

**AAUW-VA RESTON-HERNDON BRANCH REPORT
NOVEMBER 2018**

1. At the Summer Leadership Meeting in Harrisonburg in July, we focused on how we can “Harness The Energy” within our branches. What are your branch plans for the upcoming year? How are you going to “Harness The Energy?” What plans are you most proud of?

New Initiative: We are working on a new approach called “Just One Thing” based on the premise that if every one of our 90+ members did “just one thing” - large or small - for the branch it would make an amazing impact. This basic idea is being carried over to the recruitment of younger women. We are suggesting that if a group of younger, working professionals would join our branch, their schedules might allow them to take on “just one” project each year, with a clear beginning and end, to make a significant impact on their target group of girls. They would be encouraged to use the tools they are most comfortable with (i.e., social media, networking, etc.) to plan, arrange and implement their idea without physical meetings (which are not in the lexicon of many of these women). A brainstorming session (by conference call?) is in the discussion stage to get this up and running.

Program Topic Priorities: The Ex Committee has made a concerted effort this year to plan most monthly membership meetings around AAUW priorities. Our Program V-P, Judy Skirbunt, has done an outstanding job of facilitating this goal. At six of our membership meetings, the following topics are scheduled to be addressed: election process, financial planning for women, social justice (a speaker and a separate interactive program), Title IX, and AAUW Reston-Herndon history as a part of national and state AAUW. (2018-19 Program List is attached)

ERA Support: ERA interbranch awareness and information meeting is in the planning process. (see item 3 below)

50th Anniversary Celebration: To recognize the 50th anniversary of the AAUW Reston-Herndon Area Branch, which was founded as the ‘Reston Branch’ by a group of local women in 1969, planning is underway for a luncheon to be held on April 28, 2019. Current and past members and supporters will be invited to attend this event which is designed to “emphasize the importance of the Reston-Herndon Branch to the community, AAUW-VA and AAUW as it continues to grow; to celebrate the dynamism of the branch; to share information with guests regarding branch history and prior successes; to recognize and share information regarding members who have served as state and national leaders over the years; to honor former branch presidents and to enjoy an afternoon of friendship and camaraderie within the group.” The co-chairs of this event are branch past-presidents Judi Ornoff and Marion Stillson (Marion was also a past AAUW-VA president).

Membership: We are proud of the results the hard work and effort that has gone into our continued membership growth. Although we act as a team, the major credit goes to our very industrious Membership V-P, Ilene Banker. We have spent both time and treasure on pursuing recruitment and retention efforts and have learned to be more attentive to our newest members to keep them aware and engaged.

Branch Survey: We have utilized a Member Survey for the past two years in an attempt to give the general membership a voice in our decision-making and to identify areas of interest or concern to the group. Although we were disappointed with the return rate for 2018, we were

still able to glean some assumptions from the data and are trying to incorporate that information as we progress through the year.

2. Have you shared AAUW's new Strategic Plan, *Beyond Aspirations: Advancing Equity for Women and Girls*, with your members?

Strategic Plan: In an attempt to keep our branch members updated regarding the new Strategic Plan, a full membership meeting was devoted to presenting the plan using AAUW's powerpoint presentation with a handout and extensive question and answer session facilitated by our Public Policy Co-chairs, Judi Polizzotti and Mary Zane and our V-P, Janine Greenwood. Updates and additional information regarding the plan continue to be provided through: the president's e-blasts ("Reston-Herndon Happenings"); the monthly branch newsletter; the Reston-Herndon website; and announcements at the monthly membership meetings. In spite of these efforts, only 57% of the respondents to this year's branch survey "feel fully informed" on this topic. We'll keep trying! (see #2 in attached Goals)

3. The top two state public policy priorities for this year are ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and pay equity. What activities will your branch be participating in to advocate for these priorities? Have any branch members had Letters-To-The-Editor published?

ERA: The Reston - Herndon Branch, under the leadership of Public Policy Co-chairs, Judi Polizzotti and Mary Zane, is planning a program on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to inform members and the public of the history of the ERA, where it now stands and why it is still relevant and important. The plan includes contacting *VA ratify ERA* for a speaker and/or showing the film Legalize Equality. It is tentatively scheduled for March 2019 at the North County Government Center in Reston. The Public Policy team hopes to make this an interbranch effort by reaching out to the other branches in the Northern District.

Pay Equity: Our Vice-President, Janine Greenwood, has been involved with the other Northern District branches interested in supporting *Start Smart* efforts at our local colleges/universities. The Ex Committee is also exploring the possibility of hosting a *Work Smart* program in Reston, to help address the pay equity issues in our region faced by women in the workplace who are already far behind their male peers.

Letters-to-the-Editor: Our branch members have not yet participated in the Letters-to-the-Editor effort that I am aware of.

4. Has your branch registered and/or educated voters in advance of the November 6 General Election? If you have, how successful were you? Have you used the URL given to your branch to register voters online?

Voting: Although our branch has been heavily involved in registering voters in the past, the opportunities were more limited this year, so we have not participated. We continue to keep the website GOTV information up-to-date, including posting the URL link for online registration. Other election-related activities: Alison Friedman, candidate in the 10th Congressional Democratic Primary, spoke to our branch about her experiences and challenges as a candidate and an emphasis was placed on the need to vote in November; our public policy chair

volunteered with the League of Women Voters at the 9th Congressional District's Candidate Forum with branch members attending, and several members are scheduled as volunteers or plan to attend the 10th District Forum later in the month. All opportunities to ask (beg?) members to vote and encourage their friends, neighbors and family to vote in this crucial election are taken at meetings, branch events and activities and through communications.

5. How successful was your branch in meeting the AAUW goal of 90% membership renewals by September 30?

We have had the usual non-renewals that all branches face each year due to moving, death, illness and other factors, but our Membership V-P is confident that we made the 90% goal.

6. Are you collaborating with your closest college/university partners? Have you collaborated with any community organizations? If so, which organizations and on what activities have you collaborated?

Collaboration: The R-H branch has been collaborating with NCVV-Loudoun Campus for a number of years, including sponsoring our *NOVA Scholar* scholarship recipient, supporting NCCWL participants whenever possible, and participating in GOTV events on campus. In the Start Smart initiative mentioned above, Reston-Herndon has taken on the role of point-of-contact with George Mason University and we will be demonstrating the program for them in November. One of our members has already completed the Start Smart facilitator training. Our collaborations with community groups include: *The Giving Circle of Hope* (annual program featuring grant recipients and supporting their main fundraiser, "Empty Bowls"), *National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) – Dulles Section* (on-going partnership – numerous members have cross-organization memberships. NCNW will be invited to co-sponsor a March 2019 interactive program on social justice), and we are starting a relationship with *Zonta Club of Fairfax* that we hope to strengthen this year.

7. Thanks to the generosity of AAUW of Virginia branches we donated \$83,031.29 to AAUW Funds for 2017. We hope that your branch will help us exceed this amount for 2018. Do you have any fundraisers planned? Do your members know that the best way to donate to AAUW Funds is on-line, through a monthly donation to unrestricted funds? Also, does your branch need more information on the Legacy Circle Program?

Donations: A major event each year is our annual "Friends Giving" Luncheon and Fundraiser, held in November/December in place of a monthly membership program meeting. Members pay to attend the luncheon at cost where the branch sells raffle tickets to attendees for lovely baskets full of various goodies donated by local businesses and put together by our members. The proceeds from this sale goes to our NVCC scholarship fund. In addition, we have a special push for donations to AAUW at this event and have decided to step up these efforts this year by being clearer about what the contributions are used for and how important they are to AAUW. We place notifications about donating on-line in our communication with members. We also had a very nice ceremony with the state co-presidents in attendance last year for a R-H member who was pinned into the Legacy Circle by our past president (and past VA president), Marion Stillson, who is also a member of the Legacy Circle. It was quite impressive, and we followed up with a description in our newsletter with detailed information about the Legacy Circle. We will continue the awareness efforts through the newsletter and e-blasts throughout the year.

8. Please encourage your members to attend the state conference in the Roanoke area on April 6, 2019. Do you have any suggestions for workshops, speakers or entertainment?

Annual Conference: I am afraid this might be a rough sell to Northern Virginia for a one-day conference at this distance; however, I plan to attend and will do my best to encourage others to participate. Currently, we have no suggestions regarding the topics and speakers for the conference but will be happy to pass on suggestions as they come to us over the next several months.

9. The board's vision for this year will focus on Diversity and Inclusion. Has your branch planned or participated in any activities to promote these core values? If so, please describe.

Diversity and Inclusion: In 2017, we modified our local policies with a stronger statement regarding diversity and inclusion and it remains one of our goals for 2018-19 (See #1 and #3 in attached Goals). We, historically, have had a partnership with NCNW, attending each other's meetings, becoming members of each other's groups, creating opportunities for leadership teams to plan together, etc. We will pursue a joint meeting with NCNW, scheduled for March 2019, to explore social justice issues with the aid of an experienced facilitator, Professor Beverly Bennett-Roberts. We also are hoping to reach out with recruitment efforts in the Latina community. As with many branches, we continue to struggle with the diversity aspect of this issue but also need to explore ways to make our branch more inclusive and inviting to all types of individuals.

10. How successful has your branch been in utilizing social media to publicize AAUW and branch activities?

Social Media: We are on Facebook, have completely revamped the Reston-Herndon Website, utilize monthly email blasts, and are in the process of exploring Twitter and Instagram sites for our branch, but we continue to be concerned that, according to our recent survey, none of these methods yield much traffic. (An age thing?) We persevere!

11. Are there any concerns for your branch? Is there anything the State board can help with or any resources the board can provide to assist your branch?

Resources: We are struggling with the same concerns that we heard from other branches at the SLC – lack of leadership depth and willing volunteers within the branch, with many of our members skewing toward the more social activities. I enjoy these activities, also, but it continues to be a struggle to keep the balance between support for the AAUW mission and priorities and the social aspects that attract many individuals to this type of organization.

12. Is there a branch event that I can attend?

You are always welcome at any meeting, event or activity! I have attached the program schedule for the year, as well as the branch calendar with on-going events and meetings noted. Do not hesitate to show up "unannounced" if you find a break in your schedule which would make it convenient to join us; otherwise call or text me at 703-401-1989 to let us know when you would like to attend. We understand how busy you are with your assigned duties, so we would welcome you at any time!