

Annual Report – President – 2016-2017

Maria DeWald

As always, AAUW Poughkeepsie officers, board members and off-board members, interest group coordinators, community service initiative and event chairs allowed our branch to have a successful year. I adopted the musical “Clef” as a Logo and a theme of “Celebrating our Legacy, Enhancing the Future”.

Throughout the year, I have participated with AAUW-NYS on several topics such as leadership development, membership, programming and so forth. I also am serving as the District IV representative on the 2017-18 Nominating Committee. Betty Harrel also applied for and received a \$500 grant for the Leading To Reading Initiative. Since we are hosting the District IV Conference this year, Peggy Kelland will be applying for the State District Conference grant.

Our branch was recognized on the State level with many awards, including a Platinum Award for our program on campus sexual assault, Awards of Excellence for our newsletter, website and visibility, an Awards of Distinction for social media, recognition for our Equal Pay Day program, and several other awards. We also received a \$500 grant from the State which we used for Leading to Reading.

Our focus throughout the year was the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage in NYS. Lead Board liaison was Pat Luczai. Through the generosity of member Joan Monk, we sold raffle tickets (thank you Pat and Mary Coiteaux!) for a Susan B. Anthony replica purse she had donated, which was raffled off at the Annual meeting in June 2017. The proceeds were donated to the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF). Other events taking place for the celebration were an historical reenactment at our May Program meeting and a speaker at the Annual Meeting in June, Sandra Opdycke, on “When Women Won The Vote”. We also showcased an historical display of notable local women at this event. Our Historian, Eileen Hayden and Assistant Historian, Barbara Hesperheide, wrote columns for each Branch newsletter highlighting other notable events, women, and places in addition to their usual work of assuring the integrity of our archives. We also attended a press conference held by Senator Gillibrand on her “Women’s Suffrage Centennial Suffrage Act”. We participated in the community Women’s March across the Walkway joining over 5000 other marchers.

Of course, no president can hope to succeed without a Leadership Team in place. So, one of the first actions must be to assure a smooth transition, confirming continuing members, speaking with new officers, and filling slots. Because of my own schedule, I applied for a FreeConferenceCall.com number for branch use. This was used several times over the year both because of my schedule and weather related issues. This alternative to regular in-person meetings, both Board and Committee, was well received and will continue. This coming year, we will also try to use the number for in-person meeting “call-ins” allowing as many Board members as possible to participate. New positions added included an Assistant Historian and Assistant Membership VP. The latter position officially changed again at the 2017 elections to a new Co-Membership VP. It was also the first time the Immediate Past President, Barbara Van Itallie, served as a Board member. What a help she was to me!

A small committee consisting of Betty Harrel, Margaret Nijuis, Barbara Van Itallie and myself met to review the Working Rules, which were updated and adopted by the Board in October with necessary Bylaws changes being adopted at our Annual meeting and recommendations for further amendments continuing. We also updated the guidelines on thank you notes and added those to the Working Rules. We continue to work on collaboration and marketing/fundraising guidelines. In addition, Betty Harrell and Kathy Friedman, Secretary, reviewed the Bylaws and updated them with new NYS amendments after Convention.

The beginning of the new membership year meant the updating of the 2016 Membership Booklet and Directory and letters to accompany each, as well as a Membership Campaign for renewals and new members, with updated profiles and forms. We had 352 members in 2016-17, still making us the largest branch in NYS. Many Board members participated and job responsibilities were reconfigured including the plan to move the production of these documents back to the Membership

Committee. This was accomplished with the transition of the Directory in 2016 and the Membership Booklet in 2017. Special thanks go to Membership VPs Sheila Zweifler and Susie Blecker, Membership Treasurer Mary Anne Hogarty and database Manager Claudette Hennessey and their Committee for their hard work

Each month, a President's Letter was written for the Branch and, in addition, reports of attended events such as the NYS Convention and Summer Leadership. Agendas for monthly Board meetings, Open House, and the New Member Reception, were also prepared along with remarks for the Women of the Year event. Since I was out of town for our annual Writer's Tea, I asked immediate past-president, Barbara Van Itallie to preside for me. As our Bylaws indicate, besides our Annual meeting, we held a second general meeting in January.

I attended meetings to enhance our collaboration in the community including, for example, a meeting with Vassar students to speak with them on how they could get involved, a Women's Alliance Meeting, the Dutchess Community College Leadership Breakfast, and a meeting with Paul Sparrow, Director of the FDR Library, about how we might work together. We promoted the It's My Vote campaign for registering new voters with Judy Elkin as coordinator and a committee which included many Vassar students, as well as our own members. Members Kay Saderholm and Claudette Hennessey also volunteered as judges at the DCC Science Fair and awarded two winning students a \$50 gift certificates to Barnes and Noble on behalf of our branch.

Program Co-VPs, Sandy Goldberg and Betsy Kopstein-Stuts, planned an outstanding and diverse year of monthly programs including: October-The Return of the Victorian Lady: Utopia which gave an overview of some of the alternative societies of the 19th Century. This program was held in collaboration with the Poughkeepsie Public Library District; November-Understanding Islam; December – Meditation and Stress Relief (our members again brought donations for the women residents at the Grace Smith House) ; January – The Fourth Estate in the 21st Century: The role of the press in a free society ; February- Bettering Our Community and Using Resources Wisely (although this program was snowed out, it was rescheduled for this fall which will give us a chance to use the extensive resource that was developed on "How To get rid of Stuff") ; March – Rehabilitation Through the Arts; May-Meet Lucy Stone: a "history at play" presentation on this advocate and suffragist. In addition, we offered a Defensive Driving Course for members and their families/friends taught by one of our new members. We provided refreshments at program meetings and, this year, we secured a cabinet at our usual program site to store hospitality supplies to ease facilitation.

Successful events included: The Women of the Year Luncheon honoring Krista Jones of the Sparrow's Nest held at Dutchess Manor in October and chaired by Joanne Long and Carol Barmann. New chairs were secured for 2017, Gail Sisti and Mary Lou Davis; the Writer's Tea and Benefit Auction in April, our only fundraiser, was chaired by Linda Roberts and Lula Allen and raised almost \$8000 to support our initiatives and scholarships. State president, Roli Wendorf, attended this event; and, the Annual Meeting and Dinner held at the Poughkeepsie Grand and chaired by Judy Linville.

Our Community Service Initiatives, led by Board Liaison Barbara Hugo, did yeoman's work: **The Live Your Dream Girls' Conference** was reinstated with great success, in collaboration with Dutchess Community College and chaired by Diana Babington and Lori Scolaro. It was expanded to 6th and 7th girls and over 100 attended. It also included a Parent Thread and a tour of the College plus student mentors from local colleges, many workshops, and a lunch with Community Women Leaders. Their "Divas and Dreamers" Fund raised enough money to support the attendance of many girls. The same two chairs are working on the November 2017 Conference; the Partnership for Healthcare Awareness, chaired by Lula Allen and Kay Bishop, became the **Mothers Project** and continues to offer a group for new mothers in Poughkeepsie and an annual healthcare workshop; **Leading to Reading** chaired by Betty Harrell began yet another new project, "Laundromat Libraries" in addition to their many other wonderful reading programs, in collaboration with Friends of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District; **Court Watch**, chaired by Ann Pinna, received the "*The Samuel J. Duboff Memorial Award*" which is awarded to non-lawyers who make extraordinary contributions toward improving the quality of justice in New York State; **Extending Girl's Horizons**, chaired by Peggy Kelland, held monthly activities, including some STEAM and leadership projects, in collaboration with the Girl Scouts New Oaks Service Unit; our **Diversity and International Relations** Initiatives provided various programs open to the community including films , participation in International Women's Day, a planned trip to the

UN for the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (unfortunately snowed out), programs such as a talk by an undocumented “Dreamer” and another on Islam. International relations began a new “Days for Girls” project sewing kits to be used to assure women have access to menstruation resources and Diversity is compiling a cookbook; and, **STEM** workshops as part of the newly re-signed Marist Liberty Partnership (Kris Puzza) and the new Math Buddies program (Barbara VanItallie). Wow ladies! We also continue to have short presentations at Program Meetings by these Initiative Chairs and will be introducing a new Careers and Leadership Initiative this year.

Barbara Lemberger is the Board Interest Group Liaison and ably assured that all 21 Group Coordinators were kept informed. The newest is the Photography Interest Group, joining the others to offer stimulation, personal growth, lasting friendships, camaraderie and enjoyment to a large majority of our membership. This remains a wonderful recruiting tool also. Thank you coordinators!

We do believe that communication is the key! I attended a meeting of the Communications Committee to discuss how to modernize our communications. We continued to publish monthly newsletters and keep our website up to date and informative thanks to Margaret Nijuis and her assistants Joanne Scolaro and Kathy Friedman. We added a “Useful Links” menu item to the website also which can hold resources such as the “Guide for Women in Public Service Careers”. Mary Coiteaux keeps the Face Book page current and lively and, along with Sabashnee Govender, has instituted “boosts” to attract more readers. Our Publicity Chair, Cathy Kinn, as well as individual chairs and coordinators, have also had some success getting articles, pictures and letters to the editors in the paper. Our Photography Chair, Bonnie Auchincloss, has accumulated a wonderful I cloud selection of photos. Claudette Hennessey manages our local database and keeps track of our member’s interests in AAUW. A new vehicle, AAUW Alerts, was begun to be sent between newsletters and to offer the opportunity to market events of interest in the community that are brought to our attention by members. In addition, it should help to cut down on too many emails being sent to members. A logo was developed by Barbara Hugo, and Cathy Kinn, Joanne Scolaro and Bonnie Auchincloss are helping it all happen. Our rack cards are being redesigned as a community resource to build interest in our organization.

We remain dedicated to our other scholarships, honors and awards also. Betty Harrel, Honors and Awards Chair, facilitated the selection of our six Named Fellows to accompany our \$3000 donation to the National Educational Opportunities Fund. Honorees this year were Diana Babington, Mary Ann Boylan, Barbara Hesperheide, Barbara Lemberger, Lori Scolaro, Barbara VanItallie. Her committee also facilitated the choosing of our Emerging Leader, Sheila Zweifler, who was honored at the State Convention, and our second annual Cornerstone Award was given to a very surprised Gloria Gibbs at our Annual meeting.

In addition, we were able to fund two DCC Scholarships for graduating students: Kristina Daniels who will be attending SUNY Purchase, and Amanda Booth, who will be attending SUNY New Paltz. This was facilitated by VP Linda Roberts. In addition, the Wilda Dible Hunt Memorial Scholarship, in honor of member Linda Beyer’s mother, was presented to Stacie Woodard which will help her continue at DCC. The Trudy Hankinson Briggs AAUW Scholarship for a continuing DCC student was also awarded to Noah Fields. This scholarship was set up decades ago by the spouse of a former member. Imagine how many students have been helped by this generous endowment. We all attended the DCC Awards Convocation to meet the students and participate in the award distribution. Just lovely!

The Irene Keyes Memorial Fund, chaired by Marcine Humphrey, was able to fund a full scholarship for Qadan Mohamed from Somaliland to attend the NCCWSL Leadership Conference in Washington DC. Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) donations were facilitated by Chair Janna Whearty who also donated a purse for the auction at the AAUW-NYS Convention. Sharon Clarke, Rib Fest Volunteer Coordinator, also secured additional funds for LAF.

Diane Jablonski, our Treasurer, besides providing monthly treasurer's reports, worked on introducing the Pay Pal option to the website, membership forms and event payments, prepared our budget, and worked on following up with AAUW-NYS on errors regarding 501 c(3) status. She has installed an updated QuickBooks program. Diane also worked with a committee to allocate Writers' Tea profits to scholarships and the Initiatives. We continue to be in a fine financial position.

Our Nominating Committee, chaired by Betsy Kopstein-Stutz, successfully completed their mission of finding two new program VPS for 2017, Sandy Lash and Monique Jones, a new VP for Development (replacing the Educational Funds VP), Jocelyn Banfield, and a new Co-VP for Membership, Sheila Zweifler in addition to continuing officers Diane Jablonski, Treasurer, Kathy Friedman, Secretary, Mary Ann Hogarty, Membership Treasurer and myself. Our Nominating Chair for 2017-18 will be Barbara Van Itallie who has already put together her Committee which will include Board members Sheila Zweifler and Betty Harrel and Off-Board members Mary Coiteaux and Sue Doyle.

It has been a pleasure working with and getting to know the board, the other leaders and all members. Thank you for your support and your commitment to our organization, our Branch and to me personally. It makes a difference!

Maria DeWald

To be continued:

- * Purchase banners to be used at events
- * Determine a marketing strategy regarding the AAUW dues increase for 2018
- * Continue to encourage leaders to recruit and engage new members in projects and committees
- * Continue our focus on diversity and inclusion, international relations and public policy through building a diverse membership, providing diverse programs, and addressing issues relevant across different ages and cultures.
- * Educate the membership on AAUW priorities in a variety of ways
- * With the formation of the new initiative, Careers and Leadership, build our relationships with our local colleges
- * Continue to examine the Bylaws, Working Rules, Organization Chart, Website, and Face Book design. Complete Guidelines such as Community Collaborations.
- * Determine EOF Donation alternatives by January 2018
- * Continue to develop the Alerts process
- * Continue to enhance publicity including design of new rack cards/business cards, and spreading the word about Initiative and scholarship work.