



Speaker Terry Nagel and Micki Carter at the Feb. 8 general meeting with lots of Mid-Pen friends in San Carlos.

## Fighting Climate Change at the local level

By Micki Carter

Wringing our hands at the dysfunction of the federal government when it comes to Climate Change hasn't been all that effective, but Terry Nagel, director of Sustainable San Mateo County (SSMC), suggests getting involved at the local level to effect real change.

Nagel, a veteran journalist and former mayor of Burlingame, spoke to Mid-Peninsula and San Mateo chapter members at the new Skyway Building at the San Carlos Airport Feb. 8.

And I had the honor of introducing my friend of 40 years. We worked together at The San Mateo Times before she became a climate change activist in San Mateo County.

"People who volunteer with SSMC tell us it feels good to do something to counter-act climate change instead of just worrying about it," Nagel said.

She suggested that newly minted activists start with their own city. "You will need to do a bit of research and you might want

to begin with the city's Climate Action Plan."

How recently was it updated? How often does the city give progress reports? Does the city set annual goals and are those goals a priority?"

After you've done your research, here are five steps she recommends:

1. Get to know the players: the decision makers and others working on these issues: the council members, city sustainability manager, city sustainability manager, city environmental commission, city manager and local residents who care about sustainability.



2. Learn the rules for participation. By attending a City Council meeting, you'll begin to understand who's most approachable and how to participate in public meetings. The meeting agenda will include details on submitting comments by email, on Zoom and in person. Your city clerk can also help.

3. Decide what you and others should advocate for.

Get some others to go with you. Discuss your ideas in advance with the sustainability manager, commissioners and council members, city manager and make sure it hasn't  
**See CLIMATE, Page 5**



Co-President Chris Panero just got back from a trip to Paris. Her photographer's eye noted the flash of red amid the neutral tones on the Paris Metro and the exquisite result of the renovation of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.



## 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, March 4, at 10 a.m. at the Community Activities Building, 1400 Roosevelt, Redwood City
- Triad Deadline for April issue will be March 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!

## Co-President's Message

# Three things for you to do from Co-President Chris P.

By Chris Panero

If you were not able to make your Valentine's Day call, do it today!

Find the Mid-Pen Directory, turn to your neighborhood list in the back, and call the person above you on the list.

No matter what day it is, it's nice to hear from a friend.

On Netflix, see *The Only Girl in the Orchestra*, a short documentary about a pioneer: New York Philharmonic's double bass player Orin O'Brien.

It's time to choose our Named Gift Honoree. Think of a member who has worked hard for our branch and make your nomination privately to me, Co-president Cathy Chowenhill or AAUW Fund Chair

Sally Mellinger by March 15.

For your reference, here's a list of honorees from the last few years:

- 2024 — Mary Spring
- 2023 — Beth Swanson, Micki Carter
- 2022 — Margo Diltz, Sally Mellinger
- 2021 — Carole Farina, Pat Ivester
- 2020 — Wilma Hoffman, Chris Panero
- 2019 — Carolyn Miller
- 2018 — Sandra Neff, Karen Rende
- 2017 — Cathy Chowenhill, June Hennig
- 2016 — Kathy Rafael
- 2015 — Linda Thomas
- 2014 — RoseMarie Beuttler
- 2013 — Ellen Van Creveld, Hartley Laughead

# Introducing the nominees for Mid-Pen positions in '25-'26

The Nominating Committee presents the following slate for 2025-26.

Election of officers will take place at our Branch Annual Meeting at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 5, via Zoom.

Thank you to all who helped assemble the list, and thank you to all who agreed to work with our branch governance next year.

## Elected Officers

**President:** Barb Finnegan

**VP Programs:** Karen Large,  
Pat McCarty

**VP Membership:** Stephanie Katz,  
Gail Langkusch

**Admin Finance:** Mary Spring

**Treasurer:** Nancy Kucharik

**Membership Treasurer:** Wilma  
Hoffmann

**Recording Secretary:** Margot Diltz

## Appointed Positions

**Archivist:** Nancy Oliver

**DEI:** OPEN

**Neighborhoods:** Carolyn Seffens

**Parliamentarian:** Nancy Oliver

**AAUW Fund:** Sally Mellinger

**AAUW Public Policy:** OPEN

**Tech Trek:** Sheri Simmons (Chair),  
Laura Miller, Jane Fernald

**Scholarships:** Gail Langkusch  
(Chair), Katherine Linnemann,  
Carole Farina, Nancy Oliver

**Electronic Communications:**

**Triad Editor:** Micki Carter

**Website Editor:** OPEN

**External/Facebook:** OPEN

**Internal (Monday Memo):** Cathy  
Chowenhill

**Zoom Meetings:** Cathy Chowenhill

**Event Graphics:** Nancy Oliver

**Directory:** Margot Diltz

**Sunshine:** Marge Haruff

**Hospitality:** Nancy Cantisano

**Book Wrapping:** Margot Diltz (Chair),  
Stephanie Meyer, Barbara Haas

**Outreach:** Grateful Garment, Hope  
House Yvonne Bergero



Jill Eisenberg

## Diversity in kids books to be topic for March meeting

By Katherine Linnemann

With the erosion of DEI government requirements along with the rise of book banning nationwide, do we still need diverse books in our schools?

Is there a literacy crisis in our schools?

Tackling an answer to those questions at our March 8 general meeting will be Jill Eisenberg, vice president of business development, curriculum and literacy strategy for Lee and Low Books

She will discuss these topics and more at the 1:30 p.m. meeting at Skyway Center, 655 Skyway Road, San Carlos, on the westside of the San Carlos Airport.

This will be an opportunity to learn about the state of diverse children's books, given the current political climate.

She will discuss literacy in schools today, how book banning impacts diverse books and what we can do to ensure that our libraries reflect cultural diversity.

Now in its 34th year, [Lee and Low Books](#) of New York City is the largest multicultural children's book publisher in the United States and a leader in the movement for greater representation in publishing since its inception.

The presentation will begin at 2 p.m. Invite your friends.

## Protecting yourself from email scams

By Michelle Baer and Donna Holmes, Communication Committee

Email scams don't always pretend to be large corporations; sometimes they impersonate people you know – family, friends, or even colleagues. These scams can be especially dangerous because they are working to exploit established trust.

Here are four tips to recognizing and avoiding email scams.

- Be suspicious of unusual requests. If a friend or family member suddenly emails you asking for money, gift cards, or sensitive information, be skeptical

- Look at the writing style. Proceed with caution if you encounter unusual wording, spelling or grammatical errors, or phrasing that just doesn't "sound like" the person.

- Stay calm. Scammers frequently rely on urgent language to drive immediate action. Do not rush to respond to the request until you determine its validity.

- Look carefully at the sender's email address. Many email systems just show you the sender's display name, which is easy to

manipulate. The email address itself must be inspected.

In most systems you can hover your mouse over the sender's name to reveal their email address. Check the email address carefully. Frequently, the email address is entirely wrong and easy to dismiss as fraudulent.

In more sophisticated scams, the email address may be only slightly different. If you have identified the email address as incorrect, then delete the message (optionally, report as spam).

However, if after reviewing an email message, you still have some doubts, how do you proceed?

First, it is very important to NOT reply to the message and do NOT click on any links or attachments.

Then, reach out to the purported sender directly, such as by a phone call or text, to validate whether the message is authentic.

With a bit of knowledge and careful attention, it is possible to avoid many email scams.

# Can we measure the cost of eliminating USAID?

(Reprinted from the *San Mateo Daily Journal*, Feb. 7, 2025)

By Michelle Carter

The U.S. Agency for International Development — this week’s target of opportunity for the President and his eager lieutenant, Elon Musk — to most people means huge sacks of grain with USAID stamped on them or long lines of children getting vaccinated in a tent with the same logo.

These are all big, multi-billion-dollar programs that do massive amounts of good around the world, but much of what AID does involves small programs that have just one or two people on the ground in sometimes politically unstable places in the world — and those people may be the ones in particular danger as AID is getting sliced up — or sliced off.

In the summer of 1996, I was one of them.

After spending a year as the U.S. Information Agency’s Journalist-in-Residence in Russia, I accepted an offer to run an AID grant program in Albania. Much as I did in Russia, I would be working with independent newspapers to establish and maintain a free press in this mountainous Balkan country — which at the time had no functioning government.

I arrived in Tirana, armed with a briefcase full of briefing papers, the address of a boarding house where a room was reserved for me and contact information for a press organization that would have an office (of sorts!) waiting for me. All this was provided by my AID “handler” who recruited me, prepped me and promised to stand ready if I needed her at any time during the next eight weeks.

I was the entire AID Press Freedom program in Albania — funded by a non-governmental organization operating out of a prestigious university in the US — and my AID handler was my only link to home. After a year in Russia, I knew what I was getting into with struggling newspapers trying to survive against oppressive odds. I had my Mac Powerbook and Pagemaker software (on 12 floppy disks!) and some proven strategies to offer.

What I wasn’t prepared for was a coun-



Each bag of wheat or rice states it’s a gift from the American People.

try run by gangs who stopped drivers to collect “fines” on the spot and raided coffee houses on a whim. On top of that, Serbia and Bosnia were waging a hot war only a hundred kilometers away.

But I had my handler, my lifeline to the real world whom I could reach via email as long as electricity was relatively stable. (No cell phones in 1996!) She was able to finagle a box fan for my hot, stuffy room and had a courier deliver my return airline ticket two weeks before I was scheduled to leave.

Tirana had a US consulate, but it had been minimally staffed since the war began, and I had been reminded that I was a government contractor — not a State Department employee. I had no more claim on the consulate staff than any other American citizen.

Just as I was wrapping up my two-month assignment, the State Department ordered all Americans out of Albania. The war had come too close. We could hear explosions and gunfire in Tirana.

My handler shifted into high gear. From her desk in Washington, she found me transport to the Quonset hut that served as the international airport, and I, unlike all those other Americans trying to get out, had

a ticket! I towed my bags around the building, jammed with nervous evacuees, onto the tarmac to the waiting Austrian Airlines 737 and climbed on.

But what if that link to home had been severed? What if my emails went unanswered? My circumstances were harrowing but hardly life-threatening. But at this moment, AID has hundreds, maybe thousands, of grantees running one-person shops in places more perilous than Tirana. (Think of those setting up water-filtration systems in the Sudan or teaching teachers in Mozambique).

Did the frantic phone calls and emails to their AID handlers go unanswered when all AID employees were ordered to stay home or put on leave? Can they find safety if — overnight — AID no longer exists? Does anyone even care that they’re there?

Perhaps they are the unintended casualties of a reckless political act — victims of (not so) friendly fire.

*Michelle Carter, former managing editor of The San Mateo Times, is the author of From Under the Russian Snow (2017, Bedazzled Ink)*

# Climate

Continued from Page One

already been done.

4. Advocate for action. Ask the mayor or other council members to add your topic to a council meeting agenda. Rally others to go with you. Write op-ed or letters to the editor.

5. Remember to thank those who helped you. Council members hear many complaints and seldom are thanked.

Nagel is adamant that there is hope.

“We have very smart people working on addressing climate change. We have the tools and the solutions to make it happen.

“All we need is political will to shore up policies at the local level and show how we can successfully combat climate change. Once we succeed, others will follow.”

Nagel’s also a strong proponent for electrification, “one of the fastest ways to reduce carbon emissions,” she said, noting that:

- Commercial and residential building emissions account for about 25% of all GHG emissions in California.

- Electric heating and cooling systems and appliances are much more efficient and use less energy than gas ones. For example, heat pump water heaters are three to four times more efficient than gas water heaters. Heat pump HVAC systems provide heating and air conditioning.

- Electricity is also cheaper in the long run. And there are great rebates and 0% loans for up to \$10,000 available through PG&E.

- Eliminating gas is much better for your health. Stanford studies have shown indoor levels of harmful emissions contribute to asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Stoves emit this pollution even when they are off, and this gas seeps into other rooms.

- Going electric also is safer. Many of the gas lines under our homes date back to the mid-20th Century. There’s a reason why PG&E cautions you to “call before you dig.”

- Another reason to go electric is because state laws are mandating it. Starting in 2030, all new furnaces and water heaters in the state will need to be electric. The sale of gas water heaters will be banned in the Bay Area after 2026.

- All new passenger cars, trucks and SUVs sold in California will be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

She offered two tools that can help:

- SSMC’s Sustainability [Dashboard](#) can



Mid-Pen members enjoyed the gathering at the new Skyway Center.



help you learn how your city is doing

- The Sustainability Ideas Bank offers policies and programs that have been suc-

cessfully implemented elsewhere.

“We would be happy to show you how to use them.”

## Interest Sections

# Ready to learn to play American Mah-Jongg?

## 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 plays and continues 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 March 21, Wilma Hoffman will host a discussion of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. If you have questions, please contact Carol Orton.

## French Conversation

On Tuesday, March 11, we'll meet at 1:30 in the home of Mirna Hirschl, 9 Kittie Lane, Belmont. Be sure to let her know that you're coming. Questions? Contact Laverne Rabinowitz.

## Hilly Hikers

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



**They got the memo! At a recent Mah-Jongg session at the San Carlos Adult Community Center, three Mid-Peninsula players turned up in sweaters of the same shade of burgundy! Who knew?**

## 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.

## Public Policy

# Take action to fight back against Project 2025

As Co-Directors Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko outlined in a webinar in October 2024, the objectives of Project 2025 directly counter the Public Policy Priorities of AAUW California.

With federal policy pronouncements and changes taking place at a head spinning pace since Jan. 20, it is clear that there is a concerted effort by a number of coalitions in the federal government to make Project 2025 become reality.

For example:

- The Executive Order declaring that there are “only two genders, male and female”.
- The Executive Order eliminating federal funds for schools that recognize transgender identities or teach about structural racism, white privilege, and unconscious bias.
- The Executive Order directing federal agencies to look for ways to expand access to private school vouchers.
- The Executive Order rescinding a dozen Biden-era executive actions supporting racial equity and combating discrimination against gay and transgender people.
- The Office of Management and Budget order freezing all federal financial assistance

## Feb. 21 is last day to sign up for April Lobby Days

We encourage all members to participate in Lobby Days 2025, an important act of advocacy to promote our legislative priorities.

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

For more information about the event, read this [article](#).

If you would like to participate, please complete BOTH of the following steps:

Step 1: Register for the Lobby Days event [here](#).

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

(since rescinded but with a standing order for agencies to restrict DEI programming and “woke gender ideology”).

• The Executive Order withdrawing the United States from the 2015 Paris agreement which seeks to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

While this may seem overwhelming, note that there are already individuals and coalitions who are pushing back in a number of ways, from direct refusal to comply, to spamming federal surveillance accounts, to direct legal challenges.

AAUW California is building out our own action-items database, which will go live for you this spring. In the interim, we will provide a short list and ask you to take action by choosing one self-focused, one other-focused, and one political-focused item from the list below.

### Self-Focused: Education

Rewatch the AAUW Project 2025 [webinar](#) from the fall, as needed, to get a sense of what Project 2025 is/does and/or read the document itself. Read the articles linked above to better understand how some individuals and organizations are working to fight back.

### Other-Focused: Education & Connection

Whatever you take away from your

homework in self-education, be sure to tell one friend about what you learned. You can do this over lunch.

### Politically Focused: Outreach to Senators

Sign the petition opposing the confirmation of Linda McMahon. Text “SIGN PTGHEX” to 50409.

Reach out to potential swing Senators from outside of California to voice your opposition to confirmation/s:

Lisa Murkowski, Alaska. 202-224-6665. [Contact form](#)

Susan Collins, Maine. 202-224-2523. [Contact form](#)

Thom Tillis, North Carolina. 202-224-6342. [Contact form](#)

Rand Paul, Kentucky. 202-224-4343. [Contact form](#)

Mitch McConnell, Kentucky. 202-224-2541. [Contact form](#)

John Curtis, Utah. 202-224-5251. [Contact form](#)

Bill Cassidy, Louisiana. 202-224-5824. [Contact form](#)

Joni Ernst, Iowa. 202-224-3254. [Contact form](#)

Chuck Grassley, Iowa 202-224-3744. [Contact form](#)

**AAUW has issued a statement about ERA, which we want to share with you here: “AAUW applauds President Joe Biden’s historic affirmation of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While there will be challenges ahead, AAUW remains steadfast in our fight to ensure full recognition of equality that cannot be undermined on account of sex.”**

# We are not powerless if ICE arrests our neighbors

*“In a moment of darkness, we can be the light.” — Lorena Melgarejo*

**By Micki Carter**

So many of us are chilled every time we hear of another roundup of undocumented people whose families will be forever torn apart by arrest and potential deportation.

And no doubt everyone of us is asking: How can I help?

Husband Mike and I learned a great deal about ways to help (and ways to make things worse!) when we attended a Zoom presentation last month by Lorena Melgarejo, executive director of Faith in Action/Bay Area.

Melgarejo was invited to tell us what ordinary people can do to help, and she described Rapid Response teams that can be vital to a successful outcome.

It starts with a phone call to the Faith in Action Hotline (which is answered around the clock every day). The number is 203-666-4472, and the sooner that call comes in after or during an arrest in a “targeted enforcement operation” by ICE the better.

Do all that you can to share that hotline number with people who are in jeopardy.

The next step involves “witness enforcement.” After a call is received, Faith in Action turns to ordinary people like us who agree to receive a phone call and leave immediately to the site of an arrest in progress to get the full name and date of birth of the person arrested and videotape the action taken.

The witnesses then upload that video to Faith in Action.

(And absolutely promise NOT to post that video to social media, Those posts, according to Melgarejo, create mass panic which does no one any good.)

The witnesses’s equally important role is to reassure the family that Faith in Action — and you — will provide support for them as the next days and weeks unfold.

Faith in Action, Melgarejo said, has a pool of attorneys who work pro-bono or “low-bono” and will talk to the detained

**REPORT ICE ACTION!**  
**(203) NO-MIGRA**  
**(203) 666-4472**

**IF ICE COMES TO YOUR HOME, WORKPLACE, OR NEIGHBORHOOD, REPORT THIS ACTION BY CALLING THE HOTLINE AND SEND HELP TO THOSE IMPACTED**

community member within hours after the arrest. This day-of response is critical.

So we can help in a number of ways:

Spread the hotline number as widely as possible.

Volunteer to join a Rapid Response witness team. Mike and I did this in 2017. We were well informed about our roles.

Volunteer to provide support for families who has had a member arrested. Multilingual helpers are especially needed.

If you have friends or acquaintances who are in jeopardy from ICE arrest, pass along the Hotline number. You might also help acquaint them and yourself about the detainee’s rights during an ICE action. The American Civil Liberties Union has prepared some excellent [videos](#) that spell out those rights very clearly.

If you would like more information and help in understanding how you could be useful in this effort, contact me directly.

**Saturday, March 8, is International Women’s Day!**

**Honor this year’s theme — For ALL women and girls:**

**Rights. Equality. Empowerment.**

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