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## Letter from National President

Dear AAUW Leader,

As your newly elected board chair I am thrilled at the opportunity to work with such a dedicated, passionate group of leaders and members. Since back-to-school time typically means back to business in our AAUW communities, I wanted to share some of the priorities at the national office and what opportunities those will present at the state and local level. There is a renewed fervor to take action in our country, and we want to make certain that AAUW is poised to take the lead and harness that energy for the good of women and girls.

First, we are embarking on a comprehensive strategic plan, applying a sharp focus to our mission and translating AAUW's long-term vision into meaningful and tangible impact with shared, well-defined goals toward equity.

Secondly, we are thoroughly committing ourselves to be an inclusive environment. Only by working across and with *all* parts of our population will we encourage widespread support of eliminating the biases that women and girls experience. As you heard in our most [recent video](#), "Why should being a girl mean having to add words like "if" and "only" to my dreams?" It doesn't — and AAUW needs to be a representative population to change that way of thinking through our research, programs, public policy and advocacy, and through systemic cultural change. I encourage you to value all individuals in your community and include them in AAUW's work, for it's through that inclusion that we find continued relevance and growth.

Thirdly, we are experiencing continued growth in interest in STEM curricula for girls and women, and in our salary negotiation workshops. I will give you periodic updates in my bimonthly emails, and you'll find additional information in your twice monthly [Mission & Action](#).

And, as always, we are monitoring legislative changes and making our voice and position known on those detrimentally impacting women and girls. Make certain you receive [Action Network](#) (the new Two Minute Activist Mobile will send updates straight to your phone!) and engage with AAUW on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Stay informed so that you in turn can inform your community and take advantage of that increased fervor for activism and watch it translate into membership.

We've also been busy creating tools and resources to facilitate your roles as community leaders. In early August you should have received your [Leader Resources and Toolkit](#) showing you exactly where you can find pertinent information on the AAUW website. We've outlined a series of skill-building [webinars](#) that will be held monthly, and I

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hope to see many members taking advantage of this opportunity to hone skills useful in their AAUW work. You'll also find information on how to [host a program](#) on AAUW's latest research report, *Deeper in Debt: Women and Student Loans*. This report presents an outstanding opportunity to engage many segments of your local community in a discussion of the problem and best practices to bring about change.

Finally, I encourage you all to share your successes, concerns, and questions. Our staff at Connect is available to find the answers you need and spread the news on what's working for you. You can email them at [connect@aauw.org](mailto:connect@aauw.org) or call 800.326.2289.

I look forward to sharing more information with you as the year progresses. Together we have accomplished much on behalf of women and girls. I can't wait to see what our future has in store!

Yours in AAUW,  
Julia T. Brown, Esq.  
Board Chair

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Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Associate Justice, speaking to Marilyn and her granddaughter, Lindsay

## Presidents' Corner

By Marilyn Bombac and Denise Britigan

AAUW-Nebraska's motto is "*Smart Women—Smart Ideas*" and our members are filled with enthusiasm again this year as we plan our many fun and productive activities. As we all know, it takes many hands to make an organization work smoothly. In June, Betsy McDaniel, Omaha Branch President, joined us in Washington, D.C., where close to 1,000 people attended our AAUW National Convention, participated in more than 25 workshops, preconvention sessions, roundtables, daily dialogues and also listened to dynamic speakers. We learned how to lobby on Capitol Hill and had the opportunity to visit the offices of our Nebraska Senators and Representatives. Our new AAUW CEO is Kimberly Churches. She had been on the AAUW job for only two weeks when we met her at convention. She appears to be a very skilled and enthusiastic leader with a strong background in

non-profit organizations. The speakers were fabulous and we had a special visit from Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Associate Justice!

AAUW plans to release a new program “Media Literacy” within the next few months and we are hoping to incorporate some of the ideas into our Nebraska programming. We are looking forward to attending our AAUW-NE Fall Conference, *“Empowering Women Across Nebraska”*, on October 21<sup>st</sup> and learn from our branch leaders about some of their branch highlights and their future focuses. Our Keynote Speaker is Christine Lesiak, a Peabody Award winning producer, who has produced, written and directed numerous award-winning documentaries, specializing in history and the humanities. Christine will share the story of Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte (1865-1915) who was born on the Omaha Reservation in eastern Nebraska, and was the youngest of four girls. Susan was the first American Indian women to earn a medical degree, graduated at the top of her class, and a year early. We are excited to learn more about this incredible woman in history and how AAUW helped Dr. LaFlesche Picotte on her journey.

We are very happy to welcome our newest AAUW College/University Affiliate, University of Nebraska-Kearney! We now have ten college affiliates in Nebraska: Bellevue University, College of Saint Mary, Creighton University, Doane University, Kaplan University, Metro Community College, University of Nebraska-Kearney, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska at Omaha and University of Nebraska Medical Center. About seven college students plan to attend our Fall Conference. Please take the time to say “hello” if you see them at our conference.

Our Omaha Branch plans to host our 4<sup>th</sup> Tech Savvy conference on Saturday, April 21, 2018, on the campus of the College of Saint Mary. We are hoping to reach 100 middle school girls and their parents! Our next AAUW National Convention will not be held in 2019. Instead, it will be scheduled in 2020, to celebrate 100 years since women had the right to vote. This is a great time to be an AAUW member – yes, we do make a positive difference in the lives of women and girls in Nebraska!

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”—Margaret Mead*

## Welcome New State Board Members

Two of our special board members, Liz Rea and Teresa Mardesen, are not able to complete their board terms due to other commitments. Liz has served as our Public Policy Chair for many years and has done an excellent job of keeping us up-to-date with AAUW policies; and, has coordinated our State Legislative Day with much success. Teresa has been serving as our Membership VP for the past year; and, has been an excellent point-of-contact for our prospective AAUW members. Thanks so much Liz and Teresa for all of your work with AAUW!

We have two new board members who will complete the terms of Public Policy Chair and Membership VP. Sapphire Andersen will serve as our Public Policy Chair, and Alexandria Hilliard will serve as our Membership VP.

**Sapphire Andersen** is a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Political Science. Her involvement with AAUW includes serving on the National

Student Advisory Council, attending AAUW's National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL), and is currently serving as President-Elect for our Omaha Branch.

**Alexandria (Alex) Hilliard** graduated from University of Nebraska at Omaha in December 2016 with a B.S. in Criminology and Criminal Justice, and a minor in Sociology. She is currently working on a Dual Master's degree in Social Work and Criminology, and Criminal Justice from UNO. While working on her Bachelor's degree, she served on the UNO Women's Resource Center Board, a student-run organization working toward equity and equality on campus. Through this organization, Alex was selected to attend NCCWSL in June 2016. Alex said that NCCWSL inspired her to get more involved with AAUW, and she joined the Omaha Branch after graduation from UNO.

We are so happy to welcome Sapphire and Alex to our AAUW-Nebraska Board!! We are very excited to have you both on our team!

## **Blair Branch**

By Pam Andersen, President

The Blair Branch is focusing on Nebraska's Sesquicentennial.

Our September meeting featured Barry Jurgensen, Arlington HS Social Studies Teacher, who spoke on the Underground Railroad and Walker Forever Free. He drew parallels between the Underground Railroad and today's human smuggling.

Since we are a small branch, our meetings are similar to Omaha's subgroups. Our October meeting will feature a Nebraska Artist, Shea Wilkinson Fibers at the Fremont Area Art Association. December's meeting will be a social gathering at the Heartland Tasting Room & Tap House.

January will bring us to a Nebraska community issue the Blair Corps Drug Task force. A book discussion is scheduled for February. Members will read a book from the Nebraska 150 list and each give a five minute presentation on their book. March will be a presentation on "Tech Savvy" which introduces girls from 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade & their parents to STEM careers and critical thinking skills.

In April, the Blair Branch will have a Pioneer Dinner made by the officers. A presentation will be given about Antarctica. To wrap up the year will be a potluck dinner in the Black Elk/Niehardt Park. Our presenter will be Trent Erickson from Omaha's Lauritzen Gardens speaking on Prairie restoration and Native Plants.

## **Lincoln Branch**

By De Tonack, President

The Lincoln Branch awards fellowships to applying students from the University of Nebraska. We missed doing so last year and had sufficient funds to award fellowships to three students this year. Each will be presenting a program at one of our meetings this year. At our September meeting, we were privileged to hear from Sarah Petite, one of our recipients. Sarah is still working on her Master's Degree but came highly recommended for her advanced work in the field of

communications. Her presentation included her research in the psychosocial benefits of storytelling in assisted living communities and the interactions between parents and children after divorces later in a marriage. The other two recipients are Andrea Matthews and Sarah Taylor. The Lincoln Branch hopes to again assist Dr. Marilyn Grady in a February workshop at Southeast Community College.

## **Omaha Branch**

by Betsy McDaniel, President

In June Marilyn Bombac, Denise Britigan, and I attended the AAUW National Convention. We were all energized by the things we learned at the convention, and what we learned influenced plans for this year in our Omaha Branch. We learned a lot about social networking at the convention, and as a result some of our members led by President Elect Sapphire Anderson are currently creating a Facebook page that will highlight the activities of our branch. Our Program Vice President Denise Britigan attended convention programs focusing on programs for general meetings; she arranged for this year's programs to be ones that highlight stories of successful efforts in Omaha to empower women. Our September program was about the Adolescent Health Project begun by the Women's Fund of Omaha, and our next program in November focuses on work to reduce human trafficking in Nebraska. Finally, we have begun a discussion concerning an idea for an open-to-the-public 2018 panel discussion event on media literacy, a topic we heard about at the convention. AAUW researched media literacy and indicated further information is forthcoming; upon receipt of that information, we will continue our consideration of this event.

Probably our biggest branch news of all is, thanks to the hard work of our Finance Officer Linda Bors, our branch is now recognized by the IRS as having 501(c)(3) non-profit status. That means donations to our branch are tax deductible and it allows us to apply for grants only available to 501(c)(3) organizations. We are also building on past successes. Our members continue to support Sherman Elementary School's needy children with clothes, books, and scholarships for two girls to attend a science camp sponsored by UNO. Our fall clothing give-away at Sherman School is scheduled for November 9. Led by our Director Marilyn Bombac, we are once again planning another Tech Savvy event – a day of STEM-focused activities for middle-school girls on April 21, 2018. As we have for several years, we plan to co-sponsor with College of Saint Mary a spring event with a speaker, this time perhaps focused on leadership skills for women. And as I write this paragraph, we are busy organizing and preparing for the AAUW-Nebraska Fall Conference in Omaha on October 21. We are looking forward to welcoming our AAUW Nebraska members from other parts of the state.



Marilyn Bombac, Betsy McDaniel and Denise Britigan all ready to participate in AAUW National Convention, June 2017

## AAUW Fellowships and Grants with Nebraska Connections

by Linda Bors

The following AAUW programs show some of the ways AAUW National and AAUW-Nebraska are impacting and influencing each other during fiscal year 2017-18. In order to have enough funds for the recipients, all AAUW-Nebraska sponsored endowment recipients were co-sponsored with other AAUW endowments. This enables an award from each endowment every year.

Luz Sarmiento, a citizen of Colombia, is the recipient of an International Fellowship which was sponsored in part by the **Louise Pound International Fellowship** endowment. She is working on a PhD in clarinet performance at the University of Texas in Austin. Luz is deeply committed to educational development and the promotion of music and art as a means of social transformation. Her work with young musicians in under-served regions of Colombia has demonstrated the benefits of music in socially vulnerable communities and inspired young Colombian women to pursue a career in the arts.

Rhea Gillan is the recipient of a Career Development Grant which was co-sponsored by six **Research and Projects Grant (R&PG)** endowments, including three sponsored by AAUW-Nebraska: **Anne Campbell R&GP, Esther Hamon / Leola McKie R&PG, and Stan and Mary (Browne) Tyler RP&G.** Rhea currently works as a high school science teacher focusing on raising the level of science literacy in her rural, central Nebraska school district. She coordinates a successful program in which students complete cutting-edge, authentic scientific research. Her goal is to obtain a master's degree in biology at the University of Nebraska at Kearney so that she can better mentor students. She hopes to bridge the gender gap and encourage more women to pursue science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) careers.

There aren't any other current AAUW fellowship or grant recipients studying in Nebraska.