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Prescott (AZ) Branch AAUW

AAUW branch in Prescott AZ

Newsletter Jan-Feb 2021

President's Message



Tracy Smiles

The dream begins, most of the time, with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you on to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth.

Dan Rather

Before you read this, the holiday season will be all but over, as will the strangest year I remember having lived through. Like many people, I will be in the process of taking stock of what has been, and considering plans for what may be, in the promise of a new year. I won't be making any resolutions; history has taught me it's a futile undertaking. I have never, to my memory, kept a single one. Instead, I will take inventory of what I've learned this past year about myself, about my community, and consider better ways for being in the world.

I won't go into great detail about what I've learned about myself this past year, such as how, since sheltering in place, I really enjoy a clean and orderly house. Despite this, I still deeply dislike housework. The closets I set out to organize at the beginning of the pandemic did not remain organized for very long, and the piles of clothes that I'd planned to purge from said closets haven't been touched. I am more keenly aware of how much having pets enriches my life, and how much I miss my family. Traveling to visit over the holidays has felt, in the past, a bit like an obligation. But without the option of hopping on a plane to be with my mothers, siblings, and their children, I've come to realize the blessing of having a healthy family to miss, to love, and to not take for granted the precious time we have together. Today, most of all, I am reflecting on what I've learned, much to my surprise, about my appreciation for teachers.

As an educator myself, having spent 19 years teaching in public schools and 11 years at the university, I have long believed in the critical role teachers play academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually in a child and a young adult's life. However, living with a pandemic that has profoundly impacted schools has led many, including myself, to have an enhanced appreciation for teachers. In fact, I can honestly attest that my gratitude for teachers has expanded tenfold. The pandemic has shed light on an undeniable truth— teachers truly make an incomparable difference in the lives of children and youth, guiding their development and all that “development” embodies.

For a range of reasons, some by choice, some by virtue of living with COVID-19, my son, now a senior in high school, has been receiving his education virtually at home, in what the high school calls a “prep schedule.” I cannot lie about how extraordinarily

difficult this has been on him. Adolescence, a learning disability, and the pandemic created a perfect storm of emotional and academic challenges, as it has been for many young people. As a parent, and I know most of you would concur, there are few things worse than watching your child suffer.

Recently my husband, son and I, along with all of my son's teachers, academic advisers, and a school administrator met to review my son's I.E.P. (individualized education plan). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss challenges and successes and to make plans for how to support my son, given his special needs. It was a long meeting and I watched my son twist uncomfortably in the computer chair as he sat in the "hot seat," while his teachers reached out to let him know they care and are available to help. As if by magic, I witnessed how this encounter with his teachers positively impacted my fragile boy. His mood lightened, his anxiety was suddenly less pronounced, his outlook more positive—all because of contact with teachers. The visible guidance and support, and the unspoken contract of trust and goodwill, brought a sense of peace and calm to all of us. Between us, my husband and I have the academic training to support our son's in learning of curricular content, but recognize we are not his teachers, and our effectiveness at trying to be that has been minimal to say the least. I have come to realize it is everything else teachers are to students that makes what they do so incredibly essential to not only their students, but to the community and society as a whole. Today I celebrate their hard work and limitless generosity!

I have, since this experience, reached out to all of my son's teachers and expressed my admiration and gratitude for what they do, a workload that has doubled in the COVID-19 era. They are, truly, unsung heroes. I hope everyone who reads this and knows a teacher tells them how much they are appreciated, too.

Since it's a new year, I am closing my message with this quote we all know by Rainer Maria Rilke. It's one often circulated at the beginning of a new year, because it's, well, kind of perfect to reflect on as we journey onward.

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

Wishing all of you an excellent new year!

Programs

January General Meeting— January 9, 2021

Deb Dillon, Presenter

Let's Talk About Charter Schools

Deb Dillon, B.S., M.S., Ed.Spec., is a former public school administrator, award-winning dropout prevention advocate, and currently a member of the Prescott Unified School District Governing Board. Ms Dillon, who is also a member of the AAUW Prescott Branch, will share the well-researched paper she has produced for the PUSD board on the state of charter schools in Arizona. The report is entitled *Charter Schools: What They Are, How They Operate in Arizona, and How They Impact a Small Arizona City*.

Our State has about 550 charter schools— the highest percentage of charter enrollment of any state in the U.S. In her presentation, Ms Dillon will explain what charter schools are and will attempt to clear up the confusing information surrounding public charter schools in Arizona. She will also cover the development of charter schools, how they are governed and financed, and some of the pros and cons of the charter movement. Ms Dillon will then provide a look at how charter schools have impacted the City of Prescott and share some recommendations for the future of Arizona charter schools.



Deb Dillon, PUSD
School Board
Member

February General Meeting—Feb. 13, 2021

Merilee Fowler, Presenter

The Drug Epidemic in Changing Times: *Illicit fentanyl, Legalized Marijuana, and Youth Use Trends.*



Merilee Fowler

Merilee Fowler is the Executive Director of two nonprofit agencies in Yavapai County, MATFORCE and Community Counts. The February program will address the ongoing opioid epidemic in Yavapai County and, specifically, the current crisis in our area—mimic fentanyl pills, which has seen over 50 fentanyl overdose deaths, including 9 teenagers, in recent months. The passing of Prop 207 in November to legalize marijuana will present several unique challenges for law enforcement, prevention, and communities. This program will present an overview of fentanyl, legalized marijuana, and youth trends in Yavapai County.

Ms Fowler is an appointed member of the Governor’s Arizona Substance Abuse Prevention Committee and serves on the national advisory board of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA). Most recently, Ms Fowler was honored as the *2018 Outstanding Director of the Year* for the State of Arizona by the Organization of Nonprofit Executives (ONE) and received an *Excellence in Prevention Award* from the Arizona Department of Liquor Control. Ms Fowler is a passionate, action-oriented preventionist with local, state and national influence.

AAUW Prescott November- December Board Briefs

AAUW Prescott received \$500 from the Arizona AAUW to use to assist education. On the recommendation of Public Policy Chair Victoria Sweet, the board voted to use the money to purchase three specially adapted standing desks for students in HUSD.

- In November, the board heard a report from President Tracy Smiles about National President Kim Church’s inspiring presentation at the Fall Forum.



Deb Dillon

- Members are reminded that AAUW has a Zoom account available for use by Interest Groups and individuals members. Contact Sara DeRouchev for instructions.
- Current membership of the branch is 175.

Annual award winners announced

Rookie of the Year Award: Ellen Anderson



2020 Rookie of the Year – Ellen Anderson

Ellen had just retired from her years of teaching at PUSD when she joined AAUW. Since she'd lived in Prescott for years, she was perfect for Program – Co-VP. She has coordinated excellent programs, which have been interesting and popular with our membership and the general public. When we could no longer meet in person, she adapted quickly and graciously. She's supported the speakers by going above and beyond to keep in contact and make special accommodations for them. When most of us lost our Sparklight Internet access, she didn't miss a beat. The Program information in the Thumb Sketch is engaging and well-written. She's a new gem!

Mover and Shaker Award: Tracy Smiles



Tracy Smiles, Mover and Shaker Awardee

Beginning in 2004 the Prescott branch instituted the "Mover and Shaker" award to honor a member each year who works tirelessly on branch initiatives and is a leader in the branch. It honors a person who gives of her time selflessly to further the work of the branch in our community and to help it grow through her leadership, special projects, and involvement in all aspects of the branch.

It's amazing that Tracy has been a member for only four years, when we consider the impact she's had on AAUW-Prescott. She's been an extraordinary leader in extraordinary times. She has bravely lead, without a President-Elect, and has proven herself to be organized, insightful and flexible. She is committed to carefully making sure our actions reflect our missions of education, research and advocacy. A flexible, forward-thinking and collaborative leader, she's adapted and advanced the branch to

the future. It's a pleasure to see her in person or on our computer screens!

Ongoing Stamina Award: Lynne Murphy

As with the Mover and Shaker award and Rookie of the Year award, and the new in 2019 Ongoing Stamina award honors Prescott AAUW members for dedicated service and exemplary contributions in advancing our Mission: to advance gender



equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy with the vision of Equity for All. The Ongoing Stamina award member must have served AAUW for ten or more years.

Lynne Murphy, the recipient of this year’s award, does just keep going and going. Besides her official duties, she is very active in seeking out potential members and welcoming new members. In addition to serving as President, she has been Programs Co-VP and Co-Chair of the Scholarship Committee, to which she continues to contribute her ideas and time. The hospitality committee also benefits from her cheerful efforts.

Lynne Murphy-Ongoing
Stamina

Membership



Penny Briner Ewell,
Membership Co-VP

Please welcome Sue Marie Baskette as our newest AAUW Prescott branch member! Despite the trials and tribulations of COVID-19, we have gained a new member each month this fall. Thank you all for continuing to recruit wonderful women for our organization.



Annette Gauthier

Public Policy

AAUW Public Policy Zoom Event for January 19, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.



Victoria Sweet

The 2020 Election has wrapped up and now it is time to discuss the next steps for our schools and our efforts to advocate for Arizona students.

Join the AAUW Prescott Public Policy Committee as we welcome Beth Lewis, Co-founder & Director of the Save Our Schools AZ Network, Kari Hull, Northern Arizona Outreach Coordinator of Save Our Schools AZ Network, and Nicky Indicavitch of the Arizona Center for Economic Progress.

Under discussion will be the recent election results, the wins and losses, our next steps and the upcoming legislative session 2021.

Save Our Schools Arizona Network presents:

An Evening Presentation on Public School Funding Policy in Arizona



Join us for the webinar: January 19th, 7pm

Zoom Registration for the January Public Policy meeting

Use the link below to get registered!

When: January 19, 2021 7:00 p.m. Arizona

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAuf-ugqjsoGdOK9d0aQstIEghOfaUsp930>

Scholarships

Red Envelope Drive Appears to be a Success



Sandra Bennett

The AAUW Scholarship Committee's holiday Red Envelope drive has received numerous donations from generous members to aid the Centennial Scholarship. This scholarship is targeted towards women students at Yavapai College pursuing a career in the STEM fields. **The drive will go on as long as donations continue to arrive. If you haven't yet donated to this worthy cause, please consider doing so.**

Wendy Jones—In Memoriam



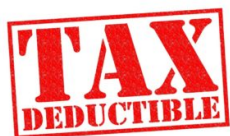
Wendy Jones

AAUW Prescott lost a valued member of our branch in November, Wendy Jones. Wendy, a member since 2012, moved to Sedona in 2015 but maintained ties to AAUW here in Prescott. Wendy was the daughter of Dot Williamson, also an AAUW Prescott member. Dot and her husband Bill have established an endowed scholarship at Yavapai College in her name to benefit women returning to school.

Wendy was instrumental in adding photos to our directory, believing it would be beneficial to the branch to have photos of members in the directory next to their contact information. She brought the suggestion to the board, and the directory team worked hard incorporating the photos, starting with the 2015-2016 issue. Wendy was one of the people who helped to secure the photos we

needed for that first issue. Additionally, Wendy was very good at taking group photos at our meetings. She was unobtrusive, capturing wonderful expressions and meaningful moments, and submitting her photos to the communications team for distribution.

Wendy was born in Ann Arbor, MI, and grew up in Toledo, Ohio, where she earned her B.A. degree in Marketing/Business from the University of Toledo. She moved to Prescott in 2012 to be closer to family, working at The Daily Courier and later at Dex Media. In Prescott, Wendy was active in AAUW, Sunrise Lions, Kiwanis, Eastern Star, Granite Mountain Riders, DAR, and Prescott Outings Club. She carried on her civic involvement when she moved to Sedona, joining the Elks and the Sedona Heritage Museum and maintaining her AAUW Prescott membership.



Tax Deductible Benefit for AAUW Members

This is just a reminder that a portion of your National AAUW dues is tax deductible for the year 2020.

- **If you paid the full amount of \$95 for the year 2020-21, you may deduct \$56.**
- **If you joined in a Shape the Future event and paid ½ price dues to National, you may deduct \$26.50.**

Interest Groups

The Lunch Group updates by Margie Crider

The Lunch Bunch is still finding meeting places, in spite of all of the closures. The good thing is that everyone who has joined us for lunch is still healthy. We still have small groups since many do not feel comfortable out in public.

Our December lunch had a very small group in a small room at Murphy's. It has a separate entrance and private bathroom. We want to remain safe and healthy without being too isolated. We always have such a good time together. If anyone has any suggestions on where to meet, please let me know. We are hoping that the restaurants with outdoor seating get plenty of heaters so we can keep meeting through the winter.



Margie Crider

May everyone remain healthy. Don't take any chances or do anything you are not comfortable with. (Oh yes, I did end that sentence with a preposition because as Winston Churchill said, when told he could not do so: "That is something up with which I will not put.")

Cheers to all!
