

BETHLEHEM BYLINES BRIEF

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DECEMBER 2025/ JANUARY 2026

Celebrating Membership Welcome to Our Six New Members



Natalie Chickey,
Membership Co- VP

Our annual New Member Tea was held November 16 at Moravian Village dining hall, extending a warm welcome to new members Theo Loupos, Judy Smullen, Kathleen Casciano, Kathryn Ramspacker, Rose Mavis, and Ashley Matz. The motif for this event was a Victorian tea, providing tea sandwiches, scones, shortbread, and, of course, tea, to attendees. Board members, committee chairs, study group and social group leaders

attended the tea and introduced themselves to our new members, sharing a good deal of information about our Bethlehem branch and socializing with new friends. We hope to see all of our new members at future program events and in our various study and social groups. Thanks to all for coming to this lovely event.

Natalie Chickey and Debbie Matz , Membership VP Co-chairs



Fran Bentkowski,
Co Program VP



Left to Right: Fran Bentkowski, Phyllis Wargo, Natalie Chickey, Judith Smullen, and Theo Loupos



Left to Right: Jo Ann Kelly, Amy Fields, and Joan Howe

Executive Team Message...

Highlights from Your Executive Team!

The Executive team met at East Hills Moravian Church on Wednesday, November 12, 2025 at 2:00 PM. AAUW member, Cynthia Weber joined our board members at this meeting. Both the financial report and the secretary's report from our last meeting were approved.

One question was raised regarding our financial reporting. Some members have requested more transparency for the financial reports. Our team discussed, agreeing that quarterly financial reports should go out to members in an email blast beginning with the start of our new fiscal year (i.e., July 1, 2026). The first report will cover July/August/September 2026. We agreed this information was not appropriate for printing in the Bylines.

The membership committee presented an update on the New Members' Tea, including information regarding the new members and what the Tea program would be. We also discussed attending a November 20th zoom session entitled "AAUW Members Recruitment Best Practices." This webinar was organized by AAUW National's Advancement Committee. Katrina Sun Breese (Sr. Director of Institutional Advancement, AAUW National) will lead a discussion with a panel of AAUW Branch Member Leaders from across the country regarding their tried and true best practices for member recruitment. Debbie Matz also presented information about an AAUW Leadership conference to be held in Lancaster in September; we will re-visit this at our next executive meeting. We are hoping to send one or two members to the conference.

The Program Committee presented information regarding the remaining programs for the year. Since Moravian Village double booked the day of our Christmas luncheon, we had to move the Christmas gathering to Saturday, December 13th. The concern is that our members might not be able to reschedule because of the busy holiday season. So, let's do what we can to drum up support for this delightful event. The program committee also reported that they are still exploring a speaker and a program for our March meeting.

Last meeting, we discussed the possibility for a teacher discount to be given to Bethlehem Area and Allentown School District teachers for our annual book fair. The Book Fair Committee okayed a 10% discount with their school district ID's. We will definitely use this incentive to encourage teachers to attend (and to donate!) to our book fair.

Shirley Daluisio of the Yearbook committee alerted us that the current front page of our website is 6 months old. We agreed that it would need more consistent updating. Cynthia Weber offered to help out in our web updates. The committee also discussed our current Facebook page and the need to send more updates to it. We all agreed that the optics of a busy Facebook page can create synergy for future events and, of course, for our Book Fair.

The team discussed the possibility of forming a School Liaison Committee in order to explore how we can help with literacy in the schools. We thought it would be wonderful to support school libraries and extra-curricular book clubs. We also thought it would make sense to have a Book Fair committee member be part of this group. We also wondered if we could form another group on antiquing.

Please let us know your thoughts on adding a member or two to our Executive Team. We hope to make a decision for next year's board, if not earlier.

Our next meeting of the Executive Team is at 2:00 on Wednesday, December 10th at East Hills Moravian Church. We welcome any and all members; just let me know if you plan to come.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and holiday season,

Natalie Chickey





Public Policy



Kristina Hollingsworth, Marylou Vernon and Joan Howe were encouraging motorists along Freemansburg Ave. to vote on the November 4th election. They met up again, along with 6 other members, on November 10th for Public Policy Study Group to discuss the election results. All were happy that so many voters turned out. Great discussions centered around the government shutdown: SNAP, healthcare, airport chaos and workers not being paid, also Sen. John Fetterman's new book, *Unfettered* and the PA state budget impasse.

How about: NO BUDGET, NO PAY! as my new protest sign.

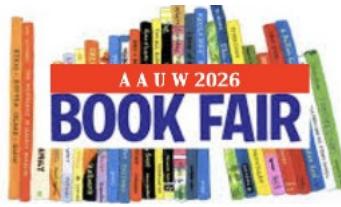
Joan Howe

The Book Nook

The Lamplighter's Bookshop By Sophie Austin

This story is about love and secrets and of course a bookshop. What is not to love? It is in many ways, *The Lost Apothecary* meets *The Lost Bookshop*. On a quiet street in Dublin, a lost bookshop is waiting to be found. Opaline, Martha and Henry have been the side characters in their own lives. But when a vanishing bookshop casts its spell, these three unsuspecting strangers will discover that their own stories are every bit as extraordinary as the ones found in the pages of their beloved books.

Review by Ann Brown



2nd ANNUAL WISH LIST BOOK FAIR EDITION

For our 64th Annual Used Book Fair we are hoping our Branch members can help us fulfill the following items on our Wish List:

- 1 – Volunteers to assist Section Chairs;
- 2 – More hard cover current and semi-current fiction;
- 3 – Used playing cards to be used on Preview Day
- 4 - Volunteers to assist on set-up day March 30th and with clean out the afternoon of April 27th;
- 5 - Many male volunteers, especially for helping with set up and clean up.

As always, we wish all of you a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year!

Joan Howe, Book Fair Co-Chair
Debbie Spinney, Book Fair Co-Chair

SAVE THE DATE!



The Holiday Luncheon

Change of Date : Saturday December 13
Moravian Village, 526 Wood St. Bethlehem, PA



Doors open at 11:00, Entertainment at 11:30 am
Lunch served at 12 noon

See you for holiday cheer and fellowship

A Special Message From Membership

25 Years Later and Still Perfect



A recent article in the Morning Call quoted and misquoted, Linda Robbins, one of the founding partners with The Perfect Fit and the visionary who saw the need and acted. She was awarded a glass plaque commemorating her accomplishments as well as a companion plaque for AAUW.

As a caseworker for the County Assistance Office, she was aware that the clients were given a work requirement to continue eligibility, with no wardrobe to go to an interview or accept the position. They had no winter coats to stand at the bus stop.

The idea was born first with a coat drive, then clothing, then an actual boutique where clients would be assisted in clothing selections for the interview by a dresser (volunteer). This could include the basic outfit, shoes, scarves, jewelry and purses. The client left feeling pampered and confident. If she was successful in landing the job, she was eligible for 5 mix and match outfits.

Lots of growing pains; forming a coalition with Lehigh County who supplied facility rent free for years, the YWCA who provided secretarial and administrative services, the Jewish Community Center with volunteers and community contacts, The Junior League with their vast knowledge of working with other organizations, volunteers and unwavering support, and AAUW Allentown, the first team of volunteers and donors.

It has grown under the leadership of Sarah Barrett and Heidi Lennick and is now located in the lower level of the former Zoellinger's building. Today it is still a boutique and has served 13,000 women, currently offering scrubs, steel toed shoes and personal hygiene items, as well as educational and job search help. A retail shop was opened to sell excess donated clothing, and the income provides much needed operating funds.

The incorrect quote stated Linda had retired from AAUW, which is not possible as she is a life member, but she did retire from the Public Assistance Office and has been involved in National, State and local AAUW branches since 1992.

A Message From Membership

A special welcome to our new members

WELCOME KATELEEN CASCIANO



With an undergraduate degree from Philadelphia University (now Jefferson University) in the field of Industrial Design, Kate spent nearly 18 years in the furniture-manufacturing industry as a technical expert and project manager. She worked in New York City, Philadelphia, and closer to home in Bethlehem, PA at Knoll's headquarters in East Greenville, PA. While working in NYC, she completed a graduate degree in the history of decorative arts and has since taught at Parsons, Jefferson University, and Lehigh University in the field of design history. She, her husband, and daughter live in Bethlehem.

WELCOME ASHLEY MATZ



A native of Bethlehem and a graduate of Freedom High School, Ashley received her B.A. from Adelphi University and her M.S. from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2012. She is employed as a school pathologist at Northampton Area Middle School. She enjoys reading, exercising outdoors, and time spent with her 5-year old son and their Cavalier King Charles.



Information :

All contact information is in the Yearbook

Bacchae: At our November meeting, we tasted, rated, and thoroughly enjoyed two Chardonnays, a Kendall Jackson from California and a Louis Jadot from the Bourgogne region of France. We will not be meeting in December. Our next meeting will be on January 8 at 3:00, and Rita Bergstrom and Amy Fields will be co-hosting at Rita's home. Happy holidays to all!

Mystery Paperback: We do not meet in December. On January 27, 2026 we will meet to discuss *The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra* by Vaseem Khan. Shirley Daluisio will lead the discussion and Anne Hammersmith will be hostess. New members are welcomed, contact Susan McNamara.

Paperback I: Paperback I will meet on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 1:p.m. in the home of Norma Ferguson. We will discuss *A Week in Winter* by Maeve Binchy. Stoneybridge is a small town in Ireland, where a woman buys an old house and turns it into a bed and breakfast. The visitors who come for the first week are an amazing group of characters, The book is full of Maeve's wonderful warmth and humor. New members will be warmly welcomed. Mardi Metzger and Myra Saturen, co-chairs.

Paperback II: Fifteen members met November 18, 2025 at the home of Marylou Vernon. Shirley Daluisio reviewed the book *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. This author has written many books dealing with mental health issues. This book focuses on becoming more resilient and learning from every regret. Most members found it a moving and uplifting novel.

There is no meeting scheduled in December. Our next meeting will be Tuesday January 20, 2026 at 7pm at the home of Linda Zimmerman. We will be reading the book *Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Iklamali. For our February meeting during Black History Month, we plan to visit the *Traveling While Black* interactive exhibit at Lehigh University. We plan to read the book, *Horse* by Geraldine Brooks for the March meeting, and your choice of a Jane Austen book for the April meeting.

Public Policy Study Group: Public Policy Study Group met on November 10, at Joan Howe's home. We discussed the results of the November election and the government shutdown. We will not meet in December.

Out to Lunch Bunch: Out to Lunch Bunch met at Outback Steakhouse on Emrick Blvd on November 12. We had a lovely group and a lovely lunch on a cold afternoon. Lots of talk of travel and catching up on kids and grandkids doings. OTLB will meet next in January - taking a busy December off. Please let Joan Howe know if you are attending the January 14, 2026 gathering at the Hotel Bethlehem, Main Street in downtown Bethlehem. Reservations will be for 12 noon.



Left to Right: Rita Bergstrom, Marylou Vernon, Mary Dawson, Kristina Hollingsworth, Debbie Spinney, Amy Fields and Joan Howe



December is National Giving Month

Ann Brown, co- editor
1514 Willowbrook Dr.
Bethlehem, PA