

The Advocate

Newsletter of the Bridgeport Area Branch of the
American Association of University Women, Bridgeport, CT



October 2021

From the President

What's Our North Star?

Many of us gathered last month and reflected on our rich history during our 90th birthday celebration. Over the last century (i.e., since 1916 when our predecessor, The College Club of Bridgeport, was founded), our organization has reliably assisted young women to afford college and better prepare to succeed in the workforce. In parallel, AAUW Bridgeport has tirelessly advocated for women and girls through a variety of programs spanning from teen pregnancy counseling (which evolved into the Greater Bridgeport Coalition for Choice) to youth mentoring programs (which evolved into the School Volunteer Association of Bridgeport). Our success was, and is, because of you – our members! Thank-you for making a difference!

I am now thinking a lot about our future.

- How can a small organization like ours make college more affordable given the complexities and high costs of financing a higher education?
- What are programs we can launch that will better prepare women to succeed in education and in life?
- What are the actions we can take to level the playing field for women pursuing a better life?

There are many smaller organizations like ours that make a big impact. I wonder what a role model might look like for AAUW Bridgeport to benchmark against.

I decided to review a handful of AAUW FY20 Five Star Branches. The **AAUW Five-Star Recognition Program** celebrates efforts of AAUW states, branches and other affiliated AAUW organizations as they continue to advance gender equity on the community, state and national levels. Branches can earn recognition through five focus areas through achievement of specific tasks listed on the [website](#):

- Advancement
- Public policy & research
- Governance & sustainability
- Programs
- Communications & external relations

Note, I am not necessarily advocating that AAUW Bridgeport seek a Five-Star status. Instead, I want to define what '**best in class**' looks like prior to launching our strategic planning work. An outcome of this work may be to pursue Five-Star recognition. Or the committee may develop a different 3-5 year vision.

So, stay tuned for more about this in the coming months. In the event you'd like to participate in the strategic planning committee, please email me at fk7417@gmail.com.

Wishing you a safe and lovely fall season!

Felicia

Program News

By: Pat Tyre, VP Programs

Business and Financial Literacy Programs

Many women we seek to help are financially insecure and lack experience in managing their career. Our branch has the knowledge, skills, and resources to help these women with situations from building a budget to interviewing for a new job. By offering a local Business and Financial Literacy program, we can help women build competencies and confidence in matters that will improve their economic security. While there are many pre-packaged programs, including [AAUW's Money Smart virtual workshops](#), let's explore designing a custom workshop that meets the direct needs of our intended audience. That's not to say we cannot leverage what's already built. The idea, however, is to launch a program that has the AAUW Bridgeport flavor and represents the combined financial experience of our member base.

I will chair this initiative, but need assistance to explore, plan, build, launch and maintain this program. Your knowledge and best practices, including suggestions for teaching success, is critical to delivering a meaningful workshop. Implementation at the local colleges is targeted for Q1 2022. Please email me if you have information to share and/or to join our committee at excelptyre@aol.com.

Pat

Membership Matters

Welcome New Members!

From Carol Salon Feldman -

Dear AAUW Bridgeport, so glad to meet you and some of the other members of your outstanding organization [at the 90th celebration]. I was a member many years ago and always promised myself that I'd come back after I retired. Well, I did finally retire as a full professor of English and Humanities after forty years of working hard at a career at Norwalk Community College that seemed so well suited to my interests. During my tenure at NCC, I designed and implemented professional development for teachers throughout the state with topics such as Writing Across the Curriculum and Collaborative Learning. Right now, I'm still working on an individual basis with mostly adult students (majority are women) who want to improve their lives through higher education.

Best, Carol

Regina Sebring is an Operations and Sales executive currently working for Borsetta, Inc., an AI-powered simulation and modeling software platform for renewable energy assets. Regina is responsible for leading Borsetta's product delivery and fulfillment obligations in the US managing partnerships within the Public and Private sector. Regina is passionate about helping others and is a volunteer/supporter of the housing and homeless service organization "Open Doors" in Norwalk, CT. "I strive to appreciate every day, be as present as possible and believe wholeheartedly 'Give, and it will be given unto you' and 'In everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you.'" Regina graduated from Pace University in New York and enjoys skiing, paddle boarding and golf (poorly but making an effort to improve, just ask Pat Tyre). "I'm excited to be a part of such a wonderful organization whose mission aligns so well with what I strive to do in my personal and professional life...advancing equity for women." To quote Madeleine K. Albright: "There's a special place in hell for women who don't help other women."

Cheryl Yanosy is a retired high school Chemistry teacher. After graduating from Marietta College with a BS in Biology, she pursued her teaching certification at Southern Connecticut State University. Both Master's and Sixth-Year degrees round out her formal education. During her 27 years at Stratford High School she was Scholarship Chairperson for twelve years. Retirement from teaching in 2005 presented new opportunities for her. Cheryl currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Institute for Neurodegenerative Disorders in New Haven. As an Alzheimer's Women's Champion, Cheryl has worked to raise awareness of this devastating disease. Two segments on Channel 8 News featured her personal experience with caregiving for her husband, Nick. Golf, church choir, travel and reading are other interests in her life. Four wonderful grandchildren keep her engaged with today's teens and certainly keep her on her toes. Cheryl said the 90th anniversary celebration was a wonderful event. There was a strong sense of purpose shared by all. She is available to support the mission of AAUW and will be proud to continue its legacy!

Other Member News

- ❖ Happy (belated) birthday to **Velma Charlesworth**, who celebrated her 102nd birthday at home in Stratford on September 30!
- ❖ For those who have not heard, long-time member **Louise Hine** passed away on September 2, 2021, at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. Among her many community leadership roles, Louise was a board member of the AAUW Bridgeport branch, and a founding member of the School Volunteer Association of Bridgeport. Services have not yet been announced. More information about Louise's life and legacy is available [here](#).
- ❖ **Note from Laurel Anderson:** the [New Member Application Form](#) has been updated to reflect the recent dues increase and is now available on the branch website.



Happy Birthday to Us!



On September 25, the Bridgeport Area Branch marked its 90th year at a joyous celebration luncheon at the Mill River Country Club in Stratford—our first in-person branch gathering since the pandemic began! In addition to welcoming new members and recognizing our 2021 scholarship recipients, this happy reunion also included remarks by community partners **Alese Mulvihill**, Dean of Students and Director of the Family Economic Security Program at Gateway Community College, and **Lutonya Russell-Humes**, Sr. Director, Fund for Women and Girls at the Fairfield County Community Foundation. To top off the occasion, **Judith Slisz**, VP AAUW of Connecticut, presented a proclamation from the Office of Lieutenant Governor **Susan Bysiewicz** in honor of our milestone. Thank you to all members of the event committee including **Carole Fanslow**, **Gretchen Goethner**, **Louise MacCormack**, **Gerry Dunbar** and **Felicia Keeton** for making this such an inspiring occasion!





Scholarship Reports

The Bridgeport Branch awarded individual 2021 scholarships to three area students who were recognized at the branch's 90th Anniversary luncheon on September 25. Congratulations to **Maria Rivera**, a junior at Southern Connecticut State College, studying accounting and **Zakia Abbe**, also a junior at Southern Connecticut, majoring in Biology, minoring in pre-med chemistry. Maria spoke to us at the meeting via Zoom. And attending the luncheon was **Magdalena Dutkowska**, a senior at Fairfield University, majoring in politics, international studies and Spanish, and minoring in humanitarian action. Magdalena (pictured below with Scholarship Committee Member **Amy Gillis**) was also awarded a special one-time Community Service Scholarship, given this year in honor of the branch's milestone anniversary. Below are the inspiring thoughts Magdalena shared with us upon accepting her award.



Scholarship Presentation at AAUW Bridgeport's 90th Birthday Event

Remarks by: **Magdalena Dutkowska**, 2020-21 Tuition Scholarship and Community Service Scholarship Recipient

"Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for providing me with this opportunity, I am grateful to be here. Being an immigrant daughter, I have been asked the following very important question countless times. What do you want to be when you grow up? There has always been a focus on my future through my education and extracurricular activities. When I was little, I often said I wanted to be an astronaut or a doctor until I quickly learned I am petrified of turbulence and faint at the sight of blood. I knew I had to find a new career path. I

remember thinking about what I wanted to be while I was sitting in my 6th-grade classroom, and seeing one of the class posters with one word: humanitarian. I eventually asked my teacher what this word meant and she responded that a humanitarian is someone who helps people. I thought to myself, this is perfect! I love helping people! So from then on when people asked me what was my dream job, I would respond humanitarian.

Looking back, if I asked a middle schooler what she wanted to be and she responded with humanitarian, I would be equally shocked and interested. This was the reaction of some adults who asked me this, but my answer has never changed since. Because of this dream, I became involved in my middle school community service club through which we fundraised enough money to build a school in Kenya through the organization, Free The Children. Along with some of my classmates, I was given the opportunity to travel with 60 Minutes to Kenya to build a school and be a part of the opening ceremony. I knew from then on this is what I wanted to do, be a humanitarian. However, as I grew up, I realized that there is no specific career that you can apply for under the title, humanitarian.

Some may have seen this as a challenge, but for me, it was an opportunity. It opened my eyes to so many different activities, programs, organizations, and job positions that constitute as humanitarian. I have been able to really explore the careers of a humanitarian during my time at high school at Sacred Heart Greenwich and now at Fairfield University. I am currently majoring in International Studies, Politics, and Spanish and minoring in Humanitarian Action. In addition to my studies, over the past four years, I have had the opportunity to volunteer with numerous organizations such as the Africa Faith and Justice Network, through which I advocated on human rights issues such as gender equality, land grabbing, and toxic dumping in Africa, and Save the Children, on the U.S. Emergency Response team where I supported projects that helped children along the border and in preparation for natural disasters. I have also had the opportunity to stay active on campus and serve my local and global community through my engagement in the Humanitarian Action Club. I have served as a fellow since my sophomore year and with my peers have collaborated with numerous organizations focusing on issues like sustainability, immigration, social justice, education, and clean water. This past

semester, the club successfully raised over \$5,000 to provide water filters, which we were able to build ourselves, to communities globally that do not have access to clean water. We are constantly engaging in different ways to serve our community.

This past year, I have explored even more what it means to be a humanitarian and more specifically, what humanitarian action looks like. During my internship opportunities, I have collaborated with governmental agencies, which further sparked my interest in politics and how legislation affects humanitarian aid. This led me to my summer internship with Senator Richard Blumenthal and my current internship with Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. These two experiences have allowed me to learn about legislation and work closely with constituents on a variety of issues such as immigration, housing, education, taxes, and much more. I enjoy the social work aspect of these experiences and how we use legislation and our knowledge of different agencies to serve the community.

As you can see, being a humanitarian has many different meanings for me. I am so interested in exploring all of these paths and more in discovering how I can continue being a humanitarian in my community on both a local and global scale. Today, I am incredibly honored to receive the Community Service Scholarship from the American Association of University Women which will support me in pursuing an education and a career in humanitarian action. This will help me to continue asking myself what it means to be a humanitarian and how I can serve those in my community. Thank you to all those who have made this possible, I would not be able to follow my passion without the support of people like you. Thank you."

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Candidate for Office

As many of us learned at the 90th Anniversary luncheon, **Blakely Lockhart**, one of our AAUW NCCWSL (National Conference for College Women Student Leaders) awardees, is running for the House of Delegates, Virginia Legislator. She is the youngest person to ever run! She is now encouraging everyone to register AND make plans as to how and where they will vote on Nov. 2. Her slogan is "Flip the 56th" and her main platform reflects her rural constituents: Healthcare: affordable, cap prescriptions, increase accessibility, get paid family medical leave; Education: inclusive/equitable, bridge urban/rural divide, bring broadband to the area.

She is enthusiastic and still hoping her Republican competitor will at least meet her if not debate! Her web site is: lockhartfordelegate.com.

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New this Year – FESP Grant Funding

In addition to the community service scholarship and upcoming individual university scholarship awards for FY2021-2022, the Bridgeport Area Branch donated \$5,000 to the Housatonic Community College (HCC) Family and Economic Security Program (FESP). This grant program provides financial support to low-income mothers participating in the HCC FESP program who are seeking an associate degree or higher education certificate. [Learn more here.](#)



Study & Discussion Groups

Morning Book Study

Meets the fourth Tuesday of most months (see November) from September through May, at 10 a.m. Due to lingering pandemic protocols, the 2021-22 program will continue to meet remotely at this time. Any Bridgeport Area Branch member is eligible to join. For more specific information about the Morning Book Study Group, please contact the Chair: **Merrilyn Decker**: 203-268-5013 or merrdeck@aol.com. Discussion programs and leaders for 2021-22 are:

DATE	BOOK	LEADER
Oct. 26	<u>Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder & Memory in Northern Ireland</u> , by Patrick Keefe	Cindy Sullivan
Nov. 16	<u>Robert E. Lee & Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause</u> , by Ty Seidule	Marcia Egle
Jan. 25	<u>The Night Watchman</u> , by Louise Erdrich	Merrilyn Decker
Feb. 22	<u>The Rent Collector</u> , by Camron Wright	Cindy Sullivan
Mar. 22	<u>A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II</u> , by Sonia Purnell	TBA
Apr. 26+	<u>Travels with Charlie: In Search of America</u> , by John Steinbeck <i>+Pre-selection (for next season) following discussion session</i>	Gerry Dunbar
May 24	Final selection of books for next season	All Members

Evening Book Group

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, at 4 p.m. For questions, contact **Gretchen Goethner** (203) 254-8481 or **Mary Misevich** (203) 255-3804. All members are welcome to join, whether or not you've read the book. Meetings for 2021-22 are:

Oct. 20	<u>Moment of Lift</u> , by Melinda Gates -- Reviewer: Maggie Casciato / Hostess: Carole Fanslow
Nov. 17	<u>Last Bookshop in London</u> , by Michaela McColl -- Reviewer/Hostess: Mary Misevich
Feb. 16	<u>Lions of Fifth Avenue</u> , by Fiona Davis -- Reviewer/Hostess: Louise MacCormack
Mar. 16	<u>God's Shadow</u> , by Alan Mikhail -- Reviewer/Hostess: Gretchen Goethner
Apr. 20	<u>Night Watchman</u> , by Louise Erdrich -- Reviewer: Margery Morresi / Hostess: Carole Fanslow
May 18	<u>Water Dancer</u> , by Ta-Nehisi Coates -- Reviewer/Hostess: Gretchen Goethner
Jun 15	Planning Potluck Supper -- Hostess TBD

2021-2022 AAUW Bridgeport Branch

Current Organization and Workstreams

We've been so fortunate to welcome six new members in 2021 including **Pat Tyre, Dorothy Minkus, Mary McDaniel, Cheryl Yanosy, Carol Solon Feldman** and **Regina Sebring**. In addition, **Judy Slisz**, VP of AAUW CT, joined our branch as an affiliate. Now we need 'all hands on deck' to run our organization and work on improvements. Below is the most current view of who's working on what. In the event you are interested in assisting with a particular workstream, please contact Felicia at fk7417@gmail.com.



AAUW Bridgeport Branch Calendar of Upcoming Activities (as of 10/18/21)

**The calendar will continue to be updated with additional events and activities, and transitions from virtual to in-person gatherings.*

Oct. 13	Wed.	7–9 p.m.	GENERAL MEETING - Fairfield County Scholarship Study—Findings & Recommendations by Harvard Business School Partners (via Zoom)
Oct. 20	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Carole Fanslow, Stratford
Oct. 23	Sat.	11 a.m.	Strategic Planning Committee Meeting (via Zoom)
Oct. 26	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study (via Zoom)
Nov. 6	Sat.	TBD	Strategic Planning Committee Meeting (via Zoom)
Nov. 8	Mon.	7-8:30 p.m.	Board Meeting – Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
Nov. 16	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study (via Zoom)
Nov. 17	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Mary Misevich, Fairfield
Dec. 4	Sat.	1-3 p.m.	HOLIDAY SOCIAL- Stratford Library
Jan. 24	Mon.	7-8:30 p.m.	Board Meeting Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
Jan. 25	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
Feb. 16	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Louise MacCormack
Feb. 22	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
Mar. 16	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Gretchen Goethner, Bridgeport
Mar. 22	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
Apr. 11	Mon.	7-8:30 p.m.	Board Meeting – Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
Apr. 20	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Carole Fanslow, Stratford
May 18	Wed.	4 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Gretchen Goethner, Bridgeport
May 24	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
Jun. 6	Mon.	7-8:30 p.m.	Board Meeting – Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
TBD			Annual Meeting and Scholarship Luncheon



AAUW Bridgeport: www.aauw-bpt.org/
AAUW Connecticut: <https://aauw-ct.aauw.net/>
AAUW National: www.aauw.org/