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Northwoods News - October 2025

MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-PRESIDENTS ANDREA AND LINDA

As autumn settles into our beautiful corner of northern Minnesota, we hope you're finding time to enjoy the crisp air and changing colors. It's a season of reflection and renewal—perfect for recommitting to our shared mission: Advancing equity for women and girls.

This month's newsletter is full of inspiration. In particular, be sure to read the heartfelt thank-yous and short articles from some of our scholarship awardees. Their words remind us why our work matters and how your support helps open doors for women and girls in our community.

For new members—and longtime members alike—I encourage you to visit our AAUW Ely webpage. Click here: [Ely Branch | AAUW of Minnesota](#) It's a great resource for learning what our branch has been up to, accessing membership forms, browsing past newsletters, and finding details about our mission and meeting schedule. And don't forget - your AAUW membership includes a [free subscription to Ms. Magazine](#)—a powerful voice for feminist thought and action. [Click here for your free subscription: Ms. magazine and AAUW - Ms. Magazine](#)

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You can also join AAUW advocates in the fight for equal pay, equity in education, paid leave, protections against sexual harassment and more. Use the link below to sign up to get alerts on when and how to engage, including sending letters to our legislators and other calls to action. [AAUW Action Network – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881](#)

Looking ahead, we have important transitions on the horizon. At our annual meeting next April, most board positions will be up for election. While it may seem early to be talking about it, most of our current board members will have completed their maximum two terms, so we need members to start thinking about helping with some of these roles. Positions on the ballot include President, Treasurer, Membership, and Program, along with appointed roles in Public Policy, Newsletter, and AAUW Funds.

That's seven opportunities to get involved, make a difference, and have fun doing it. You can share the position with another member. If you're curious or interested, please reach out to Linda or Andrea—we'd love to talk with you.

Finally, mark your calendar for our next branch meeting on October 14 at the Grand Ely Lodge at 5:30 (5:00 for social time). We'll be diving into Housekeeping by Marilynne Robinson, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for fiction with this book. The Arrowhead Library System has copies or ask Andrea or Linda for a possible copy. Our own Jan Guerin will lead the discussion, and if you've ever heard Jan lead a book discussion, you know she brings literature to life in the most compelling way.

Thank you for being part of AAUW Ely. Your energy, ideas, and commitment are what keep us strong.

Andrea and Linda

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Branch meetings are held the second Tuesday, 5:30 pm, Grand Ely Lodge.

October 14:

Jan Guerin will facilitate a discussion of the book titled *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. Jan has taught English Literature, Film Studies, and Communications both at the high school and college level, and she will facilitate our large group discussion of *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. All are welcome to the book discussion, whether or not you have read the book.

November 11:

Nicole Boitz, owner of Studio North Dance and Fitness, will speak about the development of her business, which was started 27 years ago, and its programs and facilities that are available to the community.

December 9:

Holiday celebration with auction and raffle.

January 13:

TBD: Kristin Anthony, Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Ely (HRA) or Ryan Stewart/Karl Kubiak (HUCK housing).

February 10:

TBD: Kristin Anthony, Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Ely (HRA) or Ryan Stewart/Karl Kubiak (HUCK housing).

March 10:

Florencia Sund, owner of Zone 3 Gardens, Landscape Company, will present on intentional gardening with pollinator-friendly plants.

April 14:

Annual Meeting and 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Ely AAUW Branch.

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May 12:

End-of-year banquet and silent auction.

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

BOARD MEETINGS are held the Monday after the branch meeting each month.

PUBLIC POLICY meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of every month, 3 pm at Grace Lutheran Church in Ely.

OCTOBER'S BOOK SELECTION

By Jan Guerin

An additional feature in our programming has been to read a novel chosen for its potential for interesting discussion due to great writing, strong characters, and thematic depth. Past selections have been *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell and *My Antonia* by Willa Cather.

This year we will read the 1980 novel *Housekeeping* by Marilyn Robinson. This novel has complex characters; a lonely yet beautiful landscape; themes of loss and family; and the hopefulness of resilience innate in the human condition.

Robinson was deeply influenced by the transcendentalists and their collective belief that truth and spiritual insight can be found in nature. We will use the role of nature in the novel and how it influences the characters as a springboard for our discussion. Past discussions have been engaging and lively, and Robinson's dense but beautiful novel will be a great addition to our past (and hopefully future) discussions.

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AAUW-Ely Adopt-A-Highway Fall 2025

By Jeanne Tomlinson

Yet another success for our semi-annual roadside litter pickup! We completed our obligation on September 18, 2025. We had our traditional meeting for breakfast at the Grand Ely Lodge Evergreen Restaurant at 9 AM with Co-President Andrea Landro-Pike joining us to cheer us on even with recently acquired back issues.

Once again, we had 8 eager volunteers so we divided into teams of two, each covering a ½ mile stretch of the highway. Although we had a little bit of misty rain off and on, it didn't stop us from completing the job. Thank you so much to Deb Busch, Jodi Chaffin, Lucy Diesslin, Julie Hignell, Frederica Musgrave, Sarah Paro, and Sue Peterson for helping get it done.

STEM CAMP

Our branch was happy to send three fifth-grade girls to STARBASE STEM camp during the summer. Below are notes from the girls.

Stem camp was a fun experience for me. It was cool when we could hear plane taking off and landing. We learned to use a program called C.A.D. It stands for computer aided design. We made dog tags with it. They sent our designs to the 3D printer, which would print our designs for us. We also made rockets that we could decorate and build our selves.

Outside of camp, we went to the aquarium and zoo. In the aquarium we were able to pet sturgeons and jellyfish. At the zoo, we saw many animals and birds. The hotel we stayed at had a great pool and water slide. We spent each night down at the pool. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to go!!

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Macy Coombe

Thank you so much for the scholarship and opportunity to attend STEM camp in Duluth. I really enjoyed my experience at Star base because the activities were really cool. It was like camp in a classroom setting but with only the interesting parts of school. I really liked all of the activities like geocaching, coding robots and making rockets. I got to learn a lot about space and potential jobs in coding and STEM. The teachers and helpers at camp were so nice, fun and inspiring. It was also cool seeing the high security area where the camp was located.

The week was a great opportunity for me to bond with two of my friends and classmates. Even though I wish my mom was there, it was nice having the other moms around to help and take us to do cool stuff like go to the zoo, the aquarium and dinner each night after camp. The hotel was comfy and the water slide was fun!

I am very thankful for the scholarship so I was able to go. I had an amazing time and it was a big highlight of my summer. It was so different from the other camps I've been to and I am so grateful that I won this scholarship. Thank you to all of the people who made this opportunity possible!

Sunny Weissert

I think that the STEM Camp was a very fun experience and I am very grateful for the opportunity. I think a lot of the other girls that didn't do it would also enjoy it. It was amazing and I would definitely do it again.

Thank you,

Sophia Ferrante

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NCCWSL

We received the following note from our NCCWSL scholarship recipient:

Hello AAUW members,

I want to say thank you again for picking me to go to the NCCWSL conference! I learned a lot while I was there and really enjoyed my time there! While I was there I met four women who I still talk to and am really grateful that I got to meet them through this conference. I attended many lectures. Every lecture brought up something new, and it was amazing to be able to sit down with other women and see how they see situations and what they do and talk about how you can work on it to get better. It was a very welcoming conference, and I would recommend it to any women who even second guesses they shouldn't be where they are today. It helped me understand that going into a male dominated field may be hard but keep your head up and remember that you know what you're doing and that you do great things! Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference and helping me open my eyes to learning new leadership skills and getting to meet new friends doing the same thing I am!

*Thank you,
Gretchen Braun*

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Our NCCWSL recipient, Gretchen (the tallest) with AAUW CEO, Gloria Blackwell (center)!



WOMEN IN THE TRADES

AAUW was happy to present our first Women in the Trades scholarship to a local student, Carena DeBeltz. Below is her note to us.

I am very grateful for the opportunity that I was given with the AAUW scholarship. It has helped ease some financial stress that comes with college. The first couple weeks of school have been a learning experience, but I have already been able to make some lifelong memories and friends, I am in some Intro to Construction classes and then some of my general education requirements, but it has been

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great to explore all the new opportunities college brings. I truly appreciate the financial help AAUW has provided me for my continued education, and I am extremely grateful for the support.

Carena DeBeltz



NORTHWOODS YOUNG WRITERS CAMP

This year, our AAUW branch sent two students to the Northwoods Young Writers Camp. Below are notes we received from them.

Reflecting back on my time at writing camp this year and past years, it has truly changed my life. Writing has helped me learn so much about myself and provided many opportunities to make connections with other girls my age. I have heard many deep, humorous, inspiring, and vulnerable stories from other writers over the years and have written many more of my own. The authors had amazing advice for writing and for life. I can't wait to continue building relationships and sharing writing with the girls I have met, and I truly cannot express how grateful I am to have been able to attend this camp.

Aila Harding

This summer, I attended the Northwoods Youth Writing Camp for the third time. It was such an amazing experience, like all the other times. The first time I went to Writing Camp, I met many wonderful campers, and we all decided to go to camp every year together. That has carried on for 2 more years, and lots of other campers have joined us, making our Writing Camp friend group bigger and better every year.

But this camp isn't only about the other campers! There are some incredible counselors and authors involved, which is why this camp

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experience is a 10/10! Every year that I have gone to this camp, Mary Casanova and Margi Preus have always been there, ready and willing to help out and teach many eager teenage girl writers. Their willingness to be there at camp surrounded by many teenage girls for several weeks, taking time out of their own busy lives to be there for camp, and always willing to talk to us, help us, and give us tips, is really thoughtful and considerate of them.

Elena Freking



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WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Member Update

We're VERY excited to welcome thirteen new (and a couple of returning) members since the last Northwoods News! Please welcome:

Mary Zimmerman
Catherine Bogolub
Sarah Guy Levar
Nancy Hernesmaa
Jo Hoiem
Diane Levar

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Mary Levar
Barbara Levie
Rebecca Manlove
Joellyn Mortenson
Carol Orban
Barb Palmer
Diane Vertin

MEET OUR MEMBERS!

BECCA MANLOVE

A bio from Becca's soon-to-be-released novel, *On Bumblebee Wings*:

Becca Brin Manlove is a slow blogger—lovewithroots.com; a fast kid catcher—as Grandma Daycare; and a believer in both magic and science. She lost two good men to heart attacks, her mom to Alzheimer's, and her dad unexpectedly while he was living with her. Naturally, she blogs about gratitude.

Her first book—*Hauling Water*—essays about life up here, is becoming scarce. Her next book--*On Bumblebee Wings*--is a novel about a crabby, retired teacher who is either developing Alzheimer's or is in training to become an earth angel.

BTW, Becca is a Bennie—aka College of St. Benedict, Class of 1979.



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CAROL ORBAN

Hi! This is Carol Orban, happy to be a new member of AAUW Ely Branch.

My twin sister Jan and I grew up mostly in the Washington, DC area. We graduated from the U of Maryland in 1968 and both went into teaching. Jan moved on, but I continued to teach high school English, ending my career at Vermilion Community College.

My ex-husband and I moved to Ely 50 years ago (yikes!) and lived in the woods for more than a decade. When we divorced, I moved to town and soon bought my old miner's house where I continued to raise our children, Chris, 46 and Ken, 43. I have a lovely granddaughter Jaicee, Ken's 22-year-old daughter. She's about to graduate from college.

I've been interested in politics since the Vietnam War and became active after my children left home. I've served on the DFL St. Louis County O3 Board of Directors for a decade and have been very involved in numerous local and regional elections. You win some, you lose some. I guess I'd call myself an organizer.

I love Ely and what it's becoming! I don't think there's a small town like it, and much of Ely's vibrancy is thanks to active people like AAUW members.



JAN GUERIN

My friend Lucy Dieslin invited me to join AAUW, and I'm so glad I did as I love the community and being part of the crucial mission. Another group I belong to is a programming "task force" at Ely's Historic State Theater. It's a good group as movies are one of my interests.

Before living in Ely, I lived and worked in Milwaukee where I taught English Literature both on the high-school and college level. My most recent teaching gig was at VCC in Ely. While there, I learned close up what an educational jewel VCC truly is: committed and passionate instructors and coaches, an excellent administration and a clear vision for students' futures. It's terrific.

Some of the ways I spend my free time are traveling, reading, walking, reading about and watching movies and spending time with my large extended family.

While traveling, my husband John and I enjoy seeking out and visiting locations that are connected to writers and artists so as to better understand them and how setting can influence one's creative sensibilities. Using this as a guide, we have been fortunate to see The Algonquin Round Table in New York, Shakespeare's home, many of Dickens' writing inspirations, and the favorite pub of the "Inklings" (C.S. Lewis, and JRR Tolkien) in Oxford, England. My personal favorite was the haunting and lonely parsonage and home of the three brilliant Bronte sisters. It was truly a memorable spot.

I also love to visit independent bookstores while traveling. My favorite to date is "Parnassus" in Nashville, Tennessee owned by the writer Ann Patchett. It is well curated, women centered, and the best part is the three sleepy old dogs who live right in the bookstore.

My personal philosophy that has guided my politics, reading choices and worldview is:

"Everything is born of women, and...

Let nothing be done to harm the children."

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That message was on a bulletin board in the waiting room of my daughter's pediatrician many, many years ago, and it still resonates to me as a guide toward the future. To that point, here's hoping for policies respectful of that sentiment.



FUNDRAISING



By Kay Vandervort

Pop up to the Library, Lunch and Learn:

We heard Carly talk about access to opportunities available for all of us at the college. Now, join us for a pop up to the college to:

- Learn how we can use the library there
- Have lunch in the cafeteria
- Go through the Ely Winton Historical Museum

This pop up will be:

- **Wed. November 5, 11:15**--meet in the college library
- Followed by lunch in the cafeteria
- Then on to the history museum down the hall.

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An envelope will be passed at lunchtime for those who want to donate toward our scholarships.

Note: There is no admission for the museum, however, they do appreciate donations.

Next Up: Christmas Party Auction

It's never too early to drop off items for the Christmas party auction. But for sanity purposes, it can be too late. Please think about what you can donate now. It does not need to be a complete package. Sometimes a bowl, a book, an accessory, a piece of art, or a non-perishable food item inspires a terrific themed package. But it takes time to locate the other items that might be added in order to have people bidding higher and higher. Drop off at Kay's house... You can text at ... to make sure I'll be home to receive your donation.

MEMBERSHIP

If you know someone who might like to join us, bring them to any meeting 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.

Use this QR code (or Google "Ely AAUW") to view the Ely AAUW webpage. The webpage includes a link to our Membership Form (printable) or online membership link and highlights of what our branch has been doing.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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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.