



This was the table setting for the Neighborhood 4 holiday party at the San Carlos home of Yvonne Bergero.

## Mid-Pen'ers do like to party during the holidays



Neighborhoods 3 & 5 at Stamp in San Carlos (left) and Neighborhood 8 on the deck of the Foster City home of Maureen and Stephen Buchner. More photos and stories about holiday happenings can be found on Page 7.

To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

## Co-President's Message

# Kindness for one another is needed now more than ever

By Chris Panero  
Co-President

Last week, I passed a mural at Yerba Buena center with the legend "We're All Stronger Together." What does that mean for us?

We can work for our branch as well as AAUW-California and AAUW-National. Outside of AAUW, we help our community and our friends and help and support each other.

None of this is new to any of you, but it's needed more than ever now. Thank you for being kind to each other and to the people and places around you and know that we are

all part of the great effort that is needed to get through these next few years.

The Nominating Committee (Carole Farina, Joyce Inouye, Gail Langkusch, Carolyn Seffens, and I) will be meeting this month. Is there a job or project you'd like to take on? Please contact one of us.

If you are asked to take a job, please consider doing so to keep our branch running.

Elsewhere in this issue, see the article on the upcoming Lobby Days and the calendar of general meetings.

And remember to donate to the Greatest Needs fund! Just go [here](#) and click the red Donate button.

## Who? What? When?

**Co-Presidents:** Chris Panero and Cathy Chowenhill

**Membership:** Stephanie Katz and Barb Finnegan

**Electronic distribution:** Cathy Chowenhill

**Triad editor:** Micki Carter

**Sunshine Lady:** Marge Haruff. Please contact Marge if you know anyone who would appreciate a card from Mid-Pen Branch.

**Know of a prospective member?** Please contact Stephanie Katz or Barb Finnegan

**Board Meeting:** Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 10 a.m. at the Community Activities Building, 1400 Roosevelt, Redwood City

**Triad Deadline for March issue will be Feb. 15.** Please send articles in Word, Pages or Google.doc and photos (separately, not embedded) as large-format JPEGs to Micki Carter.

**Two-Minute Activist** — Sign up [here](#) to receive regular alerts on AAUW public policy priorities, including how to send drafted letters to your legislators.

**AAUW Email** — Enroll [here](#). Don't miss any news!



The 2025 AAUW Annual Art Contest is NOW OPEN! This is your opportunity to showcase your artistic talents and have your work featured in our annual notecard collection, distributed to members nationwide.

Women artists remain under-represented in galleries and often face pay inequity. Our annual contest spotlights the creativity

and contributions of women artists within our community, advancing gender equity through art.

Here's how the contest works: AAUW members can submit up to two entries featuring their photography or a digital photo of their painting, drawing, sculpture, collage or other form of art through our AAUW Art

Contest page.

Sign-up is easy and only requires your email address or AAUW member ID! Entries are open now through Jan. 31.

Spread the word! We look forward to highlighting your contributions and creativity in the weeks ahead.

Go on! Give it a try!

## Inform yourself about proposed AAUW changes

As an AAUW member, your voice counts. National AAUW is asking for your feedback on:

1. Proposed dues changes
2. Proposed changes to the AAUW national bylaws
3. Proposed changes to the Public Policy Priorities

Why it matters: The Board of Directors is considering a change to AAUW member dues to help meet rising costs. AAUW mem-

ber dues have not kept pace with the cost of supporting AAUW's membership and the Board will consider a \$5 per year increase in dues from 2025-2029.

This dues change supports AAUW's commitment to financial sustainability, the financial strength of the national office and our ability to support branches and states.

Additionally, every AAUW member has the right to comment on proposed changes to the bylaws and Public Policy Priorities

before they are put to the membership for a vote this spring.

Comments can be submitted until Wednesday, Jan. 29, at 2 p.m. PST.

Click [here](#) to review and comment on the proposed bylaws amendments.

Click [here](#) to review and comment on the proposed changes to the Public Policy Priorities.

Click [here](#) to review and comment on the proposed changes to membership dues.



What a good time we had wrapping books at Keplers In Menlo Park in the weeks before Christmas. Thirty-seven volunteers worked a total of 54 hours over the course of nine days to talk to book buyers about AAUW while they wrapped. We did such a good job that we collected over \$1,400 in our tip jar and Venmo account. Above, Linda Howard wrapped at the table by the door. Below, Jane Bradley got a ride home from her shift from her grandson (who apparently did a little shopping himself while he waited.) Thanks to Margot Diltz and Barb Haas for organizing us for this annual fundraiser.



# Turning climate anxiety into impact in San Mateo County

Veteran journalist and climate activist Terry Nagel of Burlingame will discuss taking “big, bold action” to prevent future devastation from climate change at the Saturday, Feb. 8, general meeting of Mid-Peninsula Branch.

The meeting, from 1:30-3:30 p.m., will take place at a new location, the Skyway Center, 655 Skyway Road, San Carlos, near the San Carlos Airport.

Nagel, former mayor of Burlingame and current board chair of Sustainable San Mateo County, will demonstrate how to make positive change at the local level.

She will share tools that track how our cities are doing in the fight against climate change and share some proven solutions. Then she will show how to use that information to effectively influence local leaders.

Nagel is a journalist who served 12 years on the Burlingame City Council, including three terms as mayor.

During her first term as mayor in 2007, she appointed a Green Ribbon Task Force that created the city’s first Climate Action Plan (CAP), and she was named to the county’s first committee working on sustainability issues.

After Burlingame’s CAP was adopted in 2009, she helped form the Citizens Environmental Council (CEC), which champions sustainability on the San Francisco Peninsula. She currently chairs the board of



Terry Nagel

Sustainable San Mateo County and continues to serve on the board of CEC.

Terry worked as a writer and editor at the San Mateo Times, the San Francisco Chronicle and Forbes magazine. She served in communications roles for various nonprofits and has been an active community volunteer in Burlingame since 1978.

**Friendship is one of the greatest aspects of belonging to our Mid-Peninsula Branch. Show your appreciation by calling a Mid-Pen neighbor on Feb.14, Valentine’s Day. Look at the member list your Neighborhood Leader will send you and phone the person above you. The first woman listed calls the last. If you want to do more, go together for a walk or a coffee.**



Be SMART rep Marni Rubin poses with Mid-Pen members and friends.

## Be SMART and secure any guns you have safely in your home

By Cathy Chowenhill

Our speaker in January was Marni Rubin, a co-lead for the Be SMART program of the Peninsula chapter of Moms Demand Action.

The Be SMART campaign was launched to raise awareness that secure gun storage — storing guns unloaded, locked and separate from ammunition — can save children’s lives.

Be SMART emphasizes that it’s an adult responsibility to keep kids from accessing guns and that every adult can play a role in keeping kids and communities safer.

Be SMART

- **S**ecure all guns in your homes and vehicles;
- **M**odel responsible behavior around guns;
- **A**sk about unsecured guns in other homes;
- **R**ecognize the role of guns in suicide;



On hand to hear about BeSMART

- **T**ell your peers to **Be SMART!**  
What can you do? It’s simple. Spread the Be SMART message.  
Talk to your friends and family about the importance of secure gun storage and get the word out in your community.

**The proposed Mid-Peninsula Branch budget for 2025 was passed by a vote of the membership.**

## Prepare to take part in Lobby Days on April 8 and 9

By Cathy Chowenhill

Please join us for Lobby Days 2025!

The event will be held on April 8 and 9 and is a wonderful opportunity to meet with state legislative offices and advocate for AAUW California’s priority bills.

Meetings will be held in person at the Capitol on Tuesday, April 8, and virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, April 9.

We encourage all Mid-Peninsula Branch members to participate.

A mandatory training webinar will be held on Monday, March 31, to equip you with everything you need to know for a successful meeting.

For more information about Lobby Days 2025, see the article [here](#). If you are interested in participating, please complete BOTH of the following steps:

Step 1 - Register for the Lobby Days event by February 21st. Register for Lobby Days [here](#).

Step 2 - Register for the mandatory training which will be held on Monday, March 31, 7-8 p.m. Register for the training webinar [here](#).

We hope that you will join us in this act of advocacy to promote our legislative priorities and advance our values.

## If you haven’t heard from us, resubscribe!

After a contentious election year, many of us have experienced email burnout.

AAUW California uses the Mailchimp platform to communicate with members.. When you choose to unsubscribe from one of our messages, you are prevented from getting any messages, including the California Connection!

To re-subscribe, you need to send an email to [webteam@aauw-ca.org](mailto:webteam@aauw-ca.org) to request to be re-subscribed.

AAUW National has the same issue and asks you to ensure you stay connected with them by re-subscribing to AAUW National emails. Simply use this [link](#) to re-subscribe.

# Who knew! Eating chocolate is good for you!

By Carole Farina

Elvira Monroe gave the All About Foods Section a history of cacao beans and samples of chocolate bars made with beans from Ghana, Madagascar, Colombia and other countries to compare taste and texture. To top it off, she and Theoni Papas treated us to hot chocolate at Venetia, Palo Alto, in real Italian style — thick enough to eat with a spoon.

Elvira cites Andrew Pelouquin, editor-in-chief of *The Longevity Journal*, in saying cocoa isn't just one of the tastiest, most complex-flavored beverages to sip on a cold winter's day — it's also one of the healthiest.

Cocoa is incredibly packed with antioxidants. In fact, according to one study, "Cocoa contains more phenolic antioxidants than most foods."

It's loaded with flavonoids like catechins, procyanidin and epicatechin. These antioxidants can "scavenge reactive oxygen species, inhibit enzymes, and upregulate antioxidant defenses."

There are also a ton of health benefits from cocoa, including:

- Incredibly rich in nutrients. Cocoa contains fiber, particularly insoluble fiber, along with magnesium, copper, calcium and potassium, all of which contribute to better overall health.
- Lowered blood pressure. Research showed an inverse association between chocolate intake and blood pressure. Cocoa can increase the production of nitric oxide, which helps your blood vessels to dilate and allows for better circulation and reduced blood pressure.
- Lowered cardiac mortality rates. Data suggests that people who eat dark chocolate or cocoa at least twice a week are 66% less likely to suffer cardiac death following myocardial infarctions.
- Improved mental health. One study found that elderly men who regularly ate chocolate tended to feel better overall and had lower rates of depression than men who didn't. Lower rates of loneliness were also reported.
- Better cardiovascular health. In addi-



**Foodies put the data to the test at Venetia in Palo Alto.**

- tion to lowered blood pressure and less probability of cardiac mortality, cocoa can also reduce atherosclerotic narrowing of the arteries. The antioxidants in cocoa can prevent cholesterol from hardening into plaque and accumulating on the arterial walls.
- Enhanced insulin sensitivity. People suffering from insulin resistance may actually benefit from the consumption of dark chocolate because the antioxidants in cocoa can reduce oxidative stress, alter glucose metabolism, and improve endothelial function, all of which can increase insulin sensitivity.
- Boosted immune system. It may sound odd, but it's true: cocoa really can make your immune system more resilient against infections and disease. It does so by increasing your antioxidant activity, as well as boosting production of T-cells and lymphocytes. The natural anti-inflammatory effects can curb inflammation and speed up immune reaction times.
- Improved central nervous system function. The antioxidants in cocoa can reduce inflammation in the brain, upregulate neuronal function, protect your brain against degen-

eration (common with age and high levels of stress), increase dopamine production, protect against stroke, and improve brain signaling.

- Protection for your skin. The antioxidants in cocoa can protect your skin against the UV radiation in sunlight. It can also reduce inflammatory markers and histamines, reduce erythema, and improve vasodilation to increase delivery of nutrients to your skin.
- Help with weight loss. Counterintuitive? Not really! Chocolate increases nitric oxide production, and nitric oxide can enhance glucose uptake, increase your body's ability to oxidize (activate) both glucose and fatty acids, enhance fat-burning, and even prevent fat storage.

Yes, there is such a thing as too much chocolate — according to the data, a daily dose of more than 25 grams (125 calories) can lead to weight gain.

However, consumed in moderation (around 6 grams, or 30 calories' worth) can have all the positive effects listed above without leading to weight gain (which is caused by the milk and sugar in chocolate, not the cocoa itself).

Supercharge your diet and take your health to the next level by adding more cocoa to your daily diet!

## Interest Sections

# For movie and dinner, join the Movie Group

## Movie Group

Gail Langkusch is now the coordinator for the Movie Group, so those who are interested should contact her. They will continue to meet on the third Tuesday of the month. However, the group will attend either an early- or mid-afternoon showing of selected movies and will make dining choices based on the times of the movies selected.

## Team Mah-Jongg

A lively group of members play and continue to learn American Mah-Jongg. We meet Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon at the San Carlos Adult Community Center at 601 Chestnut, San Carlos. Usually, four to six players are able to attend, and we look forward to more joining the group. Periodically, classes are offered for those who are new to the game. For further information, contact Carolyn Seffens.

## Climate Change

The Climate Change section meets once a month on the fourth Monday from 3:30 -5 p.m. Contact Victoria Kline for meeting details and to RSVP.

## Book Bunch

The Book Bunch meets on the third Friday of each month at 10 a.m. On Feb. 21, Mirna Hirschl will host a discussion of *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt. Then on March 21, Wilma Hoffman will host a discussion of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. If you have questions about either meeting, please contact Carol Orton.

## French Conversation

The French Conversation section plans to meet on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 1:30 p.m. Get in touch with Laverne Rabinowitz for more details!

## Hilly Hikers

Hilly Hikers will continue to meet on the fourth Friday of the month. New members wanting to join should contact Wilma Hoffmann.



The French Group group poses for a photo at the end of its holiday luncheon at chez Leslie Pasahow. Mirna Hirschl, Pat McCarty, Chris Panero, Judi Kerfoot, and Laverne Rabinowitz and Leslie Pasahow, standing.

## All About Food

Join us as we explore the history, uses and benefits of foods and how to grow or prepare them. Take a turn leading monthly discussions or suggest a tasting or excursion. Meetings are at 3:30 p.m. on the second Thursday. Contact Carole Farina.

## Walk/Talk & Gawk

The group continues to meet on Thursday mornings. Members of the group suggest walks, hikes, routes and the time and place to meet, and then someone leads and does the emails for that week. Stephanie Katz is the contact.

## Want to learn to play mah jongg? Here's how

A very active American mah jongg interest group meets on Tuesday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and on Friday afternoon from 12:45-2:45 p.m. at the San Carlos Community Center.

Several Branch members have expressed interest in learning the game. In response, a series of two or three free lessons will be offered this February. The specific time and place will be decided by the participants.

If you are interested in the class or have any other questions, please contact Carolyn Seffens as soon as possible. Any experienced players who want to join the group are always welcome.



Neighborhood 2 gathered at the Redwood City home of Cathy Chowenhill for a holiday luncheon.

## Neighborhood 4 learns Yvonne's backstory

By Wilma Hoffmann

Ten members of Neighborhood 4 gathered Dec. 11 at Yvonne Bergero's San Carlos home for our annual holiday party.

What we did not know or appreciate at the time was that Yvonne's father was one of "The Three Swiss" who owned an extremely upscale restaurant by the same

name in San Francisco during and after the Second World War.

So little Yvonne grew up in that setting and understood what it took to make an elegant dining experience!

Beautiful china, Waterford crystal, silver service and the exquisitely decorated table made our eyes pop when we came in.

I think we were all impressed by the presentation. Hard act to follow for the hostess next year.

Of course, the important part was that we were together enjoying each other, the good food and general hilarity as we did the traditional gift exchange/steal.



Some more of the revelers from Neighborhoods 3 & 5 at Stamp and Neighborhood 4 at the Bergero home.

## Public Policy

# Are gender-based scholarships problematic?

By Missy Maceyko

Co-chair, AAUW CA Public Policy Committee

Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 bans sex-based discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding. Title IX was created to provide women with equal access and success in educational institutions, to redress the historical marginalization of women in educational settings relative to men.

The definition of what counts as sex-based discrimination has necessarily expanded over the years, eventually coming to protect everyday Americans from things like pregnancy discrimination and gender-stereotype discrimination (e.g. not getting a promotion because you are not performing in a way that aligns with the gender you are perceived to be).

The spirit of Title IX is to protect those who have been historically marginalized on the basis of sex/gender.

However, as part of the larger pushback against social justice and Diversity, Equity,

and Inclusion (DEI), we have seen a sharp uptick in watchdog efforts and legal action around educational programs and scholarships focusing on fostering gender (and racial) equity.

Those bringing these lawsuits suggest that programs and scholarships that are explicitly for women violate Title IX because they discriminate against men. For instance, between 2016 and 2022, Mark Perry, an emeritus professor at the University of Michigan's Flint campus and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, filed 410 Title IX complaints against universities that offer programs or awards for women, but not men.

Lawsuits like these lean into the concept of equality, the idea that fairness is giving everyone the exact same things. This is opposed to the concept of equity, where fairness is reaching equilibrium by giving some individuals and groups different protections and support to make sure that everyone has what they need to succeed.

If one student scrapes their knee and you

give everyone a Band-Aid, this is equality. If one student scrapes their knee and you give only that student a Band-Aid, this is equity. Leaning into equality work does not make sense when equity should be the target to redress an historical and/or current harm.

However, given the threats of legal action to DEI programs, and given the ongoing legal wrangling over rules and guidance about gender equity and gender equality under Title IX, many educational institutions are unsure about the legality of their gender equity programs and initiatives.

Scholarships that seek to target protected groups to overcome historical forms of marginalization have become a target in the larger attack against DEI, Title VII, and Title IX.

If a college or university is wary of listing your AAUW scholarship, this might be why.

AAUW does not receive federal funding under Title IX, so it can offer gender-specific scholarships and programs without this same fear.

## Diversity Equity Inclusion

# Finding a way to focus on voices of Black women

By Charmen Goehring

President, AAUW California

Maya Angelou once said, "When someone tells you who they are, believe them."

I have heard this quote thrown around by people talking about our incoming president, but the Sacramento Observer recently ran an article where the quote was talking about white women and, sadly, I agree with the author.

It is no secret that I care deeply about diversity and equity and believe these are keys to AAUW's survival as an organization. Equity for all is our vision, after all.

Throughout history, white women have talked about supporting Black women, yet their actions have looked much different. Today white women are asking Black women to join a Women's March to protest Donald Trump's election and all that he has said he will do.

But, whereas 92% of Black women voted for reproductive rights, health, and

justice, 53% of "white women voted against democracy, against women's interests, for a racist, for somebody who is proud to have taken away our right to choose." (Percentages reported from national exit polls after the Nov. 5 election.) White women keep showing up for fake allyship while protecting white male patriarchy and white supremacy.

Overall, we are not ready to collaborate with women of color because we have our own work to do first. This is why I have been encouraging AAUW members to learn about cultural humility and to explore concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion, individually and as a branch.

Until our traditionally white branches are truly welcoming to women of color, we will not be an appealing organization to them despite our declared desire for equity for all. Our mission and our work have the potential to transform policies and communities for all women and girls, and we should

work towards including all communities of women in that work. But we have to change who we are first so that we can become true allies to our sisters of color.

Our path forward will not be easy, but it is vital to the viability of AAUW and our branches. I encourage you to read the Sacramento Observer article and consider how you might learn more about true allyship and how to build trust with women of color to benefit our mission.

If you are interested in more DEI resources or discussion, Barb Finnegan is our Mid-Peninsula Branch DEI chair.

## Mid-Peninsula member Marilyn Perry has died

Longtime member, Marilyn Perry, died peacefully Jan. 10 in her home after a long battle with cancer. Details of any service will be shared as they become available.





The All-About-Food Section invited the Public Policy Section to join them for a Dec. 12 holiday meeting, Food Section style. The original idea was to compare sparkling white wines, with hostess Wilma Hoffmann maintaining that once you had tasted good Champagne, you would no longer be interested in anything else. To round out the event, guests were to bring a favorite holiday food, with no restrictions on choice. (Fortunately, Pat McCarty was an experienced champagne cork remover.) The prediction proved true. We started with an excellent champagne, Verve Clicquot, and even a sparkling white wine from Alsace could not compare. A great time was had by all, sharing the good food — of course, AFTER the wine tasting — which allowed time for the effects of the bubbly-tasting to wear off before people had to drive home.

## If you want to help L.A. fire victims...

**By Charmen Goehring**  
AAUW California President

Our hearts go out to everyone who has been devastated by the fires in the Los Angeles area.

As before with the Maui and Paradise fires, members are wondering how they can support their fellow AAUW members during this difficult time.

Here is a list of several reputable organizations that are supporting recovery efforts in the Los Angeles area at this time.

### Supporting victims

[Community Organized Relief Effort](#)

American Red Cross- 1-800-RED-CROSS, text the word REDCROSS to 90999 or visit [here](#).

[United Way of Greater Los Angeles](#)  
[Salvation Army](#)

### Supporting firefighters

[California Fire Foundation](#)

[Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation](#)

[Widows, Orphans and Disabled Firefighters Fund](#)

### Helping animals

[Pasadena Humane](#)

[Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation](#)

[Los Angeles Animal Services](#)

There have been multiple GoFundMe campaigns set up to help those who have lost homes as well. Keep an eye out for any campaigns assisting members in your community.

Please keep our fellow AAUW California members and their families in your thoughts and prayers and donate if you are able. Having a community of friends like AAUW might be very helpful right now.

Stay safe.

## Consider a gift to AAUW's Greatest Needs Fund soon

**By Barb Finnegan**

As defined by the AAUW, “the Greatest Needs Fund (GNF) is a vital source of unrestricted support that allows AAUW to respond quickly and effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities.

When you support the GNF, you enable AAUW to sustain core operations, advocacy efforts, and program expansion. You support initiatives like economic empowerment programs, voter engagement campaigns, and policy advocacy, ensuring AAUW can amplify its impact, adapt to evolving needs, and continue leading the fight for gender equity.

Your contributions to this fund are crucial for AAUW’s agility and long-term sustainability, empowering the organization to drive meaningful change. These funds are carefully managed to maximize impact, ensuring every dollar serves AAUW’s mission.”

Donating to the GNF is a triple win:

1) The advantage for you is that your donation is tax-deductible. Further tax advantages may occur if you use your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

2) Your donation can support numerous AAUW projects.

3) Donations towards the GNF count toward the “advancement” criteria needed for our branch to achieve the five-star national recognition program.” This recognizes a branch for achieving goals which align with the mission of advancing gender equity for women and girls.

## Join a webinar on what’s next in reproductive rights in today’s U.S.

You are invited to a webinar “Reproductive Rights: Where Do We Go From Here?” presented by AAUW Silicon Valley Branch, featuring Emily Bazelon, New York Times journalist, Yale Law professor and research fellow, Political Gabfest co-host, and author.

The Zoom event will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 1-2 p.m. Pacific.

Register [here](#).