

Annual Report – President – 2014-2015

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We had a very successful year, due to the hard work of our board members, group leaders and many others.

Thanks to Susie Blecker and Mary Coiteux, our programs were excellent and diverse. In particular, we offered several programs jointly with other organizations, which I believe is helpful to our organization in reaching out to the community with important issues as well as marketing ourselves to the community. These were the program on Women Fighters in ISIS with the World Affairs Council of the Mid-Hudson Valley, New York State Women in History with the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, and Sexual Abuse on Campus with Shir Hadash Synagogue and the Freedom Plains Presbyterian Church.

Most of our initiatives continue to have successful, on-going programs. Our Leading to Reading program even began a new project, Books for Babies. Diversity, Extending Girls Horizons, Partnership for Healthcare Awareness and Court Watch continue their regular programs not only providing valuable community service but also increasing our visibility in the community. The Live Your Dream Girls' Conference, while holding a successful event this past year, will not continue with a similar program this fall, due to scheduling conflicts and not enough member participation. The Let's Do Math initiative held the Let's Read Math Workshop this past fall but will most likely investigate other types of workshops for the future. Similarly the STEM initiative, while holding a joint workshop with Marist College last fall, is trying to determine what might be possible to continue in the future. Careers, Compensation and You and Women's Personal and Professional Development will not be continuing.

Our interest groups continue to flourish and are a popular part of our branch. These interest groups most likely serve as our best recruiting tool. We added a new interest group this year, Poetry and Plays.

Our annual fund raiser, the Writer's Tea and Auction, was very successful and very well received by the attendees. We raised over \$8500 for our initiatives and scholarships, more money than in the past. We presented two scholarships to students graduating from DCC and continuing their education. The LAF fund raiser, the Rib Fest, also brought in close to \$500. We continue to be in a good financial position.

Our branch was recognized on the State level with many awards, including a Platinum Award for our Leading to Reading program, an Award of Excellence for our newsletter, Awards of Distinction for social media and visibility and several others.

The following are the goals that we discussed last summer and into the year for 2014-2016, where we stand with each, and what has to be done in the coming year:

Increase funding for scholarships and initiatives to \$8,500: Made it! Let's try to keep up this level of income for our projects.

Increase attendance at monthly program meetings to 100: Rarely did we have this level of attendance at our monthly program meetings; perhaps only at the two on sexual abuse and women fighters and these were joint meetings with other groups. We should continue to discuss this, and even determine if this remains a goal.

Raise engagement level of current members and bring more members into leadership positions: About 60 of our members hold some sort of leadership positions, as board or off-board members, events chairs, or initiative or interest group chairs. With particular thanks to the Nominating Committee, this year we brought in people that have previously not served in any position as current and incoming board members, interest group chairs and an event chair. We encouraged leaders to add new people to their committees and in the future should continue to engage members, particularly newer ones, by asking them to participate in projects.

Define capacity and what success means: We continue to be a very successful branch in terms of the number of members that we have. Although members come and go, our membership number has remained fairly stable over the last several years. Members leave us for a variety of reasons, including illness, moving or simply lack of interest. So we all, in whatever our leadership capacity, must continue to make members feel welcome and included. I believe that success also needs to be measured in how we meet some of the other objectives on this list.

Develop a visibility plan – develop specific goals and how to get there: We have had some limited success in reaching out to newspapers. Our best attempts at visibility came from our joint programs with other organizations mentioned elsewhere in this report. Our Facebook presence increased significantly. We held a brain-storming session on this topic at the board meeting in November, and should continue to work on this issue, particularly in attempting to get some of our issues published in the newspaper.

Focus on diversity of membership, programs, age, culture, issues, religion: I believe that our programs cover diverse topics, and that we probably have diversity of religion in our membership. Although we have women of color in our branch, including some in leadership positions, I do not have a feel for how diverse we are in that area. However we are still an organization primarily of women of retirement or near- retirement age and serve an important purpose for such women. We should continue to work on this issue.

Include state and national AAUW issues: Our sexual abuse on campus program was important and well received. We have had a STEM project and have included STEM topics in some of our initiatives. Our Public Policy and International chairs bring issues to our attention. In the coming year I would like to see us continue this effort, particularly with a program on education (i.e. Common Core) at a meeting, a re-examining of our STEM efforts and perhaps more on topics of interest to college-age women.

Interaction with Colleges: Our Lets Read Math and STEM projects were joint projects with Marist College. Our talk on women fighters was also a joint project with Vassar College. We hold some of our diversity programs at DCC, held our Girls' conference there, continue to give scholarships there, and have invited their new president to be our annual meeting speaker. At our November board meeting we held a brainstorming session about how to better reach out to colleges. We were not successful in finding a recipient from one of the colleges for the NCCWSL scholarship. We must continue to find members of the college communities who will be our liaison and advise us on the best way to reach college students with our programs and issues.

Hold Joint Projects with Other Organizations: As mentioned above, we held several joint projects with community organizations, colleges, a church and synagogue and the library. This helps our visibility so let's continue this whenever we can.

Next year: In addition to what is mentioned above, I would like us to determine how we might continue a program for middle-school age girls, if indeed there is a need. Also, I intend to form a committee to investigate ways for us to collect money for dues and events, in addition to only checks. I would like to see the next president identified early in the year, so that she and I might work together for several months.

Please see the individual annual reports for details about these programs and areas. Again, it has been a pleasure working with the board and other leaders, and I look forward to another good year.