Our Mission: To honor women and girls, empowering them through education, service and leadership development.

**President’s Message**

Once the school season has begun it seems the rest of the calendar year just goes by in an instant. That is why it is so important to take a moment now to reflect on the AAUW organization, our branch, and our mission. Our general meeting provided us with an opportunity to witness first-hand how we achieve progress toward our mission to advance equity for women and girls though advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. The 2015-2016 Science Fair project has begun and we need volunteers. Please keep in mind mentoring for the science fair project will help girls who are interested in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and math.  I had the experience last year to listen to children who came into the library looking for science fair resources reflect on how the mentor project experience helped them progress in their education reminded me of the reason we are members of this organization and how important our work is to these young children. They were so accomplished and inspiring.  Please add your name to our list of volunteers for 2015-2016 Science Fair Project. It takes only a few minutes to sign up contact Catherine Haslag.

~Courtney Wyant, President

**November Program**

Jennifer Lawhead, Executive Director of Austin Aspires, will provide information about this education non-profit, share data from community focus groups around the topic of educational excellence, describe Austin Aspires' community education goals, and invite members (if interested) to join one of the  Action Teams.

Austin Aspires is a 501(c)3 organization and is an exploring member of the StriveTogether Network out of Cincinnati. StriveTogether promotes the use of collective impact to improve educational outcomes in its partner communities.

See you in the large meeting room at the Library at 6:30 for social time on Tuesday, November 10th! Meeting and program to follow at 7 PM.

Jill Maxfield and Catherine Haslag, Programs Co-Chairs

**Small Groups**

**AM Book Group**

Morning Book Group will meet at Barley's at 9:00 a.m. on November 19th.  Ellen Stark will lead discussion of the book "Go Set a Watchman" by Harper Lee.  We welcome visitors.  On December 17th we will share discussion of a favorite by each member.

**First Friday**

First Friday Luncheon will be held at the Old Mill at 11:30 on Friday, Nov. 6th.  Please contact Dorothy Krob at sdkrob@live.com if you plan to attend.

**PM Book Group**

Evening book group will be at the home of Carolyn Bogott on November 17th at 7:00 p.m. We will discuss *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks.  Please RSVP to Carolyn at csbogott@gmail.com. Our December selection is *Rocket* *Girl* by George Morgan.

**Knitting & Handiwork**

We continue to meet most Saturdays at the Coffee House on Main at 9:30 AM. You need not be able to knit/ do handiwork to attend!

**Travel Group**

The Travel Club will be meeting at the home of Gail Minerich on Wednesday, November 11th at 1:00 P.M.   Gail will be sharing her photos and experiences of their recent trip to South Africa.  We look forward to hearing and learning about this great trip.  Please let DedaRae know (433-7897) if you plan to join!

**Great Decisions**

The Great Decisions group completed its 2015 discussion program in October. We are looking forward to reconvening in February of 2016. Anyone interested in joining is encouraged  to contact Evelyn at [erguentz@charter.net](mailto:erguentz@charter.net).

Science Fair Mentoring Project Heads into Year 2

The Science Fair Mentoring Project is starting for the 2015-16 academic year.  Last year, we helped 102 3rd and 4th graders at Sumner and Neveln participate in the science fair.  These students built positive relationships with students in our community, developed confidence, and learned about science in a new way.

We are excited to be working with the 4th graders at Neveln this year.  Below is a list of dates we will be working with the students:

November 19

December 3, 10, 17

January 7, 14, 21, 28

February 4, 18, 23, 25

If you are interested in helping with this program, please email [ScienceFairMentorMN@gmail.com](mailto:ScienceFairMentorMN@gmail.com) and let me know which dates you are able to volunteer.  Please remember, you don't have to volunteer for all of the dates on this list.  Volunteer as your schedule allows; however, do please let us know in advance so we know how many mentors to expect on any given day.  We will be pairing mentors to work with specific students as much as possible.  This will make it easier for mentors and students to build a relationship with each other.

If you are interested in volunteering for this project, here is what you need to do:

1.      Let us know which dates you can help.  We understand many of you may not know your calendars for January and February.  That's ok.  Let us know which dates you can help in November and December as soon as possible.

2.      Complete a simple background check with the Austin Public Schools (APS).  There is no cost to you to complete the background check.  Please email Sue Stark at [sue.stark@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:sue.stark@austin.k12.mn.us) to start this process.  If you have completed a background check with APS in the past 3 years, you do not need to do this step for this academic year.

3.      Attend one of the orientation sessions.  We will tell you more about this program, its design, give you a short lesson in the scientific method, and answer any questions you have.  We will offer face-to-face sessions on October 29 and November 2 at 6:30p at IJ Holton Intermediate School.  You only need to attend one of these dates, not both.  If you are not available to come to one of those orientations, it will also be made available to you online.  We will provide you the link after the November 2 session so you can view the recording at your convenience.

Please let me know if you have any questions.  You can email the project at [ScienceFairMentorMN@gmail.com](mailto:ScienceFairMentorMN@gmail.com) or you can call 417-827-6989 if you would like to speak with me.

Thank you so much for your interest in helping Austin youth!

Catherine Haslag

Science Fair Mentoring Project Coordinator

Check us out on Facebook<https://www.facebook.com/sciencefairmentormn>

**WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH ACTIVITIES AT AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL RESUME THIS YEAR!**

After a year off because of the Austin High School (AHS) schedule, our branch is again sponsoring a Women’s History Project Contest for the Honors American History students, as well as an all-school assembly to celebrate Women’s History Month. This will be the eleventh year of these activities. That is a lot of young people who have been exposed to women’s issues and to some of the struggles women have had in trying to achieve equal rights. Our branch should feel proud!

At the request of AHS staff, we have contracted to bring Ann Bancroft, Arctic and Antarctic adventurer, to speak to the student body on February 23. Ann has been a teacher and was very effective when she came to AHS five years ago. She has discounted her usual speaking rate by half (to $2500) for this appearance, so we will be soliciting funds from service groups to augment the $300 set aside in our budget. IN ADDITION, ANY CONTRIBUTIONS YOU CAN MAKE WILL BE MUCH APPRECIATED.

A committee composed of Sue Grove, Jill Maxfield and Carolyn Bogott met during October to begin sending letters to service organizations. Sue and Carolyn also met with the head of the Social Studies department at AHS, Lisa Sanders, and the Honors American History teacher, Dennis Schwab, to begin work on the Women’s History project topics.

This will be an exciting opportunity to promote the Austin AAUW chapter’s mission!

Look for more information about Women’s History Month activities in the December Southern Highlights!

**PUBLIC POLICY**

On October 27 the Education and Workforce Committee Democrats hosted the Working Families Day of Action. AAUW has promoted positive work-life balance policies for decades, both by advocating and sharing personal stories with legislators on Capitol Hill. Major concerns as we look to the future are:

      **Paycheck Fairness Act (HR 1619)** – Strengthens the Equal Pay Act and helps to close the gender pay gap.

      **FAMILY Act (HR 1439)** – Provides paid family and medical leave to workers.

      **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (HR 2654)** – Requires reasonable accommodations to protect the health of pregnant workers.

      **Healthy Families Act (HR 932)** – Ensures workers can earn paid sick days each year to use toward recovering from their own illnesses, providing care to a sick family member, or seeking assistance related to a domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault incident.

      **Raise the Wage Act (HR 2150)** – Raises the minimum wage and increases the economic security of working women and their families.

The best way to celebrate the Working Families Day of Action is to urge your representative to support this package of legislation!

Evelyn Guentzel

**Directory Update!**

Please note the following e mail address update for Liz Richardson: [lizrich7655@gmail.com](mailto:lizrich7655@gmail.com).

If you ever have information you would like included in the newsletter, please contact [rao\_raedawn@yahoo.com](mailto:rao_raedawn@yahoo.com)!

**AAUW Board Meeting**

October 13, 2015

AAUW Board met at Riverland Community College. Present were DedaRae Graber, Catherine Haslag, Dorothy Krob, Jill Maxfield, Ruth Monson and Courtney Wyant.

Secretary’s report from the summer Board meeting was approved.

Nicole Cizik sent in a Treasurer’s update. The Board reviewed the 2015-16 budget, which will be approved at a later meeting.

Jill reported that additional funds are needed for the Women’s History Month speaker Ann Bancroft, who will speak at Austin High School on February 23, 2016. Jill, Courtney, Carolyn Bogott and Sue Grove will meet to discuss ideas for funding that program.

Catherine reported on the year’s programs. February’s general program will be two speakers from the Hormel Institute – Mandi Siems and Rebecca Morris. Because attendance at the May banquet has decreased in recent years, the Board discussed alternatives to holding a banquet in May.

No membership update. Catherine reported on the Science Fair Mentorship program. Volunteer orientation sessions will take place on October 29 and November 2 at I. J. Holton Intermediate School. The kick-off event with the children will be at Riverland Community College on November 12. The Science Fair will be held on Friday, February 26, 2016 at I. J. Holton. Volunteers are needed for the kick-off event and volunteer mentors are needed starting on November 19.

The evening book group reminds its members to rsvp to the hostess for the book discussion each month.

Scholarship recipients were not available to be introduced at the October general meeting, but Bonnie Rietz will introduce them at a future meeting.

The Board discussed plans for a fall 2016 House Tour and agreed that a committee needs to be formed soon to begin plans. Catherine Haslag also reported on a possible cooking class social event.

The November meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10 at the Austin Public Library large meeting room. The Board will meet at 5:45 p.m. and membership will gather at 6:30 p.m. for social time, with the program by speaker Jennifer Lawhead from Austin Aspires beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Monson, Secretary

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| **AAUW Monthly Financial Report** | | |
| **September 25 - October 30, 2015** | | |
|  |  |  |
| **Period: 9/25/15 - 10/30/15** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Opening Balance:** |  | **$5,953.08** |
|  |  |  |
| **Income:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Dues Received | $520.00 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Total Income:** | **$520.00** | $6,473.08 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Disbursements:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Dues Paid | $425.50 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Total Disbursements:** | **$425.50** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Closing Balance 10/30/15** |  | **$6,047.58** |

*Mission Statement*: AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research.

*Vision Statement:* AAUW will be a powerful advocate and visible leader in equity and education through research, philanthropy, and measurable change in critical areas impacting the lives of women and girls.

**Southern Highlights Editor:** Rae Dawn Rao [rao\_raedawn@yahoo.com](mailto:rao_raedawn@yahoo.com) **Minnesota State Website:** <http://www.aauwmn.org> **Association Website:**  <http://www.aauw.org> **Association e-mail: info@aauw.org**

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AAUW Southern Highlights

1001 22nd Ave. SW

Austin, MN 55912