



## **MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-PRESIDENTS ANDREA AND LINDA**

We all know spring is taking its time getting here. Sigh. But it's only a matter of time before the daffodils and tulips will be blooming, right? Delayed spring or not, it's time for our End-of-the Year Banquet including our silent auction and bucket raffle! Please join us on Monday, May 8 (remember, it's Monday, not Tuesday, this month) at 5:30 pm at the GEL. We'll have a short business meeting, dinner, and plenty of time to visit with other members, decide which awesome silent auction items you want to bid on, or which tantalizing items you want to purchase with your raffle tickets. It's always a fun event and raises important funds for our scholarships, Public Policy initiatives, and STEM activities.

On the scholarship front, our scholarship committee just selected Morgan Hirsch from Minnesota North College as the recipient for the AAUW Ely Branch Scholarship of \$1,000. Congratulations to Morgan!

And on the STEM front, we just held our STEM Workshop on April 22. Twenty-five girls from grades 5-8 participated, and from the rave reviews in the surveys completed by the girls, the workshop was a great success. Read more about the STEM Workshop and the MN North Scholarship later in this newsletter.

We want to give a BIG thank you to outgoing board members – Co Secretaries, Jeanne Tomlinson and Barb Soderberg, and one of our VPs of Program, Sally Koski. Thank you for your innumerable contributions during your term. And we want to give a warm welcome to new board members, Di White and Denise Case as Co-Secretaries, and Jodi Chaffin as VP of Program, who were voted in at our Annual Meeting last month. The willingness of members to serve whenever called upon and the expertise of our board members has made our job so much easier!

We'd like to welcome Carolyn Dehnbestel, our newest member who joined in April. We now have 70 branch members, an increase of 63 percent compared to 24 months ago! A heartfelt thank you to all of our members. Without you, we couldn't carry out our mission of advancing equity for women and girls.

Don't forget to vote in the AAUW National Election if you have not already voted. You should have received an email on April 5 from AAUW National with the link to the voting site along with your election ID number and password. Voting closes on May 15 at 5 pm.

Hope to see you on May 8 for our End-of-the-Year Banquet!

Andrea and Linda

### **Member updates:**

Welcome new member and a couple of updates! The branch is happy to welcome our newest member, Carolyn Dehnbestel. Carolyn is a very active Ely community member and joined us for the first time at the April branch meeting. Carolyn's information is in the newly updated directory that you received this week and you can read more about her in her bio featured in this newsletter edition!

Member Nancy Barnes' address is listed in the directory as being in Ely and it should be Aurora – thanks for letting us know, Nancy.

And new member Suzie O'Gorman's name is spelled with a "z" (as shown here) and not an "s."

### **Correction to the April newsletter:**

In the April newsletter co-president's report, I mistakenly characterized Linda Bergum's presentation in the following terms: "Dr. Linda Bergum's Tuesday Group presentation on 'Treaty Rights and Indian Healthcare.'" I should have stated it as it was correctly described in the Tuesday Group notification as "Treaty Rights and Indigenous Healthcare," using the term that is generally not considered derogatory. I apologize for the error.

Linda

Andrea and Linda

## **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

**BRANCH MEETINGS** for 2023 are as follows:

## **May 8th - End of the Year Meeting**

- Banquet, Silent Auction

If you need a ride to a meeting or event, please be sure to contact Linda Sutton or Linda Bergum!

**BOARD MEETINGS** are held the fourth Monday of the month.

## **SCHOLARSHIP WINNER MORGAN HIRSCH!**

Congratulations to Morgan Hirsch, our MN North-Vermilion Campus 2023 scholarship recipient!

Morgan graduated from Mesabi East High School in June 2017 and started in the vet tech program at MN North in 2021. Immediately after high school, she attended Northland College (where she also played hockey) until she decided to take a two-year break to focus on working/making money and taking the time to decide exactly what she wanted to go to school for.

At MN North, Megan was a participant on the 2021 volleyball team where they went to regionals for the first time in almost 20 years. She is an active member in the veterinary technicians SCNAVTA group that sponsors different fundraisers and functions within the community.

Morgan said she chose to go into the field of veterinary medicine because she thinks it will be very rewarding. She's excited to graduate in December of 2023 and jump into the career field. She plans to take the VTNE after graduation to be a certified veterinary technician and hopes to get a job and stay in Minnesota at least for the next few years.

Following is the personal statement that Morgan provided on her application:

I, Morgan Hirsch am a very hard working and determined individual. I commute 3 hours in total to school everyday (from Makinen, MN) and have an almost perfect attendance. I am also considered a non traditional student because I did leave college and it took a lot to come back after being 24 years of age. Being a non traditional student and living off campus, I have many other responsibilities that consume my life but I still maintain good grades and got a 3.86 gpa last semester in a very hard and fast pace class load. I want nothing more than to graduate from Mn North with high grades and many career aspirations for my future. But going to school takes more and more of a financial toll every semester and scholarships would be more than a big help to me and my goals.

After Morgan received notice that she was the recipient of our award, she sent the following thank you note to the MN North - Vermilion Foundation and AAUW, Ely Branch:

Thank you for my scholarship I was awarded. As an unconventional female student it is so nice to get such nice support from our community foundations. I can't wait for my last year at Minnesota North-Vermilion and entering the world they've prepared me for and becoming a veterinary technician. Every penny counts towards the financial responsibility of gaining an education and surviving life itself so again I thank you for choosing me for this scholarship.



## 2023 STEM WORKSHOPS - APRIL 22

AAUW-Ely 2023 STEM Workshops

## By Jeanne Tomlinson, STEM Committee Chair

This year, we had twenty-five girls fairly evenly distributed through all four grades (5th through 8th) attending our “almost-annual” STEM Workshops on April 22 at the MN North College-Vermilion Campus (VCC). We provided similar opening activities as last year which had been developed by Frederica Musgrave. Unfortunately, Frederica not only contracted COVID but then broke her ankle and was unable to come – and we didn’t have any VCC students to engage the girls in the more challenging math, solar system and world geography kits – so most of the girls chose to keep busy with a coloring activity and/or doing Sudoku puzzles. But at least they seemed to enjoy doing those and it kept them busy.

Our three workshops this year were:

- Plop, Bubble, Glow: Antacid Lava Lamps
- What is in a Vernal Pond?
- Mars Rovers

All three workshops were well done, and the girls clearly had a fun and engaging time.

In Plop, Bubble, Glow: Antacid Lava Lamps, Abby Sirek, pharmacist from Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital, had the girls adding vegetable oil, water and food coloring to recycled water bottles and then adding Alka-Seltzer tablets as she talked them through liquid density properties and antacids behavior.

In What is in a Vernal Pond? STARBASE MN-Duluth instructor Katie Lassi had the girls learning about what a vernal pond is and what sort of life can be found in it. Each girl had a digital microscope attached to a laptop which made it very easy to examine some vernal pond water samples and discover things for themselves. They also had a short excursion outside to collect small items that they could then bring back and examine more closely.

In Mars Rovers, Jessica Gudmundson, another instructor from STARBASE MN Duluth, introduced the girls to the basics of how a Mars rover works and then taught them the basic concepts for programming one. Then they worked together in small groups to code Lego SPIKE Prime robots to pick up and move rocks from one spot to another, simulating what might be required in a future Mars mission to clear out a space for building a Mars base.

For our closing, we invited the adults as they arrived to join their girls. The girls completed their Evaluation forms and each received a small maze puzzle cube when they turned them in. Julie Hignell from Ely Community Resource provided a nice talk about the importance of going to college and the benefits of a STEM career as well as STEM activity possibilities in our area. We closed with a drawing for a Solar Robot Kit from the collected name tags. The winner was 7th grader Brianna Stauffenecker.

All agreed it was a successful and fun day. Many thanks to all the AAUW-Ely members who helped make this happen by serving on the committee, promoting the event, donating empty water bottles,

helping with the day-before preparations and then helping on the day with set-up, registration, opening activities, group guides, photographer, clean-up etc.



# PUBLIC POLICY

## AAUW Ely, Public Policy Committee

by Mary Setterholm

### Public Policy Update

Through our 'Awareness...Then Change' series, we have begun exploration of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, and through PAVSA, learned of culturally appropriate healing and support services. Continuing in this series, we turn our awareness to understanding sex trafficking and exploitation, from the root causes to community wide interventions to prevent, support victims, and advocate for policy changes.

Does Sex Trafficking exist in Minnesota? Yes. In fact, the most recent Minnesota student survey identified over 5000 students who have experienced sexual exploitation. The rates of trafficking and exploitation are higher in rural areas where there are less support services and more poverty. Minnesota Native population experiences the highest rate of sexual exploitation of all population segments.

Our goals with this series are:

- Increase awareness and education about sexual violence, its impact on individuals and communities, and how to prevent it.
- Promote support and resources for survivors of sexual violence, including access to medical care, mental health services, and advocacy.
- Engage in policy advocacy to promote systemic change that addresses the root causes of sexual violence.
- Foster a culture of respect and consent that promotes healthy relationships and respect for boundaries. This is something that is both an individual practice and can be modeled in schools.

By taking a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, support for survivors, policy advocacy, and fostering a culture of respect and consent, communities can address sexual violence from a public health perspective and promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Our next Public Policy meeting is 4:30 pm on Tuesday, May 2 at the Boathouse. Join us if you are interested in participating in the design and execution of this next phase of 'Awareness...Then Change.'

Jessica Anderson  
Pam Ransom  
Mary Setterholm  
Public Policy Chairs

## FUNDRAISING



Bring your bank to the May 8 banquet! We'll empty them so you can start fresh for the summer. Or, just bring your loose change in a baggie if you don't want to cart your bank back and forth.

Watch for announcements of the July Garden Party! This is the big one in terms of our fundraising for the year so we hope to see all of you there and bring your friends whether they're eligible for membership or not.

Watch for announcements of an August pop up fundraiser at Linda Bergum's cabin out in the Stony Creek area! Our members from that neck of the woods come to us reliably so it's time for us to go to them. Linda will host a Mexican dinner with a cooking demonstration and we'll pass the envelope for donations toward our AAUW scholarships and projects such as the STEM workshop, equal pay advocacy, and Awareness---Then Change.

If you still have items to donate to one of our silent auctions, let Kay know now. And, if you have a great idea for a pop-up event such as a movie or happy hour or class of some kind, we'd love to hear about it.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT: Are Trans Rights Womens' Rights?

By Anna Heil

Legislation impacting transgender people, those whose gender identity or expression does not match the gender they were assigned at birth, has been all over state and federal governments in the last few months. Here in Minnesota the House approved a bill known as the "Trans Refuge Bill" at the end of March by a 68-62 vote—Democrats say the legislation will protect trans patients and providers of gender-affirming care from legal action in other states where such care is banned or restricted.



Representative Leigh Finke (DFL), the author of the bill and the first openly transgender person elected to the Minnesota Legislature, says the bill sends “a strong message to the trans community that they are loved, supported, and protected here in our state.”

Despite this recent win for transgender citizens in Minnesota, pushback against transgender rights is at an all time high; in 2023 anti-trans bills continue to be introduced across the country, blocking trans people from receiving basic healthcare, education, legal recognition, and the right to publicly exist. According to the Trans Legislation Tracker, this year 528 bills have been introduced across 49 states targeting transgender individuals. 50 have passed, 96 failed, and 382 remain active. 23 national anti-trans bills are currently seeking to impact access to healthcare, student athletics, the military, incarceration, and education at the federal level.

It's obvious how this negatively impacts transgender men, women, and nonbinary folks. This targeted wave of legislation is born out of ignorance and fear, and studies plainly show that transgender individuals face significantly higher rates of harassment and violence—they are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault according to a 2017-2018 study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. This study does not even take into account those with intersecting oppressed identities, like black impoverished transgender women, who are some of the most at-risk individuals in our society today. The issues (both social and legal) facing transgender people are too broad and deep to cover meaningfully here, but it is important to state that the defense of transgender rights is important in and of itself. Human rights must be defended, even when those rights infringe upon identities we might not share. Interestingly though, the current political and legal climate that harms transgender and gender nonconforming folks does directly threaten those of us who identify as women, and who were also born as women.

What I'd like the (primarily, if not entirely) cisgender women of Ely's AAUW branch to consider is this: in what ways might the current fascination with strictly defined gender binaries harm us? How does a formal definition of who can be considered a woman limit us... and who are we leaving out? We know that labeling “women” as those who can bear children leaves out cisgender women who are infertile. We know that labeling “women” as those who carry the XX chromosome leaves out cisgender and intersex women with genetic differences in their sex chromosomes. We know that labeling “women” as those with a certain amount of hormones leaves out cisgender women with naturally occurring high testosterone or low estrogen. We know labeling “women” as those who are nurturing or gentle leaves out cisgender women who are born or raised with competitive or independent spirits. We know that labeling “women” as those who like to wear dresses and the color pink leaves out cisgender women who like to wear pants and the color blue. Defining womanhood has always been a fruitless and confining affront to the limitless capacity of what makes a woman a woman, and it will always, always, always leave out cisgender women deemed “just not feminine enough.” As the ACLU writes, “limiting freedom for trans people worsens conditions for all women by re-entrenching the very gender stereotypes that have underpinned centuries of women's oppression.” Transgender rights are women's rights, and as we all know, women's rights are human rights.

## MEMBER UPDATES

### Meet Carolyn Dehnbostel!

Carolyn received her master's degree in Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy at Adler Graduate School in Richfield, MN in 1998. She co-founded the MN Couple Therapy Center in 2013 which now has 3 locations and 38 providers. Carolyn is a Certified Emotionally Focused Therapist and Supervisor. She enjoys doing couple and individual therapy, supervising interns and provisional therapists, and doing billing management for the organization - all via telehealth from her home that she shares with her husband, Keith, and two maltese, Casey and Gigi, on White Iron Lake in Morse Township. Carolyn has four children and two grandchildren in the Twin Cities, as well as three adult stepchildren.

Carolyn, her husband, and her mother, Betty, moved to Morse Township in 2019. Carolyn and Betty had enjoyed singing together in Giving Voice Chorus at MacPhail in Minneapolis and online for four years. Now they sing in church and as they walk the halls at Carefree, where Betty now resides in memory care.

Carolyn volunteers for Save the Boundary Waters, is an elder and in the choir of First Presbyterian Church of Ely, and facilitates a racial justice group monthly. She does yoga often and in the summer she enjoys playing pickleball. For over thirty years Carolyn was a competitive recreational volleyball player. She has been to State multiple times with her womens and co-rec teams, winning the state tournament one time. A highlight of her life was achieving the senior music award in her class of 864 at Evanston Township High School in 1986. She won the opportunity to perform La Habanera from Bizet's opera, Carmen, with her high school orchestra. Carolyn looks forward to being a part of AAUW.



### **Meet Linda Sutton, co-president!**

I was born in Richfield, Minnesota just post World War II, when the brand new suburb consisted of dirt roads and farmland. Our neighborhood quickly grew with returning soldiers building two-bedroom, one-bathroom houses using their veteran's benefits. Soon, the neighborhood was filled with children and stay-at-home moms, and we formed a strong group of playmates, outside all day in every season. Idyllic for a little white girl in the 1950s.

After high school, I attended the University of Minnesota but married before graduation, lived in St. Paul and had two kids, a boy and a girl. I worked for several years as a Program Director for the YMCA, where I was fortunate enough to have childcare included in the package.

Eventually I divorced and began to work for Control Data Corporation (didn't everyone in the Twin Cities at one time?). During the massive downsizing of the business in the 1980s and 1990s, I met my current partner, Mike, and when he took a job in Albuquerque, New Mexico, my kids grown, I moved with him. I enrolled at the University of New Mexico and completed a degree in American Studies (such a useful discipline)! We lived in New Mexico for six years in the 1990s, during which time I worked as an Assistant Director of a non-profit housing program that housed women with children who were leaving their abusers.

In 1998 we moved back to Minnesota as both our mothers were experiencing some health problems and we wanted to be there in support. We also just missed Minnesota. It was time.

I worked for several years in a program that offered job support for adults with developmental disabilities and then was offered a job with Medica Health Plans, managing customer service in the areas of Medicare and Medicaid. I absolutely loved my job and coworkers, and might have continued working longer, but the opportunity presented itself to sell our home and move to Ely – a goal we had in place ever since spending time here, specifically at Camp Van Vac every fall for many years. The caveat was that the buyers for our house in St. Michael needed to move in three weeks. If we could manage to buy a home in Ely, downsize our belongings, and hire a moving company in that amount of time, we could realize our goal. And we did it! We found a home in the woods on Garden Lake Road that has the enhancement of having AAUW members Mary Setterholm, Ellen Fisher, Eva Stevens, Deb Busch, Kristine Mosher, Teresa Sagen and Heide Buettner as neighbors!

My expectation living here in the woods was that I would become a world-class cook, nap, read biographies of every single American president and have an immaculate, tastefully decorated home. My life would be serene and slow-paced. Instead, I found that Ely offers more opportunities than I could have imagined for an extrovert (I don't know why I thought I could become a serene introvert). I joined a book club, a writing group, EMPOWER, AAUW, yoga, volunteered at the Food Shelf and joined the Ely Community Resource board. I also tutor at the elementary school, discuss politics every Friday morning with a vociferous group of friends who don't always agree, attend Tuesday Group, discuss short stories with friends and write postcards to legislators once a month. I also adopted a dog that requires twice a day walks. And the cooking, cleaning and reading about the presidents are all out of sight and out of mind. And I love it. (I did at least get through the presidents through Monroe.)

All of the things I've found to do in Ely speak to my passions – equality, social justice, positive experiences for kids, as well as books and support for the arts, writing, and being social. Being able to combine my passions with being with the best group of women I know is why I love our AAUW Ely branch!

Maybe in time, I'll get to the cooking, decorating and presidents.



## MEMBERSHIP

We have quite a few new members since we held our last “get to know you” gathering so it’s time to do it again. Join us Tuesday, May 23, from 5pm to 6:30 at the Boathouse Brew Pub. We’ll have some light hors de oeuvres. Beverages on your own. We’ll also welcome back those snowbirds who are here now and start our summer season out right.

If you are talking to someone who wants to join AAUW and you don’t have a membership form, tell them to Google – AAUW Ely MN, then click on the site.

On our webpage, they can click on the membership form. They can print it out and mail it in with a check.

Kay can be reached at 218-235-6102 or [khv771@gmail.com](mailto:khv771@gmail.com).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Ely Branch of AAUW respectfully acknowledges that we are on the homelands of the Lake Superior Bands of Ojibwe people and within the ceded lands of the Treaty of 1854, where they retained rights to hunt, fish, and gather.

We also recognize other Indigenous peoples who lived here before the Ojibwe people. These include Dakota, Cree, and other tribes that have occupied and utilized this land.

We recognize the perseverance and survival of our Indigenous neighbors who continue to live throughout this region. We're deeply grateful for the multitude of ways that the Anishinaabeg have and continue to contribute to collective well-being through sharing of knowledge and time.