



empowering women since 1881

# Ithaca Insights

November/December 2023

## Co-Presidents

Kim Edgar

kimberlysedgar@gmail.com

Lin Tollefsen

ltollefsen11@gmail.com

## Program Vice Presidents

Bobbie Kohut

utahgal46@hotmail.com

Carolyn McPherson

cjm6@cornell.edu

## Membership Vice President

Norma Goldberg

nkg@twcny.rr.com

## Secretary

Aidan Kelly

aidankelly@cornell.edu

## Treasurer

Margaret Nichols

mnr1@cornell.edu

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Mary-Carol Lindbloom

pleiades416@hotmail.com

## Newsletter Editor

Jeanette Knapp

jdk454@gmail.com

*Ithaca Insights* is the monthly publication of the Ithaca, New York, Branch of AAUW

## AAUW Mission

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization based on age, ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Monday, November 20 • 7:00 p.m., via Zoom

## Guidance Counselor 101

Want to understand more about school or students today? Join us Monday evening, Nov. 20, at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom. We will meet Eva Heffner Collier, who will talk about her experiences as a guidance counselor in Ithaca and Candor.

Eva explains, "School Counselors work with all students in their assigned group. We utilize a multi-tiered system of support in Academic, Career and Social/Emotional domains. We push into classrooms for whole classroom instruction based on specific Mindsets and Behavior standards or as needed to address identified concerns. For students who need additional support in any of the 3 domains, we meet with students in small groups to address a specific shared need. And for a smaller number of students who need individual support we would provide individual counseling on a short term basis. School counselors also provide immediate support for emergent issues and refer to internal services or outside counseling as needed.

Saturday, December 9 • 10:00 a.m. • In Person at TCPL

## Open Books - Open Minds

Ithaca is welcoming AAUW members from across the state to a New York State-AAUW Regional Meeting that begins in downtown Ithaca at the Tompkins County Public Library. Come at 10:00 a.m. to our public forum on book banning. Invite friends and neighbors concerned about this vital issue. Panelists include Moira Lang, former English teacher and school board member; Mary-Carol Lindbloom, executive director of a multi-type regional library system; and Leslie Tabor, director of the Tompkins County Public Library.

At noon, AAUW members and guests are invited to attend a legislative luncheon across the street at Hotel Ithaca. Reservations are required. **Kim Edgar must receive your luncheon reservation no later than December 2.** (See form in your AAUW Funds mailing and on page 4.)

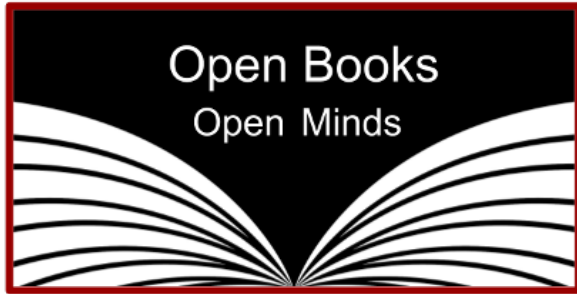
After lunch we will adjourn to the Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell for a guided tour. Car pools are recommended. Contact Norma Goldberg at nkg@twcny.rr.com if you need a ride or can offer a ride.

## President's Message

### Book Banning Is Not New

Please plan to attend our Regional AAUW Public Panel on book banning; 'Open Books - Open Minds,' Saturday, December 9, 2023, at 10: 00 a.m. at the Tompkins County

### A Public Panel on Book Banning



Public Library. And make your reservations now for lunch afterwards across the street at Hotel Ithaca (see pp 1 & 4 for details).

Throughout history, governments and religions have tried to suppress books that they deemed to be dangerous or subversive. But the recent wave of book banning is especially troubling because it is often being driven by a small group of people who are trying to impose their own narrow views on everyone else.

For example, In 2022, the McAllen Independent School District in Texas banned a number of books on race and LGBTQ+ topics, including *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson.

And, can this possibly be true . . . ? In 2023, the Florida Department of Education banned 54 math textbooks from being used in public schools. The department claimed that the books contained "critical race theory" and "social-emotional learning" content.

#### Book bans disproportionately impact marginalized communities

Books that feature diverse characters and perspectives are often the ones that are targeted for banning. This is because these books challenge the dominant narrative and give voice to those who have been historically silenced.

#### Book banning is a direct attack on our fundamental right to intellectual freedom

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees our right to free speech, and this includes the right to read

and access information without government censorship. Courts have repeatedly ruled that book banning is unconstitutional. In *The Board of Education vs Pico*, a landmark 1982 case, the Supreme Court held that schools cannot ban books simply because they contain offensive language or ideas. The Court reasoned that students have a right to be exposed to a wide range of viewpoints, even if they are controversial.

#### Public libraries are on the front lines of the fight against book banning

Libraries are committed to providing access to a wide range of materials, regardless of viewpoint. Public libraries are particularly vulnerable to book banning because they are government-funded institutions. This means that they can be subject to political pressure from groups that want to ban certain books.

#### There are some things that we can do to defend intellectual freedom and public libraries:

- **Educate ourselves and others about the dangers of book banning.** We need to understand the tactics that book banners use and the impact that book banning has on our communities.
- **Support libraries and librarians.** We can do this by donating to libraries, volunteering our time, and speaking out in support of library policies that protect intellectual freedom.
- **Speak out against book bans at school board meetings and other public forums.** We need to make our voices heard and let our elected officials know that we oppose book banning.
- **Contact our elected officials and urge them to protect intellectual freedom.** We can do this by writing letters, emailing, and calling our elected representatives.

We look forward to seeing you on Nov. 9.

*Lin Tollefsen*, Co-President

(ltollefsen11@gmail.com)

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#### Dates to Remember

**Monday, Nov. 13** • 7:00 p.m. Book Group, *Lessons in Chemistry*, via Zoom

**Monday, Nov. 20** • 7:00 p.m. Guidance Counselor 101, via Zoom

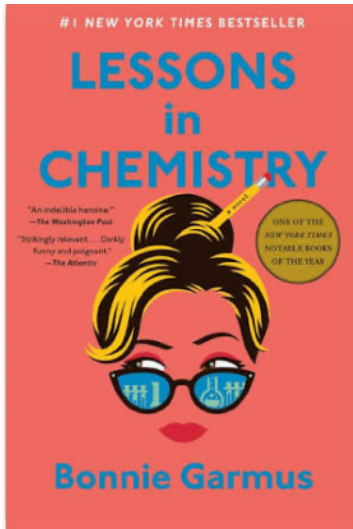
**Saturday, Dec. 9** • 10:00 a.m. Open Books Open Minds Tompkins County Public Library, see p. 4

**Monday, Dec. 11** • 7:00 p.m. Book Group, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, via Zoom

## Book Group

# More than Chemistry Lessons

Join the Book Group via Zoom on Monday evening, November 13 to discuss *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. This international sensation was on the best seller list for more than 6 months and is now an Apple mini-series. Set in the 1950s, parts of the story are not



surprising to some of us, that's just the way it was. At my first teaching job, all the men, even the young singles, got the head-of-the-family bonus. The women, including the widow with children, did not.

*The New York Times* reported: "What surprised Garmus the most about the book's success, she said, has been readers' reports of how *Lessons in Chemistry* spurred them to change their lives.

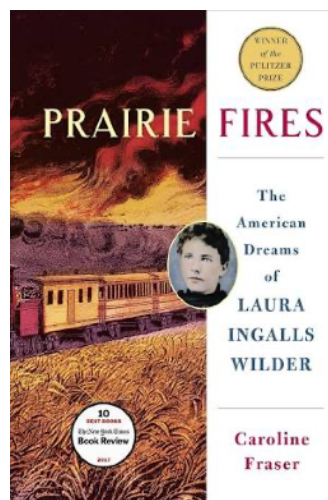
"People have quit their jobs and gone back to school or people have gotten divorced because they recognize themselves," Garmus said. "Sometimes I want to say, 'You know it's fiction, right?' But on the other hand, it was what I was trying to get across. You can really do what you need to do. You just have to dig in really hard and not expect it to be very easy."

## Prairie Fires

### *The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*

On Monday evening, December 11, we will be discussing, via Zoom, Caroline Fraser's biography of one of my (Jeanette's) favorite authors.

For all of us who grew up with the Little House books (*Little House in the Big Woods*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Long Winter*, *Little Town on the Prairie*, etc), this book is the rest of the story. Author Wilder, in a speech to admiring fans, explained, "All I have told



is true, but it is not the whole truth." December is a busy month, and this book has more than 500 pages, so you may want to begin soon.

We begin at 7:00 p.m. with tea (yours) and conversation. Our discussions begin at 7:30. Joan Reese will lead our November discussion and Jeanette Knapp will lead in December. If you want to be added to the Book Group e-list to receive the Zoom link, contact Lin. All members and guests are welcome.

—Lin Tollefsen (ltollefsen11@gmail.com)  
& Jeanette Knapp (jdk454@gmail.com)  
Book Group Co-Chairs



## Film Group Anyone?

If folks think it might be fun, I'd love to start a Film Group for our branch. Since this would be a brand new branch activity, we can create it any way we want. Some things we might consider:

1. Go to a theater or watch something on a streaming platform like Netflix
2. Meet in person or on Zoom
3. Watch current movies versus classics
4. What genres appeal the most? Comedies? Drama? Thrillers? Documentaries?
5. Some reasons you might like to watch movies:

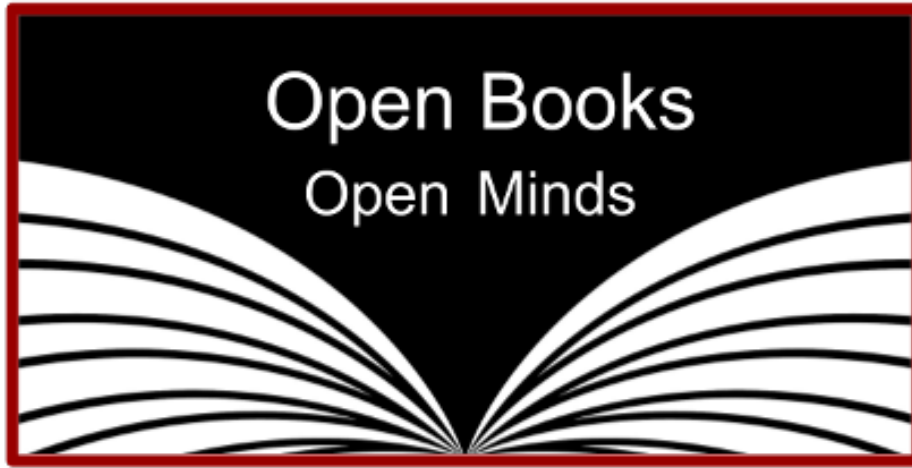
- to be informed or educated
- to identify with the characters in the movie
- to learn how other people face and deal with challenges
- to enhance social interaction
- simply be entertained

If a Film Group sounds like fun to you, please let me know and send me your ideas and suggestions.  
Lin Tollefsen, ltollefsen11@gmail.com

## AAUW Funds

You should have received a branch mailing with our year-end request to support, if you can, AAUW funds and our branch scholarship fund at Tompkins Cortland Community College. Support the AAUW priorities that are important to you. Kim needs to receive your donations on or before December 9.

# A Public Panel on Book Banning



## Open Books Open Minds, Saturday, December 9th, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Funds mailing also included detailed information about our event on December 9. The Book Banning Forum at the library is free and open to the public. If you also want to attend the legislative luncheon afterwards at Hotel Ithaca, you must make a reservation. Use the form in the Funds mailing or the one below.

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### Registration Form

**Luncheon Registration Fee: \$40.00 per person, Checks or money orders made out to "Ithaca Branch of AAUW." **Deadline to Register is Saturday, December 2, 2023****

Mail registration form and payment to: Kim Edgar, 1233 Salt Springs Rd, Chittenango, NY 13037  
Questions? Contact [KimberlySEdgar@gmail.com](mailto:KimberlySEdgar@gmail.com), or (603)448-3708

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Guest \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred name(s) for name badge(s): \_\_\_\_\_

AAUW affiliation (optional) for badge: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Johnson Museum Visit?.    \_\_\_\_\_ Guided    or    \_\_\_\_\_ Unguided

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I need a ride    \_\_\_\_\_ I can drive and take \_\_\_\_\_ passenger(s)

Special accommodations and/or other information: