

# AAUW

## THE INSIGHTER

APRIL 2023

VOLUME 87, NUMBER 4

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Membership Renewal



It is that time again, time to renew your AAUW membership and I am sorry to say that National is raising their dues again. The Merced Branch cut our dues to try to keep a lower amount for our members, but unfortunately, that does not give our organization adequate financial support. So the overall amount is up and we are resetting the amount we receive to \$13 per member as it was in the past.

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”  
*Jane Goodall*



### WEBSITE

Though Coronavirus is still with us, most of us are vaccinated and getting out a bit more. The Board will be watching this carefully as we go through the year so stay safe. Please visit our website <https://merced-ca.aauw.net/> regularly for information about Zoom programs and activities.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello fellow AAUW members. March 21st was International Down Syndrome Day. That's a special day at our house because we have Steve. He is my youngest brother. Steve was born in Hawaii on August 4th, 1961, the same day and the same hospital as Barack Obama. We say it's his claim to fame and perhaps they were switched at birth.

Steve came to live with me and my daughter, Karly, when my parents died. I told the other siblings I would try it out for 5 years and ended up having him for 30 years. When I retired, Steve went to visit each of the siblings for 3 months at a time. It was very hard for his caseworker to understand that our family wanted to share caregiving.

Now, Steve has developed dementia and has gone to live with my daughter in Merced. I help with the grands when she is doing stuff with her children. We make a good team. She is a Registered Nurse and can care for him now that he has had some heart failure and a seizure. He was hospitalized for three days this month when he had his first seizure. He can no longer do any self-care. The average lifespan for a person with Down Syndrome is 60 years old. This year Steve turned 61 and is showing signs of Dementia. 50% of Down Syndrome people develop Alzheimer's disease. Research is being done now on the connection with the extra chromosome #21 that Steve has. This chromosome plays a key role in the relationship between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease as it carries a gene that produces one of the key proteins, amyloid protein, involved with changes in the brain that causes Alzheimer's.

Sincerely,  
Sue Chappell  
President





## March Program

In March, the program was a visit to the Kids Discovery Station. It was a joy to see the interactive exhibits that Mayya Tokman and her staff have put together. Unfortunately, many of us had multiple things on that night and could not stay for the entire program.

Sorry Mayya, but we got enough of the idea that we will be back with our grandchildren to visit again. Thanks to all that were able to stay and support this great place for our local community.





## APRILPROGRAM

Our next program is a SPRING BRUNCH!

Don't miss our last official program of the year: our annual Spring Brunch! We will have a lovely brunch, install next year's officers, and review what was accomplished this year with a special focus on our very successful Science Camp. This is an event not to miss!

When: **Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 AM - Noon**

Where: Merced Golf & Country Club, 6333 Golf Road, Merced

Who: AAUW Members and guest(s)

How: RSVP by **April 24<sup>th</sup>** to Jane Lawrence at 209-658-4490 or [MercedAAUW@gmail.com](mailto:MercedAAUW@gmail.com)

Cost: \$25 (Guests are free, but if you can pay for your guest, please do as that will help defray some of our costs.)

The Board and I look forward to seeing you on April 29<sup>th</sup> at the Country Club.

### International Women's Day

International Women's Day REPORT IN BRIEF Received by Sue Chappell, President, American Association of University Women Merced, Shelly Rye, Regent, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Merced River Chapter, Janet Kasper, President of Soroptimist International of Merced, Amanda Fong, President, United Women of Faith, United Methodist Church Merced, Sheilah Brooks, President, Women in the N.A.A.C.P., and Susan Walsh, President, League of Women Voters Merced County. Thanks Sue for nicely representing our organization.



“SPRING IS INCOMPLETE IF IT’S NOT IN APRIL.”



## SECTIONS

Members of these interest sections meet in the home of the hostess for that month. Some sections also have co-hostesses. .

**Write or call Becky Tietjen to join a section at (559) 909-1520 or [frautietjen@yahoo.com](mailto:frautietjen@yahoo.com)**

**Adopt-a-Highway:** Chair – Kem Shrum 489-8130 [kkshrum@yahoo.com](mailto:kkshrum@yahoo.com)

Become a part of the group of volunteers who clean up the AAUW stretch of Hwy.140 on the way to Mariposa. The group goes out early on a Saturday morning four times a year. Watch your newsletter or email for times and dates. Cal Trans has approved resumption of our highway cleaning projects.

**Almost Gourmet:** Chair – Karen Wallace 722-5289 [the.wallaces@comcast.com](mailto:the.wallaces@comcast.com)

Couples gather for four dinners a year. This group is closed. Currently meeting outdoors.

**Book Section 1:** Chair – **Currently there is not chair for this section. I will be contacting everyone who signs up for this section and helping you decide on a chair. Becky**

Meets the first Monday of the month at 2:00 p.m. from October through May at a member's home. Members read a fiction or non-fiction book of their choice and different reviewers share a favorite book each month. Once a year we do a group read.

**Book Section 2:** Chair – **This is a new section in need of a chairperson and members. All are welcome!**

**Book Section 3:** Chair – Sharon Wainwright [sharonlwa@comcast.net](mailto:sharonlwa@comcast.net)

Members meet the first Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. and rotate between members' homes. We select a book to read, to be read by all, for each meeting, and a volunteer guides us through the discussions. Due to a large membership, you are welcome to sign up on our waiting list.

**Book Section 4 (Evening Book Group):** Chair Dee Near 723-9007 [neard@comcast.net](mailto:neard@comcast.net)

Meets the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at a member's home. This group has been meeting for 20 years. Everyone reads the same book and discusses it. A wide variety of genres are read. All are welcome. This section meets August through May. This year's selection: Oct 27 *A woman is no man* by Etaf Rum, Nov. 17 *Gone; A Girl, A Violin, A Life Unstrung* Min Kym, Jan 26 *Horse* Geraldine Brooks, Feb 23 *When the Elephants Dance* Tess U. Holthe, March 23 *The Leopard is Loose* Stephen Harrigan, Apr 27 *German Wife* Kelly Rimmer, May 25 *Bittersweet* Susan Cain.

**Bridge Couples:** Chair – Carol Hamm 383-4705 [cjhamm@comcast.net](mailto:cjhamm@comcast.net)

In order for the Bridge Couples section to be viable, 4 couples plus 2 substitute couples are needed. Currently not enough couples have signed up. If you play bridge, now's your chance to join a fun group! Normally the section meets the second Friday of the month at 7:00 p.m. This section meets from October through May. **This section has been suspended.**

**Bridge Singles:** Chair – Julia Larson 722-2628

Meets the third Monday of the month at 1:00 p.m. The group rotates between members' homes. Dessert is offered. Subs are welcome. This section meets October through May.

**Genealogy – Anyone interested in starting a genealogy Section? If so, contact Dena Traina 209.777.5227**

**Chocololics:** Chair – Diana Alexander 658-1647 [dianaalex51@gmail.com](mailto:dianaalex51@gmail.com)

Meets the third Wednesday of the month at members' homes at 7:00p.m. from October through May. Members should be prepared to either host or co-host one meeting per year. They prepare a special chocolate dish for the event. **New members welcome.**

**Knitting and Crocheting:** Chair – Dena Traina 777-5227 [traina.dena@gmail.com](mailto:traina.dena@gmail.com)

Meets the second Wednesday of the month at a member's home between 6:00-8:00 p.m. Beginners and experienced knitters/crocheters are welcome. Refreshments provided. This section meets all year. **New members are welcome.**

**Lunch Bunch:** Chair – Connie Brons 385-3837 [conniebrons@yahoo.com](mailto:conniebrons@yahoo.com)

Meets the last Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at various restaurants. Members are notified by email as to the location. Be sure to RSVP by contacting Connie to ensure a reservation. This section meets all year round.

**Play Goers:** Chair – Robyn Farnsworth 382-0548 [yaya4three@gmail.com](mailto:yaya4three@gmail.com)

Members will see 5-6 plays during the year on Sunday afternoons. This section meets August through May. Will start up again as soon as theater schedule is published. **New members are welcome**

**Quasi-Epicures:** Chair – Holly Zacharias 722-4428 [hwzacharias@gmail.com](mailto:hwzacharias@gmail.com)

Sadly the Quasi-Epicures have decided to call it quits. I'm leaving in the description this year in the hopes that, perhaps, it can be resurrected in the future. Members are notified by email to dine out at a local restaurant and see a play at Playhouse Merced on Saturday evenings. This section meets October through May or June.

**Sierra Trekkers:** Chair – Judy Smith (777-5345) and Jennifer Foster 722-3649 [sierratrekker@comcast.net](mailto:sierratrekker@comcast.net) or [one4cats@att.net](mailto:one4cats@att.net)

We will continue meeting at Lake Yosemite at 6pm on the third Thursday of the month as the weather permits. We may go back to people's homes this winter. Indoor meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month all at 6:00 in members' homes (except in December). The September planning meeting maps out the tentative dates for hikes during the year. Hikes usually occur once per month. The emphasis is on hiking -- some easy, some moderate & occasionally a more strenuous trail. Weather permitting, a snowshoe hike in the winter months can be planned. The group occasionally travels for overnight /weekend adventures. One longer trip is scheduled each a year to one of our national parks.

**Together Women Rise:** Chair – Jane Guerra 723-0384 [nickandjane@guerra.net](mailto:nickandjane@guerra.net)

Meets the first Monday of the month at 6:00p.m. at a member's home for a potluck dinner. Money is donated in the amount that would have been spent on a restaurant dinner to the organization featured each month. The mission is to empower women and girls living in extreme poverty by funding programs that foster good health, education, and economic self-sufficiency. Members become educated to various needs of women living in poverty around the world and participate in collective giving to make a positive difference. This group meets September through June. Members are asked to host or co-host one dinner. **New members are welcome.**

**Wine and Cheese:** Chair – Colleen Eisberg 725-9082 [eisberg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eisberg@sbcglobal.net)

Meets the last Friday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at various members' homes. The hostess and co-hostess determine the theme and prepare a selection of cheese and hors d'oeuvres. Spouses are welcome. This section meets September through May with no meeting in November or December. Sept 22 is the first tasting event of the year. Come share the story of your wine and share tasting with the group. **New members welcomed.**

**Bunko:** Chair – Cheryl Burke – 726-8481 [cdinesburke@gmail.com](mailto:cdinesburke@gmail.com)

Meets the fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. There is a lot of lively interaction for the members of this group. Since we have 12 members already, you are welcome to sign up for the substitute list. All members and subs are required to be vaccinated and boosted. This section meets September through May with no meeting in December.



### Adopt-a-Highway

Adopt-a-Highway started about 10 years ago and the group has been cleaning a section of Highway 140 since its inception. It is a beautiful stretch that we clean up just past Planada on the way to Mariposa. It is peaceful and refreshing to get out in nature, visit with each other as we work, and feel like you're helping the community and our world really to make it a little cleaner - getting rid of trash that birds or other animals might unfortunately take to their nests, or harm them.

This group is very rewarding as well as you get a little exercise as a benefit! All who have participated all agree that it is actually very enjoyable!

This time it was a benefit to participate because it is during the Clean California Community Days!



### Book Section IV

Book Section IV met Thursday, March 23 in the home of Sharon Spinardi. We all read *The Leopard is Loose* by Stephen Harrigan. Set in 1950 in Oklahoma City, it is a novel about a small boy and his family and the escape from the Lincoln park Zoo in Oklahoma City. The group agreed that we all felt nostalgic reading of his life, since many of us were raised during that time period. The author did a good job describing the family dynamics following the second World War, with PTSD, war widowhood and multigenerational conflict all sensitively introduced in the story. The escape of the leopard truly occurred, but the boy's experience was fictional. It's an entertaining novel that most people would enjoy reading.

“APRIL SHOWERS  
BRING FORTH MAY  
FLOWERS”



## MEMBER NEWS

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Welcome one of our new members Lori Gross!

I retired in January 2020, after 25+ years as a court reporter in Southern California, and moved to Merced to be near my son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. I had no idea that a pandemic was just around the corner! This hindered my ability to fully explore and engage with my new community although it gave me lots of precious time with my granddaughter, including hosting Zoom kindergarten. So grateful to have made it to Merced just in time!

During this time, I was fortunate enough to engage Ruth Wax to landscape my new backyard, and we became fast friends. She has taken me under her wing and continues to introduce me to everyone and everything Merced has to offer, including AAUW! It has been great meeting so many wonderful people. I continue to navigate this new world and my new life and am still most comfortable at outdoor events. Looking forward to engaging more in the future!





**TAKE A STAND AND VOTE**

It's AAUW election season and this is your opportunity to let AAUW National and AAUW California know what you think. We don't always have an opportunity to share our opinion. My philosophy is that when asked - make a decision! The only wrong decision is not casting a vote.

**AAUW National Election - voting begins on April 4th and ends on May 15th at 2 pm PT**

- Candidates for the Board of Directors
- Bylaws Revision
- Public Policy Priorities Additions

**AAUW California Election - voting begins on April 22nd and ends on May 13th at midnight PT**

- Public Policy Priorities

**TAKE A SEAT AND ENJOY**

**CAN YOU FEEL THE EXCITEMENT? MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE ACADEMY AAUWARDS COMING ON APRIL 22nd ON YOUR ZOOM SCREEN!**

In addition to our two amazing keynote speakers, AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell and Puerto Rico's Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Public Works, Eileen M. Velez Vega, we will have presentations of awards. Come see who the winners are in categories such as Named Gift, BAY (Branch Activity of the Year) Award, Equity Champion, Speech Trek top three finalists and winner, Gov Trek team winner, and the Fund categories of Top Branch Contributions and Per Capita Contributions. There will be Red Carpet interviews, exciting videos, and glittering after-parties! It will be a festive time to celebrate AAUW branches in California! Get ready for a fun-filled event worthy of a Hollywood red carpet. Join us on Saturday, April 22nd, at 9 am by clicking [HERE](#) to register. We will celebrate AAUW California and our fantastic branches and members!

**Life-Changing from Speech Trek**

We like to boast that our programs can be life-changing. Evidently, humility is not our strong suit. But we do make an impact and a case in point comes from Speech Trek. While researching this year's topic on voting rights, one of the contestants discovered that 16-year-olds can pre-register to vote when they turn 18. And she did! Does that qualify as life-changing?



**New York Times Challenge**

The New York Times challenged students to come up with words that they thought were missing from the English language.



Spell Check does not like them.

enterdraining = something that is entertaining and funny at first, but becomes tiresome after some time

polifickle = switching political views often and without commitment

foodio = the perfect video to watch while you eat your food

covect = a lasting effect of the Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns

fidgevity = the average age of particular breeds of dogs

gestiferous = to be actively and passionately gesturing

trendxiety = the fear of not keeping up with today's fast-cycling trends

We think these tongue twisters show the talent of our youth and demonstrate why we are committed to our programs that cultivate that talent: Speech Trek, Tech

Trek, and Gov Trek. Other than that, we have no particular reason for sharing these with you.

**What I need to know:** The AAUW California Annual Event, scheduled for April 22nd, promises to be a fun

and interesting event with speakers, awards, interviews with state leaders, and after-parties!

**TOP SPEAKERS IN THE STATE SELECTED! FINALS UNDERWAY!**

**What I need to do:** Register to attend and encourage others to do so too. Speech Trek 2023 Semi-Finals have concluded, the judges have submitted their ballots, and the tally is complete. Please join me in congratulating the top five members and their respective about our

members and their respective about our state level.

Elizabeth Ma, Alhambra-San Gabriel

Teddy Garcia, Camarillo

Ameya Ravi, Fremont

Adrian Back, Redlands – Honorable Mention

Kyra Sharma, La Mesa-El Cajon – Honorable Mention

Elizabeth, Teddy and Ameya have advanced to the Finals and judging is underway to determine 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Their videos will be showcased at the April 22nd virtual Annual Event and results will be announced at the end of the day. Don't miss it!





## OUR SUPPORTERS

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Please join CASA and Kids Discovery Station by placing your ad here!

