. Let's not repeat it in the '90s.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is willing to lobby NASA on Ms. Cobb's behalf, but she needs your help. Send letters of support for Jerrie to Ms. Clinton (fax: 202-456-2461, e-mail her at first.lady@whitehouse.gov, or write the White House, Washington, DC 20500) and write Dan Goldin, Administrator, NASA, 300 E Street, Southwest, Washington, DC 20546.

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Questions and articles should be addressed to the *NYS FOCUS* Editor, Donna Seymour, 8 Cedar St., Potsdam, NY 13676, 315/265-6985, e-mail: onthego@northnet.org

Spring Deadline: January 15, 1999

AAUW Readers' Theater - A Big Hit!

The AAUW **Readers' Theater**, which debuted at the six fall conferences, was the #1 rated dramatic production of the year. Members not only enjoyed the amateur theatrics, but learned a lot about AAUW's history and mission. Each branch president was given a copy of the script, authored by **Ithaca Branch** member Jeanette Knapp. The script is also available for downloading from the NYS AAUW website.

Cross Border Issues Forum Report

Katherine Briggs, St. Lawrence County Branch Public Information Officer

Since 1987, AAUW and CFUW have co-sponsored four public international forums on environmental and health issues. In the Eastern Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region, the Jefferson County and St. Lawrence County branches of AAUW form a natural hands-across-the-border partnership with the Belleville, Brockville, Cornwall and Kingston Ontario clubs of CFUW to address concerns of mutual interest.

The most recent of these public forums, **Clean Air, Clean Water: The Toxic Tide, No Place to Hide**, was hosted by the Kingston CFUW Club and held on Oct. 17 at the Donald Gordon Centre, Queens University, Kingston.

At the forum, New York AAUW had branch representation from **Jefferson County, Ithaca, St. Lawrence County, Skaneateles** and **Syracuse**. CFUW members and environmentalists came from as far west as Port Colborne, which is beyond Toronto, to Montreal in the east. The age spread among participants went from college freshmen to grandmothers, one of whom described her four-year old grandson admonishing her about not wasting hot water.

The focus was on what is now known about the health implications of air and water quality in this region; what is known about the level of exposure to environmental carcinogens; and what industrial and legislative measures are being taken to reduce these levels. An American and a Canadian who had particular knowledge in that field were co-leaders for three scheduled workshops on Industry, Environmental Issues, and Legislation.

The keynote speaker was Joann Hale, a Love Canal mother who, with others, was instrumental in drawing national attention to the health hazards of industrial pollution in the Buffalo and Niagara Falls area in 1978. A founding member of the Love Canal Homeowners Association, she gave a personal account of her experiences.

The group of "hysterical housewives" concerned about birth defects and illnesses in their families developed into a citizens' action group that drew media attention, and with the help of

ecumenical church coalitions, prodded the health department and the agencies responsible for clean-up of hazardous waste into doing something about their plight.

This high school graduate, who as a young mother had to learn how to deal with insensitive and inefficient bureaucracy, now works as a legal assistant on environment litigation, is chair of the Interfaith Center for Environmental Stewardship that responds in disaster relief efforts, and a Church World Service Disaster Consultant for FEMA Regions I and II.

After Joann Hale's keynote speech, one woman told her that, with her Ph.D. in biology, she could not have presented the information in a more lucid or compelling manner. This was a dramatic demonstration of the need for AAUW to reconsider eligibility for membership so as to make it more inclusive.

Those who attended learned a great deal about the complexities of creating solutions for, preventing, and regulating international environmental problems. The Jefferson County and St. Lawrence County branches plan to continue with their study. To read a copy of the preliminary report unveiled at the conference, visit the branch website: www.northnet.org/stlawrenceaaauw/toxctide.htm.

Why Join an Organization?

You don't buy a newspaper, you buy news.
You don't buy glasses, you buy vision.
You don't buy awnings, you buy shade.
You don't buy a mattress, you buy comfort.
You don't buy membership in an organization,
You buy cooperation with people to accomplish goals you cannot do alone.

- from the *New York State Voter*, Fall 1998



New York State *FOCUS* (USPS-390-570)
Winter 1998

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Additional Entries

The **American Association of University Women** promotes equity for all women and girls, lifelong education, and positive societal change.

The **AAUW Educational Foundation** provides funds to advance education, research, and self-development for women and to foster equity and positive societal change.

The **AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund** provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination.

In principle and practice **AAUW** values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

Important!

Attention postmaster: Dated Material. Please do not delay. Send form #3597 to AAUW Record Office, 1111 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Education Foundation News

Helen Engel, EF Vice President - 315/343-9678 rengel@oswego.edu

As the New Year starts it gives us time to reflect on the achievements of the Educational Foundation and to think about what we hope to accomplish in 1999, the gateway to 2000. Since 1888 when the first \$350 was given to Ida Street to attend Graduate School at the University of Michigan to the 301 awards totaling \$2.8 million for 1998-99, we have been helping and must continue to help women achieve.

In 1988, the centennial year of the first grant, the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund came into being. It has funded teacher fellowships and research reports. In 1992, the first comprehensive report *How Schools Shortchange Girls* was a ground breaking publication that alerted our nation to gender equity problems in our schools. This led to other publications and some positive changes have been seen. I hope that each of you has read and made use of the latest research report which came out in October 1998, entitled "Gender Gap." If you have not used this report, please try to do so. The report contains some good news and some bad news. Included with the report are media materials and branch action materials. Use these.

To keep up the progress we have made, the Educational Foundation needs your continued support. An excellent way to increase contributions is through the purchase of a New York State Equity Future. The

money from an Equity Future is committed to the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund. For a \$25 Equity Future you or your Branch can honor or memorialize someone. It makes an excellent gift for family members or friends on any occasion. Remember money contributed this way will also be credited to your Branch.

AAUW has a pin designed to honor the people who donate \$100 to the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund. If you contribute \$100 you can receive four New York State Equity Futures for your use and the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund pin. The 1998 pin is purple and diamond shaped with the year written on the pin. This pin has been given for contributions made July 1, 1998 through December 1998, but I will have some pins available in January for those of you would like a complete set of pins and do not have this one. There will be a new pin in 1999.

Please use the Equity Future contribution form from your branch mailings, whether you contribute \$25 or want to contribute more. We need you. Remember that every dollar counts toward helping women and girls achieve their full potential.