



### **WHAT IS THE STATUS OF VOTING IN CENTRE COUNTY?**

We have some late breaking news on election security that we want to give you that adds to the information we reported in the *Helping Hands* column the Public Policy Committee wrote for the *Centre Daily Times* last week. Please do share these updates!

What is the fastest way to have your vote counted in Centre County? Drop off your vote by mail ballot or mail it early enough to have it arrive before Election Day. How can this be true when we've heard so much about the vulnerability of mail-in ballots? Because the Centre County Commissioners have stepped up. Also, the Post Office management settled a lawsuit forcing them to restore operations to their former status.

Here is what our Commissioners did. They assembled over 200 volunteers ready to start processing mail-in ballots the minute the polls open on Election Day. Their efforts, combined with newly purchased machinery, mean mail-in ballot results are expected to be reported by 8:30 pm on Election day. That's faster than any precinct in the county can close their polls, run their tallies, and drive their results to the official counting location.

These results can't be challenged on security grounds because of the Commissioners' steps to protect integrity. As ballots are collected from camera-monitored drop-off boxes around the county, election workers will go in teams made up of registrants from each major political party, escorted by Sheriff's deputies.

If you don't have a mail-in ballot but now think you would like to get one, go to the Bryce Jordan Center on the Penn State campus where the Commissioners set up a satellite Elections Office. You can apply for and receive your ballot on the spot, then vote and turn it in before you leave. The Board of Elections has partnered with Penn State to make the Bryce Jordan Center a satellite elections office and Election Day poll site for the 2020 general election. This service will be available through October 27. Learn more:

<https://centrecountyvotes.com/earlyvoting/> or <https://bjc.psu.edu/centre-county-satellite-elections-office>.

### **MAIL-IN VOTING UPDATES**

Rumors about voting are confusing people. Most rumors are wrong, but they have caused some who applied for mail-in ballots to change their minds, now wanting to vote in-person. You can do that, but you must do it correctly.

Be sure you take with you every piece of paper that came with your mail-in ballot. The reason is that the people working at your poll will know you applied for the mail-in ballot. If you walk in and ask for an in-person ballot, they will think you are trying to vote twice. That's a felony, so they can't give it to you unless you prove you never used the mail-in ballot. That's why you must take all the paper, so that your mail-in ballot can be invalidated. If you only take some of the paper, you may be given a provisional ballot. Those get sorted out in the end, but it's not a desirable way to vote if you are worried about the count on Election Day.

Did you change your mind about the mail-in vote due to worries about USPS delays? If you mail the ballot back by two weeks before Election Day (or November 2), the mail should be fine. Are you still not convinced you can trust the mail? You can deliver your ballot yourself to a secure drop box. Those boxes are monitored by cameras for security reasons. You will find one at the county offices in the Willowbank Building in Bellefonte, the State College Municipal Building, and other locations.

The locations are listed at an icon on the newly redesigned Centre County Elections Office homepage. You'll find links there for almost everything you might want to know. Go to [centrecountyvotes.com](http://centrecountyvotes.com). You can apply for a ballot, find out how to return it, track it as you would a package, and even view results at the clearly marked icons.

Is mail-in voting valid? Yes. Our military has done it since the Civil War. Their ballots always are accepted a few days after Election Day, to allow for the mail. As for verification, when you vote in-person, you sign the book; when you mail-in, you sign the back of the outer envelope (be sure your ballot is sealed in the inner secrecy envelope). In both cases, your signature is compared to the one on record with the Elections Office. Bar coding keeps ballots from being fraudulently duplicated.

Because we no longer have straight ticket voting, please vote individually for each of your preferred candidates.

AAUW State College's Public Policy Committee is committed to providing you with up-to-date information to make your vote count. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Mary ([mdupuis73@gmail.com](mailto:mdupuis73@gmail.com)) or Dianne ([dianne@diannegregg.com](mailto:dianne@diannegregg.com)).

--Dianne Gregg and Mary Dupuis, Public Policy Co-Chairs



### ***FALL COMMENCES WITH MANY VIRTUAL PROGRAMS***

This fall has been marked by a wide range of AAUW programs, all virtual due to COVID restrictions. In September, Nina Cowart, Co-Vice President for Programs, moderated a variation of our annual Branch Engagement Fair (we missed the potluck portion!) on September 17.

On October 7 program AAUW State College the Community Diversity Group co-sponsored [\*\*\*Women and Mental Health: Taking Care of Yourself and Others\*\*\*](#), moderated by branch member Leslie Laing. If you missed seeing it on the 7<sup>th</sup>, you can view it now at the link above. Two other virtual October programs, courtesy of AAUW-Pennsylvania, focused on politics: ***Vote 2020: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly***, and ***Political Media and Our National Anger***. They were insightful.



### ***AAUW EQUITY NETWORK TO HOST OCTOBER 27 PROGRAM ON IMPOSTER SYNDROME; FOLLOWED BY AAUW-PA DISCUSSION***

The AAUW Equity Network is hosting a webinar on **Tuesday, October 27 from 5:00 – 6:00 pm** on ***Radical Self-Acceptance: Impostor Syndrome Through an Intersectional Lens***.

Impostor Syndrome is a form of self-doubt that manifests when objectively successful people believe their success is attributed to luck. It impacts millions of people of all backgrounds and career stages, but the compounding effects of racism and sexism creates a unique hurdle for women of color in the work place that is often left out of the conversation. Register [here](#).

AAUW-PA has scheduled a brief follow-up discussion on this program on **Thursday, November 12 from 7:00 – 8:00 pm**. You can register for the zoom conversation [here](#).



## **CO-SPONSORED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 28**

On **Wednesday, October 28, 5:30 – 6:30 pm**, AAUW State College will co-sponsor ***Resilience and Proactive Ways to Take Care of Your Mental Health in Trying Times*** with the Jana Marie Foundation. The program will honor the memory of former branch co-president Billie Willits, who was very committed to ensuring good mental health. The speaker will be Marisa Vicere, Jana Marie Foundation President and Founder. To attend this virtual meeting, visit: [Registration Link for October 28 Mental Health Program](#)

## **BRANCH WEB RE-DESIGN PROJECT MOVES FORWARD**



### ***What changes will you see?***

This summer new content was submitted to Keystone Connect, our web redesign firm. Keystone is integrating this content with a revised web organization, photographs, and new font and color guidelines supplied by national.

Our goal is to have a site that can be kept current by our branch leadership and displays the breadth of the programs and activities available to AAUW State College members and the community. Many of the navigational tabs on our current website will stay the same but with revised content. New features will include information on how our Branch has addressed AAUW’s priority issues of Equity, Leadership, and Education and a FAQ with questions and answers about our branch and national.

### ***What Still Needs to be Done?***

Our Web Redesign Team has been asked to review the new website and to assess how it works on different cell phone and laptop platforms. Some photographs still need to be selected and combined with the text. A final proofreading of the text will be conducted. Selected Board members will be trained on how to update the part of the website that pertains to their responsibility. An organizational structure for managing the website needs to be put in place.

***When will the new website be available?*** The expectation is that it will be ready in late November.

--Sally Kalin and Cindy Hall, Branch Co-Presidents



## **2020-2021 HANDBOOK/DIRECTORY COMPLETED**

The 2020-2021 *Handbook/Directory* is coming in the mail very soon if you haven’t already received it. Special thanks go to Suzanne Kerlin, who worked very hard to make the *Handbook/Directory* as up-to-date as possible. It is a terrific tool for learning more about the branch and staying in touch with other branch members. Check it out!



## **2021 USED BOOK SALE MARKETING TEAM FORMED**

The **May 15-18, 2021** Used Book Sale Marketing Team is assembled! Led by Sale Chair Dina Liberatore, the committee includes Dina, Star Campbell, Amber Redmond, and Estelle Stroup. Dina reports that help is also needed with promoting book donations to the workshop now through mid-March. If you are interested in helping, contact Dina at [dina.liberatore@gmail.com](mailto:dina.liberatore@gmail.com).



### **BOOK DONATIONS AT USED BOOK WORKSHOP**

Book donations are preferred during workshop hours at the loading dock of the AAUW State College Used Book Workshop, 176 Technology Drive in Boalsburg. Fall hours are **Monday nights, 6:00 – 8:00 pm**, and **Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 am – 2:30 pm**. Donations may also be made off-hours at the outdoor bins at the top of the driveway. To make sure your books fit the criteria for resale visit <http://www.aauwstatecollege.org/booksale/donations.html>. Unsuitable books may be recycled in CCRRA curbside recycling bins once hard covers are removed.

We do not pick-up books from residences, but a local commercial delivery service would work well for those who are unable to deliver books themselves.



### **EDUCATION UPDATES**

We keep abreast of educational issues that currently revolve around the pandemic. Cyber charter schools are booming. Local income from tax revenues is down due to COVID and public schools have budget shortfalls.

We encourage everyone to write to Senator Toomey and elaborate on the consequences of inadequate school funding in your district. We have long been concerned about the operations of charter schools and proposed legislation would increase fiscal oversight for charter schools; if House Bill 2833 passes, it would make all charter schools subject to audit by the auditor general.

**Schools need advocacy during COVID.** The September 15 webinar, "Public School Advocacy in the New Normal of a COVID-19 World", was presented by Sue Spicka of PA Schools Work with representatives from the Lancaster SD and the Public Citizens for Children and Youth. Local income from tax revenues is down due to COVID and taxpayers need more time to pay taxes. Combine this with low interest rates, and public schools have a shortfall between \$850 million and a billion dollars. As a result, many school districts laid off support staff. Charter school enrollments are at an all-time high--only the PA Cyber Charter has an enrollment cap.

Since Pennsylvania has one of the lowest amounts of school funding due to reliance on property taxes, federal aid is needed to meet the school budget gaps. Suggested actions are to write to Senator Toomey and introduce yourself to state lawmakers, via social media or other means, and tell them your story about the need to increase school funding.

--Carol Hodes, Education Committee Chair



### **MID-STATE LITERACY COUNCIL HOSTS NOVEMBER 12 VIRTUAL SPELLING BEE**

The **21<sup>st</sup> Ron and Mary Maxwell Community Spelling Bee**, a major fundraiser for the Mid-State Literacy Council Community, will be held virtually on **Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 pm**. Sixteen teams will participate, including The Beekeepers from AAUW State College, featuring spellers Talat Azhar, Sally Kalin, and Connie

Schroeder. Their team is sponsored by Blake and Linda Gall.

Other branch members involved with the event are Mary Dupuis (Bee Committee), Ann Echols (MSLC Board Chair), and Amy Wilson (MSLC Executive Director). We hope you'll tune in to the live Bee, which will be broadcast on C-NET Centre County YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC564yxu5KteoSp-gV4Vy--A>. Katie O'Toole will serve as both Word Master and Master of Ceremonies.

**More Spellers Needed!** This fun event supports local literacy programs. If you would like to join a spelling bee team, please contact Amy Wilson at [awilson@mid-stateliteracycouncil.org](mailto:awilson@mid-stateliteracycouncil.org) today, or call (814) 360-1131. Sponsors are available for teams. Teams will compete on Zoom via a private link.



### **NOVEMBER 17 - PAID FAMILY LEAVE WORKSHOP**

Karen Showalter from MomsRising (<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/users/karen-showalter>) will present a virtual Paid Family Leave Workshop on **November 17 from 7:30 – 9:00 pm**. With the increased unemployment due to COVID 19, the pressing need for paid family leave has become more evident. Karen will share information and solicit audience input through an interactive exercise and provide pertinent information on paid family leave legislation. This program is jointly sponsored by all AAUW-PA Central District branches.

AAUW Huntingdon is working on a shared program for the winter featuring AAUW Fellows. Watch for notices on future programs.

--Sue Johnstown, AAUW-PA Central District Coordinator



### **FAIR DISTRICTS PA - CENTRE COUNTY REDISTRICTING LEGISLATION**

Fair Districts PA has shifted its focus from pursuing a constitutional change to prevent gerrymandering to improving the current redistricting process to make it fairer and less partisan. The Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (LACRA), also House Bill 2638, mandates a more transparent process, public engagement, map-drawing criteria, and accountability to the voters. The same bill has been introduced as Senate Bill 1242. Both bills have been set to their respective committees; SB 1242 has already reported out of committee. The goal of these efforts is to have districts that reflect the will of the voters. For more information, consult [fairdistrictspa.com](http://fairdistrictspa.com).

You can help. Contact Senator Jake Corman (717-787-1377 or 814-355-0477) and ask him to bring SB 1242 up for a vote soon. Contact your state representative to help push HB 2638 out of committee. If you live in Representative Benninghoff's district, contacting him will be especially helpful because he is majority leader of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives (717-783-1918 or 814-355-1300). Bombard your legislators with email, phone calls, or even better, a personal visit.

--Sue Johnston, Fair Districts PA-Centre County Liaison

# New Member Welcome

**MARIA MOLINA HIGGINS**, [mcm6309@psu.edu](mailto:mcm6309@psu.edu)



A Teaching Assistant Professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Penn State University, Maria received a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and a Ph.D. in Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering from Virginia Commonwealth University. Currently, her research interests include photochemical properties of semiconductors and noble metals, optimization of radiation therapy, synthesis of metallic use of nanoparticles, and the use of ionizing radiation for water decontamination.

Maria has received several awards, including Distinguished Alumnus Award from La Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Young investigators Award (2018) in the International Conference on Ionizing Processes, Outstanding Dissertation Award (2018-2019), and an AAUW International Fellowship (2017-2018). She is passionate about increasing the participation of young women in STEM fields by participating in initiatives involving high school and undergraduate female students, and Girl Scouts of America.

## WOMEN IN SCIENCE – AN INSPIRATION

The 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to [Emmanuelle Charpentier](#) and [Jennifer A. Doudna](#) “for the development of a method for genome editing.” Since Charpentier and Doudna discovered the CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors in 2012 their use has exploded. The genetic scissors have taken the life sciences into a new epoch and, in many ways, are bringing the greatest benefit to humankind. Learn more:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/10/interview-jennifer-doudna-winner-of-nobel-prize-in-chemistry/>



Emmanuelle Charpentier



Jennifer Doudna



## BRANCH NEWSLETTER UPDATE

This issue will be the last for *Branching Out*, our bi-monthly branch newsletter as we make changes that will affect how and when branch news is delivered. Starting the end of December, we shift from a bi-monthly newsletter to a new *bi-weekly* format called *Branch Bulletin*, which will be a hybrid form of our old newsletter and branch e-blasts. It will be sent electronically, posted on the new AAUW State College website, and stored on Google Drive in a [Branch Bulletin](#) folder. This bundling of branch news will make news delivery more efficient, timely, and accessible to members at any time.

The *Branch Bulletin* **submission deadline** is the **first and third Monday of every month**. The first submission deadline is **Monday, December 21**. The *Branch Bulletin* **issue date** is the **second and fourth Monday of the month**. The first issue date is **Monday, December 28**.

Questions? Contact branch newsletter editor, Connie Schroeder, [connieschroeder@gmail.com](mailto:connieschroeder@gmail.com).