



The Advocate

January 2025

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“I’d rather regret the risks that didn’t work out than the chances I didn’t take at all.”
Simone Biles Owens, gymnast, 11-time Olympic medalist

Addressing Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes



Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 9:30 am
Lafayette Library and Learning Center
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette

Our DAW branch is joining with the Orinda Moraga Lafayette branch for this combined member meeting. We will have a fascinating panel of three speakers who are very involved in the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative (CMQCC) and Contra Costa Health's Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI). They will share their research findings and real-world solutions to reduce the racial disparities in maternal and infant health that occur regardless of income level. In addition to reviewing the impact of these programs, they will identify ways we can support their efforts locally and statewide.

You don't want to miss this event!

[Click here to RSVP](#)

The program is free and open to all AAUW members and the general public.
Doors open at 9:30 am. The event will run from 10:00 - 11:30 am.

About our speakers -

Natalie Berbick, MSW (she/her), is an experienced advocate for health equity and social justice in the maternal and child health arena. She is Family, Maternal, and Child Health Director at Contra Costa Health. As a graduate of UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan School of Social Work, her calling has been to support the health and safety of children and families throughout her twenty-year career by addressing health disparities and disenfranchised populations through prevention and intervention services. She launched and led the Contra Costa Perinatal Equity Initiative in 2018.

Adiam Mengis, MPH, LLB, (she/her), is both a Public Health Program Specialist for the Perinatal Equity Initiative and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome & Comprehensive Perinatal Services Coordinator at Contra Costa Health. Her broad public health background includes having worked in Seattle as Educator Consultant with the King County Department of Public Health, and as HIV/AIDS Outreach and Early Intervention Services Manager with the Center for Multicultural Health. She holds an MPH from Touro University California and an LLB from the University of Asmara, Eritrea.

Christina M. Oldini, RN, MBA, CPHQ (she/her), is Associate Director with the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative (CMQCC), and a proud nurse with extensive direct patient care nursing experience. Ms. Oldini has led initiatives focused on substance abuse and exposure for pregnant people and newborns, as well as perinatal equity. She holds MBA and BSN degrees from the University of San Francisco.

Third Thursday Member Meeting - February



Member Meeting

Thursday, February 20, 2025, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Danville Congregational Church

The DAW program team is working diligently to finalize the speaker and topic for our February member meeting. It's sure to be an interesting program – stayed tuned for more details.

Save the date!

President's Message

By Deborah Wechsler, President

I enjoyed seeing many of you at my home for our informal “Third Thursday” Holiday Open House on December 19. Thanks to everyone who came - bringing delicious food, holiday cheer, and beverages galore! We had a special treat: Chris Ritter led us in some carols with her expert piano-playing, the rest of the group joining her with our best singing voices. Conversation was fun and often insightful about our expectations, hopes, and challenges for the coming year.

Don't miss our first program for 2025, sponsored jointly with the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch. This is a follow-on to some of the concepts introduced to us by Dr. Kendra Carr, the wonderful speaker at our Membership Brunch in September. We will become more familiar with the challenges of ensuring equitable healthcare in our county. You can find more details in this issue of The Advocate.

I encourage all of you to offer your talents and energy in 2025 to support one of our education projects (Local Scholarships and Tech Trek) or advocacy work with the public schools. We can each make a difference, and together we can amplify our power for positive change.



January Checklist

- **January 8, 7:00 pm – DEI Team Planning Meeting – via Zoom**
[Click here](#) for more information and to RSVP
- **January 14, 5:30 pm – San Ramon Unified School District Meeting**
[Click here](#) for more information
- **January 16, 6:30 pm – AAUW San Ramon Meeting – About the Quest Science Center**
See page 8 for details

- **January 20, 1:00 pm – Multifaith MLK Day Observance, First Presbyterian Church, Concord**
[Click here](#) for details
- **January 21, 9:30 am – Member Meeting with OML – Addressing Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes**
[Click here](#) for more information and to RSVP
* Note the special morning start time *
- **February 20, 6:00 pm – Third Thursday Member Meeting**
Save the date!
- **February 25, 5:30 pm – San Ramon Unified School District Meeting**
[Click here](#) for more information
- **March 31, 7:00 pm – Lobby Days Training Webinar**
- **April 8 and April 9 – Lobby Days**
Plan to participate!
- [Click here](#) to buy your tickets for the quilt raffle and support the Creative Endeavors Scholarship fund
- [Donate here](#) to support DAW branch programs



DEI Notes

By Ogie Strogatz, DEI Officer

Happy New Year all,

I hope the holidays have provided a good stretch of time for you to rest and recharge. As a reminder, DAW is holding two events this month to consider and act on DEI challenges.

- Join me for a **Zoom meeting** on Wednesday, January 8, from 7:00 to 8:00 pm to explore how our branch will pull through the [AAUW California DEI Strategic Plan](#). Please email me (ogstrogatz@gmail.com) to RSVP.
- As noted above, on Tuesday, January 21, from 9:30 to 11:30 am at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, DAW is co-hosting our **monthly general meeting** with the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch. Our program, “Addressing Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes”, features an expert panel:
 - Natalie Berbick, Family, Maternal, and Child Health Director at Contra Costa Health
 - Adiam Mengis, Public Health Program Specialist for the Perinatal Equity Initiative, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome & Comprehensive Perinatal Services Coordinator at Contra Costa Health; and
 - Christina Oldini, Associate Director with the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative

We look forward to a thought-provoking program on the 21st.



I also want to lift up a **local observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**, coordinated by the [Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition](#) on Monday, January 20, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church, 1965 Colfax St in Concord. This will be a shared moment of grounding ourselves for the work of mercy and justice in 2025. The program will include a full reading of his Letter from the Birmingham Jail. Opportunities will be provided to connect with organizations seeking support and volunteers.

All are welcome; no RSVP is required. [Click here](#) to see the full flyer for what's sure to be an inspiring event.

Warm regards,
Ogie

Local Scholarship Update

By Ann Willoughby, Local Scholarship Co-Chair

DAW Scholarship Applications Are Being Accepted Now!

As a reminder, applications for DAW college scholarships are open and there's still plenty of time for students to apply. The applications are due by March 1, 2025. Information regarding our various DAW scholarships, as well as instructions and forms for applying, can be found on the branch website - [click here](#). Please share this information with family and friends who you think may be interested.

Learn About the Quest Science Center

Interested in STEM education? The **AAUW San Ramon Branch** invites all DAW members to its **January 16 monthly meeting** to learn about the locally based Quest Science Center and its wealth of free, interactive, family-friendly STEM programs serving Bay Area communities. Most programs are offered in the Tri-Valley, including Livermore, Pleasanton, and Danville. There are numerous opportunities for volunteering at Quest events if you'd like to participate - STEM experience is not required.



Plan to attend the San Ramon Branch meeting on **Thursday, January 16, from 6:30 to 7:30 PM**, at the San Ramon Community Center's Terrace Room, 12501 Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon. DAW members will receive an email invitation from the San Ramon branch as a reminder; no RSVP needed.

For more about the Quest Center [click here](#).

December Member Meeting – Recap in Photos

It was a very festive evening on December 19 at the branch’s holiday event. Thanks to Deborah Wechsler, gracious host and DAW branch president, for welcoming DAW members and guests to her home. Here are some photos to enjoy –



DAW Donations and Project Funding

By Chris Ritter, Treasurer

A big “Thank you” to the many members who responded to the recent letter requesting donations for AAUW Fund and our branch’s major projects!

Your AAUW Fund donations support our national organization and its projects including major grants and awards for women pursuing advanced education, legal support for women to combat discrimination, and other programs to support equality for women such as WorkSmart.

Your donations to our local Community Mission Projects support all our branch mission projects, including Tech Trek, Local Scholarships, our educational programs, and other mission activities. This designation for donations gives the branch the flexibility to apply the support where it is most needed. For those who prefer to support a specific project, your donations to Tech Trek or to Local Scholarships are applied directly to support those programs.

Here is a summary of donations so far this year along with the total funds we now have available for our local projects:

Fund	Donations	Current Branch Project Balances
National AAUW Fund (as of Nov 30)	\$7,324	N/A
DAW Branch Funds		
• Local Community Mission Fund (as of Dec 12)	\$4,888	\$27,857
• Tech Trek	\$2,957	\$7,046
• Local Scholarships	\$1,635	\$8,879
Total for Local Projects	\$9,480	\$42,800
Total 2024 Donations from Branch	\$16,804	

Adding this year’s donations to funds remaining from prior years, we currently have \$42,800 to support our mission projects for this fiscal year. This is close to meeting our goals to have approximately \$16,000 for Tech Trek, \$22,000 for Local Scholarships, and \$4,800 to carry forward. Since funds are committed to these projects early in 2025, any later donations, along with the 2025 Garden Tour and other smaller fundraisers in the spring, will go toward supporting our Community Mission Projects in the 2025-26 fiscal year.

To make a tax-deductible donation to support our important branch projects via check, please send your check made out to DAW AAUW to:

AAUW DAW – Donations
PO Box 996
Alamo, CA 94507

To donate to DAW branch projects online, [click here](#).

AAUW DAW Branch Is Awarded Three Stars

By Tremayne A. Parquet, AAUW National Deputy Director of Advancement

It is with great pleasure that I share some exciting news - AAUW Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek Branch has achieved three stars in AAUW's FY24 Five-Star Program! Your branch attained the Communications & External Relations, Programming and Public Policy & Advocacy stars. This recognition is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and commitment of your branch members to advancing AAUW's mission of gender equity for women and girls.

The Five-Star Program is designed to honor branches that align their work with AAUW's strategic priorities in areas such as Advancement, Public Policy & Advocacy, Governance & Sustainability, Programming, and Communications & External Relations. Earning three stars is an incredible accomplishment, and we are thrilled to celebrate this success with you.

Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition. Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to creating a more equitable world.



Editor's Note: AAUW National's Five-Star Program helps branches align with AAUW's strategic priorities and advance our mission of achieving gender equity for women and girls. Branches are awarded stars based on their meeting specific goals set by AAUW National in five separate categories each fiscal year; our branch was able to meet goals in three of these areas last year. Branches attaining stars in this program are recognized on the national website.

The DAW branch achieved our three stars thanks to the hard work of Monika Witte, Ogie Strogatz, Laurinda Ochoa, and all of the 2023-24 Board and DAW volunteers!

For more about the AAUW Five-Star Program – [click here](#).

AAUW California Public Policy News

Lobby Days 2025 - Save the Date!

by Rhonda Skipper, Member AAUW California Public Policy Committee

Get ready to advance legislation that makes a difference! This spring the AAUW California 2025 Lobby Days event will be held over two days: an in-person meeting day at the State Capitol on Tuesday, April 8 and a virtual meeting day over Zoom on Wednesday, April 9, 2025. We encourage all AAUW California members to participate in this opportunity for advocacy that is essential to achieve our legislative priorities!

Starting in January, the Public Policy Committee will evaluate new bills introduced in the state legislature which are aligned with our [Public Policy Priorities](#). In mid March, the committee will meet to select 30-35 bills to make up AAUW California's 2025 Legislative Agenda, including the top three bills that we will advance during Lobby Days. Training materials on these three bills will be posted on the

state website by March 26, 2025, and a mandatory training webinar will be held on March 31, 2025 at 7:00pm.

A registration form will arrive in your inbox in early January 2025. If you want to participate, please be sure to complete and return the form so that you get necessary updates about Lobby Days, including your team and meeting details.

After you register, you will be assembled into teams of 3 or 4 AAUW members and matched with Assembly and Senate districts. For in-person meetings, each team will be scheduled to meet with at least 3 legislative offices while for Zoom meetings, each team will be scheduled to meet with 1 to 3 legislative offices. Regardless of whether you are in-person or online, each meeting will last for 15 to 30 minutes.

Because legislators have many commitments during the busy legislative season, most Lobby Days meetings will be held with legislative staffers and it is not always possible to schedule AAUW members with their own legislators. However, be assured that these meetings are always impactful: because teams will be representing AAUW California as a bill sponsor and/or supporter, legislative offices will consider these meetings to be as important as constituent meetings.

Lobby Days 2025 is scheduled to take place just before the legislature adjourns on April 10th for Spring Recess. AAUW members are encouraged to participate in-person on April 8, 2025, and directly advocate at the State Capitol as these in-person meetings are the most effective way to advance our priority legislation. Even though we know that being in-person is impactful, AAUW California is not able to pay for your travel to Lobby Day in Sacramento. For those who are not able to come to the Capitol, there will be an opportunity to meet with legislative offices virtually via Zoom on April 9, 2025.

We understand that travel incurs a cost, and we appreciate you considering the in-person option. If you can afford to take a road trip, consider carpooling with your fellow members, and if driving a long distance, sharing accommodations to make in-person Lobby Day a more budget friendly event.

NOTE In addition to our members, this year some of your Lobby Days teams will include college students who have been invited to join in via a college outreach pilot project. Through this project, we will be distributing Lobby Days event flyers to several colleges and universities from November to February. Increased college student participation will enable us to reach more legislative offices; however, most importantly, we hope that this introduction to AAUW will inspire advocacy-minded young people who share our values to join AAUW.

If you have participated in Lobby Days in the past, we would love to hear your feedback on what worked and what didn't. Please send your comments to publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.

Lobby Days is a wonderful opportunity to meet with legislative offices and advance bills to promote gender equity and improve the lives of women and girls. We hope that you will join us in this important activity to promote our values.

Are Gender-based Scholarships Problematic?

Not for AAUW, but the current legal and political climate has made universities wary to offer them.

by Missy Maceyko, Co-chair AAUW California Public Policy Committee

Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 bans sex-based discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding. An outgrowth of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which offers

workplace protections on the basis of 'sex,' Title IX was created to address historical marginalization on the basis of sex/gender in education. In sum, Title IX was created to provide women with equal access and success in educational institutions, to redress the historical marginalization of women in educational settings relative to men.

The definition of what counts as sex-based discrimination has necessarily expanded over the years, eventually coming to protect everyday Americans from things like pregnancy discrimination and gender-stereotype discrimination (e.g. not getting a promotion because you are not performing in a way that aligns with the gender you are perceived to be). In 2024, the Biden Administration extended a 2020 Supreme Court decision about LGBTQ+ workplace discrimination to Title IX, providing protections to the LGBTQ+ community by acknowledging that LGBTQ+ discrimination is often the result of animus derived from gender stereotyping.

The spirit of Title IX is to protect those who have been historically marginalized on the basis of sex/gender. However, as part of the larger pushback against social justice and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), we have seen a sharp uptick in watchdog efforts and legal action around educational programs and scholarships focusing on fostering gender (and racial) equity. **Those bringing these lawsuits suggest that programs and scholarships that are explicitly for women violate Title IX** because they discriminate against men. For instance, between 2016 and 2022, [Mark Perry](#), an emeritus professor at the University of Michigan's Flint campus and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, filed 410 Title IX complaints against universities that offer programs or awards for women, but not men.

Lawsuits like those brought by Mark Perry **lean in to the concept of equality**, the idea that fairness is giving everyone the exact same things. This is opposed to **leaning into the concept of equity**, where fairness is reaching equilibrium by giving some individuals and groups different protections and support to make sure that everyone has what they need to succeed. If one student scrapes their knee and you give everyone a bandaid, this is equality. If one student scrapes their knee and you give only that student a bandaid, this is equity. Leaning into equality work does not make sense when equity should be the target to redress an historical and/or current harm.

However, **given the threats of legal action to DEI programs, and given the ongoing legal wrangling over rules and guidance about gender equity and gender equality under Title IX, many educational institutions are unsure about the legality of their gender equity programs and initiatives.**

Furthermore, the threat of legal action has had a chilling effect as institutions with shrinking budgets fear the cost and burden of ongoing legal challenges based on gender equality and equity efforts.

Scholarships that seek to target protected groups to overcome historical forms of marginalization have become a target in the larger attack against DEI, Title VII, and Title IX. If a college or university is wary of listing your AAUW scholarship, this might be why. AAUW does not receive federal funding under Title IX, so can offer gender-specific scholarships and programs without this same fear.

AAUW California

They're Coming, They're Coming!!!!

By Deanna Arthur, AAUW Fund Committee chair

Yes, there really are fund fellows and grant recipients (31 in California), and we are much closer to having their videos available. Please look at the Fund page on the AAUW California [website](#) to see the current recipients listed, their schools, and their fields of study.

Celebrating The Present While Planning for The Future

By Elaine Johnson, Nominations and Election chair

'Tis the season for celebrating. Let's celebrate the outstanding dedication of our AAUW California Board of Directors. Each board member has made major contributions, and together their impact has been impressive. Their work can be seen on the state website at aauw-ca.org. The webinar on Project 2025 is of special interest as we prepare for the coming year.

This spring, we will be electing a president-elect, chief financial officer, and three board members. Consider applying or nominating someone for these critical positions; nominations and applications are due by March 1. For more information about the election process [click here](#).

Membership Corner

AAUW Art & Garden Interest Group – Field Trip

By Tena Gallagher, Art & Garden Interest Group Lead

The next trip is coming soon - we are going to the de Young Museum on Friday, January 10, to see the exhibit featuring Tamara de Lempicka, who defined Art Deco painting. This is her first major United States retrospective and should be fascinating. Do mark your calendars and share the date with other AAUW members. For more about the exhibition, [click here](#).



Tamara de Lempicka
Young Woman in Green (Young Woman with Gloves)

To RSVP for the January field trip, ask any questions, or volunteer to drive, please contact Tena Gallagher at mstena@gmail.com. Keep the group in mind and let me know when you see an activity that you think the Art and Garden group might want to do.

“Stay Home” Policy Statement

While we understand that people want to participate in person at our branch events, we also want to foster consideration for all members in creating a safe environment for everyone. Please consider this direction when you plan to attend a branch meeting.

If you are feeling ill in any way, or have been in close contact with someone known to have tested positive for COVID in the last 10 days, please do not attend any meeting!

Remember that COVID exposure remains a serious issue and that we need to be constantly vigilant. If you plan to attend a branch event, please stay home if you feel ill or if you have been exposed to COVID or any other significant communicable disease. We encourage you to be considerate of everyone attending a function, some of whom might be more susceptible than others. If you have any doubts, test, wear a mask, and err on the side of caution.

While there are inherent risks in attending an in-person event, with your help we will do our best to keep everyone safe at our meetings.

From the Editor - Joanne Quijano

Contribute to the Advocate - Send ideas, articles, and pictures by the 23rd of the month to appear in the next issue. Please use the [Submittal Form](#) on our website to direct your contribution to the Advocate, or other DAW social media, to our communications team.

Submissions are preferred in the following format:

- Articles in a .doc or .docx file, or in the body of an email
- Calibri font, size 12
- Pictures in .jpg format
- Permissions set to enable editing

Find contact information about people mentioned in the Advocate on our [branch website](#) and in your directory. If you do not have a directory, [click here](#) to send us a request.

Comments about the Advocate? – I’m always interested in making improvements to the newsletter to better meet our members’ needs. Please let me know your comments and suggestions at jtq@sbcglobal.net.

From the Treasurer – Chris Ritter

Handle money matters here - Please send expense vouchers or deposits to our AAUW mailbox at: P.O. Box 996, Alamo, CA 94507 for expedited processing. Refer to our branch website for specific forms and instructions – Click on [Members Page](#)

From the Corresponding Secretary - Julie Grisham

Know someone who needs a note? - Julie Grisham, our Corresponding Secretary, sends cards on behalf of our branch. If you know of an AAUW-DAW member in need of a get well, condolence or congratulations card, contact Julie via email at juliegrisham@sbcglobal.net.

Our Branch Sponsors

We are proud to acknowledge our loyal branch sponsors. We appreciate their support, which goes directly to fund DAW projects that include scholarships for local college students, Tech Trek camperships, and community education programs. For more information about becoming a sponsor, please visit our website at <https://daw-ca.aauw.net/sponsorships-2024/>



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The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is the nation's leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls.

Mission: AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

Value Promise: By joining AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

Vision: AAUW empowers all women and girls to reach their highest potential.

The Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek branch promotes and supports our AAUW mission through local scholarships, AAUW program support, panel discussions, Tech Trek, AAUW Fund, and topical guest speakers.



The Advocate

Online at <https://daw-ca.aauw.net/newsletter/>

Joanne Quijano, Editor
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