



FALL 2025 THE PINE

FROM THE DESK OF KELSEY WAITS, PRESIDENT

As we begin a new year of AAUW programming, I hope that everyone has a chance to enjoy the beautiful fall weather. Reconnecting to nature and grounding yourself with some of your favorite fall activities can be incredibly healing, especially when the news cycle feels overwhelming. For me, this means making apple sauce, playing board games with my kids, and walking through our prairie.

I am excited to share that the Brainerd Lakes Area Branch has agreed to host the 2026 AAUW MN State Meeting. Our annual meetings are a wonderful opportunity to share ideas, see old friends, and build new connections. For more information, please see the “Save the Date” article later in this newsletter.

Each branch has received the [2026 Helping Our Branches Booklet](#). This has also been posted on the [AAUW MN website](#). Please take time to review our Strategic Plan and the 2026 grants and awards that AAUW MN is offering. Your branch can also consider requesting a speaker through our [Leader on Loan](#) program which provides branches the opportunity to have a board member, a team of state leaders, or teams of past leaders provide branch support and/or branch programming.

I look forward to seeing AAUW Minnesota and your branches continue to flourish during our 2025-2026 AAUW year. I encourage you to continue your involvement with your branch, but also with AAUW Minnesota and National. Consider joining the state board or volunteering for one of the positions listed in the Call for Nominations. By working together, we can accomplish our common goal of advancing equity for women and girls. It is with collaboration with one another and with other organizations that we can adequately address the many challenges facing us and build the communities we desire to see.

Thank you for your continued support of AAUW and your dedication to our mission. Each of us can make a difference when we advocate for women and girls. Although individual actions may seem small, together they build a wave of change. I wish you a wonderful AAUW year and look forward to working together during my second year as AAUW MN President.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2026 AAUW MN STATE MEETING

The 97th AAUW of MINNESOTA STATE MEETING

April 24-25, 2026, Brainerd Lakes Area

Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort

"Growing Together: Rooted in Strength"



The Brainerd Lakes Area AAUW branch is excited to welcome you to next spring's AAUW Minnesota State Meeting at Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort in our beautiful lakes and Northwoods country.

Join us Friday afternoon for some fun activities including a tour of an area art gallery, followed by dinner at Ruby's Restaurant overlooking the lake. In addition to our business meeting on Saturday, several speakers will inspire us in our mission to advocate for women and girls while supporting equity for all.

Look for more information in the months ahead via email and *The Pine* newsletter. We hope to see many of you from around the state April 24-25, 2026.

Arlene Wheaton, President AAUW Brainerd Area Lakes

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

AAUW of Minnesota Needs You!

Get on Board!

Consider joining the AAUW Minnesota State Board - an enjoyable group who gets things accomplished! Share your talents by joining this team effort to implement the AAUW mission.

We are seeking candidates to serve on the 2026-2028 state board of directors for the following positions and for the Nominating Committee for 2027 Elections:

- Vice President for Membership, 2026-2028
- Vice President for AAUW Fund, 2026-2028
- Secretary/Historian, 2026-2028
- Nominating Committee, 2026-2027 for 2027 elections (3 members and 1 alternate)

The members of the Nominating Committee are Mary Schwanke, Owatonna Branch, Barb Wonson Liukkonen, Ely Branch and AAUW MN VP Funds, and Teresa Sagen, Ely Branch and AAUW MN Administrative Assistant and Finance Chair. Please feel free to contact any nominating committee member if you have questions or contact board members who currently hold the position in which you are interested at aauwminn@gmail.com

All you need to apply is a strong belief in the mission of AAUW and a willingness to learn and grow. Rewards for state service include leadership development, camaraderie and teamwork with other leaders. **An applicant may be self-nominated, nominated by your branch or branch board of directors, or any individual.**

Nominations are open until **January 30**. The nominating committee will present a slate of candidates to the membership by email no later than February 25, 2026 (60 days prior to AAUW MN state meeting).

Please give serious consideration to applying for a state board position. These leadership positions provide a great opportunity for you to share your talents with AAUW Minnesota. We need you. Thank you.

Contact the Nominating Committee to express your interest in a position prior to January 30 (earlier if possible) at aauwminn@gmail.com Also, branch members are welcomed to join Mary Schwanke, Barb Wonson Liukkonen, Teresa Sagen in our search for candidates to fill these very important positions on the State Board!

FROM THE DESK OF BARB WONSON LIUKKONEN, AAUW FUNDS VP

There are two new AAUW Funds addressing urgent and timely concerns: Defend Higher Education and Public Policy

The Defend Higher Education Fund (# 4513) will enable AAUW to elevate the critical higher education issues impacting women, mobilize advocates across the country, provide strategic resources to students, staff and faculty on campus, and fuel investments in the infrastructure and technology necessary to move our mission forward. Your support ensures AAUW can effectively fight on behalf of women on campuses across the country and ensure that AAUW remains a trusted and powerful voice for equity.

The Public Policy Fund (#4514) is focused on increasing the impact of our Action Network through growing the number of advocates across the country and providing timely, accurate, and actionable information about our key issues. This fund helps equip branches across the country with timely, customized talking points on core policy issues like Title IX, student debt, and pay equity. Support to this fund enables AAUW to reach and energize new advocates—strengthening our collective impact in the fight for gender equity in education and the workplace.

They join our long-time funds to support equity for women and girls.

The Economic Security Fund (#4449) ensures livelihoods for women through achieving pay equity for women, providing training in salary negotiation, and deepening women's retirement security and quality of life.

The Education and Training Fund (#4450) addresses the barriers and implicit biases that hinder advancement of women by championing equal access to education and ensuring that education at every level is free from sex discrimination.

The Leadership Fund (#4452) supports the effort to close the gender gap in leadership opportunities by bolstering the participation of and increasing the number of girls and women in leadership roles, particularly in education and nonprofit organizations.

The Greatest Needs Fund (#9110) is a vital source of unrestricted support that allows AAUW to respond quickly and effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Contributions to any of those funds qualify to help your Branch recognize Named Gift Honorees at the spring 2026 State Meeting. For every \$750 contributed by a branch or individual members, your Branch will be able to honor a person who has contributed to AAUW.

When you contribute online at the [AAUW Website/Donations](#), you will be able to designate which fund you want your gift credited to, or your Branch Funds chair can identify the fund you choose when sending in the Contribution Report Form (CRF) and check to the National Office.

FROM THE DESK OF ELIZABETH MAHAN, VP PUBLIC POLICY

Women's Equality Day

On August 26, 2025, Americans celebrated Women's Equality Day. This day commemorates the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920. Let us remind ourselves that the Nineteenth Amendment prohibits the states and the federal government from denying the right to vote to citizens of the United States on the basis of sex.

Thanks to the public policy advocacy of AAUW, we can celebrate Women's Equality Day every day. Here are our resources:

The AAUW Action Network advocates in the fight for equal pay, equity in education, paid leave, protections against sexual harassment and more. Join the network at www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/

Access updates and resources for making a difference, such as meeting with elected officials, working with the media, and staying informed about AAUW's advocacy efforts at www.aauw.org/act/

Attend Member Gathers which are posted on the calendar at my.aauw.org

Become informed about AAUW's 2025 Strategic Plan and how you can take action at www.aauw.org/about/strategic-plan-2025/

FROM THE DESK OF KAREN REICHENSBERGER, VP PROGRAM

Since the beginning of the AAUW MN year, the Branch Program Vice Presidents have been contacted through email. This email contained my introduction and a variety of resources to use for program planning for the coming year, such as having a theme, focusing on the AAUW MN strategic plan or public policy, or focusing on the AAUW public policy statement. Links were included.

The idea was mentioned about regular contacts with the various branch program VPs, via emails or zoom meetings. Soon, branch program VPs will receive an email with a link to complete a poll to determine the best way to share information with you – via email or Zoom.

It is also time to start thinking about your branch scholarships, and state grants and awards. That information is included in the handbook “2026 Helping Our Branches” which was emailed to branch Presidents and branch Program VPs. You can also find it online on our website [2026 Helping Our Branches](#) .

FROM THE DESK OF PAT POWERS, VP MEMBERSHIP

Shape the Future offers one half off National Dues when joining at an event hosted by your Branch (See note below). It is a great perk to offer and such a good deal for a possible member who is interested in joining AAUW. There is that little elevator speech on the tip of your tongue when you meet someone you think would be a good member. “I belong to AAUW. Do you know about AAUW? It’s a great organization with an emphasis on the education of women and girls.” Our branch meets monthly. We have speakers who align with our mission. It is the best lecture series in our town. We have a book club and two book sales. We plan activities. We raise funds and sponsor scholarships by doing fun things and inviting the public to attend. We have a national presence and advocate for women’s issues in Washington DC. We support the “Get Out the Vote” initiative and fight for gender equity and inclusion and the economic security of women. We educate women on how to negotiate for the salaries they deserve in our online classes. At National we give away millions of dollars to women who are finishing graduate degrees and have sponsored some very prominent women. We are a community of active, intelligent, and supportive women (and men). We cultivate friendships that last a lifetime.”

Ah yes, visibility, it is the membership brochures at the library or City Hall, the articles for the local paper, the occasional radio interview, the fundraiser where you invite the public, and your presence on social media. We collaborate with like-minded organizations. Visibility takes all shapes and forms. Your Branch must find its own way.

AAUW is a fabulous organization. Getting new members and having growth in your Branch is a continuous process. The trend for organizations is generally loss of membership in recent years. Women are busy. Women who join want to contribute to a mission they believe in. We must demonstrate where our mission leads. We also must have some fun. In all the planned activities, make sure some of them are fun.

Note from National on Shape the Future and submitting membership dues: Branches can still use the [Shape the Future Campaign](#) discount of 50% off national dues for new members (those entirely new to AAUW or rejoining after two or more years)! Use the coupon code **STFFY26** at checkout. The report of free membership and redemption form is available [here](#) through **October 31**! Coupon codes for AAUW College/University member students are **CUStudentFY26** for Student Associates (undergrads); **CUGradStudentFY26**

for Grads. **Don't forget that you should send AAUW MN state dues to the State Treasurer, Beth Nienow for each of the members you recruit as part of the Shape the Future Campaign.**

Please remember that AAUW branches should submit membership dues online through the Community Hub. Branches unable to process dues online, should contact AAUW connect@aauw.org for help. **AAUW has asked that you do not mail in checks for national membership dues.**

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY UPDATES

AAUW launched the first **College/University (C/U) e-News** for campus professionals, students, and AAUW C/U Relations officers with curated content tailored for their interests. If you have a relationship with [a C/U who is NOT on our member list](#), invite them to [join us](#)! C/U membership is **\$250**, including two **free** national memberships for named faculty/staff members (as representatives), and unlimited **free** student affiliation for undergrads/graduate students. For more info or help? connect@aauw.org

AAUW MINNESOTA STATE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 26, 2025

Bloomington, MN

Present. Kelsey Waits, Barb Liukkonen, Beth Nienow, Teresa Sagen, Lisa West, Elizabeth Mahan, Karen Reichensperger, Pat Powers and Saundra Martell.

Call to Order. Teresa called the meeting to order at 10:40 am.

Acceptance of Agenda. On a motion by Karen seconded by Barb, the agenda was accepted.

Approval of Minutes of April 25, 2025 Board Meeting. On a motion by Barb seconded by Liz, the minutes were accepted.

Treasurer's Report. Beth Nienow presented the Treasurer's Report, which was filed. She requested a donation appeal in the Pine.

Finance Chair Report. Teresa Sagen presented the Finance Review Committee's report. She noted that the Finance Review Committee does not recommend that transfers from Savings be included on the budget as income; rather show the loss if appropriate. The members discussed changing the 2026 budget to add silent auction funds to the state budget rather than making it a donation to the AAUW Funds.

President's Report. Kelsey Waits reported that she plans to begin monthly meetings with Branch Presidents and is speaking at a meeting of the Owatonna Branch in Nov.

Other Board Reports.

Program – Karen reported that she is planning monthly zoom meetings with branch vice presidents for program and hopes to develop a theme.

Public Policy – Liz is in the process of reviewing Jan Carey’s materials and hopes to meet with branch vice presidents for public policy.

Membership. Pat discussed needed revisions to the brochure and how to modify it so that it need not be revised annually.

AAUW Funds. Barb Liukkonen reported that the silent auction made \$2,660. She has sent a check to national. So far this year, MN has donated \$15,000 to AAUW Funds.

Pine Editor. Sandra Martell set Aug 28 as the due date for submission of articles.

Social Media. Jan Carey and Teresa are managing the website and Facebook.

Administrative Assistant. Teresa will be completing state directory ASAP. She met with Karen and revised *Helping Our Branches*. She will provide call for nomination to include in The Pine.

Other Business.

Motion. Sandra moved and Pat seconded a motion that Barb and Teresa be made members of the Nominating Committee.

Board to Board Contacts. We will replace with board members contacting their branch counterparts.

Standing Rules. Before Jan meeting, members will advise Sandra of changes needed to the Standing Rules.

Strategic Plan. Lisa will chair the 2026 Strategic Plan Committee.

Adjournment. Barb Liukkonen moved, and Teresa Sagen seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved. Kelsey Waits adjourned the meeting at 1:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Martell, Secretary

WHAT BRANCHES ARE DOING & READING

BRAINERD LAKES AREA

The Branch is reading *Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by the Dali Lama and Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams. They are also planning their 2026 Brain Buster Trivia Fundraiser to be held on Saturday, January 17.

ELY

Ely Branch is reading *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. In the summer, they held their very successful fundraiser and Garden Party. Recently, they held one of their pop-up

fundraisers where they met as a group to view the movie *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale*, with dinner after. They are also planning the celebration of their 100th Anniversary for April 2026.

GRAND RAPIDS

The branch is hosting the Annual Northland Get Together on October 4, a day-long event in which northern Minnesota AAUW branches are gathering for a program on Wise Stewardship, including Voices of Northern Minnesota, Heidi Holtan and the All-Women News Team of KAXE/KBXE. In addition to other speakers, branches will share how they are practicing wise stewardship.

HASTINGS

The branch held a very successful fundraiser in September: *Oh la la! for An Extraordinary Evening in Paris!* featuring wine, dinner and a raffle of community experiences. Also, two Hasting's members, Dorothy and Danna, shared AAUW's mission, vision, and the many opportunities AAUW has to offer in an interview on KDWA 1490 AM Community In-depth.

MINNEAPOLIS

The branch has scheduled an evening of inspiration, connection and celebration on October 29 at their 2025 Gala at the Metropolitan Event Center. This year's theme is *Impacting the Journey for Women and Girls*.

OWATONNA

In November, the branch program is "Fostering a Sense of Safety and Support for LGBTQIA+ Residents and Visitors in Our Community". Kelsey Waits, AAUW MN State President, will share her expertise and experience to support the Branch as they work toward meeting the resolution passed at the April 2025 State Meeting as indicated in the title of this program.

ST. CLOUD AREA

The branch is holding their Annual Fundraiser, *Something Magic*, on October 7 at the SCSU Cascade Ballroom. For more information or to RSVP, contact the branch at aauwsaintcloud@gmail.com

CONTACT INFORMATION

Donations to AAUW MN: Send to Beth Nienow, AAUW MN Treasurer

Website: <https://aauw-mn.aauw.net>

Email: aauwminn@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AAUW.MN>