Our Mission: To honor women and girls, empowering them through education,

service and leadership development.

Co-President’s Message

Thanks again to all of you who helped make our Tour of Homes fundraiser a great success!

Our October program on the Crime Victim’s Resource Center was so thought-provoking and informative. Thanks to our dynamic program co-chairs, Barb Hunter and Jenni Braaten!

Now on November 12 we look forward to hearing more about Islam and having the questions answered that we didn’t have time for last year. Bring along any of your friends and acquaintances who are curious about Islam.

Wisdom from Jen:

Have you ever thought that a “circle of friends” should be revised to be a “U of friends “ so that there is always an opening for someone else to join? “Circles are great if you’re on the inside. They can be fun if you’re in one, but circles can be awfully cruel if you’re left on the outskirts, looking for a way to get inside. “

So, in our effort to make connections, let’s all try to open our circles into “U’s” and invite others to join us in every situation in which we find ourselves.

**“I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued.” Dr. Brene Brown**

Carolyn Bogott and Jen Lawhead

Co-Presidents, Austin Chapter – AAUW

**November Program**

Back by popular demand, the November program will be a continuation of the discussion on the role of women in Islam. John and Alisen Emery, from the Islamic Resource Group, in Minneapolis will be joining us again on Tuesday, November 12 at 6:30 pm.   Please note, the venue is the Mower County Senior Center rather than the traditional locations. As some of you may remember, John is a retired Army veteran who grew up in Apple Valley, MN. He was raised Catholic and converted to Islam after learning Arabic and serving as in interpreter in the Army for a number of years. There were many positive comments after their visit last year and interest in continuing to learn from them about Islam. This event is open to the broader Austin Community so please feel free to invite a friend, neighbor or colleague who may be interested in learning more about this topic. Attached separately from the newsletter is the flyer to promote this event. Please print and distribute as you see fit. Likewise, the following are links to other interviews John has done in Minnesota. We are fortunate John and Alisen are willing to drive down to Austin for part two of this discussion!

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/10/26/former-catholic-clearing-up-misconceptions-about-islam>

<https://www.kaxe.org/post/islam-and-muslims-beyond-stereotypes#stream/0>

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| [https://ecp.yusercontent.com/mail?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.kaxe.org%2Fsites%2Fkaxe%2Ffiles%2Fstyles%2Fmedium%2Fpublic%2F201801%2Firg.gif&t=1572191500&ymreqid=bdff71e2-a184-094e-1c69-5d000b01e700&sig=Ux69fiEe3Qm9gdhnqpCK2Q--~C](https://www.kaxe.org/post/islam-and-muslims-beyond-stereotypes#stream/0) | [Islam and Muslims: Beyond Stereotypes | KAXE](https://www.kaxe.org/post/islam-and-muslims-beyond-stereotypes#stream/0)  Islamic Resource Group (IRG) is doing talks in northern MN about the Muslim experience. They will be in Brainerd this Saturday January 13th at 6pm at Central Lakes College with a talk called "Islam and Muslims: Beyond Stereotypes".  www.kaxe.org |

Jenni Braaten & Barb Hunter

**Member Spotlight – Laura Helle**

Many of us will remember Laura’s six years as the executive Director of the Hormel Historic Home. Since she left there in 2012, she spent 3 years working for Vision 2020 as Director of Vision Creation. Then she was Director of Grants and Alumni Relations at Riverland Community College, before taking her current position as Executive Director of Austin Area Arts, overseeing programming for the Paramount Theatre, Austin ArtWorks Center and Austin ArtWorks Festival. Accomplishments in the position include winning a 4-year operating support grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, making Austin ArtWorks Center the inaugural site of the first ever Minnesota Black Fine Art Show and bringing the first ethnically/racially diverse Featured Artist to the Austin ArtWorks Festival (Anishnanabe artist Rory Wakemup).

Laura was elected in 2016 to the Austin City Council representing the 1st Ward. As a city council person she serves on the boards of the Port Authority, Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Austin Public Schools Community Education Advisory. She helped start the new Culture and Arts Commission for the city.

In 2018, She joined the board of the South East Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC) Board and this summer was named Vice President of that board.

Laura is a graduate of Iowa State and has had further leadership training through University of St. Thomas and the Blandin leadership programs.

Laura says, I happened to be born into the privilege of a white family with high levels of education. I received an excellent education in an environment that was built for my culture. Despite this background of privilege and comfort, I have always identified with the 'other' in our midst. I am passionate that no one be barred from participating in any life experience—challenges as well as triumphs—because of gender, socio-economic status, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, education, etc.

I am a member of AAUW because I identify strongly with the mission to advance equity for women and girls. Toni Morrison put it this way: "..your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else."

On a personal level, I also know that many of the members of the AAUW here in Austin are real-life trail blazers. Because of the work these women did, I am able to have the job I have, to be the working mom that I am and to claim space as a community leader. I appreciate spending time with these women and learning from their experiences.”

We are so fortunate to have Laura as a member of our Austin Branch of AAUW!

**2019 Home Tour Success!**

The 2019 AAUW Tour of Homes is in the books! Many thanks are to be extended across our organization. Sonia Larson & Sue Grove secured the three unique homes we featured on the tour. Sonia was also gracious enough to offer up her home as a refreshment stop for our ticket holders. This new edition to the tour was well received. We would also like to extend a sincere thanks to our home co-lead hostess’: Vickie Spyhalski, Sharon Hyland, Carolyn Bogott, Sandy Folk, and Marsha Kuehne. Finally, thank you to all members for selling tickets, getting the word out about the tour, providing bars for refreshments, and guiding ticket holders through the homes on the day of the tour! Thanks to these collaborative efforts we were able to raise more than $2700 towards our scholarship funding. Give yourself a big pat on the back!

~Rae Dawn Rao & Carolyn Rugg, Co-Chairs of AAUW Home Tour

**Small Groups**

**PM Book Group**

We will be meeting at the home of Sue Grove on November 18th at 7 PM to discuss *Art of the Wasted Day* by Patricia Hempl. Please RSVP to Sue at sue.grove@riverland.edu. We will meet at 7 PM on December 16th to discuss *Onigamiising Seasons Of the Ojibwe Year* by Linda LeGard Grover.

**AM Book Group**

We will meet November 21 at 9:00 A.M. at Perkins to discuss *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande. Gerry Rustad will lead the discussion.

**First Friday**

The First Friday group will meet at Applebee's at 11:30 on Friday, Nov. 1st. RSVP to Dorothy Krob by noon on Thursday, Oct.31st. [sdkrob@live.com](mailto:sdkrob@live.com)

**Great Decisions**

Great Decisions meets November 25 at 1:00 P.M. at Riverland’s C110. The group will discuss the U.S. and MEXICO: Partnership Tested, by Michael Shifter and Bruno Binetti.

**SUPPORT FOR OUR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**

We were introduced to our scholarship winners at the October meeting. It was wonderful to meet Jessica Lemickson and Ebise Walga and to hear Jessica’s story (Ebisa Walga came a little late and there was no opportunity to hear from her directly). We are again providing simple support for them each month in the form of an encouraging note and/or gas card. Please get in touch with me if you wish to participate. I will also have a sign up at the November meeting. Thanks! Peggy Benzkofer

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| **AAUW** | | |
| **October 1 - October 31, 2019** | | |
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| **Period: 10/1/19 - 10/31/19** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Opening Balance:** |  | **$9,510.24** |
|  |  |  |
| **Income:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Book sale proceeds | 135.00 |  |
| House tour proceeds | 2,935.00 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Total Income:** | **$ 3,070.00** | $12,580.24 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Disbursements:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Insurance | 190.00 |  |
| Stamps | 11.00 |  |
| House tour expenses | 201.83 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Total Disbursements:** | **$402.83** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Closing Balance 10/31/19** |  | **$12,177.41** |

**PUBLIC POLICY**

Evelyn Guentzel

Wow! Where did October go? We had a wonderful opportunity to hear from Torri Miller of the Crime Victims’ Center. We were educated about the array of services provided as well as the demographics of domestic violence across our community. It means so much to know that we live in a caring community.

On November 12, we will hear more about WOMEN In ISLAM, their faith and their role in religious life. This meeting is open to the public and will be held at the Senior Citizens’ Center. It is part of our initiative to share our programs with the public.

With its current public agenda, “AAUW supports efforts to improve racial, gender, and ethnic justice. This includes creating a diverse culture of involvement, respect, inclusion, and connection, where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives is fully appreciated and utilized.” Moreover, its policies are aligned with national and international policies that "promote peace, justice, sustainable development, mutual security and civil and human rights of all immigrants.”

This is an important position to share with the public audience. AAUW speaks in broad terms about justice for all and diversity. While we focus on a group to educate ourselves and our audiences, we seek to understand the cultural dimensions of America. ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITIES.

*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.

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