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Bethlehem Bylines Brief

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CALYPSO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND PROJECT

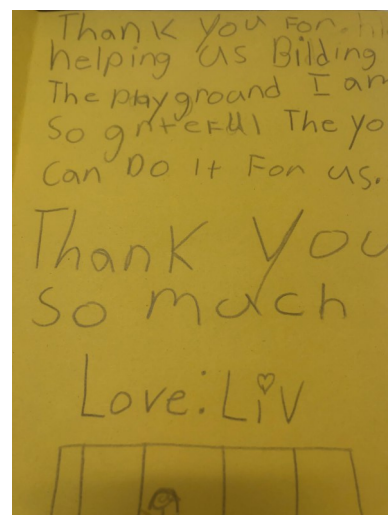
Our last in-person branch meeting was held at Calypso Elementary School.



Our donation of a \$100 was used in support of the playground project, sponsored by the Calypso PTA. After several delays due to COVID, the new playground was finally completed and groundbreaking was held on January 21, 2021.

Our branch was invited to attend the groundbreaking and we were thanked by the PTA and the students. It was moving to see the students on the new playground and I was privileged to be a part of this momentous occasion.

Linda Robbins



Programs Zoom forward during the Pandemic

This has been an interesting year for the program team. Programs, dates, and locations were scheduled in June, and then COVID entered the scene. What appeared to be a lost year turned out to be successful, thanks to Zoom and the patience of our membership.

Our first program with Senior Judge Kimberly McFadden and Attorney Barbara Hollenbach, was a window into the careers of two intrepid women in the male-dominated legal world. Laughs were shared as they recounted some of their experiences, but it became obvious that their dedication to and love of the law was what saw them become respected members in their field.

Marie Bachman, Chief Technology Officer for the Bethlehem Area School District gave an in-depth look at what our schools are facing during this pandemic. Gone are the days of pencil sharpeners and ink wells. Who knew that a music teacher could hold choir practice with choir members in their own individual homes? Who knew that not every home in Bethlehem had Internet access, much less a computer? Kudos to the teachers and the technology staff who have weathered this storm.

Although we missed our holiday luncheon, a lively group gathered in December to Zoom chat and share holiday ideas. We all missed seeing one another and enjoyed the chance to just talk, talk, talk.

We will hold a Zoom presentation in March with Dr. Sirry Alang, Associate Professor of Sociology and Health, Medicine, and Society at Lehigh University who will speak about issues concerning diversity's role in a healthy society.

Lastly, we will hold a chat session April 20 at 7 pm. We will hear about AAUW National's intentions to open membership to non-college women and to vote on the issue. This Zoom "chat" will provide lots of talking time. We won't make up for the lost interaction at Book Fair, but we can try.

Sincerely,

Your Program Team



BOOK FAIR Volunteer Opportunity

For 5½ years, Linda Robertson stored and mailed out the AAUW E-books sold on Amazon Used Books. Linda will relinquish this volunteer job July 1, 2021. The Book Fair is seeking her replacement.

The position requires/involves:

- Storing 140 boxes of books (shelving is available). These are not large boxes (18" X 12" X 8").
- Shipping the books upon sale. Postage is purchased through Amazon, almost eliminating the need to go to the post office. Your postal carrier usually can pick up the packages from your house.

The volunteer must have access to a computer to search the Excel files holding the complete inventory of the boxes to locate each sold book, and for managing the Amazon sale process. A smart phone is helpful as the Amazon app notifies you when a book sells so that you do not need to check your computer constantly. AAUW averages 10 sales per month. Book Fair will provide most of the shipping materials, and Branch members can be counted on to donate small mailing boxes and envelopes (which keeps our costs down).

With a simple click, the "store" is easily shut down whenever the volunteer goes out of town.

We are happy to answer questions about this opportunity and will provide instruction and help if this is a job you would like to take on. We have found it interesting to see what sells and where in the world the books go.

If you are interested, contact Rita Bergstrom (ritabergs@netscape.net) or Amy Fields (ajf219@rcn.com).

Cynthia Weber and Linda Robertson

AAUW Members Upcoming VOTE on Open Membership and Dues

Every two years, AAUW members vote on revisions to Public Policy Priorities. A vital voting opportunity begins on April 7 through May 17 on Open Membership and Dues in AAUW. As a community, we must review and ponder these issues for changes to our bylaws and their effects on our Association's future. In the February Bylines, an article outlined some of the significant points for changing the bylaws to include the non-degree membership requirement. National AAUW's position's focus is based on the mission of equity and inclusion to achieve a more diverse organization.

We want to offer more direction and leadership in helping our members decide and vote on these issues. Many branches organize a voting day, which can easily be done via Zoom or another videoconference platform. We want to schedule this as part of a branch meeting and have everyone vote online together! If you do not have a valid email address, you should receive a letter in the mail and request a paper ballot.

In 2019 a vote to change the bylaws to include non-degree membership requirement resulted in 46% of the National membership in favor of this change. The AAUW bylaws state that an affirmative (yes) vote of two-thirds of the votes cast is required to amend the bylaws.

More information can be viewed on this topic at:

<https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2021/01/Membership-Requirement-full-talking-points.pdf>

Your Membership and Program Teams plan an important Zoom Chat meeting on April 20, to engage in a discussion on this issue followed by a socialization time with friends. We hope to share a voting process at that time. More information is coming on these important dates and issues.

Group Information :

Diversity: Deeds and Dialogue: Members of this group come from the Bethlehem, Easton and Allentown branches. This group is concerned with social action as well as social justice. The group decided to try a new model. Over at least the next 6-8 months, the group will be using the free publication, ***Anti-racism Daily***. Two members will identify topics from among the **Daily's** publication and lead the discussions. Each new pair also will be responsible for handling the logistics of running the group--sending out agendas, following up, etc. Using various media, the group examines the role of society in the problems of diverse populations (age, gender, race, ability and religion). Next meeting at 7pm on March 24, 2021.

If you have questions, please contact Rosemary robaker356@gmail.com

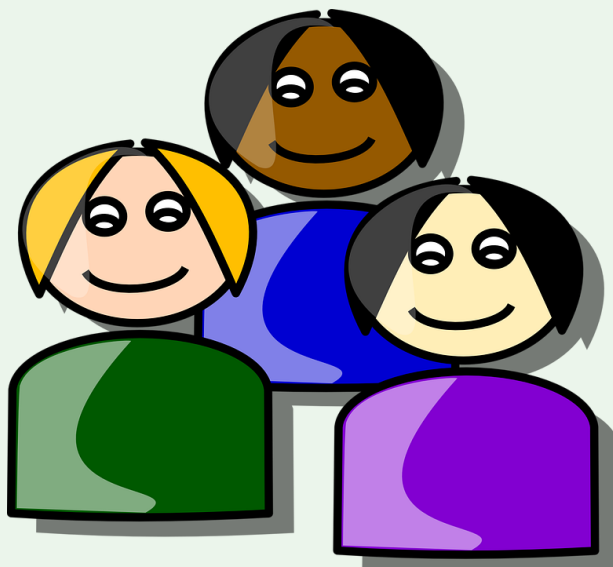
Bacchae: Bacchae will meet on Zoom on Thursday, March 11 at 7:00 pm. Fran Bentkowski and Jeanne Eroh will be hostesses and will be delivering the wine packages. Fran will also be hosting the Zoom session. Please contact them to let them know whether you will be attending or not. Wines will be hostesses' choice. Any questions? Contact Phyllis Wargo

Mystery Paperback: Attention all mystery lovers! The Mystery Book Club will meet on Zoom on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 1:30 PM. Cathy Kotanchik will lead our discussion of the book "Moriarty" by Anthony Horowitz and compare it to the short story "The Final Problem" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This is a great time to join our book group and all new members are welcome. Contact Mary Dawson for more information.

Out to Lunch Bunch: Cindy and Joan look forward to organizing a lunch as soon as it's safe to eat in a restaurant again. Until then, stay safe everyone. Cindy Huhn and Joan Howe

Paperback I :Paperback I is online. It will be on ZOOM, March 15 at 1:30 pm. The book is Etna: a Murder Out of Time by Mancuso and Kerchner. Please contact Myra Saturen myra125@hotmail.com with any questions.

Paperback II: The PPBII BOOK GROUP will meet in March 16 via Zoom. We are reading the book "The Beantown Girls" by Jean Heaney. Pat Knoll will hostess the Zoom meeting. Please contact Pat and let her know if you interested in joining our Zoom meeting (610-533-7643). We welcome new members- contact me if you would like to join our book group, joannefletcherwagner@gmail.com or 610-392-0891.
Happy Reading! Joanne Wagner



Public Policy – Dysfunction by Design

Because my job is to inform our members about public policy, I'm hoping a quick civics lesson will be helpful. Keep this in mind when I write about what's happening in Harrisburg that affects all of us.

I watched the webinar "Dysfunction by Design" presented by Fair Districts PA. It helped me understand why our state legislature needs major procedural reform. The current process is not designed for collaborative legislation. It is designed so the majority party maintains complete control if a bill proceeds onto the floor for debate or dies in committee.

The dysfunction starts with gerrymandered districts. The majority leaders draw up the distorted districts to protect their incumbents. Incumbents with seniority control the rules. The Speaker approves committee chairs and the chairs control the agenda. The Speaker, President Pro Tem, or Majority Leader decides if and when a bill gets a hearing. Anyone of these individuals can send a bill to another committee to DIE! There is no transparency or accountability. The game is fixed! 93% of bills go nowhere; no hearings, no debate, no vote! 85% of successful bills are introduced by the majority party.

An organization recently ranked state legislatures on agenda fairness and collaborative atmosphere. Colorado was given a rating of 100%, Pennsylvania got a 0% rating. PA is the largest and most expensive state legislature in the country, but the least productive. Even bills with high public backing go nowhere.

Examples:

- Anti-gerrymandering: Fair Districts PA's bill with all its bipartisan and civic backing died without debate.
- Lead Exposure: 18 PA cities have higher levels of lead than Flint, MI due to old pipes and paint. 25 bills presented, none voted on.
- Public School Funding: Current funding formula leaves the neediest districts with \$7,800 less per student than wealthier districts. No legislative action.

This has been going on for years. These bills die in committee without discussion or debate.

Why?

Legislators don't have to take a hard vote, thus they are not accountable to their constituents. As citizens and tax payers we deserve good legislation. Good bills deserve debate and a vote.

Harrisburg needs to reform its procedural rules.

Joan Howe
Public Policy Coordinator

EXECUTIVE TEAM MESSAGE

It's that time of year again and your 2021 dues renewal will be in the mail soon. You will note that the first increase of a three part dues increase will occur this year. Dues will increase \$3 for a total dues of \$88. Please return the entire form to indicate your desire to continue your membership. It is important to return your form by June 30 to assure your information is correct in the fall Yearbook.

In 2022, the dues will increase by \$5 and another \$5 the following year.

I am available to discuss the dues increase and the logistics behind it, or you can refer to the November issue of the Bylines for additional information.

Linda Robbins
Finance Officer

Don't forget to vote on the membership issue-details coming soon from your membership team.