

## Northwoods News - May 2024



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

Greetings AAUW Ely Branch Members,

As this is our last newsletter for our fiscal year, we decided to look back at what we've done this past year. We're thrilled that our branch has been able to accomplish so much!

Because of the generosity of our members and the fundraising efforts of Kay Vandervort along with branch member contributions, we are able to grant almost \$9,000 in scholarships to support women and girls' education:

- MN North College-Ely Campus
- National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL)
- Northwoods Young Writers Camp
- STARBASE STEM Youth Camp

Our Public Policy Committee has been busy this year with several events. The Dolly Parton Pub Crawl last fall (developed by three of our younger branch members Carly Wogen, Lucy Soderstrom, and Anna Heil) was so much fun! And with a fabulous turnout of the Ely community, it was a great way to educate the public on the pay inequities between women and men using a fact-filled "passport" for each participant.

Another Public Policy initiative this year was to provide the community with information on human trafficking. We hosted a powerful program on sexual assault and trafficking last September provided by the Executive Director of Sexual Assault Program for North St. Louis County. At a Tuesday Group last October, we hosted a compelling presentation, Human Trafficking and Exploitation in Minnesota, by a federal contractor with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office-Trafficking in Persons and the

Executive Director of the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Violence (PAVSA). This June, we will be sponsoring a book signing event for a young woman who was a victim of sex trafficking. She is a courageous woman who is willing to tell her story and now lives in the area.

Last August, our branch sponsored a one-woman performance of the life of Jeanette Rankin who, in 1916, was the first woman elected to Congress and was a champion of women's rights and civil rights throughout her life.

In February, Public Policy hosted a lunch for about 80 kids, mostly of Native American heritage, attending Indigenous Students Day at the Ely Film Festival where the kids watched impactful films about Indigenous culture and experiences.

All these Public Policy events were coordinated by our branch, and funding was in partnership with Ely EMPOWER.

Getting the long-overdue Equal Rights Amendment into the Minnesota State Constitution is still an important priority for our branch. Eight branch members traveled to the Minnesota State Capitol in February for the ERA rally -- and news footage of some of our members was on at least two channels! Numerous emails and calls to state legislators were also sent from our members.

And the semiannual Adopt-a-Highway cleanup for our two-mile stretch of Highway 169 is always enjoyable! The next one is coming up on Friday, May 10, with additional information in this newsletter.

Next fiscal year looks just as active!

Our end-of-year banquet/branch meeting is Tuesday, May 14, at 5:30 pm at the GEL. As in previous years, we'll have a fabulous silent auction and bucket raffle to raise money for scholarships and our programs. There will be plenty of time to visit with other members and decide which tempting silent auction/raffle items you want - baked goods, wine baskets, a gardening basket, etc. We will also pay tribute to our three new AAUW Named Grant Honorees. This is always a fun meeting! Hope to see you there.

Andrea and Linda

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

May 10, 9 am: Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup  
- Meet at the GEL at 9 am for breakfast first

May 14, 5:30 pm, GEL: Branch meeting

- End of the year banquet and 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.

## **AAUW-ELY ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY SPRING CLEANUP**

**By Jeanne Tomlinson**

It's time again to pick up litter on our adopted stretch on our 2-mile stretch of Hwy 169 between the AAUW-Ely Branch Adopt-A-Highway signs (about 8 miles west of Ely).

For our new members - and those who might not remember – we'll meet for breakfast on Friday, May 10, 2024 at the Grand Ely Lodge Evergreen Restaurant at 9 AM. Then we'll grab a buddy, get our vests and maps and head out to our assigned stretch of the road and do our best to pick up as much litter as we can. We've always been done before noon. The more helpers we have, the earlier we get done. Even if you can't help with the litter pickup, please join us for breakfast.

Please let me know via email or phone call/text if you'll be able to help and/or whether you'll be coming to breakfast.

Thanks all!

Jeanne Tomlinson

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## **AAUW ANNUAL MEETING**

On April 26 and 27, eight Ely Branch members traveled to Hastings for the first in-person Minnesota Annual Meeting since 2022. We enjoyed spending time with committed women from around the state, listening to inspirational speakers and learning about the status of legislation and issues that impact the women and girls that our mission supports.

The speakers included Suzann Willhite, ERA MN President Emeritus, who provided a

status report on the Equal Rights Amendment in the state legislature and how members can continue to lobby our legislators. We learned about legal issues affecting people of diverse racial and gender identities and the struggle for reproductive freedom. And we learned so much more in an action-packed weekend.

A late surprise was the addition of Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan to the Saturday agenda. Her personal story and commitment to equality for all was truly moving and impactful to the audience. Along with recorded messages from Senator Amy Klobuchar and Second District Congresswoman Angie Craig, we felt fortunate to live in a state where our issues are supported by other strong women.

We heard from outgoing AAUW MN State President, Jan Carey, and had a chance to visit with Kelsey Waits, the incoming President. We are very fortunate to have these women representing Minnesota to the National AAUW organization. Kelsey even bid on and won our beautiful Ely Silent Auction basket and plans to visit us this summer!

All in all, it was an amazing weekend, reminding us that women can accomplish a great deal when we work together as friends with a mission.

## **PUBLIC POLICY**

### **AAUW Ely, Public Policy Committee**

by Mary Setterholm

While there won't be branch meetings or newsletters this summer, your public policy committee will be working to further the AAUW Mission.

You will see press releases in the newspapers and will notice Human Trafficking posters appearing in the bathrooms of local establishments. During the month of May, Public Policy team members will be approaching area businesses requesting to hang posters (provided by AAUW Ely). Look for them and thank the businesses for participating.

On June 12, in coordination with NLAA and the Folk School, we will be sponsoring Elizabeth Gade, a trafficking survivor and poet. She will be reading from and signing her most recent book of poetry as well as her first book titled "Fawn and Freeze."

On September 23rd, right when we get back together again, Elizabeth will join us at a

combined EMPOWER /AAUW meeting at Hidden Valley to talk about her experiences as a human trafficking survivor and how creative writing has helped her heal.

Also during September, Public Policy and Ely Rotary will be sponsoring candidate forums. You will see press releases and marketing in the papers and around town to help you get the dates on your calendars!

If you joined AAUW Ely because you believe in/are motivated by the mission of AAUW, the Public Policy Committee is the team that puts the mission into action in our community. Consider joining us. Our next full group meeting is Tuesday May 21st at 4p.m. We meet at Grace Lutheran Church. If you'd like to know more, feel free to contact [mary.setterholm@gmail.com](mailto:mary.setterholm@gmail.com)

## AAUW-ELY NAMED GRANT HONOREES

Our branch is thrilled to have three Named Grant Honorees this year! We appreciate the years of dedication that these three women have given to AAUW, and we are so grateful for their leadership and continued support and participation.

**PAT MERFELD** joined AAUW in 1986. Pat served as Branch Co President along with Deb Mackie from 1990 to 1992 and was the VP of Program for five years. Pat has been a frequent volunteer on the Herberger Fundraiser and the STEM workshops and has served as a contact with Ely schools in outreach to students and parents. She has also been a delegate to the AAUW-MN conventions for many years.

**MARGE FORSBERG** joined AAUW in 1997. She served as our Branch President from 2004 to 2008 and also served as the AAUW Funds Vice President. Marge has chaired many Fundraising Committee efforts, including the Herberger Fundraiser and the shoe collection. She has been a delegate to numerous AAUW-MN conventions and is our link between Minnesota North-Vermilion and our branch as the Chair of the College Advisory Board.

**BARB SODERBERG** joined AAUW in 2009. Barb has served as Vice President of Program and as Branch Secretary. She's been a member of the Scholarship Committee for many years and also links our branch with the Minnesota North-Vermilion Advisory Board. Barb is a frequent volunteer on branch projects such as Highway Cleanup, STEM workshops, and Candidate Forums.

Our deepest gratitude goes out to these three members. Thank you!

## AAUW-ELY AND STARBASE

AAUW-Ely was pleased to receive the below letter from STARBASE Director Charity Johnson. They will be including our logo as a sponsor on the back of their camp tshirt. The branch has provided scholarships for three students to attend camp in June.

## FUNDRAISING



By Kay Vandervort

### LOTS OF FUNDRAISING:

If you couldn't bring your piggy bank to the April meeting but need to empty it, bring it to the May banquet, and plan to bring it filled again to the September meeting.

The May banquet will focus on a bucket raffle which is smaller items. For that, we're especially looking for baked items but also just smaller fun stuff such as accessories, cooking, and pampering items with a value between \$10 and \$25. There may be a few silent auction items, but most will be saved for the garden party.

Garden Party: The Garden Party is scheduled for Saturday, July 20 at 11:30 am at Barb Soderberg's house, 1370 Trygg Road.

For those of you who have never attended, it includes:

A salad luncheon

Desserts and wine as well as non-alcoholic beverages

A brief program component (which is usually bragging about what we do and giving people a reason to bid higher so we can continue to do those things)

Bucket raffle

Silent auction

Relaxing conversation in a beautiful garden  
And whatever great ways we can find to raise money for our mission-based scholarships and programming.

We are looking for auction items such as:

Cocktail pontoon rides or other adventures

A make and deliver dinner for 4 or 6

Teaching a craft or skill for a small group of friends

Certificate for a dessert a month for three to six months

Host a themed dinner for 4 or 6

Art

Quilted items

Baked goods

Pampering packages

Massage certificates

Restaurant gift certificates

Artistic accessories

Pottery

Garden items

Cookbooks and kitchen gadgets

Whatever you think might go well

What's really important is that you bring friends to the garden party. This is where we make the most of our money for the year. We need everyone's help. Invitations that you can use to invite friends and family will be available at the May meeting.

Any items for the garden party can be dropped off at Kay's house at 629 E. Boundary Street. at least three weeks before the event---the earlier the better so there's plenty of time to put great packages together. And as always, if you have baskets and containers you no longer need, we can use them for the events.

And we're always looking for Pop Up get together ideas. Let us know what you think would be fun.

We had a lovely Pig Parade at the April meeting!

## **AUCTION BASKET FOR THE STATE MEETING**

For the silent auction at the state meeting we did a "Gifts from the End of the Road basket" that included admissions to the museums, root beer, a snuggly hat knitted by Linda B, a Folk School mug and Gene Hicks coffee, Crapola, and some smaller trinket items. The incoming state president bought it for \$160.

## MEMBER UPDATES

### MEET DI WHITE!

I was born in Lincoln, Nebraska and, except for a few years as a child when my father's job took us to nearby communities, I lived all my life in Lincoln. I found Lincoln politically to be a breath of fresh air compared to the rest of the state.

I did not attend my graduation at the University of Nebraska because it was the same day I married my first husband. While we were on our honeymoon, I was offered a teaching position at Irving Junior High. In my 34 years at Irving, I taught the English curriculum to 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. Remedial reading and advanced reading were also among my assignments. I was teaching creative writing when computers first came to our building in the early '80s. I was the first teacher in the district to employ a simple word-processing application called Bank-Street Writer in a creative writing class. This set me on the path to becoming the primary computer teacher at Irving. I taught Computer Applications, Multi-Media, and also after-school classes for other teachers.

When publication applications became available on the computer, I became the Journalism teacher for both newspaper and yearbook. The last six years of my teaching career were at a specialty school for information technology where I taught video-making, 3-D animation, and music creation. In 2005, I became certified in "Career and Technology Education" by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which gave me certification to teach in this field in all 50 states.

My husband and I raised and showed Afghan Hounds for the first five years of our marriage, but had to give that up when children arrived. We raised two beautiful daughters who have become strong, independent women with charming personalities. During this busy time I completed my Masters in Adult and Continuing Education. I also became aware of Title IX and realized that I could participate in competitive sports. I started with running and soon transitioned to triathlons. Biking is still my favorite of the 3 sports. I rode Tour de Nebraska (a five-day ride) 22 times, and RAGBRAI (a seven-day ride) 10 times.

My husband died from cancer after 36 years of marriage. I met my current husband, Rusty, on a Tour de Nebraska ride and married him in 2008. We've been on 30-plus BWCAW trips together, and this is what prompted us to look for a cabin in the Ely area.

We bought our cabin on White Iron Lake in 2020, believing that we would commute from Lincoln. Seven hundred miles is a long commute for two old people, and we love the people of Ely, so Ely has become our home.



## **MEMBERSHIP**

If you know someone who might like to join us, bring them to the May banquet to check us out with no pressure. Or, schedule a coffee get together for the person and invite another member or two to talk about AAUW.

## **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.