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# **Bethlehem Bylines Brief**

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 1

FEB 2022

## **End of Year Holiday Luncheon**

Thirty AAUW members were very excited to attend an in-person Holiday Luncheon at Northampton Community College on the 2nd of December, 2021. Everyone signed in so we could contact trace, if necessary. We all wore masks and sat at large round tables to stay socially distanced. While trying our best to stay safe, we enjoyed being together again.

Hampton Winds Restaurant served us butternut squash soup, fresh garden salads with shrimp, chicken or salmon, and LUCIOUS chocolate mousse for dessert. "Discussion starters" were placed on the tables, just in case we needed ideas. The question, "What have you missed most this past year?" was answered almost unanimously, "Definitely, seeing family and friends!"

Thank you to Olga Conneen for the potted poinsettias, fresh greens and holly from her garden to decorate the tables, and to Lynn Bittner for the beautiful seasonal centerpiece of greens and berries for the sign-in table. This arrangement was then delivered to Beth Corroda, whose illness prevented her attendance. Phyllis Wargo, who delivered the centerpiece, said it brought a real smile to Beth's face.

## EXECUTIVE TEAM MESSAGE

*RANDOM THOUGHTS FOR WINTER 2022*

As we come off the holiday cycle of buy, bake, decorate —and, of course, gather together (and eat!) I ask myself, “How did it go by so fast?” We then shifted gears in mid-January to celebrate and gain inspiration from Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr and his life of activism. Before we knew it, February was here, and if you aren’t a snowbird or a lover of all things cold and snowy, you maybe dreading the shortest, but seemingly longest, month of the year.. However, February does gives us things to look forward to, like longer daylight hours and Valentine’s Day.

Valentine’s Day is generally a celebration of love, both romantic love and friendship. Of course, some people feel this holiday is simply another opportunity to sell candy, flowers, and jewelry. Sadly, they miss the true meaning of the day, one when we let those whom we care about know how we feel. (Of course, this is not meant to imply that we shouldn’t let them know how we feel EVERY day! )

Some people show love by giving of themselves to help others. Just a few examples are those who volunteer at soup kitchens, work with Covid patients in a hospital, or battle fires to save someone’s home or business. Another example of showing love by giving of oneself is illustrated by the iconic Betty White, who passed away at the end of December, just weeks shy of her 100th birthday.

Besides having a career that spanned 80 years in the entertainment, Betty also devoted much of her life to advocating for animals. She served for 50 years on the board of the Los Angeles Zoo and worked with many animal non-profits throughout her life. *Newsweek* reported that for 70 years she supported American Humane Society , this country’s first national humane organization. She did all that plus she made us laugh. Age did not seem to matter to her. She just kept going. And for that, Betty is an inspiration to all women and truly a Golden Girl!

*Phyllis Wargo, Program Co-Vice President*

# In Memoriam

Remembrances *by Linda Robertson*

## Bernice Gardiner

Bernie completed her college experience later than many of us. She was in her 40s when she earned her bachelor's degree and earned a Master's in Education from Lehigh University in her 50s, all while raising four children and working for pay outside the home. Upon joining AAUW-Bethlehem, Bernie served as Public Policy Chair, a position that suited her strong interest in policy and politics. One day as we volunteered at Book Fair, she remarked in passing that she had worked with the famous underwater archaeologist Dr. Robert Ballard on the groundbreaking JASON Project and also served with the group which established the SMART Discovery Center. Her eyes sparkled as she shared her passion for science and learning. Imagine, the day before she died, Bernie posted on Face Book about the launch of the new NASA space telescope named for its late director James Webb. She was a longtime member of the Bethlehem Garden Club and became an expert photographer recording her beautifully planted garden. Horticulture, birds, wildlife, world photography, science: all areas that showed Bernie as a curious, lifelong learner – truly the spirit of an AAUW woman.



## Margery Leinroth Gotshall



Marge and I became AAUW friends almost as soon as I joined the Bethlehem Branch in 1988. We became close when she became president in 1992 and asked me to serve on her board. For the next 29 years we served on committees, went to plays and movies, had dinner dates, talked politics, fundraised for worthy causes, and went on house tours, truly enjoying each other's company. After she moved to Michigan in 2016 to be closer to family, we talked by phone every month and wrote many letters. Marge earned a bachelor's in sociology from Wells College in 1945, and was a caseworker in Philadelphia for The Society to Protect Children from Cruelty. Her interest in children, fairness and social inequality continued with her involvement with the Nurse-Family Partnership and many community-oriented non-profits. Marge was an engaged, modern woman and my role model of what it means to be a true friend.

## Fund Our Schools

The lawsuit filed against the State of PA by several school districts and parents in 2014 finally went to trial on November 15, 2021 in Commonwealth Court. The lawsuit is asking the court to declare the current state funding system unconstitutional. A win means the legislature will be ordered to cease using the current inadequate funding scheme and create and maintain a new system that will enable all students to meet academic standards. The trial is expected to last until mid- February.

I've been following the weekly updates. Testimonies of superintendents, teachers, coaches and school board members are heartbreaking. Testimonies by experts in early education and child development are compelling. A n impressive range of experts in finance, business and academic standards, and the state constitution have testified so far.

William Penn School District, just SW of Philadelphia, is just one example of the unfairness of the current school funding. It is a district of 4,900 students from 6 suburban low wealth communities. Its residents pay the second highest tax rate in the state, but each school student receives \$4,836 less annually using the state benchmark for adequate funding. That is \$28 million of lost state funding.

In a recent zoom meeting, Allentown State Representative, Mike Schlossberg, said there are Representatives in Harrisburg who don't feel they should pay for a disadvantaged student's science class, because they think that student will only ever work at McDonalds. That's a scary philosophy from our politicians. Rep. Schlossberg feels that if the lawsuit is won, it will be appealed to the State Supreme Court. That will take about a year. To follow the latest trial developments, go to [FUNDOURSCHOOLSPA.ORG/NEWS](https://FUNDOURSCHOOLSPA.ORG/NEWS).

So, how can our Bethlehem branch be more involved in nonpartisan public policy? It won't be until 2023 before we can exert pressure on Harrisburg to fund our schools fairly. However, another big issue is Redistricting, but the time for public input ended in January. I questioned Rep. Schlossberg about how the state is using the federal pandemic money. He said there are \$2 to \$3 BILLION sitting in a rainy-day fund. Maybe we can suggest a few ways a good chunk of that money could be used now. For example, helping school districts update their HVAC systems to provide a healthier environment for working and learning. I'd love more ideas. When we gather for our study groups, we could quickly send post cards or emails to our local and state legislators. I am happy to research talking points and provide the names and addresses of our legislators. Let me know what you think.

Joan Howe [joanhowe3@gmail.com](mailto:joanhowe3@gmail.com)



### **Study Group Information :**

**BACCHAE** met on Thursday evening, January 13, on Zoom and had an enjoyable evening with our guest sommelier Kathleen Smith whom Rita had invited. She guided us through a tasting of two northern Italian wines from the Piedmont region, a Pinot Grigio and a Dogliano, a red wine that we had never tried before. She also made suggestions about food pairings for each wine. We finished the evening with Amy's scrumptious dessert, peanut butter caramel brownie bites. Next month on February 10 at 7 pm we will again meet on Zoom and taste wines from either Pennsylvania or New York. The individual cups of wine and a serving of dessert will be delivered by hostesses Joanne Wagner and Phyllis Wargo to each member attending the meeting---with the exception of those joining us from Florida, of course! Any questions? Contact *Phyllis Wargo*

**OUT TO LUNCH BUNCH** met on Wednesday, January 19 - this time at *Blue Grillhouse* on Easton Avenue in Bethlehem. It was a very talkative group with everyone getting a chance to put in her 2 cents. A lovely meal and a grand group - 11 this time. We decided to meet again but moving on to March. Look for an email late in February with details, but please put March 9 at 12:00 PM on your calendars. We are still struggling to find a restaurant open for lunch.

*L to R: Fran Bentkowski, Jeanne Eroh, Linda Federico, Linda Robbins, Pat Slifka, Shirley Daluisio, Anne Hammersmith, Debbie Spinney, Rita Bergstrom, Joan Howe. Photographer, Amy Fields*

**PAPERBACK I** meets in the homes of members and discusses fiction and non-fiction books available in paperback. We meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 2:00 PM. On February 22, we will discuss *Madame Picasso* by Ann Girard. This historical novel tells the amazing story of Eva Gouel, who became the great love of Pablo Picasso's life. She moved from the country to Paris, where she found work as a costumer at the famous Moulin Rouge. There she was noticed by Picasso, already becoming famous for his art. New members will be warmly welcomed. Contact *Mardi Metzger*.

**PAPERBACK II** will meet on Tuesday, February 15th at 7:00 PM at Linda Federico's home. Our book is *This Tender Land* by William Kent Kruger. As of now we are planning on meeting in person but we may change that to a Zoom meeting. Please contact me at 610-392-0891- call or text by February 8th for confirmation about meeting location.

Our January books(2) *Passing* and *The Vanishing Half* were reviewed by Rita Bergstrom and Debbie Spinney. Contact *Joanne Wagner*

**MYSTERY PAPERBACK** It's winter and we should all have time to dig into a good mystery! We will meet on Tuesday, March 22 at 1:30 PM. Our book is the classic mystery by John LeCarre entitled *The Perfect Spy*. New members are welcome. Please contact *Mary Dawson* for more information.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING** will meet on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 at 7:00 PM,. At this time we are assuming Zoom. The Topic will be the book *The Daughters of the Earth* by Carolyn Niethammer. For further information, please contact *Rosemary Baker* at [robaker356@gmail.com](mailto:robaker356@gmail.com)

## SAVE THE DATE — MARCH 9TH AT 5:30 PM

The Moravian Student Affiliate will present a Program on The Dynamics of Gender, Reproductive Rights, and Privilege. To be included will be recent news on Roe v Wade, ideas of gender dysphoria, birth control, and related topics. Please note that this Zoom program is rescheduled from February to March.

### PA School Funding: Basic Facts *by Ann Brown*

After several school districts and parents brought a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the funding process for public education, the Commonwealth Court agreed to hear the case.

- PA contributes only 38% to education, which ranks 45th for state funding in the US. Most funding falls to local taxpayers, fueling gaps between wealthy and poor communities.
- 86% of PA students attend schools that don't receive adequate resources for education.
- 277 of the state's school districts are underfunded by more than \$2000 per student.
- Special education costs grew by 66%, but state funding increased by only 11%. Yet in the last decade, PA state's share of special education funding has fallen from 32% down to 22% ,

Bethlehem Area School District was short funded \$43,245,826 of the benchmark set for basic adequacy, \$2,743 per student. What can you do? Go to [tiny.cc/PAfunding](https://www.tiny.cc/PAfunding) and sign a petition. Every child in the Commonwealth of PA has a right to an education that prepares them for careers or college. Pennsylvania's constitution states that our students have the right to a "thorough h and efficient" education. Go to [tiny.cc/SupportLawsuit](https://www.tiny.cc/SupportLawsuit) and sign a resolution. Where you live should not dictate the type and quality of education your receive.

**Book Fair, 2022** is on mark to be record setting. We are so close to earning \$1 million in net sales; our goal is to reach this amount and more.

Preparations for Book Fair, 2022 have gone into “overdrive”. A deposit has been paid for the Ice Rink, meetings with Section Chairs, the printer, and people involved with the Ice Rink are set. An email went out to previous Section Chairs and Committee members and all are happy to give their time to setting up the Book Fair. There is always a need for volunteers; see the schedule below for days and times. We would love to meet you at the Ice Rink.

### ***Important Book Fair dates:***

**Donations will be accepted:** April 4-24    Volunteers are welcome Monday-Friday 9-12

**Kick-off Koffee:** April 5 at 10:00 AM    This event is open to all Book Fair volunteers, members and community folks

**Sup and Shop:** April 26    Look for more information in future emails

**Book Fair Sale Dates: Thursday, April 28 – Monday, May 2**

Contact Rita or Amy for questions and comments.

Rita Bergstrom [ritabergs@netscape.net](mailto:ritabergs@netscape.net)

Amy Fields [ajf219@rcn.com](mailto:ajf219@rcn.com)

## **Scholarship Applications for Bethlehem Branch**

The scholarship committee has been hard at work preparing to offer scholarships this year to both adult women who had their undergraduate degrees interrupted and to our local high school senior girls. The high school girls receive their applications from their guidance offices.

Adult women can access applications in the financial aide offices at Moravian, DeSales, Cedar Crest, and NCC. Or they can access the criteria, applications and deadline from our website at [bethlehem-pa.aauw.net](http://bethlehem-pa.aauw.net). Information is also being posted to our Facebook page.

Since we have not done this for two years, it would be very helpful if you could pass along the information to anyone you know who might meet our criteria.

Thank you for your help in getting the word out. *Fran Bentskowski, Scholarship Chair*

*The Scholarship Committee*