**AAUW-MN Public Policy**

**Branch Update**

**November 1, 2019**

Greetings AAUW-MN Public Policy branch chairs/contacts. Hang onto your hats, as this update has a lot of information to absorb. Public Policy is a keystone to AAUW. Our advocacy to issues that impact women and girls is our goal.

In this update, I will share the work that is happening at our branches, the tasks which are on the horizon for AAUW-MN Public Policy and an activity report of tasks completed as your Vice president of Public Policy.

**Branch Highlights:**

The **Duluth branch** will hold its annual fundraising event – *Created Here: Meet the Artists*. This annual event uses the theme of ‘women creating’ and each year it celebrates local female artists and those who contribute to arts and culture in the Twin Ports. Presenters this year are: Karen McTavish – quilter, author, teacher and owner of McTavish Quilting Studio; Linda Legarde Grover – author, columnist, and UMD professor of American Indian Studies; Mary Fox – Artistic Director with renegade Theater Company, and Linda Turpening – pianist. The event will be held Thursday, November 7, 2019, Northland Country Club, 3901 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN, 5:30pm-8:30pm. Proceeds, from registration and silent auction, support AAUW Funds and allows the Duluth Branch to provide local scholarships. In addition to this fundraiser, the branch presented a resolution at the AAUW-MN State Convention asking the membership to adopt a resolution stating the ‘State Board of AAUW Minnesota will encourage its branches to stay informed on the progression of DACA legislation and the impact it has on education in Minnesota’. The AAUW-MN Public Policy Committee will track the progress to DACA initiatives, issues and disseminate the requested information and action.

The **Ely branch** continues its success on two major public policy issues fronts – Pay Equity & ERAMN.

First, as a MN AAUW Grant Project, the Ely branch set its eye on pay equity. The purpose of their pay equity project is to educate students, citizens and businesses on the importance of equal pay for equal work for the economic viability of the community. Additionally, they asked businesses to sign an affirmation of support for equal pay for their employees. They canvassed businesses who had not signed our Affirmation of Equal Pay and increased the number who had signed from 50 to 117. As of August, 88.3% of all businesses have signed the affirmation. On two different occasions they printed a thank you in the local newspapers to list those businesses who have signed the Equal Pay Affirmation. Within the two year project period their goal is to affirm and celebrate Ely as the first 100% equal pay community in the state. The Pay Equity Committee will continue efforts throughout the year including press releases, advertising to thank businesses that have signed the affirmation, and one-on-one meetings with businesses that have not signed the affirmation. The ‘unhappy hour’, for the community, hosted at a local wine bar will occur again and continue to provide information about pay equity issues.

Second, the Ely branch added an Equal Rights focus to its activities and connected with ERA MN for education and lobbying efforts. The branch invited ERA MN to present information at three of their local events: a presentation to Rotary Club, to Tuesday Group, and at an ‘Unhappy Hour’ social event. The branch divided its campaign among presentations at Vermilion Community College, Ely High school and community clubs/organizations. College students were shown a one half hour documentary on equal rights. A discussion ensued around equal rights issues. Students received additional hand out materials as well as a cookie with a bite out for male students and a full cookie for female students. Students were very engaged in discussion on the issue and indicated they learned something new that helped them understand the issue better. For high school students the branch also utilized the equal rights film and facilitated discussion around that film. Students received additional hand out materials as well as a cookie with a bite out for male students and a full cookie for female students. The branch found high school students were not as engaged as the college students and plan to make the high school presentation more interactive. ERA presentations were made to the Rotary Club and to Tuesday Group (a weekly lunch gathering for community members). The Ely branch plans to expand ERA activities, in support of an equal rights amendment to the Minnesota constitution. One such expanded activity is planned for 2020. The Ely branch will co-sponsor with the Brunfelt-Sainio Memorial Foundation a two-day conference themed: “Women’s Lives Transformed – the 19th Amendment”, June 26 and 27, 2020, Vermilion Community College, Ely, Minnesota. Speakers will be: Dr. Sara Evans, Author and Historian, Dr. Annette Atkins, Author and Historian, Linda Wharton, JD, Political Scientist (concentration in gender discrimination and the law).

In addition to their local activities, the branch presented a resolution at the AAUW-MN State Convention asking the membership to adopt ERA advocacy as part of their public policy activities this year. That resolution passed unanimously. The branch is completing an action plan to assist AAUW-MN with its responsibilities.

The Ely branch reported the total numbers of persons attending an event or participating in one of the public presentations. Here is the impact: (an increase of 40 from the previous year)

* VCC classes – 30
* VCC table – 50
* EMPOWER: 20
* Tuesday Group - 50
* Unhappy hour - 75
* Rotary - 25

Total – 290

**CONGRATULATIONS to the Duluth and Ely branches**. Thank you for your decisions to select these public policy issues and advocate for women and girls in this manner. Your branch member commitment to public policy is commendable.

I encourage branches to contact me with your Public Policy initiatives and activities. We can learn from each other and continue ‘moving forward’ for AAUW.

**Tasks on the Horizon for AAUW-MN Public Policy:**

GOAL: To plan and complete AAUW Legislative Day, 2020. A tentative timetable for an AAUW-MN Legislative Day is set and **t**he following items reviewed:

* Share SPPC training materials.
* Outlined Legislative Day Planning & next steps: survey branch chairs to gauge – event date, branch public policy priorities/activities, which may result in 4 major themes in order to create ‘teams’ for legislative action
* Create a Legislative Day 2020 team/committee
* Establish a 2020 AAUW-MN Public Policy Committee; recommend to AAUW-MN president potential committee members – Mary Haltvick, Hillary Beste, Caroline Owens, a branch member from south of Metro, Jan Carey (chair) (AAUW-MN president appoints committee members)
* Request an entire issue of the PINE be devoted to Public Policy, which would include the Legislative Day and numerous training documents, links, national reports, etc.
* Request the AAUW-MN administrative assistant complete appointments with MN Legislators, as needed, for Legislative Day. This could be as few as 8 appointments depending on how many branches attend and participate.
* Request the AAUW-MN administrative assistant reserve a conference room at the State Capitol for Legislative Day. (to be determined)
* Recommend an 2019/20 AAUW-MN Public Policy Priority issue: “Climate Change in MN – Initiatives, Education & Action”

**Activity Report of Goals and Tasks by Vice President Public Policy to date:**

1. To engage members and develop outreach strategies to AAUW National & State Public Policy and Issues.
   1. Update the Branch Public Policy chair email directory for implementation of information sharing. Completed
   2. Establish an AAUW-MN Public Policy priority issue In process
2. To create “AAUW Public Policy Video Channel” & “AAUW Public Policy Podcasts”
   1. Video Channel project is on hold
   2. Developed, wrote script for first Public Policy Podcast Completed
3. To strengthen networking with branches
   1. Attend special branch events or fundraisers throughout the State; attend others as invited/notified (Ely, Hibbing, Virginia)
   2. Met with Mary Haltvick, Mpls PP chair September 27,2019 Completed
4. To attend SPPC webinars and communicate with National officers
   1. Attend all future webinars/training sessions Ongoing
5. To develop & coordinate Information outreach and advocacy activities
   1. Post Public Policy article for PINE Submitted
   2. Post Public Policy updates for state website Submitted
   3. Share Legislative Day Video montage with Branch public policy chairs Completed

Future Plans:

1. To plan and complete AAUW Legislative Day, 2020.
2. To develop AAUW-MN State Public Policy webinars
3. To attend scheduled 2019/2020 SPPC webinar training sessions

**Watch for these . . .**

Future Public Policy Updates will include;

* PowerPoint presentations by AAUW National Public Policy with guidance on ‘how to lobby,
* learning to use the MN Legislature’s website, tracking bills, watching hearings,
* learning how to effectively communicate with legislators,
* how to set up an appointment with a legislator.
* how to ‘ask’
* how to interpret StateNET bill tracker
* links to Public Policy videos and web resources.

**Check your email for additional Public Policy Updates.**

**Together – Moving Forward for AAUW**

Jan Carey,

AAUW-MN VP Public Policy