

September 2020

## President

Jeanette Knapp  
jdk454@gmail.com

## Program V.P.s

Kathy Earnest-Koons  
kael@cornell.edu

## Membership V.P.

Norma Goldberg  
ncg@twcny.rr.com

## Treasurer

Margaret Nichols  
mnr1@cornell.edu

## Webmaster

Alene Wyatt  
alene@lightlink.com

## Recorder

Sharon Turecek  
sturecek416@gmail.com

## Action Fund Chair

Kim Edgar  
kimberlysedgar@gmail.com

## Public Policy Chair

Madeline Hemmings  
madeleine.hemmings@gmail.com

## Newsletter Editor

Sharon Barrie  
spibarrie@hotmail.com

## AAUW MISSION:

**To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy.**

### VISION:

Equity for all.

**The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund** provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination.

**The AAUW Educational Opportunities Fund** provides funds to advance education, research and self-development for women and to foster equity and positive societal change.

**The AAUW Fund** allows AAUW to put resources where they are most needed.



## PROGRAM NEWS

Welcome back to the new year of AAUW programs! We will be trying everything virtually at least for the fall so bear with us please. Luckily for our branch, we have an amazing techno wizard – Alene Wyatt who serves as our Zoom queen.

## SEPTEMBER SOCIAL HOUR

On Wednesday, September 23rd at 4:00 p.m. we will hold a Social Hour via Zoom. We are gathering just to talk and hear what others are doing. Tune in to say hello to old friends and meet some new ones. Carolyn McPherson will be our virtual hostess for this event. Alene will send the Zoom link.

## COVID-19 AND ITHACA CITY SCHOOLS

In October, we will once again be graced by a talk from Sean Eversley Bradwell. Sean spoke with us at the History Center last September on the history of racism in Tompkins County. He was just recently re-elected to the Ithaca City School Board and will talk with us on COVID-19 and the Ithaca City schools. Stay tuned for info on time and date.

Kathy Earnest-Koons  
Program V.P.

## VOTING

There may not be a more important task for this fall than voting. We have all received many details about how to do it. If you need more call me - 607-277-0682 or email me. I will respond immediately.

We know how important the Presidential race is - each of us will have to vote our conscience. However, the corona virus has shown us how important state and local elected officials are. They, in fact, must actualize whatever needs to be done. In order to have an effective government, we need to elect people we believe in at every level. So in the next few weeks, find out about the people who are running - choose your preferences - support them if you can - but above all, VOTE for your choice. We will all be glad about such an election.

Madeleine Hemmings, Policy Chair  
[madeleine.hemmings@gmail.com](mailto:madeleine.hemmings@gmail.com)

## Dates to Remember

Monday September 14: Book group discusses Little Women via zoom

Wednesday September 23: Social Hour on Zoom at 4:00 pm

TBA in October: COVID-19 and the Ithaca City Schools

**Tuesday November 3: Election Day** (in case it slipped your mind)



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Ideas Are Where You Get Them

The Ithaca Branch board met, via Zoom, on the last day of August. I was grateful to see everyone and sad that we were no longer meeting over dinner at the Kendal Cafe. So much has changed since we last met early in March. We have lots of program ideas, though none will be in person for the foreseeable future.

The good news is that almost everyone has renewed their membership, so our branch is in good shape. The worry is that so many are out of work and hunger and homelessness are rising. And how can we make this a fairer society, where everyone has a chance to succeed?

### ***"I can't think until after the election!"***

That memorable comment from our survey describes many of us. (See below for more survey results.) I have always loved sayings, often repeating my mother's and my grandmother's observations, but the ideas headline above is my own. As a writer I know that ideas just appear. The trick is to capture and use them. It was Jane Goodall's advice, heard on NPR, that the answer to despair is to do something!

### **What can we do about the election?**

A lot. Some of us are already at work. Norma Goldberg is writing post cards for Reclaim Our Vote. Check out their website and contact Norma for more information. Lisa Harris is writing letters with a friend. I will be making calls on Sunday. Leslie Danks Burke is running for the New York State Senate. If you want to help, let her know. I will share more good ideas as I receive them.

AAUW is non-partisan, but we as individuals can campaign for candidates or issues. All campaigns need money and folks to make phone calls, assemble mailings, and put up yard signs. I get daily emails from several campaigns. If you need help connecting to anyone's campaign, let me know, and I will try to help.

### **What have I been doing during this strange time?**

I finished a quilt I began more than 50 years ago—hand quilting while I listened to Governor Cuomo's daily corona virus briefings. I finally read *The Story of the New York Times*, the D. A. R. American history prize book I won in high school. And my husband and I enjoy FaceTime gatherings with our daughters.

Jeanette Knapp, 272-3367, jdk454@gmail.com

## SURVEY SHOWS VOTING IS TOP ISSUE

Our late-August survey drew responses from 15 out of 39 members. Almost 39 percent is excellent for an email survey. Not everyone answered every question.

Eleven were interested in meetings with speakers on current issues via Zoom (No one was opposed.) Nine would attend gatherings on other subjects, one said maybe, no one said no. All who replied had the equipment and skills for Zoom gatherings.

Program suggestions were abundant. Voting was at the top of the list:

"To me the most important issue is making people believe they must vote."

"Mail in voting. Helping older voters request an absentee ballot, and helping them fill out the ballot so that it is correct."

"How to get eligible students registered and get them to their polling places."

"Current initiatives to combat voter suppression and encourage voter registration."

Education was second:

"Local perspective on COVID-19 & schools"

"Public school curriculum"

"Women's educational opportunities"

"STEM"

Third was racism & white supremacy:

"What's currently going on with racial justice issues in Ithaca. (I'd be grateful for an update by a knowledgeable person.)"

Of equal interest was COVID-19.

"Effects of pandemic on child care programs in Tompkins County"

"How local theater groups have met the challenge of the pandemic"

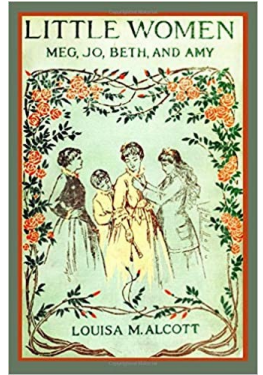
Other issues mentioned were hunger in our community, equity, climate change, reproductive rights for women, New York issues, rise in authoritarianism, a polarized nation, and grief—how to move forward. This is the suggestion we are acting on first: "Social gatherings on Zoom just to talk and hear what others are doing." Join us Wednesday afternoon, September 23, 4:00 p.m.



# AAUW BOOK GROUP NEWS

## THE BOOK GROUP GOES VIRTUAL!

Picking up again after being interrupted by the pandemic shutdown in March, the book group will meet via Zoom on September 14. Kathy Earnest-Koons will lead us in a discussion of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. Reading or re-reading this classic set in the period of the Civil War might cause us to think about the young women and families of our present time of the Covid virus. What would a modern young Louisa write in a 2020 *Little Women* for this time?



With a trial virtual book discussion in August, when Jeanette Knapp lead a discussion of *The Woman's Hour* by Elaine Weiss about the final passage of the 19th amendment of the Constitution, we discovered that we can connect quite well via Zoom. Many thanks to our own superb computer expert, Alene Wyatt. We will continue on with virtual book discussions.

The Book Group will vote on a list of books for this new year after the September 14 discussion. With luck and health, there will be a Friends of the Library book sale this fall, starting somewhat later in October than usual. Quantities of books have been pouring into the Esty Street building before the final day for donations on September 12. The sale is always a great place to find some of the books on the AAUW list.

Nothing is usual. In the past, AAUW members have volunteered to work as pricers, cashiers, and greeters during the sale. We will not be doing that this fall. The October sale will be minimally staffed by a few trained volunteers protected by masks, plexiglass, and other safety precautions. Capacity of the building during the sale will be greatly reduced to allow for social distancing.

If you would like to be added to the AAUW Book Group email list, please write to Betta Hedlund at <bhedllund@mindspring.com>



The recent 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution and the 2020 Women's Equity Day recognition mark the date that women finally won the long battle for the right to vote. Unfortunately, many black women could not vote until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That law prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

AAUW is nonpartisan, but believes passionately in voter education. We support equitable political participation and representation for appointed and elected offices and encourage candidates to run for offices.

Last April, the AAUW Action Fund and the Equity Network hosted "Getting Out the Vote During A Pandemic" webinar on three key ways to help ensure that Americans can cast their ballots. The first is to increase opportunities for early voting, voting by mail, and absentee voting. The second is to improve access to polling centers that are safe and accessible, especially in areas where COVID-19 infection rates are high. AAUW supports the *Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019-2020*, which was passed in the House with corrections on July 27, 2020, and is still in the Senate for action. The third key way is to work on voter registration efforts in our community.

AAUW supports equity and educational opportunities for all women and girls by devoting time, work and financial resources to Voter Education. A small portion of our national dues supports this work. Additional support comes directly from the AAUW Action Fund and the Greatest Needs Fund.

For ideas on what you can do to encourage community members to vote in the 2020 Election, see the 2020 Voter Issue Guide which is available at <https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AAUW-2020-Voter-Issue-Guide.pdf>.

Hope you and your family have a healthy and safe fall election season. Your ongoing support of AAUW and its mission are greatly appreciated.

Kim Edgar  
AAUW Action Funds Chair

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership so quickly last May and June. We have 39 members. Eight of these are Lifetime members. I know we are not out and about like previous times but if you know of anyone who would like to join I would be glad to send them a membership form.

Norma Goldberg  
Membership V.P.



### LIFE DURING COVID-19

**Bobby Kohut**

I guess I have been very fortunate during COVID-19 because I have been able to read a lot of great books, knit on a baby blanket, and take invigorating walks. Unfortunately, the many usual walking places have shrunk to only a couple consistent ones as we do not want to walk where it is really crowded. During the many nice days we have enjoyed over the summer, we have spent a lot of time outside around the house -- eating on the deck, doing some yard work, and just sitting under some big shade trees to while away the time thinking, talking (with my husband), or reading. Some times we even get to say hello to neighbors we "see" walking their dogs. (Luckily we can recognize them because of their dogs!!). We did celebrate our 50th anniversary on 29 August by eating lobster rolls (ingredients sent from Maine arranged by our daughter) and ice cream cake from Purity. Even though we did not travel anywhere new this year to celebrate, we had a wonderful day. Our families have all stayed healthy for which we are most grateful.

### HELLO FROM KEK!

**Kathy Earnest-Koons**

Hope this finds all ya'll well and practicing your social distancing. I know I am. Don't give up – be vigilant. It will just take time for COVID19 to be controlled. I think it will always be with us, kind of like the flu. One of the things I have been trying to practice during the pandemic is communicating better and more with friends and family. Whether by facetime, zoom, cards, letters, calls, texts or Facebook messenger, it's been fun. One friend from college got in touch with me after about 40 years

and I am now a pen-pal of another friend's thirteen-year-old son. That has been one of the things I have most liked about our AAUW Zoom meetings this summer that our own personal tech guru, Alene, has set up for us. Even if it's not the same as being together in person, it is a way to "see" each other and catch up. Supporting each other is so important right now. I would like to call on all of you to think about what areas you'd like to have our branch focus on this year. I can help, but I would like others to be responsible for hosting a program of their own choosing. Jeanette sent out the survey and hopefully some of you had some great suggestions. I'll be leading the discussion of *Little Women* on September 14th at 7:30 pm so plan to join us for this Zoom event from the comfort of your own home. You can even wear your PJ's! Hope to "see" you then.

### THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON VOLUNTEERING, FROM MY PERSPECTIVE **Sharon Turecek**

Like many of my neighbors, I have volunteered for years for many booths for the annual Ellis Hollow Fair. The Fair is almost 60 years old and is a major fund-raiser for the community. For the past 7 years, Pat Sims and I have co-chaired the quilt booth. About 14 members work year-round to create a unique quilt to be raffled at the Fair each September.

This past March we had this year's quilt on the quilt frame and were hand-quilting it when the country suddenly shut down because of the coronavirus. Since March there have been no Tuesday and Wednesday work-bees, no quilting, conversation, tea and cookies. I really miss my quilting friends. This year's Fair would have been held next weekend, but it has been cancelled. Uncertainty remains for future Fairs, like with many things.

I have also been a member of the Ithaca Branch of AAUW, since my first granddaughter was born 17 years ago, to celebrate her birth. I have been on the Board for most of those years, and have held almost every position at least once. My friends on the Board are truly good friends. Since March we had to discontinue all our programs, activities, and meetings due to the virus. We have started up this fall with our first Zoom Board meeting. While it was so good to see each other on-line, I miss the in-person meetings. I miss my AAUW friends.

I now have more free time. Organized volunteering has ceased for me. I try to regularly help some of my neighbors who are older and are pretty isolated. That is volunteering, but in an entirely different way. I guess I should feel good about that. And so I do. But I still miss my old friends.