

# AAUWNYSFOCUS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN ■ NEW YORK STATE ■ WINTER 2014 ■ VOLUME 63, ISSUE 1 ■ ISSN 1056 3199



**MENTORS  
WANTED  
NO PAY,  
BIG REWARDS**

FLICKR PHOTO

One month. That's all it takes to provide a platform for Afghan women and girls to develop their voices and discover their power in the world. AAUW-NYS International Affairs Director Elise Russo explains how AAUW branches can reach out and get involved. **See her story on Page 3.**

# Reminder: Mandatory bylaws deadline is May 15

BY EDWINA FRANCES MARTIN, ESQ.  
AAUW-NYS SECRETARY/BYLAWS CHAIR

In October, all branch presidents and bylaws chairs should have received the 2013-14 bylaws conformance memo from the national office of AAUW. The changes regard Membership and Dues and are meant to conform with requirements of new provisions of the Washington, D.C., code.

All AAUW affiliates must conform their bylaws to those of AAUW national because AAUW is incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in Washington, D.C., whose laws require that the bylaws of affiliate organizations remain consistent and “conform” to the bylaws of the main entity.

The mandatory changes replace prior Membership and Dues bylaws requirements — see Article IV, AAUW 2013 Bylaws, [www.aauw.org/files/2013/07/2013-AAUW-Bylaws.pdf](http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/07/2013-AAUW-Bylaws.pdf).

However, branches are allowed to adapt language to your needs where appropriate and noted; also, you can adjust section numbering to fit within your bylaws.

When you have made your revisions, please submit them to AAUW at [connect@aauw.org](mailto:connect@aauw.org), and me at [edwinamartin@hotmail.com](mailto:edwinamartin@hotmail.com). Once again, the deadline for receipt by AAUW and AAUW-NYS is May 15, 2014.

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

BY JEAN HAVENS  
AAUW-NYS PROGRAM VP

At the 2013 AAUW-NYS Summer Leadership Conference in July at Cazenovia College, a brainstorming workshop enabled participants to share and garner a wide range of ideas and resources for developing high-quality mission-based branch programs.

In highlighting AAUW resources they'd found particularly valuable, members cited the “frequently asked questions” (FAQs) section of the national website, as well as the “Program in a Box” materials and the availability of AAUW Fellows as speakers.

Utilizing background materials available from the United Nations, as well as from the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), is yet another way to expand your members' horizons concerning issues affecting girls and women, not just in our country but around the world. Identifying branch members' passions is the key to developing a successful calendar of programming.

Working in collaboration with other community organizations can not only generate a source of speakers but also increase AAUW visibility while contributing to the development of a stronger voice on issues affecting the community as a whole.

Keeping up with what other branches and states are doing around the country helps build awareness of the scope of

AAUW and the impact members can have on decision-makers on all levels, from the town hall to the White House and beyond. What is happening in other states as far as our public policy issues are concerned? Are areas such as women's reproductive rights and health care being eroded by legislation that might someday strike a little too close to home? Fully engaging your branch members in projects and issues gives them a purpose and a sense of accomplishment.

At the same time as you're providing concrete information and ideas for action, don't forget to keep your branch activities — all of them, including interest groups, action groups, community initiatives, and not just your monthly meetings — fun! They are, after all, each just one aspect of your overall year-round programming.

Incorporate diversity wherever possible. Perhaps you could change the ways you reach out to people.

An underlying theme for your year — every year — could be “I/We can make a difference.”

Find ways to enable your members to take ownership of your branch programming. If everyone feels they have a voice in establishing programs, they will be more supportive.

There are many ways to put together a successful year of programming appreciated for both its value and the doors that it opens for your members.

It's our mission, and it's definitely not impossible!

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## Report of the nominating committee

The 2013 AAUW-NYS Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the recommendation of the following for election for 2014-2016 state office at the 2014 Convention, to be held April 25-27 in Ellenville:

AAUW-NYS President: Edwina Frances Martin, Esq., Staten Island Branch

AAUW-NYS Development VP: Janice Brown, Jefferson County Branch

AAUW-NYS Program VP: Jane Pfeiffer Russell, Bath Branch

— Donna Seymour  
AAUW-NYS Nominating Committee Chair



# A chance for voices to be heard

BY ELISE RUSSO, ED.D  
AAUW-NYS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

**T**he right to tell one's story is a human right."

This is the belief of the founders of the Afghan Women's Writing Project, which provides a platform for Afghan women and girls to develop their voices and discover their power in the world.

Want to help them?

The AWWP — [www.awwproject.org](http://www.awwproject.org) — provides its writers with secure on-line workshops where they are mentored by people like us!

Mentors who are teachers, professors, published authors, and educated women like AAUW members hold online groups with five to eight participants. Writings are shared and mentors comment, suggest, recommend, question.

When the writing is polished to the point where the author is happy with her work, the piece is published in AWWP's online magazine.

The goal is to promote greater economic independence for these women, young and older, by strengthening their self-confidence, computer literacy and writing skills.

The women craft essays, opinion pieces, and continue the important role of poetry in the Afghan culture.

How can we get involved? Mentors sign on for one month at a time and work with their group of five to eight girls, on average. Many of these girls also attend SOLA School of Leadership Afghanistan, in Kabul.

These are girls, between the ages of 12 and 16, from Afghanistan and many other countries involved in intense studies to prepare them for a successful future.



WIKIMEDIA PHOTO

Their mantra is "one girl with courage is a revolution."

Mentoring is valuable for both mentor and mentee. AWWP offers some training to new mentors to ensure consistency.

Also, they pair a current mentor with a new mentor to answer any questions and get familiar with the process.

Here are the details: The first of every month (we can do as many months as we want) you'll send an email to the girls or women in your group.

Every Saturday night send along some writing prompts (AWWP can provide samples if we can't think of some ourselves.) The mentor comments on the pieces, they might go back and forth between the mentor and the mentee two to four times.

When all are satisfied, the editing director posts the essay, poem or other work to the blog.

As you might expect, some mentors become quite attached to their mentees

and letters and pictures are exchanged. Levels of English vary but the girls are eager to write and learn English so we can provide help in that way as well. Internet access can be a problem in Afghanistan. Usually the girls do their writing from work or from school.

AWWP is branching out to help provide more computers and find better ways to access reliable Internet service within the maze of complicated politics in that country.

There are many stateside events planned to further this work with readings and celebrations planned.

Interested? Contact Jenn Mayfield ([jennifer.a.mayfield@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.a.mayfield@gmail.com)) or Elise Russo ([marusso@aol.com](mailto:marusso@aol.com)).

We have already spoken with Stacy Parker LeMelle from the Writing Project who has shown great enthusiasm for having AAUW-NYS members join the Afghan Women's Writing Project so that we can enable women to "have their own voice."

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# Legal Advocacy Fund: It's the power behind us

BY NANCY MION

AAUW-NYS LEGAL ADVOCACY FUND DIRECTOR

What is the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund all about?

Our Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) works to challenge sex discrimination in higher education and the workplace. This article shows you how this is being accomplished from LAF's inception to the present day and what you can do.

A favorite saying of mine is that active member involvement in the enactment of laws that advance equity for women and girls is enforced by their support of LAF and its using the legal system, by backing major cases, to defend those laws.

However, LAF does more than that; it also informs people of their rights through our AAUW LAF website and campus outreach programs, brings plaintiffs and their attorneys to speak with groups, and provides legal referrals.

LAF had its beginnings in New York State in 1981 with the case of the Cornell 11. These brave faculty women sued the University claiming that anti-discriminatory laws were violated when they were denied tenure in favor of less qualified candidates. They asked AAUW for help. A settlement was reached and LAF was started.

I will never forget the thrill of hearing them speak at a NYS Convention. I heard Kimberly Davis, an LAF litigant speak, at the 2013 NYS Convention. A LAF Travel and Education Grant helped pay for her visit with us. We learned that Kim's case was the latest one of several related to sexual assault in the military receiving LAF support. How proud I am that we recently took on these cases.

There are laws that protect employees and students from discrimination and harassment. But if a person does not know their rights what can they do? Have you or someone you know ever been in that situation? AAUW has a free Legal Referral Network comprised of attorneys knowledgeable in these areas.

LAF provides two great resources. Know Your Rights at Work gives current information on legal developments in workplace protection. The other Know Your Rights on Campus also has news updates as well as programs about fighting sexual assault on campus and ensuring compliance with Title IX.

What can you and your branch do locally to protect students on campuses from discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, unfair pay, pregnancy discrimination and Title IX Violations? You and your branch can develop on-campus events, to be determined by you and an institution of higher education. How to fund this event? Apply for an Evvie Currie Giving Circle LAF Campus Outreach Program Fund Grant. It was created 10 years ago and named in honor of Evvie Currie, our first NYS LAF VP and NYS Past-President.

Donations to ECGC are used only for Campus Outreach Programs in New York State. LAF has supported over 100 strategic cases that have established precedents in its 32-year existence. There are eight cases being supported right now.

Additionally, LAF provides employees and students information about their rights regarding discrimination and harassment through attorney networks, our AAUW website and branch on-campus events.

LAF advocates for those facing sex discrimination and harassment in higher education and the work place through the legal system and your support makes it happen. Contact your branch LAF fundraiser today.

# We're incorporated! And our name reflects it

What's in a name? Everything! The official name of our statewide organization under our 501 (c)(3) filing is **AAUW of the State of New York, Inc.** When you send membership dues in the future, you will need to use the new name on the checks you send.

## WILD WOMEN

Joan Monk has collaborated with New Jersey AAUW members on the NY/NJ AAUW "WILD" Women (Women in Leadership Development) "Embracing Eleanor in the 21st Century."

Robin Gerber, a keynote speaker at the AAUW National Convention in New Orleans, has agreed to support us in a yearlong, month-by-month, chapter-by-chapter study of her book, "Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way."

There is a reading guide by Robin for book groups who are interested in reading the book.

Branch participation is encouraged via conference call by having members share calls and report to the branch.

## LEADER ON LOAN

Branches are also encouraged to request a Leader On Loan from the AAUW-NYS Board Speakers Bureau. Send your request to me and then the state will pay for the travel of the invited speaker. The list can be found on the AAUW-NYS website.

Betty Harrel will be chairing a task force to collect best practices from branches that have been successful in increasing membership and filling leadership positions. This information will be made available to each branch.

## WOMEN IN STEM

On Dec. 12, AAUW collaborated with the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor to present a webinar entitled "Women in Stem: Why it matters and how YOU can help them get there."

Although women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers earn nearly 33 percent more than those in non-STEM careers, women are significantly underrepresented in STEM fields. Women with a STEM degree are less likely than their male counterparts to work in a STEM occupation; they are more likely to work in education or healthcare.

The webinar presented available resources, current research, and specific strategies that can be used to help women open doors to careers in the STEM fields.

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

On Dec. 13, I attended a 2013 Women's Economic Empowerment Summit presented by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. The agenda focused on empowering working families, rewarding work and helping businesses compete.

Professor Ellen Schall; Martin Cherkasky, Professor of Health Policy and Management, New York University, and Neera Tanden, President of the Center for American Progress,



THE  
PRESIDENT'S  
REPORT  
BY MARY LOU  
DAVIS

welcomed participants.

Keynote addresses were given by Senator Gillibrand and Billie Jean King, tennis legend and women's rights pioneer.

Two solution sessions offered were "Elevating Women in the Workforce: Ensuring Financial Stability for All Americans" and "Overcoming Barriers: Supporting Breadwinning Women and their Families."

## WHEN WOMEN SUCCEED

In October, I attended a session at Hunter College entitled "When Women Succeed, America Succeeds." Speakers included House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Nydia Velazquez (New York), Donna Edwards (Maryland), and Doris Matsui (California).

The meeting was sponsored by A Better Balance, Center for Children's Initiatives, Equal Pay Coalition NYC, MomsRising.org, New York Civil Liberties Union and New York Paid Leave Coalition as a celebration to make women's economic needs a national priority.

## SENECA FALLS II

I also attended a meeting of The Founding Family team, whose mission is to evolve democracy and to build a broad based, long-term civic engagement movement.

They are planning a national women's convening in Baltimore in May called "Seneca Falls II" to maximize women's collective voting, purchasing, investing, cultural and personal power.

The goal is to attract previously inactive women to a women's movement.

## THE WAGE GAP

Pema Domingo-Barker from the Center for Urban Pedagogy, a non-profit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities, requested that a member of AAUW visit The Urban Assembly School for Criminal Justice in Brooklyn to discuss the wage gap.

In this City Studies project, students are asking the question "Where does the pay gap come from?"

To find answers, they go beyond standard classroom learning and engage in rigorous field research, visiting real sites and interviewing decision-makers and stakeholders. They collaborate with a teaching artist to produce innovative works in a variety of media.

These projects are taken up by neighborhood organizations and advocacy groups and used to educate others.

The young women who interviewed me were very interested in AAUW's mission and will keep us informed about their project.



## District conferences at a glance

BY JOAN MONK  
AAUW-NYS DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Everything went like clockwork this fall due to the dedication and hard work of our district coordinators plus a little help from Mother Nature who delivered cool, crisp, beautiful fall days. Diversity was at the top of the agenda in Districts III, IV and VI. From the feedback I received from branch members, board representatives and presenters, I'm happy to say that rave reviews were the order of the day. Congratulations to all!

### District I: Oct. 12

Lucille Ball as a Business Woman, The Marvin House, Jamestown

### District II: Oct. 19

Violence Against Women on College Campuses, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Geneva

### District III: Oct. 5

Happy 100th Anniversary Mohawk Valley, Utica College, Utica

### District IV: Oct. 19

Diversity in Programming, Dutchess Community College, Poughkeepsie

### District V: Aug. 27

AAUW Updates Both Local and National, The Harvard Club, Manhattan

### District VI: Oct. 19

Diversity — Changing the World Together, Captain Bill's Restaurant, Bayshore

### District VII: Spring 2014

Title IX — 949, location TBA

District Conferences continue to offer our members the opportunity to learn more, connect more and do more.

Please contact me with ideas or suggestions.

# AAUWNYSSNAPSHOTS



**JAMESTOWN BRANCH:** A copy of "Remarkable Women in New York State History" was donated to the James Prendergast Library. Dolores Thompson presented the book to Tina Scott, library director. Dolores is historian for Jamestown and the author of a dozen profiles in the AAUW book.

POST-JOURNAL PHOTO



**STATEN ISLAND BRANCH:** At left, Muriel Schlefstein, Rochelle Schwartz and Lisa Balistreri enjoyed a holiday gathering at Nino's restaurant. Above, Edwina Frances Martin welcomed Letitia James, newly elected New York City Public Advocate, as the branch's November guest speaker.

PHOTOS BY CLAIRE REGAN



**A WARM STATEWIDE WELCOME:** Kimberly Pollard, right, AAUW State Organizer for New York, Maine and New Hampshire, was greeted at the Albany board meeting by Nancy Mion and Donna Seymour. Kimberly can be reached at [pollardk@aauw.org](mailto:pollardk@aauw.org).

PHOTO BY CLAIRE REGAN

# Reserve funds support worthy state projects

By MILDRED DEWITT  
AAUW-NYS TREASURER

Accountants experience an inner peace in the knowledge that debits should always equal credits.

The Board of Directors for AAUW of the State of New York convened in Albany on the weekend of Nov. 15-17 in order to plan and promote our organization throughout the state.

As of this year, we are operating under a new name and we are incorporated. We are now known as American Association of University Women of the State of New York, Inc.

I am pleased to report that we are financially sound. A substantial portion of our savings will be invested in order to generate additional

revenue through dividends and interest. Our operation account received sufficient membership renewal fees for the fiscal year 2013-14 that will support the approved budget.

Additionally, we have reserve funds that are not specifically earmarked and there were several programs initiated to enhance branch involvement. These were in the area of membership and participation at the Summer Leadership Conference in Cazenovia.

The following program/incentives/-donations were approved:

- \$1,500 donation to the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund (code 9170) — distribution of profits from sale of the book prepared by Historians Marilyn Smiley and Helen Engel;

- \$500 incentive for participation at Summer Leadership Conference,

Cazenovia, to fund 10 branches at \$50 per branch subsidy toward attendance — any branch that was non-participant for last two years (AAUW-NYS Membership VP Maria Ellis);

- \$150 donation to Free the Girls to facilitate the delivery of bras for Distribution Coordinator Joan Monk; we will again collect bras/bucks at our 2014 Convention;

- \$150 incentive for WILD program, Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way, Robin Gerber (Program Coordinator Joan Monk);

- \$150 donation for purchases of children's books/videos for the YWCA (Program Coordinator Joan Monk).

These programs/incentives generated at the board meeting are for the use of branches. Contact the coordinators to learn more.



## FREE THE GIRLS: OUR CUPS RUNNETH OVER

By JOAN MONK  
AAUW-NYS DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Free The Girls is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides job opportunities for survivors of sex trafficking. They collect gently used bras and donate them to the women as starting inventory for their own business selling the bras.

Why bras? Second-hand clothing is a profitable market in many countries

around the world. Bras are unusually sought after items. Re-selling them provides opportunities for these trafficked women to work with other women. Most of them were sold into prostitution as children, some as young as 8 to 10 years old.

Because their lives were stolen from them, they missed out on going to school and getting educations. Re-selling bras allows them to work as much or as little as their school schedule permits.

To learn more, visit [www.freethegirls.org](http://www.freethegirls.org).

**THOUSANDS OF WOMEN BENEFIT FROM THE SUPPORT:** Shipped 73,000 bras to Mozambique ❖

Doubled the amount of women in our program in Mozambique for a current total of 21 launched pilot programs in three locations in Uganda ❖ Launched a pilot program in El Salvador ❖ Shipped 57,000 new bras to Uganda ❖ Shipped 20,000 bras to El Salvador ❖ Received \$20,000 grant awarded from a private family foundation ❖ Raised over \$20,000 at our first annual gala, BRAlapalooza ❖ Featured in a 30-minute documentary by CNN's Freedom Project called "Mozambique or Bust" ❖ Logged over 1,000 volunteer hours per month by over 92,500 unique website visitors from 194 different countries. -- Joan Monk





NEW YORK STATE FOCUS  
WINTER 2014  
ISSN: 1056 3199  
www.aauw.org  
www.aauw-nys.org

**Mission Statement**

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

**AAUW Value Promise**

By joining AAUW, we belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance.

**Vision Statement**

AAUW will be a powerful advocate and visible leader in equity and education through research, philanthropy and measurable change in critical areas impacting the lives of women and girls.

**Diversity Statement**

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.

FOCUS, a quarterly newsletter, is published by the American Association of University Women-New York State.

The distribution cost of \$4 is included in state dues.

Questions and articles should be addressed to:

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Submissions are accepted at the discretion of the editor.

FOCUS is a publication of the AAUW-NYS Board.

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The 2014 AAUW New York State convention, April 25-27 in the Catskills, will focus on “A World of Wellness” with the goal of stimulating the mind, energizing the body and inspiring the soul. AAUW National President Patricia Ho’s keynote address on Friday will kick off three action-packed days that will include inspiring speakers representing AAUW’s Legal Advocacy Fund and the Center for Global Women’s Leadership. Public health issues, reproductive rights and an historic look at issues of work/family balance are among the topics that will stimulate discussion. There will be opportunities for networking and sharing ideas on building community coalitions, increasing branch diversity and incorporating social media into branch visibility. Elections, awards and caucuses will round out the schedule along with an LAF fundraiser and time for swimming laps to become the Mermaid of the Convention. The Sullivan County historian will share tales of the Catskill resorts. The conference site itself, Honor’s Haven Resort and Spa in Ellenville, formerly known as the Fallsview, offers opportunities for healthy activities to round out your visit. — Karen Carr