



Branch Banter

MAY 2025

MAY DINNER AND ANNUAL BRANCH MEETING

Thank you to everyone who made reservations for attending our May Dinner!

WHEN: Tuesday, May 13 5:00 PM
5:30 – 6:30 PM A delicious dinner provided by Gingerbabies Catering
6:30 PM Program and Business meeting

WHERE: York Alliance Church, 501 Rathton Road, York

PROGRAM: After enjoying our dinner, we will look forward to hearing from our 2024 scholarship recipients, Sully Pinos and Kori Thompson. There also will be the presentation of Branch awards and the installation of new officers.

Suzanne Robertson & Darla Stover, Program Co-Vice Presidents

GET OUT THE VOTE

- ❖ Municipal Primary Election – May 20, 2025
- ❖ Last Day to register – May 5
- ❖ Last Day to request Mail-in and Absentee Ballots – May 13

Check this website for more information:

<https://yorkcountypa.gov/503/Elections-Voter-Registration>

The York County Elections and Voter Registration Office has two locations.

The newer office address is: 2401 Pleasant Valley Road Suite 219 York, PA 17402

The original location in the Administrative Center in York City remains open at:

28 East Market Street B003 York, PA 17401

Both locations can manage your requests, with one exception: the York City office cannot provide reports, walking lists, street lists, etc.

The May 20 Election is a Primary Election to select candidates for School Directors, Township and Borough Offices, City of York Offices, County of York Row Offices, and Judges for the Court of Common Pleas for the Municipal Election which will be held on November 4, 2025.

Betty Hooker, Get Out the Vote Chair

FROM THE PODIUM – COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Our Branch has always recognized the importance of networking and collaborating with community members and community organizations.

An example of our Branch's recent community outreach occurred on April 15 when five of our members (Betty Hooker, Suzanne Robertson, Carol Anderson, Lauren Scheib, and I) met with five York College students. Associate Professor Ashley Earle asked us to meet with the students during their WiSE (Women in Science and Engineering) Club meeting to discuss our perspectives about what is currently happening in our country. We shared some of the historical events that we experienced over the years.

After the meeting, one student shared her thoughts. She wrote, 'I like to think that the club makes a strong effort to make sure that women or afab (assigned female at birth) know what challenges they face in their career and how they can build a support system. AAUW is certainly one of those ways that a person could find support in the 'real world.' I always enjoy hearing from older people that care about the same things as me. I grew up in a conservative community where most of these topics are just dismissed so hearing from all of you almost feels healing. Sometimes you need a reminder that people care and these problems are not new. Thank you for your support. I hope I will be able to do the same for others as I move forward in my career.'

We walked away feeling inspired and hopeful for our future generations. Ashley Earle has reiterated that she is looking forward to our continued partnership with York College.

There will be more opportunities to network with our community. Look for the sign-up sheets at our Branch meetings.

Barbara Woodmansee, President

BOARD MEETING

The May 6 Board meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on Zoom. Branch members are welcome.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEWEST MEMBERS – Lauren Scheib

I retired as COO of the Association of Test Publishers in January of 2024, and am enjoying focusing on things that matter a great deal to me. In addition to joining AAUW, I have joined the Central PA Red Cross chapter, have trained in mass care as a Disaster Action Team (DAT) member, doing client intake for community members who have lost their homes to fire. I was discouraged from studying archaeology in the 70's because I was a girl, but have rediscovered that interest in joining the Friends of Camp Security (FOCS) in East York and participating in my first archaeological dig. I launched an Aspiring Teachers scholarship in memory of my mother, at Queens College in NYC; and self-published a children's book about Monarch butterflies with my college roommate, which is available on Amazon (*M.W. and The Monarch*). I earned my bachelor's degree in communications from St. Bonaventure University and a master's degree in journalism and public affairs from American University in Washington D.C. I live with my husband of 37 years in East York. Our 3 grown children are married or engaged, with one grandchild. As an empty nester, I'm looking forward to getting involved with AAUW and its many activities in support of education and gender equity.

Joan Beekey, Membership, Co-Vice President

BRANCH AWARDS

Outstanding Woman – Carol Anderson

During her many leadership roles within our Branch, Carol is known for not only acknowledging a problem, but thinking creatively to find a solution. She enlisted a PSU intern to assist with some of our membership tasks. Responding to the needs of our members, Carol led our Branch through a dramatic change in the times and location of our membership meetings. Carol's recommendation that leadership roles be changed to a one-year term resulted in some members being more willing to accept leadership roles. Carol is a perfect example of someone who not only acknowledges a problem, but thinks creatively to find a solution. Carol has accomplished all of this when she was experiencing challenges in her personal life. Carol's leadership has helped our Branch adapt to the current environment and has enabled our Branch to remain a strong, vibrant organization.

Members Making a Difference – Joan Beekey and Martha Fleischer

Martha revised the Branch membership form, created our *Membership Dues Guidelines* document, and collated the responses to our *2025 Member Survey*, as well as writing a report about it for the membership. Joan has been busy recruiting new members as well as making connections at the Village at Sprengle Drive and arrangements at the Glatfelter Center meeting location. They both have provided new energy to our members as Membership Co-VPs.

York Branch Special Honorees – Darla Stover and Suzanne Robertson

Darla and Suzanne have guided us through a year of change with our meeting locations and times. They quickly found solutions when they faced obstacles scheduling some programs. They provided the membership with a well-balanced, interesting year of programs.

Lois Conaway, Awards Chair

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet on Wednesday, May 21, at 1:00 PM at Olive Garden to discuss *Look for Me There* by Luke Russert.

Please RSVP to Linda Palmer if you plan to attend. If you are interested in joining a discussion, you can request a list of discussion questions.

BRIDGE GROUP

The Bridge Group will meet Wednesday, May 7, at 10:00 AM at the home of Lois Kulp Hickman. Please bring a sandwich for lunch.

Please call Lois if you would like to be a substitute player for the May 7 game. We will continue to meet throughout the summer months.

Lois Kulp Hickman.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Renew your York Branch membership by June 15, if you have not already done so. That is closer than it might seem to be. So please either renew online with your credit card (it is not that hard) or mail the completed form and your check to Bonnie Bluett or bring your check along to the May 13 Branch meeting to pay in person.

Joan Beekey & Martha Fleischer, Co-Membership VPs

MEMBERSHIP – 2025 MEMBER SURVEY REPORT, PART 2

This report reviews and summarizes the results of remaining questions from the February survey of Branch members.

Question: “Do you have any suggestions for improvement or recruitment of new members?”

These were the suggestions or comments from more than one person:

Suggestions: More publicity (6+); Newspaper articles/ads (4); Discussion groups/coffee chats (3); Repost Facebook messages (2); Personal contacts (2).

Comments: too busy in similar groups or other activities (3); recruiting young women difficult or unrealistic (3); aging membership (3).

Question: “Can you think of any Branch activities or projects in our community that would help promote gender equity for women and/or girls?”

These were the suggestions or comments from more than one person:

Suggestions: Write Read Write (6); Scholarships (4); Walking group (3); Lunch a Month (3); Collaborate with other groups such as CRC, PSU, YCP, YWCA, HACC, OLLI (\$) (6+ total); Local history programs (2); Local shows or historical sites (2).

Comments: enjoying current activities of bridge and/or book groups (6).

Question: “Are you willing to get involved or help with an activity or project?”

Responses: Yes, mentoring; Yes, depends on details.

Notes: Some ideas can be completed immediately, such as personal contacts to invite potential new members, or joining an existing committee or group. New or renewed activities or projects would be projected to start in the 2025-2026 year.

A sign-up list was/will be at the April and May Branch meetings for members who are interested in a new or current activity, project, or committee: Write-Read-Write; Discussion Group; Lunch-a-Month; Scholarship Committee member; CRC Committee member; Mentoring; Local sites visits; Other activity or project not listed. Volunteer Leaders or Coordinators Are Welcome!

Thank you for your participation as we plan for the future of Our York Branch AAUW.

Martha Fleischer, Membership Co-Vice President

BANTER DEADLINE

May 27 is the deadline for articles for the June *Banter*, the last issue until September.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

AAUW National has responded to the current circumstances surrounding DEI. They will be spelling out the full wording of DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Our Branch's DEI Committee agrees that to say the words helps to be clear about what our values are and what we stand for. As a result, the committee will not be using DEI in our publications. We will be spelling out what DEI means. It does not change our efforts to support the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Because discussions about 'DEI' and other current issues can be challenging, AAUW has a few recommendations when engaging in difficult conversations:

1) Ask yourself, 'Do I have an agenda?'; 2) Begin with what you have in common or what you agree on; 3) Start the conversation with neutral questions; 4) Listen with the intent to understand; 5) Pause before reacting and reflect; 6) Do not look at the discussion as you need to win an argument, but rather as it is an opportunity to increase awareness; 7) Do not take things personally; 8) Consider their background. Finally, keep in mind that it takes time to process new information and it takes time to understand each other.

Book recommendation: *The Color of Water* by James McBride

Rita Meisenhelder & Barbara Woodmansee, DEI Co-Chairs

PUBLIC POLICY

Governor Shapiro presented his vision for the 2025-2026 budget on February 4. For the education budget, he proposed the same level of funding for adequacy and tax equity with important cyber charter reform. With very low increases in basic education and special education funding, this budget will need to pass as a package to meet the basic inflationary demands on school districts. It is an important budget year to meet the mandate to fix our unconstitutional school funding system with many opportunities to support these efforts. He also spoke strongly on minimum wage and AAUW PA will be tracking legislation as it is introduced.

Carol Heintzelman, Public Policy Chair

GAMES AND LUNCH GROUP

Please join us for lunch and group games at Anne McFeely's home on Friday, May 16, at 12 noon. To **RSVP by May 12**, call or text Anne.

Anne McFeely

SUNSHINE

If you know of an AAUW member who deserves a card due to illness, death in family, or thinking of you, please notify Linda Rupert.

PENNSYLVANIA CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING

While attention has been focused on DOGE and reducing fraud and waste at the national level, Pennsylvania experts are alerting Pennsylvania voters of waste and questionable spending in cyber school funding.

OVER-PAYMENT TO CYBER CHARTER SCHOOLS

What are cyber charter schools? Cyber charter schools are public schools that are conducted online. Students attend school by logging onto their computers. School districts pay the same per-student rate to cyber school operators as they do to traditional brick and mortar schools. Obviously, the costs of cyber education are much lower. There are no transportation costs, no building maintenance costs, and no gyms or libraries or art rooms to maintain; yet the operators of cyber charter schools are paid the same per-pupil amount as traditional public schools.

Pennsylvania school districts disburse more than \$1 Billion dollars in tuition payments to cyber charter schools annually. The money comes from property taxes that are raised at the local level. Some of that money goes towards computers and teachers' and administrators' salaries at cyber charter schools, but there are also numerous expenses that cyber charter schools do not ordinarily identify.

QUESTIONABLE EXPENSES

- **Over \$4,000,000 was spent on gift cards for groceries, and gift card purchases at Dominos, Target, Walmart, Dunkin, Five Below, and Books-A-Million. Reach Charter School spent these tax funds for “state testing incentives” and “attendance rewards.”**
- **\$500,000 was paid by PA Virtual Cyber Charter to Nustream, a marketing company, to boost their internet ads to the top of Google searches.**
- **21st Century Cyber Charter School spent \$608,270.76 on advertising and promotion in the 2023-2024 school year.**

EDUCATION DOLLARS SHOULD BE SPENT FOR EDUCATION!

Legislative reform is needed. It is time for the PA General Assembly to require cyber charter schools to routinely provide information to the public on their non-educational expenditures, including cash payments to students and their families for awards and attendance incentives.

Governor Shapiro proposed an \$8,000 per student cap for students enrolled in regular cyber charter school educational programs in his February Budget message. The Pennsylvania General Assembly should pass this legislation without delay. By reducing overpayment to cyber charter schools, public school districts will have more money for traditional public schools which are attended by the vast majority (approximately 90%) of Pennsylvania's children.

Betty Hooker

Mission

To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

Vision

Equity for all.