



**AAUW**  
of Arizona

# SAVE THE DATE

## Fall Forum

November 7, 2026

Mesa Community College, Navajo Room  
Hosted by East Mesa Branch

Based on your feedback to the Forum survey so far, the topic will cover some of your suggestions. The format will change to encompass more networking and time for branch members to collaborate on take-aways from the speakers.

Stay tuned for more information through the summer.

Beverly Byrd  
AAUW Arizona



*AAUW advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.*

*Values: Nonpartisan, Fact based, Integrity, Inclusion & Intersectionality*

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2025-2026**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**Happy Spring to all our AAUW Arizona members!** (although it has felt more like summer these past few weeks). We just held our annual Spring Conference on March 28, and it was a great success! Our theme was

**“Education- Empowering Women for Change.”**

We had nearly 50 members in attendance. We heard from educators who talked about barriers women are facing and what we can do to help them navigate through those barriers. Prior to the presentations, we held a business meeting where our Past President, Becky Gunn, conducted the election and installation of officers for 2026-2027.

Our **Arizona Board of Directors for 2026-27** will begin their term on July 1, 2026. The Board includes:

<b>President</b>	Beverly Byrd
<b>President-Elect</b>	Penny Briner-Ewell
<b>Vice President and Treasurer</b>	Gail Garrison
<b>Vice President and Treasurer Elect</b>	Sandra Williamson
<b>Program Vice President</b>	Melinda Gomez
<b>Membership Vice President</b>	Beth Zdeblick
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Dr. Linda Thor (second term)
<b>Communications Director</b>	Marjorie Haberman (second term)

Also, on July 1, I will begin serving as **Past President** for one year. In addition to the elected Board, we have a new member appointed to our State Board. Lenore Hemphill (Prescott branch) has agreed to be our new **Webmaster**. Lenore is already on the job and we appreciate her willingness to serve in this role.

One of our major activities this spring is the collecting of signatures to put an initiative on the ballot this fall that will provide transparency, accountability and safety in the ESA program. This was a key priority identified at our Visioning session in January of this year. If you haven't signed a petition, please contact our Public Policy Directors Betsy Flaten and Mary Linnemann. They can help get information to you about where you can sign the petition. The signature gathering is occurring now until July 2, so please join with Save Our Schools and AAUW Arizona and sign the petition to put this important initiative on the ballot this fall.

Soon Spring will turn into Summer, and I know some of you are leaving for cooler climates. I hope your travels are safe and you enjoy summer with your friends and family. I want to thank all of you for your commitment to the mission of AAUW!!

Karen Ramos, President, AAUW Arizona



# Spring Forum

## "Education – Empowering Women for Change"

*Spring Forum in Review by Mary Linnemann, Public Policy Co-Chair*



If life gives you lemons make lemonade certainly was the appropriate sub theme of our Arizona AAUW Spring Forum. The speakers had all been set when it was announced that No Kings Day would be held on our forum day. We adjusted speaker times and sent our participants off that morning in car pools to protest. They returned just in time to take part in the installation of officers and to enjoy the presentation of our main speaker Dr. Arzeu Corella.

Following Arezu, Tremayne Parquet from AAUW National joined us on video to discuss the AAUW Five-Star program and new procedures for reporting.

Panelists Elizabeth Dern, Rio Salado College, MaryAnne Riodique, Northern Arizona University and Dr Adero Allison, Arizona State University, discussed current situations and problems in higher education.

The panel was moderated by Dr Arezu Corella. A highlight of the day was the interactive activity led by Dr. Corella in which we reflected on our own experiences finding a career path, becoming financially aware, and being mentored so that we could move forward as mentors ourselves and help create a sense of competence and belonging in our mentees.





AZ Arizona Board – 2026-27

Left to Right: Gail Garrison, Karen Ramos, Beverly Byrd, Marjorie Haberman, Dr. Linda Thor, Melinda Gomez, Sandra Williamson, Penny Briner-Ewell - (Becky Gunn at podium installing new officers)



## BRANCH SPECIAL PROJECTS

by Amy Perlick



**AAUW Arizona** encourages branches to support their local communities while furthering the mission of AAUW. If branches become aware of a need in their community that will advance equity for women and girls, they are encouraged to apply for a Branch Special Project grant.

- ✦ A Branch Special Project grant supports a project, activity, program, sponsorship, or worthwhile opportunity that a branch feels would benefit the community and advance the mission of AAUW.
- ✦ Branch Special Project grants are for a maximum of \$1000.
- ✦ Branches may apply for one grant per fiscal year (July 1-June 30) and may not apply for the same grant more than once.
- ✦ The AAUW Arizona Board of Directors will evaluate submitted proposals according to the approved criteria and determine the amount of funding.
- ✦ Applications must be submitted to the Branch Special Projects Chair no later than two weeks prior to an AAUW Arizona Board of Directors meeting, to be considered at the upcoming Board meeting.
- ✦ Meetings are held the third Wednesday in July, September, November, January and March.
- ✦ No applications are considered at the May meeting.
- ✦ For more information on Branch Special Projects, to see a list of past projects, and to access the application, click [here](#).

For additional questions, please contact the

Branch Special Projects Chair

Amy Perlick, at [branchspecproj@gmail.com](mailto:branchspecproj@gmail.com)

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## East Mesa

by Janice Dill, President

The Family Literacy Program of Mesa Public Schools is celebrating its 35th birthday this year and AAUW East Mesa Branch is along for the ride. We have raised funds to purchase sets of books in English and Spanish that families will learn about in class and then take home to share with their children

In January 2026, leaders of the program presented information to our East Mesa Public Policy special interest group. The Family Literacy Program gives K-3 parents the opportunity to have a greater influence on their children’s education and future success. Parents learn English, attend their child’s class, and participate in Parent Time. At this point our connections have been with two elementary schools – Adams School and Jefferson School.

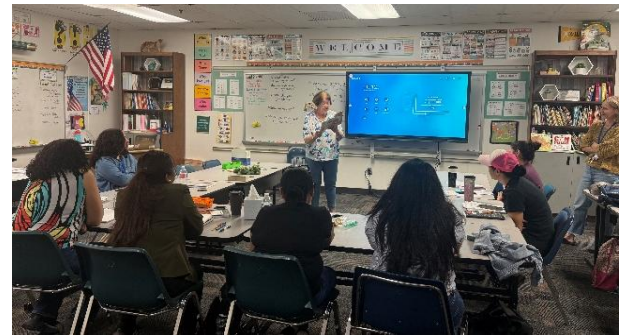


Working with the Moms in the Family Literacy Program at Adams Elementary and with Family Support Specialist Martina Estrada

AAUW members visited with the moms and shared what we do in AAUW. We learned about why the moms were in this program and what they hoped to accomplish for their families.



Norma Huerta, Family Literacy Liaison for Mesa Public Schools, led us in making bunnies out of washcloths as part of a demonstration on how to read.



Elaine Prom reading about Frog and Toad to the class at Adams School

In April we made cards for Teacher Appreciation Day for our teachers at Adams Elementary. During the school year we were able to provide needed items such as headphones, backpacks, Expo pens for whiteboards, snacks for test-taking days in support of Adams classrooms. We hope to continue the partnership for the next school year.



## Green Valley

Gerry Peterson, Co-President

Our branch has had an active and rewarding spring. Our March meeting saw a presentation on Current Borderland Issues/Status by members of the Tucson Samaritans. They discussed desert searches and water drops, border watches, and other services offered to migrants crossing the desert by this all-volunteer organization. Several branch members are also members of the Samaritans.

Our Membership Committee offered a second New Member Tea in March, providing a warm and welcoming setting to connect, share information, and build friendships within our branch.

April saw our Spring Luncheon Fundraiser that included a silent auction and raffle of donated items from members and local businesses. This was a new format for us and was successful in raising funds for our operating budget as well as our scholarship fund.

Our May meeting will be a presentation by Shelly Hartman, Pima County Community Action Team Coordinator, Save Our Schools: Arizona's Public Schools at Risk: Vouchers, Privatization, and the Fight for Equity.

Our state funded grant, **Keeping Girls in School program** continues to provide personal hygiene products for girls at our local elementary school, and to other facilities through member donations of money and products.



Finally, our branch was recognized by the Green Valley Foundation for answering “the call to community service in January, posting the US Flags annually on Martin Luther King Day.” We have been providing this service on the main street in Green Valley for 17 years.



Spring Luncheon Fundraiser



2026 - 2027 New Board Members

## Northwest Valley

Kate King, President

### AAUW- NWV Branch: A STRONG FINISH TO THE YEAR

The NWV Branch continues to inspire with its continuing expansion of ideas and programs.

- ✚ Our Scholarship Committee is exploring new scholarship options for Rio Salado College (RSC) in Surprise
- ✚ We are recruiting for a new Fundraising Chair position.
- ✚ The Membership VPs are recruiting members for a membership committee to improve our recruitment techniques, and had a successful tea for new & prospective members.
- ✚ The Branch Membership passed its updated Bylaws, and the Board formed a Bylaws Committee to continue reviewing them for adequacy.
- ✚ The Public Policy Committee:
  - Arranged for an internal Caregiving SIG to share feelings & strategies for coping; and
  - Participated in Voter Registration classes so they can register voters at key functions throughout AZ. This month they teamed up with the League of Women Voters to register students at RSC in Surprise.

The Branch extended our *New Officer Induction luncheon* on April 16 to provide critical information by Nicky Indicavitch, Statewide Outreach Director, Save Our Schools Arizona (SOS) on the *Protect Education* initiative. She described the need for action regarding SOS's time-sensitive ballot initiative, *Protect Education*, regarding much needed changes to Arizona's education vouchers system. She brought petitions for collecting signatures from interested attendees and instructed members on how they can qualify to collect signatures for petitions.

The *Protect Education* signature gathering already has over 9,000 petitions out in the field, and it collected thousands of signatures at the No Kings3 protests across the state. Nicky distributed flyers on *Protect Education* with additional information.

#### The Protect Education Act will:

- Add new safety measures to protect kids, like required background checks for school employees.
- Reduce waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer funds by banning the use of ESA voucher funds for non-educational items like diamond rings, vacations, lingerie, and other luxury items.
- Ensure transparency for our taxpayer dollars.
- With an exception for families of students with disabilities, limits eligibility to families with an annual income of \$150,000 or less to ensure vouchers support families who really need them.
- Return millions back to public school classrooms by ending the stockpiling of taxpayer funds in private savings accounts.
- Raise the bar for academic quality and student success.

## 1880 to 1910

**The Roots of a Trailblazing Mission**  
AAUW was founded by Marion Talbot, who became the Dean of the College of Women at the University of Chicago and a leading figure in higher education, and Ellen Swallow Richards, the first woman to earn degree in chemistry and a leader in the field of home economics.

## Scottsdale

**Laraine Rodgers, President**

### Donation to Foundation for Student Scholarships

In April, our branch was delighted to present a \$15,000 gift to Dr. Eric Leshinskie, Scottsdale Community College (SCC) resident, for the AAUW Scottsdale Endowment at the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation (MCCF) to be used for student scholarships at SCC. Our thanks to Charles Silver, Development Director who continues to facilitate engagement with our branch and SCC.

We are grateful for those AAUW members who worked with SCC to set up the endowment and all those who contributed their dues, donations and time over the years.

Special thanks to Viva Ashcroft, VP Finance, Scottsdale Branch Dr. Linda Thor, President, MCC Governing Board and both AAUW Arizona and AAUW Scottsdale branch member for their leadership.



Left to right: Charles Silver, Development Director, Laraine Rodgers, President Scottsdale Branch, Dr. Eric Leshinskie, President, SCC, Dr. Linda Thor, President, MCC Governing Board, Viva Ashcroft, VP Finance, AAUW Scottsdale.

### AAUW Project Updates:

Linda Nance and Barb Esses conducted our first tabling event at SCC since Covid! This creative team drew students, staff and faculty at Artie's Palooza (the SCC mascot is an artichoke named Artie!) to learn more about AAUW! We will be sharing events and information in the college's internal newsletter for employees as well as tabling as we reach out to connect with potential new members, both students and regular.

### Author's Luncheon

Our annual author's luncheon speaker at our March member meeting was fabulous! Her presentation style, personal story and writings were engaging and educational. Monica Brown, award-winning children's book author is also an Associate Professor of English at Northern Arizona University. She has written over thirty magical realism multicultural picture books for children from biographies including *Frida Kahlo and her Animalitos* and series, the latest being the Lola Levine chapter book series, inspired by her Peruvian and Jewish heritage.

A year ago, Monica donated over 200 books to our Adopt-A-Book Program! Scottsdale Branch members Viva Ashcroft who lives across the street from Monica and Linda Nance and Leader of our Adopt-A-Book program picked up all the books from Monica's garage!



Monica Brown, Author, and Linda Nance, AAUW Scottsdale Branch member.

## Southeast Valley

### Mary Kenny, President

The Southeast Valley Branch's concludes its programming year in April with a review of the year, induction of the 2026-27 Board, and introduction of incoming Chairs.

Recent programs provided members with an overview of Civic Engagement Beyond Voting's Request to Speak and Two-Minute Activist along with directions to participate; a presentation about AI programs at the Chandler-Gibert Community College, and an introduction to Positive Paths, a nonprofit organization serving women in the East Valley.

Wrapping up this month is the Branch-sponsored **Lego Robotics Program** at San Marcos Elementary School in Chandler. Participants in the after-school program, which began in October, are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls. Several Branch members volunteered throughout the program to assist teachers and students.



The annual **scholarship fundraiser** on March 21 exceeded expectations! Almost two hundred people attended, raising close to **\$15,000**.

Guests were treated to delicious appetizers while enjoying acoustic guitar selections by local musician Joe Lombardi.



Event guest speakers, Dr. Carissa Lynch, Dean of Students at San Marcos Elementary School and Maddy Rohm, Arizona Science Center, along with an impressive slide presentation capturing many of the Branch's activities and projects made an impact statement about the importance of our work and how the fundraiser supports that work.



Left to right: Maddy Rohm, AZ Science Center; Mary Kenny, President, AAUW SEV Branch; and Dr Carissa Lynch Dean of Students, San Marcos Elementary School.

## Fellowships & Grants

Since 1888, AAUW has been one of the largest funders of women's graduate education, research and community projects, investing in women who go on to change the world.

## Tucson

**Dawn Armstrong, President**

### **We Made History! State and Local Project**

At the March 7 meeting Debbie Hansen, a nationally known speaker and author, helped us remember, record and share stories from the journeys we represent. We learned a fun and simple recipe for capturing our priceless stories that we can now share with other Branch members. These stories will also contribute to Debbie's state-wide AAUW history project!



**Debbie Hansen presenting to  
Tucson Branch Members**

### **AAUW Tucson - Proud Sponsor 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Take Back the Night Tucson Event**

TBTN Tucson is an annual, community-driven event designed to support survivors of sexual violence, raise awareness, and reclaim public spaces as safe.

Hosted by the University of Arizona's Office of Public Safety, the event featured a 5K run/walk benefitting Survivor Support Services, survivor speak-outs, artistic expressions and a community resource fair.



The Tucson Branch also helped sponsor **The League of Women Voters' annual Issues and Eggs fundraising event** and provided a **SARSEF Award (the Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair)**, for one high school winner!

## **Strengthening Our Network**

**AAUW's impact starts  
with our members. We're  
building a powerful, aligned  
community across  
branches and states —  
backed by strong  
infrastructure and  
sustainable resources — to  
drive change nationwide.**

## AAUW Arizona Forum Survey

Mendy Gomez at [mgomez@educationforwardarizona.org](mailto:mgomez@educationforwardarizona.org) and  
Bev Byrd at [ybbord13@hotmail.com](mailto:ybbord13@hotmail.com).

AAUW Arizona conducts two Forums annually – Fall and Spring. Understanding that the Forum content should align with National and State Public Policy Strategic Priorities, and that the Forum content be relevant to our members, we are conducting this survey to solicit your feedback regarding the content and logistics of the events.

**Please click the link below to access the survey and respond no later than May 15, 2026.**

**All responses will remain anonymous.**

[Begin Survey Here](#)

## ARIZONA SUN

**Four issues—Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer—  
of The Sun are published each year.**

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### USEFUL LINKS

**AAUW Arizona State - <https://www.aauwarizona.org/>**

**AAUW National - <https://www.aauw.org/>**

