

# HAPPY 85<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

### NEW YORK STATE

#### IN THE BEGINNING

The Association of Collegiate Alumnae (ACA) was founded in 1881 in Boston by Marion Talbot who saw women college graduates drawn together in a great body for "the advancement of human folk". Their first project was to disprove the commonly held belief espoused by Dr. Clarke that education seriously affected a woman's ability to have children. Their research refuted the idea.

Within two years there were 320 members. Groups were organized across the country. State Divisions were developed for closer contact between branches enabling them to communicate problems that called for action. In 1920 the ACA branches here formed the NYS Division. In 1921, due in part to the availability of the telephone, many alumnae associations, college women's group and college clubs felt the need to be joined into one national organization. When ACA and the others merged to form AAUW, we automatically became a part of the new organization.

#### THE TWENTIES- "NOT QUITE A ROAR"

Educational standards were the main thrust.

A loss of members nationwide called for new policies and methods.

Marie Currie spoke at the Buffalo Branch as NYS raised money to help buy her a gram of radium.

The Mohawk Valley Branch hosted the first official State Convention in 1928.

#### THE THIRTIES - "WE WERE FAR FROM DEPRESSED"

Study Group programs were begun in 1931. It was recommended that the topic International Relations be included. The first Legislative Program (now called Public Policy) featured educational funding, consumer interest and opposition to legislation that discriminated against women.

#### THE FORTIES - "LIFE BEGINS AT ..."

We supported bills for establishing a state university system, state aid to libraries and state aid for public schools, the money to be spent only on public schools.

100% of the branches contributed to the Million Dollar Fellowship Project.

Branches aided university women refugees escaping the war.

#### THE FIFTIES- "A FURIOUS PACE"

Fall Area Conferences, similar to those we attend today, were started in 1953.

Branches focused on the United Nations.

Efforts were made to place women in elected and appointed offices.

#### THE SIXTIES - ZOOMING AHEAD

NYS supported the Civil Rights Bill.

Branch programs were improved by focusing on four topics that evolved from member determined Emerging Issues. The topics were changed every 2 years.  
A 2 year state wide project *The Mature Woman and her Educational Needs* started in 1966.

#### THE SEVENTIES - "WOMEN ON THE MOVE"

Juvenile Justice was a state project.  
Issues of concern were: Status of Women, Education, Social Issues, and New Organizational Patterns.  
Workshops in Developing Effectiveness (WIDE) were started to help branches and members.  
NYS had 9,375 members in 73 branches.

#### THE EIGHTIES - "MAKING A DIFFERENCE"

The Cornell 11 litigation in 1981 catalyzed the founding of The Legal Advocacy Fund.  
Convention titles were *Choices + Challenges = Action, Priorities, Momentum for the Future*.  
Topics included *Money Talks and Taking Hold of Technology*.  
Task Forces were developed for *Public Support for Public Education, Peace and National Security*, and *Women's Work/Women's Worth*  
The Educational Foundation started the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund for Women and Girls in 1988 to foster equitable education for girls, especially in science and math, through research initiatives and teacher fellowships.

#### THE NINETIES - "TAKING THE INITIATIVE"

Diversity of membership and a heightened awareness of "otherness" were strongly promoted.  
Education and Equity became a prime action for NYS. AAUW became a major national force with the Educational Foundation publication of *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* and 8 subsequent reports.  
Sister-to-Sister Girls Summits were held across the state.  
A Voter Education Director was appointed in 1996.

#### 2000 AND BEYOND...

The Summer Leadership Conference at Delta Lake was instituted by Pres. Fortunato to bring branch leaders and NYS Board together.  
The Task Force for the Future was convened by Fortunato to evaluate the organization of AAUW NYS and recommend changes.  
As computer usage expanded, communication between the Association, NYS Board, and members was more rapid.  
The use of computer communication was greatly encouraged by Pres. Currie.  
Currie's by-word slogan "Living the Mission" reminded us all of why we are members of AAUW.