

**American Association of University Women  
Merced Branch**



**THE INSIGHTER**

**Dena Traina, President  
Susan Walsh, Editor**

**JUNE 2020  
Volume 84, Number 8  
Merced-ca.aauw.net**

**President's Message:**

This will be my last President's message. I started out the year wanting all of you to reach out to the young professionals in our area to see if they wanted to join our ranks and to see how we could help them. Now I am reaching out to YOU! Over the next year or two we need your continued support to keep AAUW strong. Our branch is one of the older branches and we want it to continue, to be vibrant and to continue to support women in our area. There are a number of things that you can do to help.

- First, make sure that you have paid your dues. The form has been emailed to you and was in the last newsletter. This is the best way for us to gather information so we can stay in touch.
- Second, keep thinking of different ways that we can stay strong. We have a great new group of officers for next year and they will need your ideas. We are planning on starting a phone tree so we can communicate with those of you that do not want to be on a computer after a full day of being on one or just because you don't like them.
- Third, change your section meeting to a Zoom meeting. We have a couple of groups already doing this. One of book sections is already meeting this way as is the knitting, crochet and textile group.

We are still trying to figure out some things like what will happen to Science Camp in January but for now we are going to stay hopeful that there is a way for it to continue. So let's get our ideas flowing and get those sections operating remotely.

It has been my privilege to serve as your president and I will continue to be active a past president next year. So I would like to introduce (though no introduction is really needed) Ruth Wax your president.

*Dena Traina* AAUW President

## Incoming (2020-21) President's Message

First of all, I hope my message finds you healthy and safe. We are navigating uncharted waters as we learn to deal with COVID-19, and it seems the only certainty is uncertainty. As we have all been sheltering in place for quite some time now, your surroundings may begin to seem boring or unexciting. For this reason, I have decided to make my theme this year “**Bloom Where You Are Planted**”. Since I love to garden, it has been one of my favorite sayings for a long time. As we all spend more time at home, let's try our best to **BLOOM!** Maybe we can find a skill or talent we didn't know we possessed; perhaps we can find a way to help other fellow members (or friends and neighbors) who aren't able to get out as easily as we can.

My partner, Dennis, has decided to learn to play the keyboard, so there is more music in our home lately—although not all of it is on key! I've been doing more cooking from scratch and trying new recipes and he has been a good sport as not everything has been a total success. I don't think Bon Appetit magazine will be recruiting me any time soon!

Going forward, our meetings may look different for a while. Most of you may be quite familiar with Zoom, or its equivalent by now. And while meeting via technology certainly can't replace the enjoyment and camaraderie of face-to-face interactions, it is definitely better than nothing! Stay tuned for a calendar of upcoming events. I am extremely grateful to have such a strong and talented board working with me this year!

If you haven't paid your annual dues yet, the deadline is June 30, so that you will be included in the directory and avoid a late fee. As an aside, we know there are many local businesses who are struggling financially, so any assistance you can provide will be most appreciated. We've been doing a take-out meal about once a week from a local restaurant or getting a gift card to help with their cash flow—and it gives me a break from planning another meal. The board has discussed the possibility of supporting one or two local worthy charities or non-profits during these challenging times. If you have a favorite cause you think we should support, please contact me or another board member and let us know your thoughts.

I think I speak for the entire board when I say, I look forward to seeing you in person as soon as it is deemed safe. Until then, please keep in touch and continue to bloom! Nothing lasts forever. This too shall pass!

Respectfully,

*Ruth Wax*, Your Next AAUW President



# AAUW BOARD BIOS

## PRESIDENT RUTH WAX

I was born in Los Angeles and graduated from UCLA in 1970. I taught second grade in San Diego for five years before moving to Merced in 1975. I chose to be a stay at home mom until my two sons were in middle school, when I returned to teaching at Gracey Elementary School here in Merced. I thoroughly enjoyed my career.

After 20 years of teaching first grade, I retired in 2009. Since then, I have been involved in becoming a Master Gardener and volunteering as an adult literacy coach through the Merced County Library. I love teaching people how to read. As a member of AAUW, I participate in the Tuesday morning Book Section and the Dining for Women group. I've helped with the Girls' Science Camp in various capacities over the years. I am also active in the University Friends' Circle and the Merced Garden Club. One of my passions is gardening and visiting gardens. I even enjoy pulling weeds!

A highlight of my life has been traveling with my partner of 20 years, Dennis Hanks. We have been fortunate enough to visit 23 countries together, and have taken many domestic vacations as well. I am grateful for my friends and my family (especially my grandkids).



## PAST PRESIDENT DENA TRAINA



### Dena Traina

Dena Traina holds a Bachelor and Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. Dena has been active in many engineering groups including the Society of Women Engineers.

Ms. Traina has served on local committees for the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan where she is currently Chairman of the Regional Advisory Committee, the Programmatic Climate Action Plan, and the High-Speed Rail Station Plan. She is currently President of the American Association of University Women Merced Branch and is looking forward to serving as Past President next year. Dena also serves

on the Board for the Merced County Court Appointed Special Advocates that helps foster youth in our County.

Dena is passionate about mentoring girls to think about engineering as a career. She has been active in mentoring hundreds of girls over the years and is currently the lead for the Engineering Session of AAUWs Mother-Daughter Science Camp.

Dena has married to Samuel Traina for over 40 years and has a grown daughter and two grandchildren.

## VICE PRESIDENT / PRESIDENT ELECT JANE LAWRENCE

I have lived in Merced since 2001 when I arrived from the University of Vermont to become UC Merced's founding Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. I have been an active member of AAUW for several years and have enjoyed attending AAUW sponsored events and social gatherings. I have helped out in Kathleen Hull's and Jennifer Foster's class during Science Camp and I have been a member of the knitting/crocheting interest group since it started. I am still a beginning knitter, but have learned so much from my more experienced colleagues.

I believe very much in the mission of AAUW. Having spent my whole career working at universities, I believe strongly in supporting women to attend higher education. I look forward to assisting President Ruth Wax and working with the other Board members during the coming year as we seek to find ways to keep our AAUW chapter strong in light of the pandemic and as we all continue to do the important work of AAUW.





## **PROGRAM VICE-PRESIDENTS: ASHLEY MCCOMB-THANADABOUTH**

Ashley McComb Thanadabout is a Merced native who boomerang-ed back home after graduating from UC Davis with a B.S. and M.S. in Civil and Environmental Engineering. Starting her career with Golden Valley Engineering and Surveying, in 2004, as a summer intern during college, Ashley returned to the team full-time in 2011. She is a California State Licensed Civil Engineer, and currently, has aspirations for obtaining the Structural Engineering License.

In her free time, Ashley and her husband have traveled to Mexico, Japan, Hawaii, and Australia, and hope to one day visit cities in South America and Europe. Together, they greatly enjoy frequenting California's Central Coast, and spending time with their families.

Ashley other pastimes include nature walks, snorkeling, swimming, crocheting, reading, and occasionally binge-watching period-drama tv shows.



**SUE CHAPPELL AND ANN AHMADI**    Sorry. No photos. No bios.

## **MEMBERSHIP VICE-PRESIDENT ANITA PARKER**

I am a retired elementary teacher/ library media specialist. I taught for 33 years for the Merced City School District and can honestly say that I loved my career! I was a classroom teacher for 20 years and then received a second credential to teach in the Library for the other 13 years.

I joined AAUW in 2005 after I retired when a friend invited me to several of the local events.

I have been the membership person for five years. I'm the one who bugs you to pay your dues, and my other large responsibility is putting the yearly directory together and distributing it to all of the members. Besides my membership position I also belong to one of the reading group sections and the bunko section.

I have been married to Tom Parker for almost 54 years and we have two children and five grandchildren. When we aren't traveling, we spend many hours helping out with the grandchildren. I also enjoy quilting and organizing albums of family photos and memorabilia.



## **TREASURER PHAEDRA HOFMANN**

I am entering my 14th year as an educator, and I currently teach at Merced High School. I just earned my Master's Degree in Special Education, and hold two special education credentials. I am happily married and have three step children. I love to travel, watch the Giants play, and see musicals. I'm pretty active and love to run, bike, and hike in Yosemite.



## **SECRETARY LINDA LUCAS**

We moved to Merced in 1989, and I worked for Merced Union High School for 20 years and really enjoyed all the great people I worked with. All three daughters graduated for Merced High, and completed college. They are all happily married, working mothers raising our grandkids. I feel blessed to get to be part of their lives.

When I retired in 2009, I had time to become part of Merced AAUW. I love the opportunity to get to know other professional people in our community and promote the goals of AAUW. I have been involved in bridge, Science Camp, the AAUW board, and Dining for Women. I am excited that Kathleen Hull will be taking the Merced AAUW website. I got the website started in 2016 and it's time to have another skilled person take it to the next level.





## EF / LAF PAULINE CUCHNA

I had a wonderful career working at Merced College for 24 years in the areas of Community Service, Instruction, and Relations with Schools.

After retirement ~ I volunteer my time on the board of AAUW as Scholarship Chair and on the University Friends Circle board as Common Interest Group Chair at UC Merced.

My favorite pastimes are playing Bridge, reading, and having lunch at my favorite restaurant, "510 Bistro." My favorite TV programs are on "PBS" and my current favorite movie is "Knives Out."

My personal motto is, "kindness." My best piece of advice is, "Trust in yourself and never give up!" Most importantly ~ never let your bucket list be empty.



# American Association of University Women

## Merced Branch Membership 2020-2021 (Deadline June 30, 2020)

**Please complete and submit the entire form** (even if you are an honorary life member) and return with your dues. This is necessary to ensure that you are listed accurately with National, in the directory and on newsletter mailings.

**Make your check payable to Merced AAUW and mail to:**

**Anita Parker, 2814 San Juan Court, Merced, CA 95340.**

Please note: Failure to renew will exclude you from section participation in 2020-2021.

Is your contact information listed correctly in the AAUW Directory? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

*Please note corrections below.*

\_\_\_ *My contact information is not in the Directory, please include as listed.*

---

### MEMBER INFORMATION

Name:

Last Name,                      First Name                                      Middle Initial

Address:

Street                                      City                                      Zip

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email:

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- Regular Branch Member **\$88**  
(Assoc. \$59 (\$56 which is tax deductible), State \$20, Branch \$9)
- Honorary Life Member **\$0**  
(No Fees)
- Association Life Member **\$29**  
(Assoc. \$0, State \$20, Branch \$9)
- Scholarship Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Science Camp donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Late Fee (after July 1) \$2

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## **Title IX Rollbacks: Has The #MeToo Backlash Begun?**

Kimberly Churches, [CEOAAUWexecutive@aauw.org](mailto:CEOAAUWexecutive@aauw.org)

The #MeToo Movement was supposed to be a water-shed moment. No longer would we sweep accusations of sexual assault under the rug. No longer would we blame assault survivors for how short their skirt may be. Or if they had been drinking. Or if they might have flirted. We would stop making excuses for an assailant for being generally a good guy whose future could be ruined. And we'd worry less about how assault statistics could blemish a school's reputation and more about how sexual trauma could affect a woman's life.

But here we go again: The U.S. Department of Education has rolled back Title IX protections against campus sexual harassment and assault. The new rules turn back the clock, reversing policies that were put in place to make it easier for survivors of sexual misconduct to come forward. These rules stack the deck against survivors, making it too onerous, even traumatic, for many to come forward. Even with protections in place, it's never been easy for sexual assault survivors to speak out: 89 percent of colleges reported zero rapes and 79 percent of middle and high schools reported zero cases of sexual harassment, according to a study by AAUW. Yet the Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that one in five women experience sexual assault or violence while in college. Obviously, these numbers don't align. Forces of institutional self-protection, along with the hurdles and burdens preventing survivors from pursuing justice, already get in the way.

For a time, it seemed that Title IX could offer welcome recourse for survivors. Created nearly a half century ago to ensure all students had access to an education free of gender discrimination, Title IX governs not only athletics (with which it's often associated) but actually all things gender equity on campus. Guidelines to Title IX, adopted in 2011, made it clear that colleges needed to utilize the law to battle campus sexual misconduct —or risk losing federal funding.

### **A Troubling Return To The Past**

Now, those guidelines have been overturned and re-placed with rules that sound archaic. There is no other way to interpret them other than they are intended to deter survivors from reporting issues, including:

- Allowing universities to hold trial-style hearings where the survivor of sexual harassment or assault could be subjected to live cross-examinations by representatives of the accused.
- Changing the definition of sexual assault and violence on campus from “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature” to conduct that is “severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it denies a person access to the school's program or activity.”
- Letting universities choose the standard of proof to use – either “preponderance of the evidence” or a higher bar of “clear and convincing evidence.”

When these rules were proposed last spring, they drew much criticism from educators, gender advocates, survivors and others. In fact, more than 125,000 people and groups weighed in during the public comment period, most of them opposing the rollback. Still, the Administration is moving forward; so, the question now is how can we ensure that survivors retain the protections they need?

#### What We Need To Do

Our goals should be clear: First to prevent sexual harassment and assault, and when it does occur, to have fair and just systems in place – for both the accused and survivors. Prevention starts with changing campus culture. This means modernizing all policies and practices on campuses that perpetuate bias and diminish anyone based on gender. We need to foster more equitable and respectful environments in all regards; by leveling playing fields we'll shift power differentials and discourage tolerance for unacceptable behavior.

We must all be upstanders, not bystanders, speaking up when individuals are behaving inappropriately, when people are being unduly pressured or when someone needs support and encouragement for reporting harassment or assault.


Campus administrators can – and should — choose to continue following more modern and acceptable practices that treat survivors appropriately, with understanding and respect. Many colleges and universities said they plan to maintain current practices, such as keeping the unwelcome conduct standard, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it will reduce their potential legal risks. And we must double down on our efforts to reverse the rule change and to advocate for new legal protections that represent best fair policies and practices.

The momentum unleashed by the #MeToo movement cannot be contained. We have learned the lessons: We will not pause. We will not be silenced. We will not tolerate pushback against the progress we have made. We may have lost this battle, but we are winning the war and will continue fighting until we achieve gender equity, the full promise of Title IX.

*Originally published on February 27, 2020, the text has been updated to reflect that the final rule, then a proposal, has now been adopted.*



THANK YOU TO OUR ADVERTISERS FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT



**VON GOODIN DDS INC.**  
Personalized Dental Care

**VON GOODIN, DDS**

---

830 WEST OLIVE AVENUE  
MERCED, CA 95348

PH: 209-384-3434  
FAX: 209-384-8262

[www.vongoodin.com](http://www.vongoodin.com)



*Eye2Eye Photostudio*  
*Friedhelm Golz*

P: 209 724-0787  
C: 209 446-8673  
[frgolz@yahoo.com](mailto:frgolz@yahoo.com)  
[www.eye2eyestudio.com](http://www.eye2eyestudio.com)



Scott Middleton

209 259-7130 work  
209 720-8175 cell  
663 Chandon Drive  
Merced Ca 95348

MIDDLETON

Handyman Services



## The Goldsmith

Unique Jewelry • Vintage Pieces  
Custom Designing • Jewelry Repair  
We buy and sell Gold and Silver

**Nick Guerra**

1828 Bellevue Rd.  
Atwater, CA 95301  
(209) 358-6022

## HYPNOTHERAPY AND COUNSELING

For Positive Changes



529 W. 19th Street

Merced, CA 95340

conniebrons@yahoo.com

Dr. Constance J Brons, Ed.D., R.N.

Am. Bd. Hypnotherapy ABH #13670  
Am. Bd. for Certified Counselors #49343  
CA Bd. of Reg. Nursing #260306

(209) 388-1140

phone or fax