

# AAUW

## THE INSIGHTER

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### WEBSITE

Please visit our website <https://merced-ca.aauw.net/> regularly for information about programs and activities.



### SCIENCE CAMP ASSISTANCE

The Science Camp Committee is losing one of its spectacular co-chairs, Kathleen Hull. We would like to thank her for all the work she has done on this committee for the last 15 + years. Hopefully, we can still talk her into doing her archaeological presentation.

With Kathleen leaving as Co-Chair, we will be looking for a new co-chair to assist Dena Traina with this very worthwhile endeavor. It involves managing the program and attending half of the sessions. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Dena Traina at 209.777.5227.

*"When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous."*

- Michele Obama -

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I like to think of “seasons of our life” in terms of “seasons of the year”. Springtime surely equates to childhood and especially our teenage years. Springtime with its rains, hail, and snow – its strong winds, lightning, and thunder – and sometimes its floods, landslides, and tornados can be a handful - just like impetuous teenagers. In July at our annual planning session, we picked March 29<sup>th</sup> for the date of our Yosemite trip. Kathleen Hull and I assured the group that March 29<sup>th</sup> would be a lovely day for the trip. Springtime in Yosemite! The waterfalls! So, the date was set in cement on our calendars. Then March arrived. A landslide closed Highway 140 in both directions. (CalTrans was trying to get the road open, but YARTS was doubtful.) Snow was predicted for the day before and the four days immediately following March 29<sup>th</sup>. It was supposed to be a low of 26 degrees and a high of 45 in Yosemite Valley that day. And still we decided to take our chances. Funny thing about teenagers, when you’ve just about had as much as you can take from them, they turn around and are absolute sweethearts. And so it was on March 29<sup>th</sup>. The road opened, the red bud trees were in full bloom against a background of emerald green grasses and newly sprouted tree leaves. The waterfalls were running at full tilt (with unnamed smaller waterfalls here and there). Half Dome was snowcapped. It was delightfully cool – not cold – not icy. The sun shone all day long. Kathleen delighted us with walking tours that highlighted some hidden gems in Yosemite Valley. We proudly showed first-time visitor, Mona Kowalczyk, the sights. Kenra Bragonier explained her (and Don’s) role in restoring the Valley facilities following devastating floods and Dena Traina explained her role in the complicated engineering and installation of Yosemite Valley’s wastewater system. (To quote Kenra, “Say a special thanks to Dena each time you flush a toilet in Yosemite!”) We shared stories and laughs, meals and drinks, and some unexpected discoveries. The day couldn’t have been better!

And true to form, “teenage Springtime” made yet another turn. After our glorious day of sunshine, it snowed the next 4 days in Yosemite Village.

Looking ahead – mark your calendars for:

- our SPRING BRUNCH
- in Linda Lucas’ lovely garden
- 2501 St. Augustine Ct.
- Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 10am to noon

We’ll enjoy brunch and coffee with friends, book reviews, a table talk, and the installation of next year’s officers. Come join in the fun and cheer next year’s president, Sharon Spinardi, as she assumes the mantle!

It’s been a joy serving as your president this year! Many thanks for your support! Becky Tietjen





## MARCH PROGRAM RECAP

There isn't much to add to Becky's wonderful description of our trip to Yosemite. She did leave out the bit about the delicious cookies she made for the trip. Yum. So on that note, I will only add the pictures!





## MAY PROGRAM

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Don't Miss the AAUW Spring Brunch!!

Traditionally, our chapter has ended the year with a brunch. The Board has a fun event planned for this year!

WHEN: Saturday, May 3rd  
TIME: 10-Noon  
WHERE: Linda Lucas' house, 2591 St. Augustine Court, Merced  
WHO: Members and Guests  
COST: Brunch: \$10 for members; \$5 for guests  
RSVP: Please RSVP by April 30<sup>th</sup> at [MercedAAUW@gmail.com](mailto:MercedAAUW@gmail.com) or call Jane Lawrence at 209-658-4490

We will hear about what AAUW accomplished this year, install officers, and preview upcoming events.

Fun, food and camaraderie! We look forward to seeing you there!



- [Girls Who Code](#) founder Reshma Saujani did a TED Talk about how girls are taught to be perfect by society, while boys are taught bravery. She says, "Most girls are taught to avoid risk and failure. We're taught to smile pretty, play it safe, get all A's. Boys, on the other hand, are taught to play rough, swing high, crawl to the top of the monkey bars and then just jump off head first." She encourages a change in narrative to empower girls to strive to be brave and be comfortable with imperfection.

[TED TALK\\_Here](#)





## SECTIONS

**Adopt-a-Highway:** Co-Chair – Kem Shrum 209-489-8130 [kkshrum@yahoo.com](mailto:kkshrum@yahoo.com) and Dee Near 209-756-6086 [neard@comcast.net](mailto:neard@comcast.net)

Become a part of the group of volunteers who clean up AAUW's 2 mile stretch on Hwy.140 just past Planada on the way to Mariposa. The group usually goes out early morning every couple months or so - about 4-6 times a year. The chair will send an email to let the group know date and time. Equipment is provided. We enjoy the great outdoors, chatting, exercise (walking a mile or two), and providing a service. Email Kem if interested.

**Almost Gourmet:** Chair – Karen Wallace 209-617-1709 [the.wallaces@comcast.com](mailto:the.wallaces@comcast.com)

This group meets 4 times per year (with spouse, partner, or guest included). This section is currently closed.

**Art Connoisseurs:** Chair – Nancy Barber 209-201-9009 [nanceeb92@gmail.com](mailto:nanceeb92@gmail.com)

Do you love wandering around Art Museums? Are you a lover of art? Interested members should contact Nancy. We will meet quarterly to plan our excursions.

**Book Section 1:** Chair – Kathy Berkeley 209-581-1599 [bekeleykathy@gmail.com](mailto:bekeleykathy@gmail.com)

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 Judy Smith 209-777-5345 [sierratrekker@comcast.net](mailto:sierratrekker@comcast.net)

Do you love a good mystery? This group is for you! Meets the second Thursday of each month at 3:00 p.m. Call or text Judy Smith.

**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, this section is closed, but you are welcome to sign up on our waiting list.

**Book Section 4 (Evening Book Group):** Chair Dee Near 209-756-6086 [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. For summer 2024 the group read: Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the friendship that saved Yosemite by Dean King and Husbands by Holly Gramazio.

**Bridge Singles:** Chair – Pauline Cuchna 209-658-6321 [samnilla@sbcglobal.net](mailto:samnilla@sbcglobal.net)

Meets on the last Monday of the month at 1:00 p.m. The group rotates between members' homes. Table snacks are offered. Subs are welcome. This section meets September through May.

**Bunko:** Chair – Cheryl Burke – 209-726-8481 [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. This section meets September through May with no meeting in December.

**Chocoholics:** Chair – Diana Alexander 209-658-1647 [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. Chocoholics will be limited to twenty members in order to accommodate everyone in our homes.



## MORE SECTIONS

**Game Night:** -Chair – Dee Near (209)723-9007 [neard@comcast.net](mailto:neard@comcast.net)

Who's up for some Fun & Games? Game Nights will meet on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm at a member's home. Let Dee know if you would like to join the fun!

**Knitting and Crocheting:** Chair – Dena Traina 209-777-5227 [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.

**Lunch Bunch:** Chair – Connie Brons 209-385-3837 [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 209-382-0548 [yaya4three@gmail.com](mailto:yaya4three@gmail.com)

Members will see 5-6 plays during the year on Sunday afternoons. This section meets September through May. New members are welcome

**Sierra Trekkers:** Co-Chairs – Judy Smith 209-777-5345 and Jennifer Foster 209-722-3649 [sierratrekker@comcast.net](mailto:sierratrekker@comcast.net) or [one4cats@att.net](mailto:one4cats@att.net)

Meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 in members' homes (except for December). The September planning meeting maps out the tentative dates for hikes during the year. Hikes usually occur once per month and are usually easy to moderate trails with an occasional strenuous trail. The group occasionally travels for overnight /weekend adventures. One longer trip is scheduled each year to one of our State or National parks.

**Together Women Rise:** Chair – Jane Guerra 209-723-0384 [jane@guerraville.com](mailto:jane@guerraville.com)

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 welcomed.

**Wine and Cheese:** Chair – Colleen Eisberg 209- 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. Come share the story of your wine and share tasting with the group. New members welcomed.



### Trekkers

Three Trekkers went to Big Sur for a two night adventure. We visited Andrew Molera State Park, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, and the Point Sur lighthouse. Dinner at Djeetens was delicious and our cabin was perfect for playing card games in the evening. We recommend visiting the area!

And remember to check out your free state parks pass from the public library!

Dee Near, Nancy Barber and Kathy Berkeley



### Art Connoisseurs

We had a fabulous time with beautiful weather at Columbia College on Tuesday to view John Accurso's art installation as well as he and his wife, Li Chang Accurso's, art studio. Thank you to Carolyn Vara for arranging the visit. And thank you to Russ Vara and Dee Near for driving! It was so nice to have John there to talk about his art in person!

John admitted to getting bored doing only one type of art and mentioned that he frequently switches back and forth. As a result, he had many pieces of what he called Oggetto Libri (Book Objects), Wood Assemblages, and Drawings on display.

We will be meeting in June to plan out from August through December (?). Be thinking about some places you'd like to visit. I know that for our planning meetings we have been meeting on the first Friday of that month, however, I will be gone June 6th. Could we meet June 5th on Thursday, or would Friday, June 13th work for everyone? Let Nancy Barber know if this works!

Just a few local non-Art Connoisseur ideas that you might be interested in:

- The Bobcat Art Show 2025 is happening from May 1st through May 17th at La Galeria from 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. This will highlight works from UC Merced students, faculty and staff.
- Merced County Arts Council's Honors High School Art Show on view from March 26th - April 27th at the MAC Wednesday through Fridays 2:00-8:00 pm, Saturdays from 11:00-6:00, and Sundays from 11:00-4:00. This is the final week!
- Merced County Courthouse Museum Celebrations and Festivals Around Merced County on view March 13-August 31, Wednesdays through Sundays from 1:00-4:00 pm.
- UCMerced Art Gallery - In the Quiet Where We Meet: Art by Eddie Rodriguez on view April 17 through May 19th in the Social Sciences and Mgmt Bldg - 106.



### Renewal Time

#### Merced Branch Membership

It's time to renew your AAUW membership for 2025-26. Please go online, or complete the form and get it to Dee Near by June 30, 2025.

Branch membership can now be renewed online at the national [AAUW website](https://www.aauw.org)! To do so, you must first create an account on the website (if you don't already have one), and the YouTube video "[How to Login or Create an Account on AAUW.org](#)" will step you through this process. Once your account has been created, the YouTube video "[Tutorial: How to Self-Renew for Existing Members](#)" explains the steps in renewal process, including how to stipulate membership in a branch. **Be sure to note Merced Branch membership (Branch 0061) when you renew** so you can continue to receive branch news and information!

You are welcome to renew with a check made out to Merced AAUW if that is easier for you, of course. Please send our form to Dee Near 1004 Half Dome Ct Merced CA 95340. And note that the national dues have increased by \$2, so renewal costs \$107 for members. If you are a lifetime member of national, dues are \$33.00.

The renewal form is included as a separate page in this newsletter for ease of use. If your information in the directory has NOT CHANGED and you renew online, you can just renew, online. However, if your phone, email or address have changed, please let Dee Near know for the directory.

#### Scholarship Recipient

Marciela Perez from Winton, CA has won the 2025 AAUW Scholarship. This year we chose to award one \$2,000 scholarship rather than two because of the deserving nature of this young lady. Marciela wants to become a veterinarian. Her interest in this area started as a youth and she has taken advantage of every opportunity to set herself on this path including showing animals with FFA and competing in a veterinary science judging competition. We will be honored to have her join us at the May Brunch.

#### McElwain

Kathleen McElwain's father passed away on March 17.

• "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."  
Eleanor Roosevelt



## AROUND THE STATE/NATION



Join us on **Saturday, April 26th, 9 am-2:30 pm**, for our AAUW California 2025 Annual Event on Zoom, entitled *Pivoting 4 Our Future*.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to envision together how we can pivot to sustain our organization. We will gather with hundreds of members across the state to celebrate our accomplishments, honor our members and branches, and learn how we can continue the success of AAUW California and our branches into the future.

[Register Now](#)

[Additional Information](#)

### AAUW in Action: Defending Higher Education

AAUW is taking action to protect the U.S. Department of Education's role in civil rights enforcement and borrower support. Our Lobby Corps met with lawmakers, we [joined coalition efforts](#) to protect civil rights enforcement and federal financial aid, and we trained members to hold in-district meetings during the April recess. [Take action](#) and join thousands of AAUW supporters by making your voice heard. [Access our in-district advocacy toolkit here.](#)

### Defending Voting Access

AAUW opposed the *Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act*, which passed the House on April 10. Americans already affirm their citizenship when registering to vote — the SAVE Act would strip that right away, blocking millions, especially women, seniors, rural voters, and communities of color. [Tell the Senate: Oppose the SAVE Act.](#)



## AROUND THE STATE/NATION

### Protecting Women in the Workforce

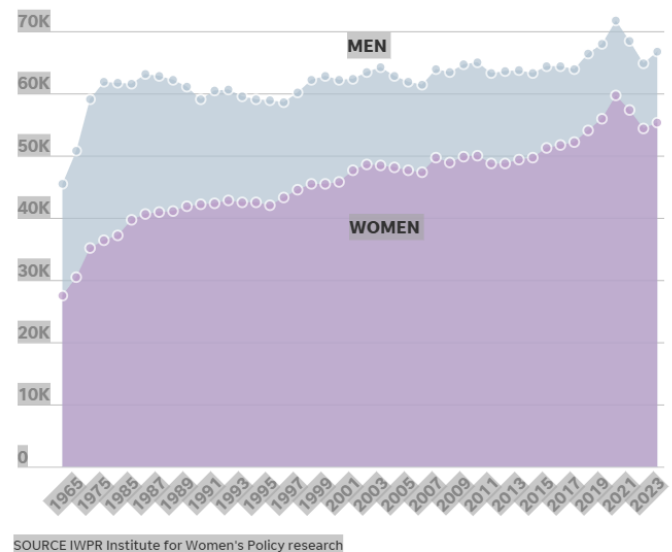
AAUW continues to lead on workplace equity, calling on the Department of Labor to preserve staffing at the Women's Bureau and OFCCP. Our pay equity research was [featured in USA Today](#), and CEO Gloria Blackwell highlighted our work on a podcast and LinkedIn Live, reinforcing the urgent need for economic justice. [Check out more AAUW in the News.](#)

**Ready to take your career — and your confidence — to the next level?**

Join thousands of women across the country who are building brighter futures through AAUW's Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (WEEI) webinar series. From expert-led sessions on salary negotiation and financial literacy to leadership development tools you can use right away, these free webinars are designed to help you earn more, lead with confidence, and close the gender pay gap for good. [Explore our upcoming webinars and register today!](#)

#### Gender earning ratio, 1960-2023

Based on Median Annual Earnings, full-time (in 2023 Dollars)



Editor's Note: The chart above shows similar proportions as we are seeing locally. During COVID, incomes went down in general, but unlike this one, the ratio of women's to men's salaries went down significantly in Merced County.

AAUW MERCED  
**Renewal 2025-26**  
(Deadline June 30, 2025)

**Please renew your membership online at the AAUW website.** <https://www.aauw.org/membership/new-systems-update/#join>. If this is not possible or convenient, 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:**

**Dee Near, 1004 Half Dome Court, Merced, CA 95340**

Please note: Failure to renew will exclude you from section participation in 2025-26 year

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## MEMBER INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name Middle Initial

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City ZIP

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Is your contact information listed in the AAUW Directory?

YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

Please note corrections below.

\_\_\_\_\_ My contact information is not in the Directory. Please include as listed.

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### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular Branch Member \$107  
(Assoc. \$74 (\$69 is tax deductible)  
State \$20, Branch \$13

\_\_\_\_\_ Honorary Life Member \$0

\_\_\_\_\_ Association Life member \$33  
(Assoc. \$0, State \$20, Branch \$13)

Donations to AAUW Merced Branch (voluntary)

Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Science Camp \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL Included \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_