



Branch Banter

JANUARY 2026

SHARE AND SHOW

WHEN: Tuesday, January 13 1:00 PM
Social time 12:30 PM NO business meeting today

WHERE: Glatfelter Center, 1802 Folkemer Circle, York

PROGRAM: All are welcome to attend this special January Branch meeting. Our members will be showing their paintings, crafts, needlework, and collections and sharing their stories, music and more. We are showcasing what makes our members tick. Please bring a friend.

NOTE: It is not too late to share or show something. **Deadline to sign up is January 9.** Please call Lois Kulp Hickman.

Lois Kulp Hickman & Anne McFeely, Program Co-Vice Presidents

FROM THE PODIUM

Happy New Year! I hope that all of you had an enjoyable holiday and are ready to participate in some of our upcoming Branch activities and events. I am looking forward to our January program where we will hear about some of our members' interests and talents, because I am always amazed at how talented our members are and enjoy getting to know everyone better.

I also want to highlight our Branch Awards nominations that are currently due to Lois Conaway, our Branch Awards Chair, by January 15. If you have noticed an AAUW member who is actively involved and doing a great job of making a difference in our Branch, please consider nominating this member in one of the categories that Lois has highlighted in her article.

Lastly, I want to thank Barbara Woodmansee, Joan Beekey, and Jean Quickel for agreeing to be on our Branch's Nominating Committee to develop our slate of Branch Officers for the upcoming year. Please feel free to talk with any member of this committee about how you may become involved in serving our Branch.

Thank you for all that you do to support our mission of gender equity for women and girls, and I look forward to seeing you in the upcoming year!

Bonnie Bluett, President

BOARD MEETING

The January 6 Board meeting will be conducted virtually using Zoom at 10:00 AM. Bonnie will email the agenda and Zoom link prior to the meeting, so please let her know if you are interested in participating. Branch members are always welcome.

BRANCH AWARDS

York Branch is given the opportunity to present three awards annually through the sponsorship of our state organization, AAUW-PA. The honorees are recognized by AAUW-PA, and members receive a certificate recognizing their accomplishments. These awards are not required, but an opportunity to recognize women that we determine should be honored.

The **Gateway to Equity Award** is given to individuals or organizations that have shown by action and philosophy that they advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, or research. This award is selected by the Branch Board members.

The **Member Making a Difference Award** is given to a member who has made a big difference in something important to the Branch within the last year. This person need not be an officer or a committee chair.

Outstanding Woman Award

- She has provided meritorious service to the Branch and the community over multiple years.
- She may not be the current president.
- The state allows two nominees for this award from the Branch.

Other Optional Awards

York Branch Special Honoree – may be given to someone who has been active for many years who deserves recognition but does not qualify for the other awards.

AAUW-PA Special Honoree – This award is given by the State Board to someone who has been active at both the State and Branch levels or has given extraordinary service to the local branch.

Check our *Yearbook* for past honorees. Please submit your nominations in writing **by January 15, and please give examples of the person's accomplishments in a brief statement.**

You may send an email to Lois Conaway. Thank you for your suggestions. A committee of past recipients will select the 2026 honorees. Please understand that the Branch is under no obligation to submit all of these awards, but we would like to recognize the women who have served our Branch in a significant way.

Lois Conaway, Awards Chair

DEGREE EQUIVALENCY POLICY FOR MEMBERSHIP

We are excited to provide you with this new policy information summary. Many of us know someone who is aligned with the mission of our organization and they have had some higher education, but not the standard educational degree.

National AAUW adopted a new policy in June, 2025, which specifies the process for assessing credentials for membership based on degree equivalence. It allows membership for individuals who have received the equivalent (e.g., RN) of an associate degree from an accredited higher education institution.

1. All prospective members should demonstrate a commitment to working to advance equity for women and girls.
 2. Determination of eligibility is based on one or more of the following:
 - a. At least two (2) years of full-time or 48 credit hours equivalent education at an accredited institution.
 - b. Holding of certificates, licenses, or professional certifications issued by a higher education institution accredited by a recognized agency.
- Requests may be made and submitted to executive@aauw.org or connect@aauw.org by the individual directly, or by an AAUW affiliate (branch) member on behalf of the individual. Decisions are made by the national AAUW Board of Directors.

Might you know a prospective member who could now be eligible to join AAUW York Branch? Let me know if you would like more information.

Martha Fleischer, Membership Co-VP

PUBLIC POLICY

Looking ahead, National AAUW will be involved in several key policy fights in 2026 including the following: (1) AAUW is tracking how the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' budget law will reshape education. The bill created a national K - 12 tax-credit voucher system, and the Department of Treasury had sought public input until December 26. (2) There will be comment opportunities on the Department of Education's proposal to redefine graduate and professional students, monitoring FY26 appropriations, and following executive orders to revamp college accreditation. (Note: Nursing has been re-classified as a non-professional degree/program, which will result in a decrease in the amount of government funds available to pursue graduate level education.) (3) On January 13, 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear Little v. Hecox, a major case on transgendered students' rights. AAUW joined an amicus brief in support of transgender students. On a separate matter earlier in December, AAUW's Lobby Corps celebrated more than 50 years of volunteer advocacy advancing equity for women and girls.

Carol Heintzelman, Public Policy Chair

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Several years ago, our York Branch established a partnership with the Confronting Racism Coalition. The Coalition's mission is 'to create sustainable change by breaking down system racial barriers and promoting healing, equity, and inclusion for all. Its vision is for York to be a place where differences are valued and equity prevails.' Their mission and vision fit well with AAUW's mission.

Representatives from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee frequently attend the Coalition's monthly meetings and learn what is happening in the community and the impact that the Coalition is having in our community. As an example, we have learned that the Coalition has influenced policy decisions in schools.

At the most recent Coalition meeting, there was a discussion about the Coalition's accomplishments during 2025. One accomplishment that was particularly meaningful to the Coalition was receiving AAUW PA's Gateway to Equity Award. This award, given by our Branch, recognized that the Coalition shows by their actions and philosophy that they advance equity for women and girls.

Another major accomplishment was the development of the Coalition's new website. The website provides excellent information about its history, what they do, and the impact it has in our community. Take time to check it out: confrontingracismyork.org or search for Confronting Racism Coalition York and you will find it.

Rita Meisenhelder & Barbara Woodmansee, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee Co-Chairs

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet on January 21, to discuss *Take My Hand* by Dolen Perkins-Valdez.

BANTER DEADLINE

January 26 is the deadline for articles for the February *Banter*.

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.

Mission

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

Vision

Equity for all.

Diversity Statement

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.