



President's Message

*Kudos to everyone who participated in our **January fundraiser**. It was a great success! What fun it will be to attend our February branch meeting and discuss how to allocate the funds we raised.*

*In order to prepare for that discussion, please look over the **Strategic Plan** and think about the goals we have listed there. Of course, you can also suggest something entirely new. If you have an initiative to propose, I ask that you provide the following, emailed to me no later than February 10th:*

- A brief description of the initiative
- A proposed timeline for completion
- The estimated cost
- The names of those who will take the lead and make sure the "work" gets done

All suggestions will be considered.

Lois Fisch, President

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2026 Upcoming Speakers



We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming General Meetings, where we will be hosting two impactful community partners:

February General Meeting – Tidewell Hospice

In February, we welcome Hospice (Tidewell Hospice), who will share resources, support programs, and insights on compassionate end-of-life care in our community. This is an important and meaningful topic we encourage everyone to learn more about.

We Encourage All Members to Attend. Your participation matters!

These meetings are a wonderful opportunity to stay informed, connect with fellow members, and support organizations making a difference in our area. Please mark your calendars and join us as we continue learning, growing, and supporting our mission together.

March Guest Speaker



Deb Mazzaferro

Floridians for the National Popular Vote

Deb Mazzaferro believes the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is the best way to ensure every vote counts in electing the president and vice-president. Since 2017 she has been an advocate, Subject Matter Expert and founding member of Floridians for NPV.

Deb's role includes building coalitions, marketing and legislative advocacy.

Since 2001, Deb has been known as CoachMaz, guiding small businesses in their sales and marketing strategy and execution. She is a certified coach by the Gestalt Center for Organizational and Systems Development and Positive Intelligence .

Deb is the League of Women Voter's liaison to the LWV New College Student Chapter. She is a director on the Tara Master Association and a Florida resident since 1987.

National Popular Vote or Electoral College? How about both? Since 2006, there has been an interstate compact that uses the Electoral College to improve how the US elects its president by popular vote. Eighteen jurisdictions have passed the law. We are now 77% of the way to implementing a national popular vote. Come learn about this elegant change that conserves states rights and gives One Person, One Vote.



The North County Book Group

**Tuesday, February 17th, 2026 –
11:00 AM**

**Location: North Sarasota
Library Conference Room**

Lois Fisch will lead a discussion of **James by Percival Everett.**



The Gulf Gate Book Group

Tuesday, February 24th,
2026 – 11:30 AM
Location: Gulf Gate Library

They will discuss Master, Slave, Husband, Wife by Lyon Woo. Carol Bernasconi will lead the discussion. Lunch will take place afterwards at a local restaurant. All are welcome!

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Membership Corner

Welcome to two new members!

Barbara Kay

Barbara is a retired snow bird currently dividing her time between Sarasota and Ann Arbor, MI. She is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University and has a Master of Arts from the University of Hong Kong. She is a life-long traveler, having lived in a variety of countries for over 30 years, but since returning stateside she has enjoyed membership in the AAUW Ann Arbor and now here. Too many interests and too little time.

2576 Prospect St., 34239; 734-276-2436; bjgoodk@yahoo.com

Nancy Couzelis

Nancy is a retired elementary teacher, originally from Connecticut, with degrees from Springfield College and Fairfield University (MA+30). She and her husband enjoy traveling, and have a condo in Denver, where their daughters live with their families.

6430 Hollywood Blvd.; 203-984-8027; Ncouzelis@aol.com.

This year, rather than a booklet-type Directory, a printed copy of our branch roster is available at meetings. The information was taken from the National roster, so if you

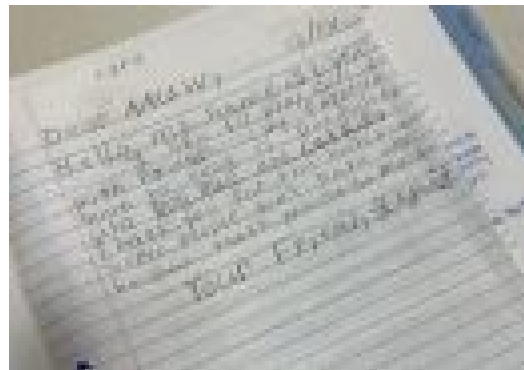
never updated your contact information at that level, it may be wrong. Please let me know of any corrections and I can update you on the AAUW Community Hub. If you would like to have a copy mailed to you let me know and I will send it - I won't send an email copy due to security risks. If you cannot make a meeting feel free to ask someone else that you will see to pick it up for you.

Please make the following corrections:

Barbara Heistand's phone number is incorrect in your Directory.
It should be 941-966-8399.

Thank you, Diana Sells

WRITE READ WRITE 2026!



Good news! Two third grade teachers at Booker Elementary School are looking forward to participating in our project. The students are going to write letters to us about themselves and their interests in reading.

We may have about forty students so we need your generous help to purchase books (hard cover if possible), and write a return note to your assigned student(s). **Please bring your books and notes, one book per student, in a gift bag to our February 18th meeting.** Sue and Liz will take the books to the classrooms shortly after that. We can look forward to thank you notes from the children in March.

Our goal is to encourage the love of books and reading by giving each

child their own book to keep and read. If you would like to participate but cannot attend the general meeting, please call or text ASAP – Liz Smith 248-396-2990.

Thank you, Liz Smith and Sue Ritchey

The AAUW Florida Public Policy Issue Forums



Bills We Support for the 2026 Florida Legislative Session

Special Emphasis: Domestic and Dating Violence

WHY: Reported domestic violence incidents in Florida have increased recently. Women are disproportionately affected, making up about 70% of reported victims. Domestic violence is a significant factor in homelessness. Safe, affordable, trauma-informed housing is critical.

HB 268 (Gossert-Goldman), SB 296 (Borman): Victims of Domestic Violence and Dating Violence

- Feasibility study to establish HAVEN (Helping Abuse Victims Escape Now) with a dynamic database enhancing response times and privacy, and a Coordinating Council within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).
- **WHY:** Abuse victims need protection from abusers who can potentially access the existing reporting systems.

HB 167 (Johanna Lopez), SB 148 (LaVon Bracy Davis): Termination of Rental Agreement by Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Violence, or Stalking

- If a tenant has been victimized as above, landlord cannot evict them but must allow them to break their lease or change locks if they remain.
- Landlord cannot refuse to rent to a potential tenant because they have been victimized.

We also support related bills HB 277 and SB 662, Domestic Emergency and Batterers Reform and Accountability Act, to provide more comprehensive support and protection for domestic violence victims while offering intervention opportunities for offenders.

HB 56 (Hart), SB 173 (Jones): Pregnant Women in Custody

- Offers option for an arrestee to have a pregnancy test and, if sentenced, the court may postpone incarceration for 12 weeks after delivery.
- **WHY:** Prisons and jails do not have adequate facilities for childbirth or infant care. Healthy outcomes for children should be an interest of the state.

HB 338 (Brinkley), SB 392 (Jones): Prohibited Discrimination Based on Hairstyle

- prohibit discrimination based on "protected hairstyles" within Florida's K-20 public education system and private schools participating in state scholarship programs. The bills define a protected hairstyle as one historically associated with race.
- **WHY:** Studies from Duke University and national CROWN Act show that Black individuals with natural hairstyles face prejudice, including being rated as less professional or capable.

HB 361 (Saldana), SB 454 (Bracy Davis): Use of Campaign Funds for Child Care Expenses

- Would allow candidates to use campaign funds for costs associated with the care of a candidate's dependent child due to campaign activities such as events, canvassing, debates, and meetings. Not for expenses that would have been incurred if there were no campaign.
- **WHY:** AAUW advocates for women in leadership including elective office. Since women are still the primary caregivers for young children, those costs are a deterrent for them.

HB 167 (Fvonne Hinson), SB 182 (Shen Jones): School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program

- A School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program within the Department of Education would recruit qualified current and retired teachers to mentor new classroom teachers and those who need special help.
- Each mentor will receive a stipend from the associated school district.

If anyone would like to see an entire bill, please send me an email, and I will gladly forward it to you. Also, you can go directly to flhouse.gov to keep abreast of the latest news.

The Digital Democracy Project



Florida registered voters can tell legislators how YOU want them to vote on actual legislation. Vote on your phone and track the the Tally Interactive map. Compare what voters WANT and what legislators DELIVER.

[Download the App Here](#)

AAUW Florida Public Policy Issue Forums

Wouldn't you like more in-depth information on the important issues facing Florida from an equity-focused, nonpartisan viewpoint? Then be sure to attend as many **AAUW Florida Public Policy Issue Forums** this year as you can. All sessions start at 6:00 PM on Tuesday evenings. They are open to AAUW members and guests. All sessions require pre-registration.

If you have any questions, contact Mary Gatta, AAUW Florida Public Policy Issue Forum Organizer at gatta.mary@gmail.com

You will need to RSVP for each session individually (links below). Once you RSVP you will receive a Zoom link for the session via email.

Women's Economic Security 3/31/26

If you would like to learn more about the bills that are and will be proposed during the 2026 legislative session and the members of the committee(s) you are interested in following, you can go to <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Committees/committees.aspx>. There you can link to all of that information and go deeper into the bills themselves. You can also sign up to the Legislative Tracking System from this site and keep up to date with all activities and meetings related to those committees you are following. Be in the know. Sign up today.

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AAUW Sarasota Ballet Enthusiasts



Our next ballet, **Notes Unspoken**, is coming up on **Saturday, January 31, 2026 at 2 PM**. The performance will be at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, ie. the Asolo, with lunch prior to the performance at 12:30 PM at Grillroom Restaurant, located at the Ringling Museum just off the Museum lobby. If you are attending this performance and would

like to join us for lunch, kindly let Nancy know so she can include you in our lunch reservations.

For a more complete description of this performance, visit SarasotaBallet.org. For tickets, contact the Sarasota Ballet Box Office at 941.359.0099.

Call or email Nancy Brennan with any questions at 941.924.5951.

PROGRAMS		
PROGRAM 4 Notes Unspoken	FSU Performing Arts (The Asolo)	Jan. 31st, 2:00pm
PROGRAM 7 Foundations of Royalty	Sarasota Opera House	May 2nd, 2:00pm



Branch Funds Available



AAUW Sarasota had a successful fundraising event and we are projecting expenses less than the budget approved by the members in August 2025.

As a result, the branch has \$12,337 available to supplement existing programs, fund new programs or to reserve funds to support branch operating expenses in the future. These decisions must be approved

by a majority of branch members attending the branch meeting. Details about our financial position and funding proposals for 2025-2026 will be presented and decided at the AAUW Sarasota branch meeting on February 18th. **If you would like funding for a new program, please submit a written proposal by Feb 10th to Lois Fisch lfisch@utica.edu.**

The Branch has a Philanthropy Plan for funds generated from our endowed funds and has additional funds of \$1,562 that may be spent before June 30, 2026. Funds from the endowed funds may only be disbursed to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations. Funds spent from the operating budget are not restricted. Our spending should align with AAUW strategic plan <https://www.aauw.org/about/strategic-plan-2025/> and the AAUW Sarasota Strategic Plan.

The Abigail Adams fundraising event generated \$3,380 for the branch. In addition, cash available from previous years less reserves was \$11,817. We expect dues revenue of \$1,500. Expenses to date are less that budgeted and expected to be \$4,320.

Under the current budget, we have budgeted in the operating budget for the following for programs:

- **Teacher support** \$500
- **NCCWSL** \$0
- **Miss Sarasota Softball** \$0
- **Tech Trek \$0Scholarships** \$0

Philanthropy Plan 2025-2026

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|---|-------------|------------|
| • College Scholarships | (2) \$2,500 | \$5,000.00 |
| • Technical/Vocational Scholarship | \$1,250.00 | |
| • Tech Trek | \$2,000.00 | |
| • AAUW Greatest Needs Fund | \$1,500.00 | |
| • Local Initiative | \$500.00 | |
| • Women’s Resource Center | \$1,000.00 | |
| • Additional Funds | \$1,561.65 | |

Calendar of Events

DATE	TIME	EVENT	PLACE
Sat. Jan. 31st	2:00pm	Ballet Program 4 Words Unspoken	FSU Performing Arts (The Asolo)
Tue. Feb. 3rd	11:00am	Board Meeting	Sarasota Women's Resource Center
Tue. Feb. 10th	11:00am	Funds For New Program Request Due	email lfisch@utica.edu
Wed. Feb. 17th	11:00am	The North County Book Group	North Sarasota Library (conference room)
Wed. Feb. 18th	2:00pm	General Meeting – Write Read Write Books Due	Sarasota Women's Resource Center
Tue. Feb. 24th	11:30am	Gulf Gate Book Group	Gulf Gate Library

Meeting Dates

Board Meetings

February 3 - 11:00-1:00

March 3 - 11:00-1:00

April 7 - 11:00-1:00

May 5 - 11:00-1:00

June 2 - 11:00-1:00

Branch Meetings

February 18 - 2:00-4:30

March 18 - 2:00-4:30

April 15 - 2:00-4:30

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Save The Date- September 25-27, 2026
AAUW Atlantic Regional Conference 2026
Lancaster, PA!



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2025-2026 Board of Directors

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President

Marcia Hill

Secretary

Ellen Roche

Treasurer

Diana Sells Memberships	Silvia Blanco Director of Programs	Sue McGowan Public Policy
Sue Casey Past President	Estephanie D. Synthesis / Communication	

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AAUW SARASOTA
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