

AAUW MEMBERSHIP RECRUITING YOUNGER MEMBERS

A branch must first understand what younger women are looking for in their volunteer affiliations and must then create an environment that welcomes such participation. Talk with the younger women in your communities; ask them how they would like to become involved. Research shows that younger generations seek short-term volunteer activities – projects that have a start and an end and that yield positive and measurable results. They like to engage quickly and tend to move on when they do not feel that they are making an impact. The branch environment must be welcoming and convenient. Hold meetings in non-threatening and accessible locations and at a time that doesn't prohibit younger member involvement. Take on issues and programs that are of interest to younger women. Encourage them to take on assignments quickly. Their passion will drive them. During branch meetings, keep your meeting agendas lively and informative. Use that time to engage members in activities that sparks their interest, generates thinking, and produces positive results. Keep reporting to a minimum. Be open to new ideas and perspective. The "this is the way we've always done it" mentality will drive younger members away.

Concentrate energies on the underlying mission of AAUW (equity and education for women and girls) with forums and round tables on violence, education, sexual and economic discrimination, local and worldwide issues pertaining to women, women in history, building political and financial leadership, and effecting local changes to benefit girls. Disseminate information and distribute promotional and contact information wherever there is a lot of traffic: fairs and festivals, libraries, gas stations, city halls, real estate offices, etc. In local newspapers, write letters to the editor, contribute to a regular column, publicize board and planning meeting dates in addition to general meetings, submit press releases on everything you do (including state and regional conferences). Encourage feedback at every turn; remain flexible as new ideas emerge. What works best is enthusiastic membership vice-presidents and presidents willing to do whatever it takes with constant, persistent work including follow-up. *Draw from the past while moving into the future*

Don't forget that being welcoming and inclusive rather than just focusing on the issues make people feel welcomed and wanted. Meeting the needs of the target you are trying to reach is important to understand. Hold meetings right after work (5:00 or 5:30) so working women can come and get home early (by 7:00). Have meetings at different times to reach all members, some on Saturday mornings, some on weeknights, some daytime luncheons also. They can be potlucks, meals served at a country club, or just cookies and coffee. Ask yourself three questions:

1. How can AAUW determine the needs of younger women in your community?
2. How can AAUW best meet those needs?
3. How can AAUW involve new, younger members?

Unfortunately there are no easy answers to recruiting younger members, only suggestions. If you have younger members in your branch, ask them why they joined, why have they stayed in AAUW, and what would they recommend as ways for your branch to recruit more younger members. If your branch has some former members who are younger, ask them why they joined, why they didn't renew. And finally, ask young women in your community, what are they looking for from a women's organization.