

Annual Report – President – 2017-2018

Maria DeWald

As always, AAUW Poughkeepsie officers, board members and off-board members, interest group coordinators, community service initiative and event chairs and all our members have allowed our branch to have a successful year.

I continued with the musical “C Clef” as a Logo and a theme of “Celebrating our Legacy, Enhancing the Future”. There is always so much to both celebrate and enhance!

National/State Involvement:

Throughout the year, I, and other Branch members, have participated with **AAUW and AAUW-NYS** through:

- * Attendance at the 2017 and 2018 Summer Leadership Conference
- * Attendance at the 2018 Convention
- * Betty Harrel and Diane Jablonski attended a meeting with Kim Churches in NYS as she traveled across the country on her listening tour
- * I served as the NYS District IV alternate representative on the 2017-18 Nominating Committee I attended meetings in-person and by call
- * We applied for and received the AAUW- NYS Program Award receiving \$250 each for Leading to Reading and Days For Girls
- * We hosted the District IV Conference which was at The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory, an example of a recent urban renewal effort. Although we applied for and received the State District Conference grant, we were able to return it. In addition, because of low costs, we were able to deposit some dollars for use by next year’s Conference hosts
- * We applied for and received the following awards at Convention: the AAUW-NYS 21st Century Program Platinum Award for our Court Watch Program and Awards of Excellence for our newsletter, website and visibility
- * Our Irene Keyes Memorial Fund, chaired by Marcine Humphrey, was able to fund a full scholarship for Katherine Murray from Marist College to attend the AAUW NCCWSL Conference in Washington DC. We hope to award two scholarships next year
- * The Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) donations were facilitated by Chair Janna Whearty who donated a designer tote for the auction at the AAUW Convention. There were also individual member donations made directly to LAF both at the Convention and through National
- * Sharon Clarke, RIB Fest Coordinator, also secured \$629 in additional funds for LAF. The new Coordinator for this year is Marcine Humphrey
- * I concentrated some Branch President’s letters on the resources we receive from National and otherwise tried to prepare the way for the \$10 dues increase, along with our Membership VPS
- * Purchased AAUW Poughkeepsie Branch pens to use as gifts

Special focus for the year included:

- * Continuation of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage in NYS
- * Travel to a Westchester Branch meeting, along with VP Bonnie Auchincloss, to both receive and "Pass the Torch" commemorating the march across the state for Women's Suffrage.
- * Historian Eileen Hayden and Assistant Historian Barbara Hesperheide, completion of a full year of monthly "Perusing Our Past" articles for the Branch
- * A celebration of the Year of the Veteran for 2018 with a historical reenactment at our May Program meeting on **World War Women: The Unsung Heroines of WWII**.
- * Advocacy through marches both locally and in DC and across the state, with many members participating, for gun safety, against sexual harassment, and for fair immigration policies.
- * A Candidate's Forum in October with the help of members Ellie Charwat, representing the League of Women Voters, and Suzi Stoller, for all candidates running for the County-wide offices of Comptroller and Family Court Judge. At this event, our Public Policy Chair, Pat DeLeo, also gave out information on the proposed Constitutional amendments
- * Monthly, mission-based Public Policy articles in the Branch newsletter by Pat who also sent calls to action re the Two-Minute Activist
- * Community Connections: I attended meetings to enhance our collaboration in the community including, for example, a Women's Alliance Meeting, the Dutchess Community College Leadership Breakfast, and a meeting with the WPN Women's Professional Network with whom we are collaborating now on a Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Workshop for this September at Vassar College.

Our leadership team was strong:

- * The Board was reorganized to 20, thus changing the quorum from 14 to 11, by moving some positions from Board to Off-Board and eliminating some.
- * A smooth transition was a priority as was personal communication with continuing members, speaking with new officers, and filling slots for this year.
- * Our membership campaign sent out more than 50 letters of invitation encouraging membership and asking them to come to our Open House.
- * Both at the end of my first term and in this transition year, I hosted the last Board meeting and a thank you brunch at my home. In both cases, continuing, retiring and new board members were invited to talk and transfer materials. This past brunch in 2018 was hosted jointly by the incoming president, Diane Jablonski, and me.
- * I have prepared a binder and forwarded all my edited digital files to Diane.
- * The Nominating Committee for 2017-18 was chaired ably by Barbara Van Itallie and her Committee consisting of herself, Sheila Zweifler and Betty Harrel from the Board, and Mary Coiteux and Sue Doyle from the general membership. I was especially pleased that they were able to fill all slots in record time as follows; President Diane Jablonski, Treasurer Pat Luczai, Secretary Ruth Sheets, and continuing Communications VP Bonnie Auchincloss. I believe it is a sign of a healthy organization when leadership succession is a priority and members step forward willingly to fill vacancies. Barbara will again serve as chair next year.

Monthly Board meetings:

- * Agendas for monthly Board meetings, Open House, and the New Member Reception, were prepared along with remarks for various events

- * Kathy Friedman, Secretary, assured minutes were prepared and sent out with the agenda each month and that Conflict of Interest Forms were signed annually by all Board members.
- * Our FreeConferenceCall.com number continued to work well and was used for about 1/4 of our meetings, particularly in poor weather or light agenda months.
- * We switched our non-call meetings to one of the Vassar Hospital Conference Rooms offering a much more conducive, comfortable and cost free space for our meetings thanks to our member, Sabashnee Govender. There is even valet parking!
- * Because of better AV equipment there, I am hoping that members who are away will also be able to use our conference call line at this meeting space to “call-in” for those meetings, allowing as many Board members as possible to participate. It is even possible to potentially try a digital platform such as ZOOM for these call-ins with Vassar Hospital’s superior resources.
- * Since I was out of town for one Board meeting, I asked our Program Chairs, next in the order of succession, to preside for me. They did so beautifully! In addition, as indicated by our Bylaws, we held a second general membership meeting (in addition to our Annual Meeting) in March which they again chaired for me. Leadership development in action!

Document Integrity:

- * All Bylaws changes passed both at this and last year’s Annual meetings in June have been updated in the Bylaws.
- * The Working Rules were also updated according to various Board actions throughout the year and editorial changes reflecting current practice. Some changes included new guidelines on Honorariums and Donations, Mileage and Thank You Note responsibilities. All documents are now up to date the website.
- * We worked hard to communicate the National Bylaws vote and recommendations to our membership including with a president’s letter, several articles in the Branch and consistent reminders in our monthly Alerts and individual emails.

Public Relations:

- * Cathy Kinn, PR Chair, led us to a stellar PR year. She developed a process and became fully informed regarding the Poughkeepsie Journal, introducing herself to all appropriate editors. We had many articles in the Journal plus information was sent for the digital Vassar Events newsletter, the Southern/Dutchess News, and to appropriate groups such as the Wallace Center when we did our World War II program. Many letters to the editor were submitted.
- * As PR Chair, Cathy also worked with me on the monthly Alerts bulletin by finishing the drafts, attaching the logo (new this year and highly identifiable as designed by member Barbara Hugo) and assuring it was sent to Joanne Scolaro for forwarding to membership
- * A new marketing business card was designed by Barbara Hugo and Cyd Averill. We are still in need of a larger tabling bookmark or card which they have offered to help with
- * We assisted the County with their annual Hudson Valley Women’s History Booklet which featured Ann Buckholtz who was, among many things, a past member and president
- * When having a program in collaboration with another community organization, we were often able to use their marketing resources through open communication.

Communications:

- * Bonnie Auchincloss, Communications VP, continues to develop the job description for this new position
- * Margaret Nihhuis, editor, published the Branch newsletter each month except July, along with her assistants Kathy Friedman and Joanne Scolaro. I wrote a President's letter for each and either a combined or separate report on various events.
- * Margaret also ensures the website is kept up to date. I have tried to be involved helping Margaret by periodically reviewing the website, including creating some new pieces such as the one on National college student membership and referring research that can be put under our Resource Tab.
- * The Alerts bulletin went out monthly with me doing the first draft and PR Chair Kinn completing the process
- * Mary Coiteux, along with Sabashnee Govender, kept our Face Book page up to date. They have again used "boosts" to attract more readers.
- * Claudette Hennessey manages our local database and keeps track of our member's interests in AAUW. We had several discussions re new ideas.
- * Our Photography Committee, headed by Communications VP Bonnie Auchincloss, continues to take pictures of Board members at program meetings and add them to the I Cloud, along with many event/program/field trip pictures.

Membership:

- * I attended several membership Committee planning meetings
- * I participated in the updating of the 2017 Membership Booklet and Directory. I wrote a letter to accompany each
- * This year, we added pictures of the Board and cell phone numbers to the Directory.
- * I participated in the updating of the membership renewal forms and Member Profile for the 2017 campaign. I wrote a letter to go with this mailing.
- * The transition regarding responsibility for production back to the Membership Committee for all these documents was also completed with these 2017 publications.
- * In addition, we held an Open House in September with refreshments provided by our Interest Groups, a New Member Reception and light supper before the program meeting, with baked goods from our board members. Thanks to our membership VPS, Board and Interest groups for all that planning.
- * We gave an Honorary Membership to the President of DCC last year and this year has also added one for the Vassar College President because of all their support.
- * We honored many members for longevity in our Branch from 10 to 55 years, including a new Branch Honorary member, Mariellen Pangia, who no longer needs to pay branch dues. Arlene Seligman was honored for 50 years and Lillian DePasquale for 55 years!
- * Special thanks go to Membership VPs Sheila Zweifler and Susie Blecker, Membership Treasurer Mary Anne Hogarty and database Manager Claudette Hennessey and their Committees for their hard work.
- * We had 353 members in 2017-18, still making us the largest branch in NYS.

Honors/Awards/Scholarships:

- * As Chair of the Honors and Awards Committee, Betty Harrel, facilitated the selection of our six **Named Gift awardees** to accompany our \$3000 donation to the National

AAUW Fund (unrestricted). Honorees this year were Pat DeLeo, Sabashnee Govender, Eileen Hayden, Sandy Lash, Judy Linville and Joanne Scolaro who were all honored at the Annual Dinner. In addition, our 2018 **Emerging Leader** was Monique Jones, who was honored at the State Convention.

*The process will now be for the Board to decide in January to which National Fund(s) they wish to send their National donation each year, according to need.

* Our third **Cornerstone Award** was given to a very surprised Mary Coiteux at our Annual meeting.

* We were able to fund **two \$600 DCC Scholarships** for graduating students: Oluwaseum Badjo who will be attending SUNY Albany to study psychology and Sahomi Cuba, who will be attending SUNY Binghamton. The Trudy Hankinson Briggs AAUW Scholarship for a continuing DCC student was also awarded to Jacey Collins. 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. Jocelynn Banfield, Development VP, and I attended the DCC Awards Convocation to meet the students and participate in the award presentations.

* Members Kay Saderholm and Claudette Hennessey were our volunteer judges to the Dutchess Community College 2018 Science Fair and awarded a \$50 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble to the two winners on our behalf

Programs:

* Our new Program Co-VPs, Monique Jones and Sandy Lash, did an exceptional job planning an outstanding and diverse year of monthly programs including:

- October: **Bettering Our Community: Using Resources Wisely**. Presenters were the Resource Recovery Agency and a Vassar student. We distributed a document researched by member Barbara Van Itallie on "How To Get Rid of Stuff" which is now posted our website;

- November: **Being Muslim in America** by author Sabeeha Rehman;

- December: **"Five Cent Cookies": A Journey to Senegal**, presented by Amy Thrasher for the IBM Service Corporation (our members again brought donations for the women residents at the Grace Smith House);

- January: **Protecting Yourself and Your Family from the Perils of Online Activity**, presented by Investigator Thomas Roidi, NYS Police (our members donated fabrics for the Days for Girls Project);

- February: **The Many Faces of Trafficking and What We Can Do**, presented by a Vassar sophomore (our members donated personal hygiene items for the Poughkeepsie Closet);

- March: (due to weather the program was rescheduled to early April) **Lean In? Opt Out? What's a Women to Do?**, a panel, held at Vassar College which is one of our College/University Members, and moderated by one of our members, Wendy Maragh Taylor, Vassar College Director of Campus Life, on the challenges that women face trying to balance work responsibilities, community engagement, and family/personal relationships;

- May: "History at Play" presentation on **World War Women: The Unsung Heroines of WWII**.

* We provided refreshments at program meetings and restructured the hospitality process by introducing a new sign-up volunteer process for bringing refreshments, led

by Barbara Van Itallie. The Program VPs set up coffee/teas utilizing the hospitality supplies now housed in our rented cabinet to ease facilitation.

* I attended the program planning meetings both last year and this year

* PR for all programs was coordinated through Cathy Kinn and Margaret Njhuis with our VPs preparing all materials for the Branch and marketing as needed

Events:

* In all cases, I attended some committee planning meetings, worked on programs and remarks, wrote letters as needed, and wrote thank you notes for the following successful events:

* **The Women of the Year Luncheon** honoring Mariel Fiori, Editor of LaVoz Magazine, held at The Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck in October and chaired by Gail Sisti and Mary Lou Davis. New chairs were secured for 2018, Gail Sisti and Margie Quart;

* **The Writer's Tea and Benefit Auction** (name changed this year) in April, our only fundraiser, was chaired by Linda Roberts and Lula Allen for the ninth year and raised almost \$15,000 to support our initiatives and scholarships...a record!;

* The **Annual Meeting and Dinner** held at the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie and chaired by Judy Linville. This was a unique site at a not-for-profit foster care home. The servers were the students who are working through a new work/study program created by the home for culinary arts and they were a hit! Speakers included staff on "The Importance of Community Connections" and our 2018 NCCWSL winner, Katherine Murray, who brought AAUW's mission of changing the culture for women and girls clearly home! We also invited Katherine's mom as our guest and, in this case, included the staff in my thank you notes.

Community Service Initiatives:

* Our Community Service Initiatives, led by Board Liaison Barbara Hugo, did yeoman's work. I participated in several meetings such as the LTR holiday wrapping session, attending the Girl's Conference and bringing opening remarks as well as hosting a Women' Leaders table, volunteered for a STEM workshop, and lending support as needed:

* **The Live Your Dream Girls' Conference** held its 9th Conference with great success, including 6th grade girls in addition to seventh grade. This Conference was in collaboration with Dutchess Community College, another College/University AAUW member and chaired by Diana Babington and Lori Scolaro. It again included a Parent Thread and a tour of the College plus "Big Sisters" and a "Brother" 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 2018 Conference again which will be expanded to now also include 8th graders;

* The Partnership for Healthcare Awareness, chaired by Lula Allen and Kay Bishop, became the **Mothers Project** and continues to provide new mothers in the Poughkeepsie area with parenting and health education, social support, and access to local services at this important and vulnerable time in their lives;

* **Leading to Reading** chaired by Betty Harrell continues to support literacy efforts in the area with a variety of programs. Their Community Readers program expanded to include additional pre-schools this year and they did a joint outreach with the Friends of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, Laundromat Libraries, which placed crates of books in locations where children spend time waiting in the community. The project received an **Excellence in Education Award** from CTAUN (Committee on Teaching About the United Nations). The award was presented at

their annual conference at the UN Building in New York City with 15 members attending to applaud Betty. This project engages almost half of our membership!;

- * **Court Watch**, our award-winning program chaired by Ann Pinna, has enabled similar projects to begin across the country and are currently helping Westchester Branch begun their own Initiative;

- * **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 became Committees of the Board to assure a focus on these important areas. International Relations started their "Days for Girls" project, which has grown so much it will become an Initiative meeting twice per month. It also works collaboratively with the American Sewing Guild-Hudson Valley NY Chapter;

- * **STEM** workshops were part of our agreement with the Marist Liberty Partnership (Kris Puzza) and tutoring is part of the Math Buddies project (Barbara Van Itallie).

- * A new Initiative, **Careers and Leadership**, was started which I will co-chair this coming year. It seeks to collaborate with our College/University members more robustly and to bring the plethora of National research resources to college and other students and to the community.

- * Several members attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women in NYC. International Women's Day events were snowed out but we hope to join with other community organizations on celebrating this event in 2019.

- * We also continue to have short presentations at Program Meetings by these Initiative Chairs

Interest Groups:

- * Barbara Lemberger was the Board Interest Group Liaison and facilitated communication with all 23 Group Coordinators.

- * A new group was formed (Canasta), a second Ediss II Group is hoping to get off the ground, and several coordinators retired for at least a while but found new leadership quickly.

- * All our groups 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!

Finances:

- * Treasurer Diane Jablonski, besides providing monthly reports: continued to work on introducing membership and event payments through PayPal online; prepared our budget; submitted tax paperwork; installed QuickBooks, our new accounting tool, and developed revised reports for the Board accordingly in an effort to further clarify spending and to assure ease of use for a new treasurer; and, facilitated the use of two new SQUARE charges for our events

- * We clarified the need for legal wording when acknowledging a donation and put the verbiage in the Working Rules

- * I participated, along with Diane, the event chairs, and the Development VP, on the annual funding committee allotment of Tea profits for our initiatives, scholarships, donations

- * We continue to be in a fine financial position

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.

Respectfully,

Maria DeWald

Suggestions re items to continue:

- * Purchase banner/table cover to be used at events
- * Design tabling card/perhaps book mark size. Ask Barbara Hugo and Cyd Averill.
- * Continue to enhance publicity and spread the word about Community service initiative and scholarship work.
- * Continue to encourage leaders to recruit and engage new members in projects and committees
- * Continue our focus on 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 and look for opportunities to share National research with the community at large
- * Continue to examine the Bylaws, Working Rules, Organization Chart, Website, and Face Book design. Consider an updated face Book site, an Instagram Account and perhaps a Twitter account
- * Complete Guidelines such as Community Collaborations
- * Determine which National fund(s) will receive our annual donation by January 2018
- * Continue to develop the Alerts process
- * Consider raising the DCC Scholarship amounts