



FOCUS

What Are AAUW NYS Districts and Why Do They Have Meetings?

Evelyn M. Currie, AAUW-NYS President
emcurrie@earthlink.net 518/399-3711



NEW YORK STATE

AAUW 21st-Century
Platinum Award, 2002-2003

Once upon a time, AAUW NYS combined branches within a specified geographical boundary into a District. The original intent was to encourage camaraderie and networking among nearby branches. The District Meeting in the Fall was to impart AAUW priorities to the members who were not able to attend the AAUW NYS Convention. The Districts have been modified several times through the years in hopes of increasing the attendance of our members at these meetings.

In 2003 the AAUW NYS Board announced the District fall meeting dates at the Convention District Caucuses. This was done to allow the District Chair and the Host Branch a “heads-up” on their preparation. By having each district meeting on a different weekend, it allowed the President and other Board members to be at almost all of the meetings. It also allowed us to live our Diversity statement by not meeting on Rosh Hashanah or the day of the Induction Ceremony of the National Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

In the past, some District programs strayed from learning about AAUW issues or “Living the Mission” programming. So it was refreshing for me, as I attended 6 of the 7 District Meetings this fall, to be surrounded by women who understand the vision of the 17 women who founded the organization that became AAUW. I sensed that they want to help AAUW grow in purpose, not just struggle to survive.

District 5 started my journey with a wonderful Legislative Forum featuring Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef. The keynote talk about Title IX and Gail Nordmoe’s “Shape the Future Through Change” presentation enthused us all!

District 7 kept my journey upbeat with five NYS Board members sharing ideas on AAUW priorities and policies. Assemblywoman DeDe Scozzafava updated us on Assembly procedure and key issues coming up for the next legislative term.

District 1 had a “Branch Program Best Practices” Panel that was exciting and sent Branch members home with wonderful programming ideas. Linda Brodsky, our LAF litigant suing the University of Buffalo, brought tears to my eyes as she told “her story.”

Happy New Year
Graphic

In This Issue:

Celebrating Art.....	p. 2
Civic Participation.....	p. 3
LAF: Campus Outreach ...p.	4
Mobilizing the Vote.....	p. 5
Media Matters.....	p.6
Open Windows for Girls..	p. 7
Voter Education.....	p. 8
UN Update	p. 9
Branch Action Notes.....	p. 10
Membership News.....	p. 11
Women in Politics.....	p. 12

Living the Mission
Graphic

(Cont'd on page 2)

District 2 had six NYS Board members updating them on “Living the Mission” priorities. The Yates County Branch hosted for the first time and did a great job. All seven Branch Presidents in the District were there to receive a “Living the Mission” T-Shirt.

District 4 invited a representative of the Civil Liberties Union to present the US Patriot’s Act. We each shared which AAUW Public Policy issue was the most important to us and why. The four NYS Board members present joined in the discussion.

District 6 was attended by five NYS Board members and 63 members from the 11 branches on Long Island. The keynote speaker, who has been in politics for 50 years, gave a great start to a day of AAUW “Living the Mission.”

District 3 was a great end to my District experience! Southern NY hosted and each Branch brought a LAF Basket for a Silent Auction. Elizabeth Cohen, a *Binghamton Press* columnist, spoke on “Open Doors, Shattered Minds: How today’s women may lose sight of hard won freedoms.”

How I wish that more AAUW members had availed themselves of the opportunity to “unshutter their minds” with the challenges presented at our 2003 AAUW NYS District Meetings! **Evvie**

Celebrating Living the Mission with Women Artists

Jane Smith, AAUW-NYS Program VP
607/868-3243 blufview@empacc.net

As I traveled across the state throughout the autumn, I learned of several branch projects that were great examples of mission-based programming. The Skaneateles Area Branch in the Finger Lakes has created a community event dedicated to “Celebrating Women in Art.”

This unique project was the product of a brainstorming session in 2001. Branch leaders wanted to showcase the beautiful work of local women artists and encourage local residents to support their work. The branch arranged for the show to be held at the local Presbyterian Church on a Sunday in mid-November. Art works were put on display during the morning of the noon to 6 pm Sunday Art Show. This eliminated any branch liability issues.

The mediums represented include watercolors, oils, fabric arts, jewelry, pottery and some furniture. The first year showcased 40 women artists with a wide spread of age from their 20s to 70s. In 2002 there were artworks from 57 women artists displayed on two floors. During the show, two young women from the local high school played piano, splitting the five-hour time span. Branch members provided sweet and savory treats for the public and two local flower clubs donated arrangements.

A branch committee organizes the event with branch and local help. A community volunteer handles publicity; fliers are printed and distributed. Branch members donate food and the branch pays for the punch served. In the first year the local high school provided and installed screens for hanging artwork. A local gallery added more screens for the second year. There is no charge to attend, but donations are accepted at the door. This year over 500 adults and children attended.

Branch President Joyce Jowaisas sees a major plus of the event is the opportunity for local people to view and purchase local artwork. (Five percent of each sale goes toward the expenses of the event.) The Celebrating Women in Art event has become a great place for people to meet as well; community members come and stay for the whole afternoon. Joyce adds that the support each artist feels is another key element. Women artists are empowered by the praise and positive comments made by community members who view and buy their artwork.

The branch benefits as well from the increased visibility and goodwill in the community. They set up a table at the exit for membership committee members and the event has brought new people into the branch. And best of all, Joyce says, “It helped build good spirits in the branch members, who were so proud of what they did.”

For more information about this event and to find out how you can import it into your branch area, contact Joyce Jowaisas at jowaisas@adelphia.net or call 315/685-3789. The Skaneateles Area Branch has been awarded an AAUW New York State Living the Mission Award by state President Evvie Currie for this event.

Blue Print for Living the Mission:
Benefits of Civic Participation
Congressman Lee Hamilton



During my 34 years in Congress, I must have talked to hundreds of groups in my district about the importance of civic participation. They expected a big speech -- and usually got one -- but they were often surprised by what I had to say.

Since I was a federal legislator, they assumed I'd be full of advice about getting involved with national politics: writing letters, meeting with members of Congress, following congressional debates on television or checking members' voting records. These are certainly worthy pursuits that merit encouragement. But I'd tell my constituents that civic life is best lived in the neighborhood, and that they could perform no better service than finding a problem within their community and doing something about it.

We would all like to resolve the big problem: health care, Social Security, the tax code, national defense. Some of us have those opportunities, but most of us don't.

On the other hand, all of us can work for small, incremental changes. You can work to get a school rebuilt or a road repaired. You can make sure that ramps for the handicapped are carved into street corners. You can convince local officials to put up a safety signal at a dangerous intersection. You can help a worthy, disadvantaged student to enter medical school or ensure a young woman who lives in your town steps into the world with more opportunity than her mother.

These are not trivial examples. They save lives and communities, making them safer and better. The wellspring of American democracy lies in countless small actions like these that make ours a better nation. Indeed, I've always liked the attitude of the carpenter who said, "I cannot solve the world's problems, but I can help build this house."

It's not always easy to become involved. We have other things to worry about -- our jobs, our bills, the well-being of our families. No doubt, taking care of these private interests is a civic virtue in its own right, and we are good -- in this country -- at protecting our individual interests. But all of us benefit from giving at least some of our attention to advancing the public

interest, or, as the founding fathers called it, the "common good."

Most Americans would like to live in better communities, a better state and a better nation. But they simply don't know where to go, whom to contact, what to do. The first step is to look around. Most of us are good at finding things that need improvement.

What in your community needs fixing? What needs repair? Who are the key players in the town or city that you could talk to? How can you best communicate a grievance or articulate a solution?

If you get to know your community well -- the problems that need addressing, the various residents and the issues that engage their attention, the people who hold formal power and the informal leaders who have the ability to get a message out or pull a crowd together -- you can become involved, and you will achieve results. Set goals, craft messages, organize and share the credit when you're successful. You'll be surprised at what you can accomplish.

When we become involved in our communities, our cynicism dissipates and morale improves. Indeed, civic engagement is the greatest antidote I know for cynicism. Through it, we do more than improve our lives and surroundings -- we reach a better understanding of our ability to influence change, and we no longer feel distant from centers of power and decision-making. We also gain an appreciation for democracy -- how to understand different points of view and forge a consensus behind a course of action.

After all, the success of any democracy is determined by the participation of its citizens.

Lee Hamilton is the director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He served as a U.S. Representative from Indiana from 1965 to 1999. This editorial appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* on October 13, 2003.

Legal Advocacy Fund: Campus Outreach in NYS

Susan Sontup, LAF Vice President

tresswann@yahoo.com

516/679-6274

The mission of the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund is to provide funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination. Since 1981 the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund has helped students, faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education challenge discriminatory practices — practices such as sexual harassment, denial of tenure or promotion, pay inequity, and inequality in women's athletics programs.

One way LAF promotes equity for women in higher education is by educating the college and university community about sex discrimination and ways to improve conditions through campus outreach. Campus outreach educates students and staff about sex discrimination issues, shares ways to address and prevent sex discrimination, and provides action steps toward creating a more equitable campus climate. LAF believes that the more men and women know about sex discrimination and the prevention policies in place at their institutions, the less sex discrimination will occur.

AAUW-New York State's Legal Advocacy Fund program is launching a new campus outreach initiative. At our Fall 2003 meeting, the NYS Board established the **Evvie Currie Giving Circle** to fund LAF outreach programs within New York State. The Giving Circle reflects Evvie's interest in positive societal change, equity and discrimination prevention as we address issues of sexual harassment and discrimination.

A Giving Circle is a group of donors who pool their contributions to make an impact by supporting a

specific project, in this case, campus outreach programs in New York State. Giving Circles are a powerful way to impact social change. The Evvie Currie Giving Circle will enable us to honor Evvie by funding programs that will be proactive in addressing sexual discrimination and harassment issues that confront women on the college campuses of New York State. Our pooled dollars in this giving circle will have a greater impact than smaller gifts. We will work with the Association to determine the campus outreach programs to be funded with our gifts.

Evvie Currie



LAF Giving Circle

Typically, the LAF staff works with administrators, faculty, and students at each university to determine the best type of presentation and the specific issues to be addressed. Presentations vary in format, from panel discussions to brown bag lunches to video presentations with open discussions. Since 1997, LAF has presented campus outreach programs on more than 20 campuses, including the University of Rochester.

The Evvie Currie Giving Circle is the first effort of this nature in New York State. As such it will serve as a model for others in the state, as well as the nation, and represent the commitment of AAUW NYS to "Living the Mission" by promoting lifelong education, equity for all women and girls, and positive societal change. Branches and individuals can earmark contributions to the Giving Circle that will stay right here at work in New York. This circle will be closed on March 30, 2005. Regular updates will be sent to members of the circle as it progresses.

The **Task Force for Tobacco-Free Women and Girls** is a statewide initiative to address tobacco from women's perspective because girls start to use tobacco for different reasons than boys and women encounter different difficulties than men when trying to quit. The Task Force strives to raise awareness of the ways in which women and girls are targeted by tobacco promotion, to encourage women's and girls' organizations to make tobacco use prevention a priority, and to develop and implement women-centered strategies and programs for reducing tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure among women and girls. AAUW-NYS President Evelyn Currie is a member of the task Force Steering Committee. The AAUW-NYS Board endorsed the work of the Task Force at our Fall 2003 Board meeting. For more information, call the NYS Smoker's Quitline: 1-866-NY-Quits (1-866-679-8487) or visit www.nysmokefree.com.



Living the Mission . . . Mobilizing the Vote

Betsy Forkas, Public Policy Director
518/377-6919 bforkas@earthlink.net



At the winter meeting in November, the AAUW-NYS Board of Directors took a bold step to change the way we organize branches to interact with each other around issues of concern to all of us. We will **not** hold traditional District Meetings in the Fall of 2004. Instead, we will organize branches according to congressional districts. Branches will work together to facilitate voter education, voter registration, and candidate forums within their congressional district. In addition, branches will be encouraged and assisted in building coalitions with like-minded organizations and campus groups to mobilize the vote.

How will all this happen? We will determine which branches are in which Congressional district and appoint AAUW coordinators for each of the 29 districts. The second step will be establishing coalitions with community organizations like BPW, the YWCA, and the League of Women Voters, as well as campus groups.

Every branch will receive a tool kit for coalitions to use to register voters, develop and present a Candidate Forum in October, conduct Voter Education drives, and encourage the participation of college students and AAUW Members-at-Large.

We are very excited to be able to present an idea that exemplifies our theme: Living the Mission, will work for every branch, has the potential for high visibility as well as membership growth, presents AAUW in a leadership role in our communities, and provides a community service.

The Mobilize the Vote Project will be fully described at the State Convention in April. Stay tuned for more details, but start planning now for your branch participation!

Girls for Planet Earth is a year-old national program developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society with funding from the National Science Foundation's Gender Equity Program. Young women between the ages of 14 and 17 explore the fascinating worlds of ecology and wildlife biology through a service-learning project based in local communities. Since 1895, the Wildlife Conservation Society has worked from their Bronx Zoo headquarters to save wildlife and wild lands throughout the world.

Girls for Planet Earth encourages girls to become environmental leaders. Their website includes information on Service-Learning Projects, Women Working in Conservation, and has a Virtual Clubhouse for girls who participate. The need to encourage girls to stay interested in math and science is critical. AAUW Educational Foundation research shows that women receive only 28% of the computer science bachelor's degrees awarded in the United States and just 18% of the engineering degrees. In physics, women account for only 20% of the bachelor's degrees and 12% of the doctorates.

These small groups of high school students around the country who are accepted into the program from affiliated organizations, such as the Girl Scouts of America, conduct science-oriented service learning projects that, in addition to being scientifically rigorous, must also benefit the communities in which they live. AAUW would make an excellent mentoring organization in your community!

Living 
the Mission

For more information:

- Girls for Planet Earth: <http://www.girlsforplanetearth.net>
- Wildlife Conservation Society: <http://wcs.org/>

Why Critical Analysis of Media Messages Matters

Donna Seymour, Communications Director 315/265-6985

onthego@northnet.org

Three news stories that broke in a recent 24-hour period illustrate just how young people in this country are being bombarded by media messages that are having a profound effect on their behavior, their values, and their choices. And these media messages are impacting to them at younger and younger ages.

On Oct. 29, the *New York Times* ran a story titled, "A Growing Number of Video Viewers Watch From Crib" by Tamar Lewin. A study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that on a typical day in the study, 59% of children from 6 months to 2 years old watch television and 42% watch a videotape or a DVD.

Other statistics from the Kaiser study indicate that 10% in this age group have a television remote control designed for children, more than a third of the families in the study live in homes where the television is on almost all the time, and these children are much less likely than others to be able to read at ages 4 to 6.

In another story released on the same day, *Women's eNews* commentator Sheila Gibbons asks, "Has there ever before been a flood of such contradictory, confusing high-pressure 'advice' directed at teen girls that serves their interests less?" Young girls get conflicted advice about important lifestyle choices, including the how-tos of dating, dieting, being popular, the "right" clothes, and what constitutes beauty, just to name a few.

The epidemic of eating disorders that haunt teen girls is exacerbated by the dieting and fashion advice in these magazines. And the really scary news is that "Teen magazine this fall reported, without comment, that 35 percent of U.S. girls 6 to 12 years old have been on at least one diet, and that among normal-weight girls 50 to 70 percent consider themselves overweight."

A stunt on the MTV show, *Jackass*, was credited with "inspiring" ten New York State college students who went on a multi-site crime and vandalism spree.

These media messages are designed by experts in the fields of communications, advertising, and

marketing to target the most vulnerable and least experienced in our society. Soda companies know how important it is for them to target youngsters in order to capture the taste wars early – a sports scoreboard paid for by Coke or Pepsi may reap a lifetime of beverage purchases by the thousands of young people who pass through the schoolhouse doors.

What can AAUW do?

One proactive action is to educate youngsters through the **Turn Beauty Inside Out Campaign**, an ongoing public education effort started by *New Moon Magazine* and coordinated by Mind on the Media. 2004 Turn Beauty Inside Out (TBIO) Action Kits are available for TBIO Day on May 19, 2004. On that day the focus will be on encouraging girls and boys (not to mention women and men) to redefine beauty to focus on who they are and what they do, not on how they look.

The TBIO Action Kit, available by mail or e-mail, is designed to give you ideas about how to use TBIO Day to raise awareness, inspire discussion and foster coalition building or involvement in girls' issues. It includes a Step-by-step Guide to Organizing a TBIO Event in your community, Follow Up Activities, and Media Tips to publicize your efforts.

Mind on the Media is a non-profit organization working to increase public awareness about the harmful effects of media images. You can find out more by ordering a TBIO Action Kit or by visiting their website (www.mindonthemedia.org).

My thanks to Janet Forbes, the AAUW-NYS Initiative for Educational Equity Director, for bringing this important information on the Turn Beauty Inside Out Campaign to our attention. Janet is happy to assist any branch who wants to get to work on this right now; contact her at: jlforbes@hotmail.com or 716/483-3525. AAUW-NYS Program VP Jane Smith is also ready to help you; contact her at 607/868-3243 or e-mail blufview@empacc.net.

Living the Mission – Making a Difference

Open Windows for Girls:

A Mission-Based Community-Action Program

Janet L. Forbes, Initiative for Educational Equity Director
716/483-3525 jforbes@hotmail.com

Since 1989 the **St. Lawrence County Branch** has sponsored Open Windows for Girls, a series of educational enrichment camperships for low-income girls to attend a summer camping experience to broaden their horizons and provide an open window to the future. Faye White, the Open Window coordinator, was drawn to AAUW over 10 years ago when she read a newspaper article highlighting the program and the opportunities it offered to local girls. Faye knew "A program that enables girls, age 10 to 15, who would otherwise not have that opportunity, attend summer enrichment programs"... was something she wanted to be a part of.

Open Windows for Girls was created to combat the frustration branch members felt in responding to the reality for many girls in St. Lawrence County. As the largest county in the state, and one of the poorest, it also had a high teenage pregnancy rate. Poverty, isolation, low self-esteem, and non-supportive families and communities still hold many girls back. Open Windows was created to show them they could do something different, go somewhere new, learn about something new, develop a talent, and meet people outside of their own proscribed circle.

In 1989, two girls went for week of summer dance lessons with \$70 in proceeds from two bake sales. The program has grown each year; in 2003, 24 girls were served for a cost of nearly \$3,400 in a wide variety of sports, math & science, writing and other kinds of camps

Open Windows does make a difference. One of the first graduates has gone on to be a coach at her former high school. Her self-confidence and leadership skills are helping a new group of girls mature and expand their horizons. Another has opened her own business.

The financial support for Open Windows comes from a variety of fundraisers and direct solicitation. The camperships range in size from \$120 to \$200 and are paid directly to the camp or school. The branch works with volunteers in the local schools to identify the girls who may be potential participants.



Faye that

feels one

of the biggest successes of this program is encouraging other people and organizations to help give girls an opportunity to expand their lives. One of the local teachers' organizations now shares the cost each year for one or two girls to attend a camp. The branch has also targeted many professional women in the area as potential donors to the program.

Open Windows for Girls is an ideal example of an AAUW mission-based, community-action program that addresses all the elements of our mission by promoting equity for all women and girls, lifelong education, and positive societal change. It also draws potential members to a branch. Collaboration with other local organizations that serve the needs of women and girls is another way to support AAUW's work and expand our impact.

Want to know more about Open Windows for Girls? Contact Faye White at 315/393-2215 or whitefw@twcny.rr.com.

AAUW NYS 2004 CONVENTION APRIL 23-25 2004

WHY COME TO CONVENTION?

1. To network with women who are involved in "Living the Mission" of AAUW in New York State.
2. To get away and share a weekend with like-minded people exchanging ideas at a good hotel with locally acclaimed food.
3. To become informed, stimulated, and energized ready to continue being part of "Living the Mission" in your branch.
4. To have the opportunity to find out what is happening in AAUW, to talk with the NYS leaders to gain an even better understanding of the many facets of AAUW.
5. To find out what other branches across the state are doing to "Live the Mission."

The Votes Are In: Voter Education Week a Success!

Jann Mirchandani, Voter Education Director

718/671-1649 mirchman@ix.netcom.com

We have reports from all over the state on voter education programs.

St. Lawrence County Branch's Betty Graham contacted the North Country Library System director who called the Board of Elections and had voter registration materials shipped directly to every library in the system, which covers several North County counties and dozens of public libraries. **Poughkeepsie Branch** held a forum on environmentally friendly development, a significant local issue, to "build our visibility and networking" says Public Policy chair Peggy Keland. **Syracuse Branch** encouraged members to attend the League of Women Voters' discussion on the federal legislation known as the Help America Vote Act and concerns about the new voting machines in New York State.

I know many other branches have held legislative forums, voter registration drives and other voter education activities. I received many e-mail inquiries from Public Policy/Voter Education Chairs asking for suggestions on planning their Voter Ed program.

This was really *exactly* what I was hoping to achieve this year. We got many first-timers involved in planning some mission-based programs. We got the word out about AAUW and our mission. We networked with other like-minded organizations. We made a difference by educating members, friends and neighbors about issues important to us all! I can't think of a better way to "warm-up" for next year when the stakes will be much higher.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first "Voter Education Week" drive. The **2004 Mobilize the Vote** is already in the works!

Voter Education In Action:

The **North Shore Branch** co-sponsored a local candidate's forum with the League of Women Voters at Hofstra University Law School.

The **Islip Area Branch** worked with the NAACP to attract a large audience for a Candidate's night. Both candidates for Suffolk County Executive and local legislative candidates presented their positions and answered pertinent questions from the audience.

The USA Patriot Act was the subject of a meeting organized by the **Kingston Branch** in conjunction with the local LWV in September. A standing-room-only crowd of more than 200 heard three expert speakers who provided information on the provisions of the legislation and the pros and cons of the controversy that it has sparked since enactment just after 9-11. One of the marks of the meeting's success was the lively discussion that continued after adjournment.

The **Ontario County Branch** worked with local candidates to put out fliers with pictures and brief notes from each to distribute to local

businesses. The branch got excellent visibility by placing the AAUW logo on the fliers and got a picture and article in the local newspaper.

Eve Widdows of the **Westchester Branch** reports they distributed Voter education and registration materials through the public library system in the county. Members also went to three colleges during Voter Education Week with displays and information about how to register to vote and applications for absentee ballots.

The **Jefferson County Branch** hosted its annual "Meet the Candidates" night at Jefferson Community College with candidates for Watertown mayor and city council.

At the **District 5 Conference** Betsy Forkas, the AAUW-NYS Public Policy Director, presented Congresswoman Nita Lowey with a certificate of appreciation from AAUW-NYS for her commitment to educational opportunity, health care reform, public safety, environmental protection and women's issues.

The **Bath Branch** distributed voter registration forms at local businesses, libraries and schools. The high school Honor Society registered students who had just turned 18 and teachers who had recently moved. AAUW members assisted local residents to fill out forms at the town hall.

Update on the Briefings on the Status of Human Rights for Children

Joan Monk, International Affairs Director

914/245-7704 ftmaven@bestweb.net

AAUW worked in coalition with the League of Women Voters and other organizations to sponsor "Briefings on the Status of Human Rights for Children" at the United Nations on October 7, 2003. Members in attendance were privileged to hear: Kay Maxwell, President, LWVUS; Richard Morgan, Chief, Strategic Planning and Program of UNICEF; Martin S. Rendon, VP for Public Policy and Advocacy of the US Fund for UNICEF and Doris Schapira, LWVUS Main Observer to the United Nations.

Kay Maxwell began her talk by saying: "The abuse of children is a global sin and we are all accountable." Her passion and commitment to children was evident as she so eloquently helped us believe how the poorest child in the most remote part of the world is our concern today.

Richard Morgan informed us about the Convention on the Rights for Children (CRC), the most ratified convention to date. (But two countries, the United States and Somalia, have not ratified yet.)

There was both good news and bad news on the global front for children.

- Although there has been a decrease in the number of deaths of children each year, 11 million children die each year.
- Half of these deaths could be prevented through basic interventions: immunizations, breast feeding, safe delivery, clean water and basic sanitation practices.
- More children are in school today than in any other time in human history, but with the growth in population there are also more children out of school as well.
- HIV/AIDS pandemic is drastically affecting the lives of children, especially girls, creating 14 million orphans.
- Millions of children are involved in prostitution, hazardous labor and soldiering all over the world.

What can we do? A social movement is needed to create a world fit for children. It is imperative that we remind politicians that children are their best hope. We must inspire, motivate and pressure governments to find the money and political will to create a world fit for children.

Martin S. Rendon informed us about how the funding for UNICEF happens on Capitol Hill. He also spoke about the pros and cons of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Children. The US Children's Welfare League hopes to build a strong constituency to promote the ratification of the CRC. He inspired us with his closing remarks saying, "We are in a rare moment in history where we are trying to improve the human condition."

Donna Schapira spoke at length about her role in an NGO (non-government organization) the UN. "Girls are at risk all over the world" was the theme of her presentation. The status of girls in the world is perilous when girls face such issues as female infanticide; the preference for boys; girls caring for younger siblings; female genital mutilation; prostitution and slavery. The Working Group on Girls has made strides on many of these areas.

We can all help to make a difference. Doing nothing is not an option.

2004 AAUW-NYS CONVENTION LIVING THE MISSION II

April 23-25, 2004
Albany Marriott

IT'S A CAPITAL IDEA

Convention information, Hotel & Convention
Registration Forms available from
Contact: wyszcarmen@msn.com
Telephone: 631/472-9377
www.northnet.org/nysaauw/albany04.htm

Convention Registration forms will not appear in the Spring 2004 FOCUS. You must order them!

The hotel package includes two nights lodging, six meals, welcome reception and breaks. The cost per person is: \$400 single, \$276 double, \$234 triple.

Living the Mission in New York State Branch Action Notes

Buffalo Branch held its second Transitions Conference for Women Returning to School in mid-November with a daylong program. Workshop sessions included Strategies for Success on Campus, Wonder Woman Doesn't Live Here Anymore, Financing your Degree, Picking a College that Meets your Needs, and Where the Jobs Are. Attendees also took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a tool that provides insight into individual personality type and strengths.

The **Jefferson County Branch** learned more about the Watertown Victims Assistance Center with the Center Director, Elaina Marra-Hedrick. They also collected professional clothing for clients of the center.

Local government officials, school district staff, coalition partners, and community residents joined **Huntington Branch** members to honor nine 2003 Excellence in Science Award winners in November. This special reception was hosted by our new partner, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, at their Dolan DNA Learning Center. The evening included: a tour of the Story of a Gene exhibit, an engaging presentation by Dr. Shirley Chan, a Scientist who became a Multimedia Producer of educational materials for the center, and a musical performance by the Northport High School String Quartet. The young women received a special honor from CSHL - a signed copy of Dr. James D. Watson's book, The Double Helix, and from the Town Supervisor - official certificates of recognition. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory is where geneticist Barbara

McClintock did her ground-breaking gene research which led to her Nobel prize for medicine in 1983.

Mid-Island Branch members participated in a Town of Hempstead meeting on domestic violence. They conducted a clothing drive for Bethany House, a local safe house for battered women and their children.

The **Ontario County Branch** awarded two \$1000 scholarships to local community college graduates enrolled in area colleges for their BA degrees.

The **St. Lawrence County Branch** awarded their biennial Agent of Change Award to Hilary Oak, a creative agent of change for the Arts in the community. Since 1987 the branch has been recognizing local women for their efforts as a volunteer, employer or employee to advance the cause of women's rights, exemplify the importance of equity for women, and/or to bring about significant positive change in the community. Over 400 people were served at the branch's fourth Professional Clothing Fair. There were enough donated clothing left over to hold a second fair in the spring!

Westchester's Equity in Education Action Group is focusing on their Hispanic Outreach Project with the Westchester Business Institute this year. Volunteers tutor the Hispanic students in English and Math each week. They are also organizing three workshops: Time Management, Self Esteem & Confidence Building, and Note Taking.

Smithtown Branch celebrated their charter anniversary with a retrospective of their first 30 years with many charter members and past presidents in attendance. Former AAUW-NYS president Pat Hogeboom gave the keynote address.

COME TO THE AAUW NYS CONVENTION IT'S A CAPITAL IDEA!

The Keynote speaker will be Antonia Novello, New York State Health Commissioner, a former U.S. Surgeon General.

Two Computer workshops will be given on Friday.

Saturday afternoon workshops include Personal Finances, Defending the Bill of Rights - An In-depth Summary of the USA Patriot Act, The Young and Not So Restless (Membership Issues for the 21st Century), Transitions, and Leadership Tools.

A tour of Albany's historic district.

Fun with the LAF Basket Silent Auction, the EF 5K Walk/Run and the IFUW Bina Roy Lap Swim.

Awards and Branch Honors.

AAUW Afterhours, complete with music by a female duo.

Membership: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU!

Diane Silvestro, AAUW-NYS Membership VP
belvoir6@hotmail.com 716/631-3349

AAUW does a lot of great work, Sister-to-Sister, Transitions, and mission-based programs supporting positive action for women, *all made possible by your participation*. The Association offers a number of benefits; discount programs, a voice in government, a powerful network, *AAUW Outlook* our award-winning quarterly magazine, and updates on public policies that affect your life. But the most valuable benefits are personal - you are investing in your own intellectual growth. Being active in AAUW lets you accomplish goals, develop personal relationships, and influence people and events, on many levels.

You know that in today's political climate, rights and privileges AAUW has championed since 1881, when Marion Talbot called a meeting of 17 women to establish the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, are being eroded. At a time when women are busier than ever, we need more hands and minds to prevent this. Perhaps there was a time when some members felt we should be discreet, but that time is gone forever. We need to show our **AAUW Pride!** We need to make our lengthy reputation of supporting education and equity for women and girls well known.

Let other women know what AAUW means to you, tell them what you've gained from your association with other like-minded women. Talk up AAUW wherever you are. Invite non-members to meetings, dialogues, and seminars to engage them in networking, solicit their input as to what it'll take for them to join. Reach out into the community. If you are involved in another organization, act as liaison for both to work in unison, personal contacts work. Post AAUW mission and activities where you work, we need to attract younger members to carry on. Publicize AAUW in every way imaginable, offer to put up notices in places you regularly frequent like grocery stores, health clubs, libraries, banks, malls, recreation centers, and anyplace there's a community bulletin board.

Keep AAUW strong. Remember what adherence to our mission has accomplished over the years. Pass the torch to a new generation. Bring more members into AAUW to assure it's future as an advocate for women and girls. Most of all, remember what AAUW has meant to you, what it can mean to those whose lives we affect but who are unaware of how they can help.

"Fellow" is the Major Part of Fellowships!

Phyllis Anderson, Educational Foundation VP
631/234-2451 EFVPforNYSAAUW@aol.com

For more than a century, the AAUW Educational Foundation has advanced education and career opportunities for women. From the first 1888 fellowship of \$350, the program has increased dramatically! In the academic year 2002-2003 we awarded almost \$4 million to help nearly 300 exceptional women achieve their personal and professional goals.

It has been a pleasure to meet some of the recipients of grants. Last year, visiting the New York City and North Shore Branches, I heard several young women speak of their studies and plans, which were as varied as the number of speakers. One American Fellow, Jessica Cattelino, received the Sandy Bernard/Alice Ann Leidel Fellowship and the Margaret Brandner Tilt/Warwick (NY) Branch Fellowship. (The Warwick Branch disbanded, but their good work lives on.) Jessica's field is sociocultural anthropology; her research analyzed the relationship between casino gambling and Florida Seminole Indians.

Jessica says "Receiving a 2002-03 AAUW American Dissertation Fellowship was a great honor and an enormous practical benefit, and I sincerely thank all of you who support this award program. I am nearly finished with my anthropological dissertation, *High Stakes: Seminole Sovereignty in the Casino Era*, which addresses the relationship between tribal casinos and Florida Seminole Indian efforts to define and exercise their self-determination as a culturally distinct people. This fall I will leave New York, where I am enrolled at the New York University, to go to New Mexico. I look forward to finishing the dissertation, working on my book, and experiencing a year in the American Southwest."

It is exciting to know that our fundraising can achieve such wonderful results. Individually and collectively we live and share the Mission to help women. The Educational Foundation gives us a "big bang for our bucks." New York is well respected for our past contributions, and I am confident that our legacy will continue. Help us celebrate when your Branch is recognized in April at our NYS Convention! Reaching the goal of \$25 per member would really increase our total giving for the year! Have you done your part? We are participating in the second century of advancement for women and girls!



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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, disability, or class.

Important! All mailing labels are prepared at AAUW headquarters. Attention postmaster: Dated Material. Please do not delay. Send all address changes to AAUW Records Office, 1111 16th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036

Did You Know?

The 2003 off-year elections featured fewer numbers of women candidates for office than in years past. According to a recent report from the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, this drop confirms a trend, first identified in 2000, of a decline of female candidates in state-office races after three decades of small but steady gains. Women constitute over half of the population in America, but consider these facts about women in public office:

Congress: Women hold 73, or 13.6%, of the 535 seats in the 108th US Congress - 14, or 14.0%, of the 100 seats in the Senate and 59, or 13.6%, of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives. In addition, three women serve as Delegates to the House from Guam, the Virgin Islands and Washington, DC.

Statewide Elective Executive: In 2003, 80 women hold statewide elective executive offices across the country; women hold 25.3% of the 316 available positions. Among these women, 36 are Democrats, 41 are Republicans, and 3 were elected in nonpartisan races.

State Legislature: In 2003, 1,648, or 22.3%, of the 7,382 state legislators in the United States are women. Women hold 402, or 20.4%, of the 1,984 state senate seats and 1,246, or 23.0%, of the 5,411 state house seats. The number of women serving in state legislatures has increased more than five-fold since 1969 when 301, or 4.0%, of all state legislators were women. New York State does not rank among the top 10 states with women as state legislators



The **Turn Beauty Inside Out Campaign** is an ongoing public education effort started by New Moon Magazine and coordinated by Mind on the Media. It is a collaborative effort to foster participation, discussion and awareness of women and girls images in the media. The 2004 focus is media portrayal of women and girls as political leaders.

Action: Support and encourage more women to run for political office at every level: local, state and national. Consider running for office yourself! Volunteer to work in a political campaign. Learn about the issues and advocate for equality in politics. **Mobilize the Vote in 2004!**