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**Branching Out** is published monthly by the Bradenton Branch of the [American Association of University Women](#), P. O. Box 14009, Bradenton, FL 34280-4099.

### **April President's Message**

Spring greetings, fellow branch members! I don't know about you, but I can't believe it is already April! We are heading toward the end of our fiscal year, so it is time to renew membership. I did mine with the email **Treasurer Mickie McElroy** sent. I encourage you to join me. More info is in this newsletter. Since we Zoomed our meetings all year, the \$\$ saved on lunches or dinners more than covered my renewal. All the vaccinations taking place make meeting in person much more likely.

Speaking of branch meetings, while I understand that some of you haven't planned to participate in them, our programs have continued to feature the work of community partners (League of Women Voters and Women's Resource Center) as well as our past Women of Achievement honorees (Jane Plitt and **Janene Amick**). Last month after Janene introduced us to innovative solutions **The Manatee Performing Arts Center (the Florida Cultural Group, Inc.)** has initiated in the face of the pandemic challenges, we reviewed the legislative priorities of Florida AAUW in advance of Virtual Lobby Day. I made some contacts with couple of local legislators. Perhaps you did, too?

Registration is now open **AAUW Florida's (Virtual) Annual Meeting 2021**. Since there is no travel or expense involved it is a perfect opportunity for each branch member to participate in any or all the sessions (April 16-18). Complete info and the link for registering is in this newsletter. A detailed description of each session on the conference agenda is posted on the AAUW Florida website at <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net/2021/02/02/leadership-conference/>.

Also available is the video of the **Florida Membership Town Hall** about the proposed membership and voting. It is up on the Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/529745698>

Our branch needs additional members of the leadership team. If you are willing to help (even if you don't want a title tied to your name!) please contact me or any board member. There is always a place for your voice!

Marcia Hill

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## SAVE THE DATE

**Membership Renewal (see below)**

**April 3** - 1:30pm Book Group

**April 16, 17,18** - Virtual Florida Leadership Conference. Be sure to REGISTER!

**April 20** - 6:45pm Branch Monthly Mtg. (We will talk about the Virtual Florida Leadership Conference - see below for details.)

May 6 - 1:00 Book Group Lunch (see below for details)

**May 18** - 6:45pm (TBA).

[Note: Women of Achievement 2021 has been postponed until 2022.]



AAUW Florida 2021 Leadership Conference Registration

**REGISTER HERE!**



## Virtual Leadership Conference and Annual Meeting April 16, 17, & 18

### *"Women Together in the Sunshine State"*

#### April 16th - Late Friday Afternoon

- Branches share their 2020 highlights.
- Announcement of Named Gift Awards.
- Hear keynote speaker, Janet Petro, Deputy Director, NASA, Kennedy Space Center - **"Adapting to New Challenges"**.

#### April 17th - Saturday Morning

- **Session on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
  - Review the DEI Tool Kit online at [aauw.org](http://aauw.org).
  - Learn how to start difficult conversations.
  - Explore key terms and concepts.
- **Session on Economic Security**
  - Define financial literacy for women at all stages of their lives.
  - Investigate resources.
  - Discuss policy implications.

#### April 18th - Sunday Morning

- View video of branch successes.
- Annual Meeting - Election of officers; review of proposed bylaw changes; and pros and cons of membership initiative.

There is **NO FEE** to participate in the Leadership Conference by Zoom.  
Registration will open March 15.  
Pre-Registration is required. You will be sent a Zoom invitation.

**Members and guests are welcome!**

**Watch for Updates!**

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For more information about AAUW Florida contact  
Patricia Dewitt, AAUW Florida President, [aauwfldewitt@gmail.com](mailto:aauwfldewitt@gmail.com)  
Bea Holt, AAUW Florida Director for Programs, [beaholt45@gmail.com](mailto:beaholt45@gmail.com)

## APRIL MEETING

Come prepared to discuss the Florida Leadership Virtual Conference. Share what you learned from whichever session(s) you were able to attend!

If you were not able to attend, this will be a great opportunity to listen and discover more about Florida AAUW.

If you have not yet registered, the link for the Conference is above. Having a virtual Conference is a wonderful way for ALL our members to go!

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### Proposed Change for AAUW Membership

*Below is a post from March on the AAUW Florida Advocacy Blog by of Pat DeWitt, AAUW Florida President. I think she gives some insight into the proposal to eliminate the degree requirement for membership in AAUW. Each of us will make our decision on the matter and submit our own vote. Pat shares a process she went through in examining the issue.*

#### **Marcia Hill**

Starting April 7, 2021, AAUW members will vote on a proposed bylaw change providing that membership shall be open to anyone who supports our mission. I wish to share with you my journey regarding this controversial topic.

The last time AAUW open membership was proposed, I voted against it (a blog post on this appeared Feb. 27, 2018). This was because 1) a friend who was a member of the national Lobby Corps told me that she felt strongly that being “highly educated women” gave them more credibility in the halls of Congress, and 2) with the increasing number of women in the United States to hold at least a two-year college degree, it did not seem necessary to expand the pool of those eligible to join AAUW.

During one of the recent national discussions of the proposed change in membership requirements, I asked if there was any truth to what my friend in the Lobby Corps had told me. The panelist said no: what legislators care most about is whether you are eligible to vote for them. This was a “duh” moment for me. My years of experience in advocating for AAUW legislative priorities persuade me that the panelist was right. Perhaps it gave my friend more self-confidence to hold a degree, but a woman’s self-confidence comes from the sum of her qualities, not from just one. AAUW’s research and legislative advisory capability should give us confidence in approaching legislators.

As for the pool of potential AAUW members, it is indeed large enough as it is. I have repeatedly emphasized that the battle for college degrees for women has been won. But the question is whether it is diverse enough. The research recently commissioned by AAUW of Florida showed that fewer women of color hold degrees than white women: while 41% of white women hold at least an Associate degree, and therefore are qualified for AAUW membership under current requirements, only 23% of Black women and 28% of Hispanic women would qualify. In addition, we learned that 66% of black women and 57% of Hispanic women live below the level of economic security for their family type.

So, shouldn't we encourage these women to get a college degree? According to the Florida State College in Jacksonville (FSCJ) website, "Twelve credits, which is considered a "full-time" load for a semester, cost \$1,259 for Florida resident students. Figure in your book costs at about \$80 per credit hour, and you are looking at a total bill of about \$2,219 for a full-time semester." Of course, there's financial aid. I used FSCJ's net price calculator to estimate cost for a 35-year-old single mother with two children, earning less than \$30,000 per year. She received \$3,101 in financial aid. The cost was \$15,203 including \$10,396 for room and board. So, if we subtract the room and board, we get \$4,807. That is still too much for this woman!

If we want to help all women and girls with diversity, equity, inclusion, and economic security, we need not hold ourselves above the ones who need help. We might gain valuable insights from the people who are experiencing economic challenges and inequity. Moreover, we might be seen as working together rather than swooping down from above to be "saviors". Our national Strategic Plan 2.0 calls for an increased emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. While education remains an area of emphasis, that area is focused on equity, access, and freedom from sex discrimination at every educational level.

We have been told by national board members that it is becoming more difficult to secure corporate grants when we are seen as exclusionary. Those grants have enabled us to maintain and expand Start Smart, Work Smart, NCCWSL, our research publications, and our lobby and policy advisory activity. We have been told that member dues cover only 15% of an already reduced budget and dramatically reduced staff. We need those grants if we are to retain and strengthen our position as a national force for equity for women and girls.

### Update from the League of Women Voters of Manatee County

Were you one of the 225 people who participated in the **League of Women Voters Implicit Bias** training last week? If you had to miss the session led by **Dr. Lorie Fridell**, you can still experience the session filled with research, compelling examples, and a path for how to understand and address our own biases. **Dr. Fridell** is a Professor in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida and a nationally recognized expert on biased policing.

To join or rewatch the training, the LWV is making available a full recording at: <https://lwvmanatee.org/videos/>

#### Recommended Books:

- *The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives* (Shankar Vedantam)
- *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives* (Howard Ross)

- *Biased: Uncovering the hidden prejudice that shapes what we see, think and do* (Jennifer Eberhardt PhD)

We thank **Helen Andersen**, Co-Chair of the Social Issues Committee of the LWV of Manatee County for sharing this opportunity with our branch.

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## Membership Renewal Time!

Each member got a personalized email last week with an individualized link. Renewing is as simple as clicking on that link, checking your data to be sure it is accurate, then submitting payment. If anyone prefers to pay by check, you can send it to Mickie - the address is in the email - with any changes to your address, etc. since last year, and I'll do the renewal for you. If you didn't get the email, please to check your spam/junk. Anyone who wants a repeat message, can email Mickie ([mickiemc@gmail.com](mailto:mickiemc@gmail.com)) to have the email resent to you. If you are comfortable with email, please help those who are not, or have them contact me by mail with their checks. That will be helpful.

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### Special Interest Groups

Most Special Interest Groups are not yet meeting regularly.

### APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Dolores Domermuth	MO
Carolyn Reynolds	AL
Judy Bodner	IL



**The AAUW Book Club will meet on May 6th at 1:00 o'clock at Riviera Dunes Restaurant in Palmetto. Our book for May is *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead. Come and join us for a delicious lunch and a lively discussion. Call Carolyn Reynolds (941-720-6575) to make a reservation.**



## ZOOM Meetings

We will continue to meet via ZOOM through the end of 20-21. To join the meeting, click on this link between 6:45 and 7:00 on February 16:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6030763851>

If you are unfamiliar with using ZOOM, there is an excellent tutorial at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUwumKCW7M>.

Test your microphone and speaker when prompted. Make sure your camera video is enabled.



Please call or text Meg Newsome (941-704-2707) or Judy Griffin (941-323-4639) for individual assistance.

### **Bradenton Branch Leadership**

Website: <http://bradenton-fl.aauw.net>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AAUW-Bradenton-Branch-103388217778483>

#### ***Branch Leadership 2020-2021***

President - Marcia Hill: [mshanerhill@gmail.com](mailto:mshanerhill@gmail.com)

Past President - Judy Griffin: [jdthgriffin@gmail.com](mailto:jdthgriffin@gmail.com)

Director of Finance (acting) – Mickie McElroy: [mickiemc@gmail.com](mailto:mickiemc@gmail.com)

Secretary – Fay Murphy: [faymurph@aol.com](mailto:faymurph@aol.com)

Director for Programs – Judy Griffin: [jdthgriffin@gmail.com](mailto:jdthgriffin@gmail.com)

Director for Communications – Meg Newsome: [meggnewsome@outlook.com](mailto:meggnewsome@outlook.com)

Director for Public Policy – Mary Schmidt:

[mcsrealtor@aol.com](mailto:mcsrealtor@aol.com)

Scholarship Foundation President – Elaine Graham: [ebebeg@aol.com](mailto:ebebeg@aol.com)

Scholarship Information: [aauwbbbscholarship@gmail.com](mailto:aauwbbbscholarship@gmail.com)

Bylaws Chair/ Parliamentarian – Ruth Qualich:

[qualir@yahoo.com](mailto:qualir@yahoo.com)

Bridge Group: Lois Blevins at [lwblevins@msn.com](mailto:lwblevins@msn.com)

Book Club: Carolyn Reynolds: 941-720-6575

Just for Girls: [deeisnice@gmail.com](mailto:deeisnice@gmail.com)

*AAUW promotes equity for women, education and self-development over the life span, and positive societal change. AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. Founded in 1881, membership is open to all graduates who hold an Associate or equivalent or higher degree.*



## Important to Know

***National AAUW***

<http://www.aauw.org/>

***Florida AAUW***

<http://aauwfl.aauw.net/>



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