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AAUW State College grants awarded

Following the annual Used Book Sale in May 2024, AAUW State College awarded program grants to 26 local, nonprofit groups, with proceeds from the sale. The major selection criterion for funding was that the programs reflect AAUW’s mission to advance equity for women and girls. “Money raised through the Used Book Sale allows the branch to provide financial support for programs that might not otherwise be viable,” commented Michele Cowl, STEM Committee Co-Chair.



COMMUNITY ACTION GRANTS – Sixteen programs received Community Action Grants to address needs in areas such as health, leadership, literacy, and self-esteem. According to Sherry Crassweller, Community Action Grants Chair, almost **\$65,000** was awarded, including grants for six new programs.

2024-2025 Community Action grantees included: 3 Dots Downtown; Altrusa International of Centre County; C-NET; Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts; Centre County Print Factory; Centre Helps; Centre Safe; Centre Volunteers in Medicine; Jana Marie Foundation; Leadership Centre County; Mid-State Literacy Council; Park Forest Preschool; Random Acts of Reading; RISE (Reading IS Enlightening); Schlow Centre Region Library; and The Rivet at Discovery Space.

STEM GRANTS – The AAUW State College STEM Committee awarded 10 STEM grants, impacting over 350 Centre County women and girls, totaling **an additional \$28,000**. The committee oversees science, engineering, and math experiences for females of all ages across Centre County.

Grants fund various projects and programs and include an open application for mini-grants up to \$500 that anyone in the county is eligible to apply for. “It can be hard to identify a few hundred dollars to get a new program started, but we can do that for some programs that engage females in STEM learning. Our mini-grants provide a platform for equitable access to those who need funding for public STEM programs. The application is simple and can be found on the AAUW State College website. We accept applications year-round until our funds are depleted,” said Carol-Beth Book, STEM Committee Co-Chair.

Learn more about AAUW State College grants: [Community Action Grants](#) [STEM Grants](#)



Thank you letters from Community Action Grant & STEM Grant recipients (excerpts)

From **Centre Helps** (\$4,000) – We are so grateful to be a recipient of grant funds from you. Our case management team was very excited and already have clients who are receiving help thanks to your grants. Thank you for your support and for all you do for our community.

—Denise McCann, Executive Director, Centre Helps

From **Centre Safe** (\$8,500) – Your gift provides safety and support for survivors of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Your support ensures that survivors will have access to the 24-Hour Crisis Hotline, Emergency Shelter, Crisis Counseling, Legal Advocacy, and Representation. It also helps us address violence before it begins—by working with children and youth to develop healthy relationships. We could not do this without you!

—Jennifer Pencek, Centre Safe Executive Director

From **Centre Volunteers in Medicine** (\$10,000) – We are very grateful for your thoughtful gift in support of Dental Services for Women. It will make a considerable impact as we offer expanded services to more Centre Countians in our new facility. Due to the generosity of benefactors such as you, our patients have access to high-quality healthcare and are able to continue on their journey to improved wellbeing.

—Cheryl White, CVIM Executive Director

From **Penn State graduate student Emilee Fortier** (\$500) – Thank you for STEM mini-grant to fund our STEM Outreach Workshop: Effective Strategies for Graduate Students.

—Emilee Fortier, Penn State graduate student

From **GaLS (Girls Love Science)** (\$2,400) – Thank you so much for the support of the program at our school. You enabled us to visit with amazing female scientists and inspired our students in thinking about their future careers!

—Lee Szymkiewicz, Teacher, Bellefonte Area Middle School

From **Mid-State Literacy Council** (\$11,400) – Thank you for the generous Community Action Grant, which will equip women with the skills and knowledge needed to obtain and advance in employment, access healthcare, and pursue higher education. We appreciate your investment in our community supporting literacy. You provide the ability to offer quality literacy education to every woman who seeks our services.

—Amy Wilson, *Mid-State Literacy Council Executive Director*

From **Random Acts of Reading** (\$2,000) – Thank you so much for funding our book vending machine project. This grant will help us facilitate another amazing meet-the-author event at one of our local schools. We are so excited to be able to keep providing these great books and experiences to kids in Centre County, due to the generosity of organizations and people like you! —Penny Eifrig, *Random Acts of Reading Executive Director*

From **Schlow Centre Region Library** (\$1,550) – On behalf of Schlow Centre Region Library and our patrons, thank you for the grant which will support titles and programs for *Women’s Wellness: The Minority Experience In & Out of the Workplace*. They will offer readers mirrors that reflect themselves and others in our community. They would not be possible without you!

—Maria Burchill, *Head of Adult Services, Schlow Centre Region Library*

From **The Rivet at Discovery Space** (\$4,000) – The Rivet’s project-based makerspace programs supported by AAUW State College are a perfect blend of education and community service. Participants learn practical skills like woodworking and teamwork while creating something meaningful for the community. The Little Free LABraries built this year will be filled with STEM experiments and activities and will serve as a lasting resource, encouraging curiosity and learning in science!

—Janet Dillon and *The Rivet at Discovery Space team who lead makerspace programs for girls*

Branch member potluck planned at Orchard Park:

Thursday, September 12, 5:00-7:30 pm



Great news! Our fall member potluck is scheduled for **Thursday, September 12 at Orchard Park, 1060 Bayberry Drive from 5:00-7:30 pm. Here is a map to the location: [Orchard Park](#).** Mark your calendar today.

Come at 5 pm to socialize and learn about ways to become more engaged with the branch! Together, we will further our mission to pursue gender equity. **Bring your favorite dish, salad, or dessert to share; that is all.** We will provide paper products and beverages. Feel free to invite a friend or colleague to join you at the potluck; there will be membership forms on hand for new members (\$92 annually). Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

--Betsy Manlove and Renee Cloutier, *AAUW State College Program VPs*

SCHOOL VOUCHER Program

SAVE the DATE: Thursday, September 26, 6:30–8:00 pm
College Township Community Room

Mark your calendar for this early evening hybrid program (in-person and via Zoom), co-sponsored by AAUW State College and AAUW Pennsylvania. Susan Spicka, executive director of Education Voters PA, and Sandra Miller, AAUW Pennsylvania Public Policy Chair, will serve as program presenters. Details and Zoom link will be available in early September. **Learn more:** <https://edvoterspa.org/tax-payer-funded-vouchers/>

For a comprehensive background on school vouchers in Pennsylvania, read the following article.



KEYSTONE
RESEARCH
CENTER

Pennsylvania's Track Record on School Vouchers: Still No Accountability

Note: *Mary Dupuis and Dianne Gregg, AAUW State College Public Policy Co-Chairs, share an important June report authored by Michael Ewing of the Keystone Research Center. It is an in-*

depth look at school vouchers and the lack of accountability in Pennsylvania's two existing voucher programs. They have cost taxpayers \$2.6 billion since their inception. The report is eye-opening. Highlights follow below. Full report: [School Vouchers – No Accountability](#)

After decades of chronic underfunding, the Commonwealth Court has ruled that Pennsylvania's current K-12 education funding system is unconstitutional and must be rectified. The Basic Education Funding Commission released a report in January 2024 recommending \$5.1 billion in state investment over the next seven years to ensure students have the resources necessary to meet state achievement standards.

Despite this court mandate, some lawmakers in Pennsylvania are considering expanding our existing private school voucher tax credit programs or creating a whole new voucher system. Pennsylvania does not have a public dollar to waste on funding private schools—schools that can and do discriminate and operate without any financial or educational accountability.

PENNSYLVANIA'S PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS: The state of Pennsylvania currently funds two types of private school voucher programs. These received a combined total of \$470 million in PA taxpayer funds in 2023-24 and have received roughly \$2.6 billion since 2001.

- **Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC):** The EITC program was first funded in 2001 and provides tax credits to businesses that donate to a scholarship organization (SO) for private school scholarships, as well as tax credits for Educational Improvement Organizations that deliver innovative programs to public schools and scholarships for

children to attend pre-school. This report focuses on tax credits to scholarship organizations.

- **Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC):** The OSTC program was first funded in 2012 and provides tax credits solely to corporate contributions to nonprofit SOs that provide vouchers to attend private schools. These scholarships must go to students living in a “low achieving” school zone, defined as the state’s bottom 15 percent of public schools based on standardized test scores.

The primary findings about voucher programs in Pennsylvania are as follows:

- Pennsylvania’s existing voucher programs fund private and religious schools that are expensive, discriminatory, and exclusive
- Students do not benefit equally from voucher programs
- Students in rural communities often do not have access
- Private schools receiving vouchers discriminate
- Voucher programs have little accountability
- Vouchers subsidize elite and expensive private schools
- Religious schools teach creationism in lieu of science and are eligible for vouchers

Leaving aside the question of whether vouchers are good educational policy, at minimum, we should not expand these programs without basic financial and educational accountability in place. On the financial front, we are setting Pennsylvania and our taxpayers up for significant misuse of state funds. On the education front, we are setting our students up for attending schools that fail to deliver quality education as well as fueling social division and intolerance. Both outcomes are unacceptable.

Our public schools—which have strong financial and educational oversight and educate all our students without discrimination—need significant increase in investments to bring our school funding system into constitutional compliance. Increased investment in our public schools as outlined by the Basic Education Funding Commission, not increased funding for unaccountable private schools, will have the most impact on our children’s lives.

Plan to attend the September 26 program on School Vouchers to learn more!



**AAUW Atlantic Regional Conference
Glen Allen, Virginia, Sept. 27-29**

The AAUW Atlantic Regional Conference presents a unique opportunity for branch members to meet

AAUW members from 15 states in the eastern U.S., from Florida to Maine, and be inspired. The conference is modeled after a highly successful AAUW Midwestern conference held last year. Some attendees are making a vacation out of the conference since it is being held in an

historically rich area of the country, an hour's drive from Williamsburg and Jamestown, 50 minutes from Fredericksburg, and 20 minutes from Richmond.

Over the three days, there will be several roundtable discussions and networking opportunities. Eighteen presenters include **Gloria Blackwell**, AAUW CEO, **Megan Kissell**, AAUW Senior Director of Policy and Member Advocacy, **Ajla Glavasevic Laussegger**, AAUW Pennsylvania Diversity Chair, speaking on Generative AI, and many more noteworthy women. **Cindy Hall**, AAUW State College member and AAUW Pennsylvania President, is on the steering committee for the conference. **Early bird registration is due September 6.**

Details: <https://aauwatlanticregionalconference.com/>

Registration: <https://aauwatlanticregionalconference.com/online>

It would be wonderful if several of us were able to travel together to attend this worthwhile conference. **Interested?** Contact info@aauwstatecollege.org by **August 30.**



Branch-sponsored Penn State Forum Lunch with Susan Robinson, October 7 Tickets now on sale

Penn State Alumna **Susan Robinson** learned during her time at Penn State that she had a genetic visual impairment for which there was no correction or cure, and which would leave her legally blind (or partially sighted, as she prefers it). Today a business advisor, inspirational speaker, and entrepreneur,

Susan partners with executive leaders and boards of directors on enterprise-wide issues. Her team-oriented approach draws the best out of others, ensuring success for all. Her previous projects include organizational turnarounds, program launches, leadership workshops for top talent, competitive differentiation and growth assessments, and strategy, horizon, and transformation planning.

Tickets on Sale: AAUW State College has reserved two tables for the event. The cost to attend is \$25, which includes a buffet lunch that begins at 11:30 am. Visit https://aauwstatecollege.org/lectureship_women_leaders/ to purchase your ticket!



Mid-State Literacy Council seeks more spellers for annual Spelling Bee, September 25

Great news! The AAUW State College spelling team from 2023, **The Book-Bees**, featuring **Martha Hummel**, **Morgen Hummel**, and **Vasundara Varadan**, have re-upped to participate in the 2024 Mid-

State Literacy Council Spelling Bee. It is an online event planned for **September 25, 6:00 pm**. Last year, The Book-Bees were co-winners of the Bee.

If you would like to form a team or help complete an existing team, contact Amy at awilson@mid-stateliteracycouncil.org by mid-August.

Learn more about Mid-State Literacy Council at <https://www.mid-stateliteracycouncil.org/>



United Nations Association of Central Pennsylvania to hold Celebration Dinner, October 27

AAUW has a deep interest in women's issues locally, nationally, and internationally, and as a nongovernmental organization it consults with various United Nations bodies. The local UN chapter, UNA of Central Pennsylvania, is holding its annual celebration dinner on **Sunday, October 6, at the Ramada State College Hotel**.

The speaker, Penn State Smeal College of Business professor **Aydin Alptekinoglu**, will discuss how clothing and fashion employers pay substandard wages and flout human rights regulations. The United Nations has a special agency dedicated to fashion sustainability: <https://unfashionalliance.org/>. Ticket information and details will be available in the September and October *Branch Bulletins*. Stay tuned!



June 25 CDG Conference video presentations now available

The June 25 biennial Community Diversity Conference featured several informative presentations. Some of them were taped by C-Net and are available for your use: ([Black Maternal Health](#), [Business Case for Diversity](#), [Transgender & Genders Inclusion, Support, Advocacy](#)).



August 9 is International Indigenous People Day

Learn about the world's 476 million indigenous people. They make up 6.2 percent of the global population, and they represent more than 19 percent of the extremely poor. Learn more: [World Indigenous People Day](#)



Invitation to Community Diversity Group Potluck, to be held August 15

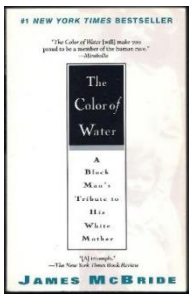
AAUW State College members are invited to the CDG Annual Fall Potluck – **August 15, 5:30-7:00 pm**. It will be held at Holmes Foster Park Pavilion 2. Register today: [CDG August 15 Potluck RSVP](#)



Happy Valley Latin Festival to be held Saturday, September 14, 11 am-5 pm, MLK Plaza

Join Us for a *Vibrant Celebration of Latin Culture* at the 4th Happy Valley Latin Festival on September 14! Experience the traditions of Latin culture with live music, captivating dance performances, and delicious food from across Latin America. Invite friends and family for a day filled with joy, color, and community. MLK Plaza is located at 127 S. Fraser Street, State College.

Learn more: <https://www.statecollege.com/event/happy-valley-latin-festival/>



¡ADELANTE! Book Club to meet Thursday, September 19

Our book club is modeled after the AAUW Diversity Outreach for Impact Program, featuring diverse cultures in both fiction and nonfiction offerings.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, September 19, at 2:30 pm**. We will discuss *The Color of Water* by James McBride. A young African-American man describes growing up one of twelve children of a white mother and black father and coming to terms with his confusion over his own identity. To participate with the group, please contact info@aauwstatecollege.org. We warmly welcome new members. **Join Zoom Meeting: [September 19 Adelante](#) Meeting ID: 883 7339 7994; Passcode: 562149**



Introducing Two-Spirit

Adopted in 1990, Two-Spirit is the modern umbrella term that bridges a gap in understanding between indigenous and western cultures. Each Nation defines the term differently, but generally it means one is born with both a male and a female spirit. Two-Spirit is part of the spiritual teaching of most indigenous people of North America. **Learn more about Two-Spirit:**

[Ma-Nee Chacaby talks about Two Spirit identities \(youtube.com\)](#)

[“What Does ‘Two-Spirit’ Mean?” \(them’s InQueery Series\)](#) --Contributed by Denise Rupert

Diversity Committee: Naana Nti (Chair), Carline Crevecoeur, Denise Rupert, Malu Tejada, Sophie Penney Leach, Maria Schmidt, and Carmen Vanderhoof



Thank you from scholarship recipient

2024 branch scholarship recipient **Cigdem Alrawi** was unable to attend this spring’s annual AAUW State College Award & Scholarship Banquet. She returned recently from Turkey and stopped by to visit AAUW State College Scholarship Chair Leslie Laing, to pick up her scholarship award in person. Congratulations, Cigdem!

Arts Fest yields great memories and goodwill for branch volunteers



Despite some extreme weather during this year’s Arts Festival, (July 10-14), the branch-run Information Booth at the intersection

of Allen and College was fully staffed.

Special thanks to branch leader **Jackie Esposito** for her organizing skills and being a super cheerleader and to the 24+ branch members who staffed the booth over five days. Arts Fest organizers extend their thanks, as well!

Left: Jackie Esposito and Chriss Schultz staffed the first shift of the event. Right: Naana Nti, Talat Azhar, and Connie Wheeler enjoyed catching up with one another.



Now is the time to engage with the branch

Whether you are a long-time member or have joined the branch recently, if you are not currently “engaged” with the branch, the time to do so is now! Behind the regularly held branch programs, membership events, and the Used Book Sale, there are several committees working tirelessly. Without these committees the

branch would cease to exist. The committees need your help! Committee descriptions and committee chairs’ contact information are provided here: [ENGAGEMENT](#)



Membership renewals

Time to renew your AAUW membership? Members receive an email renewal notification from AAUW during the month preceding the due date. **Ways to renew:**

ONLINE through AAUW National – respond to the email reminder from National or go to [AAUW Membership](#) on National’s webpage where you

will be asked to reset your password.

BY MAIL – go to https://aauwstatecollege.org/join_aauw_membership/ and click on “Join by Mail” at the bottom of the page. Print the form and send it with a check to the address listed.

QUESTIONS? Contact Membership VPs [Susan Chyczewski](#) and [Carline Crevecoeur](#).



Branch *Handbook/Directory* update underway; members asked to update their information today

Work is underway on this year's branch Handbook/Directory. It will be available in two formats: 1) electronically on the branch website **Members Only** page and 2) a print version that is made into a booklet and delivered by early fall. **Carline Crevecoeur, Suzanne Kerlin, Candace Davison, and Connie Schroeder** are working on it now to ensure an accurate listing.

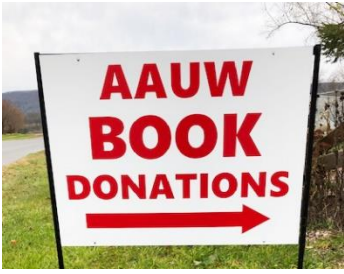
As the overall editor, Candace asks that members contact her ASAP, this week via email at [Candace Davison](#) with 1) changes in your listing - name, contact info, degree(s) and 2) if you **DO NOT** want to receive the printed version. **Updates are due to Candace by August 5.**

Branch web team gets down to business

The newly organized branch Web Team is moving into high gear, making updates to the website—[AAUW State College](#)—with large and small improvements along the way. It is a work in progress, with a focus on pages in the most urgent need of updating. The team is very accomplished and learning about aspects of the web page that are new to them. Branch Marketing & Communications VP Connie Schroeder commented, “The new Web Team is talented, determined, and fun, a terrific combination.”



Pictured left to right: Web team members Candace Davison, Sherry Lonsdale, and Jane Stanton, joined by Connie Schroeder, rear (in red).



Summer used book donations keeping workshop volunteers busy

The community continues to keep us busy with their incredible donations. The volunteers are keeping up with the pricing and sorting while working around their summer vacations. If there are any AAUW members who would like to join us, they would be welcome. There is plenty of work to share. Book donations at the workshop are keeping volunteers busy! If you have books to donate or need directions to the workshop, check out [Book Donations](#) first. Workshop hours are **Mondays, 6-8 pm** and **Tuesdays/Wednesdays 9:00 am-12 noon**. After Labor Day **Tue/Wed hours run 9:00 am-2:30 pm**.



AAUW Pennsylvania seeks board members for 2025-2027 terms

AAUW Pennsylvania seeks officers for 2025-27, including **Membership Vice President, Secretary, and Finance Officer**, to be approved at the January 2025 board meeting. Interviews will be done via email and possibly by Zoom calls. If interested, email <https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/about/board/> and write a note **to the attention of Ann Pehle and Deb Rooney**, AAUW Pennsylvania Nominating and Elections Committee, no later than **August 20**.



Join us behind the scenes at our monthly board meetings

Branch board meetings are a great place to learn about what is going on and to offer input. The next AAUW State College board meeting will take place in person at the **College Twp. Building** (upstairs) and via Zoom on **Monday, August 12, 11:30 am–1 pm**.

To join online: bit.ly/AAUWSCBoardMeeting



Branch Bulletin dates

The next *Branch Bulletin* will be issued **September 2**. The submission deadline will be **Monday, August 26**. Please send items to editor [Connie Schroeder](#).