

ADVOCATE

<https://aauwbuffalo.org>

Together Making a Difference!

November 2023

Vol. CXXXII No. 3



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Post-Election Politics in Buffalo and Erie County Harlem Road Community Center Auditorium

4255 Harlem Road, Amherst

Thursday, Nov 16, 6:00 pm–7:45 pm

Jim Heaney, from the *Investigative Post*, will explore this very timely topic.

The *Investigative Post* is the only news organization in Western New York dedicated exclusively to producing watchdog journalism. Its mission includes covering issues of importance to the citizens and taxpayers of Buffalo and Western New York.

It was launched in February 2012 under the direction of [Jim Heaney](#), a former investigative reporter with The Buffalo News. In the succeeding years, the nonprofit newsroom has built a reputation for fact-based, high-impact reporting.

Jim has won more than 25 journalism awards and was a finalist for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

Some of the recent topics tackled by the newsroom include:

- [City Hall clerk paid not to work](#) (September 14, 2023)
How can Buffalo afford to pay a clerk for not working for seven years?
- [What's the bad news regarding The Buffalo News](#) (February 14, 2023)
As the Buffalo News is shrinking, its problems grow. Might it be de-listed from the NY Stock Exchange?
- What is the root cause of the fighting students - on the bus, at sports events, around the schools, at the library, etc. How do we tackle the problem?
- The local Conservative Party doesn't like the results of an election so it seeks to throw out the results?
- Mayor Byron Brown seems to successfully defy all the rules that protect our democracy - what is the answer?

Following the program, light refreshments will be served. There is no cost to attend, but we do need to know how many to plan for, so please leave a voicemail (716-559-3037) or email us (AAUWBuffaloProgram@gmail.com) with your name(s) by Saturday, November 11.



December ADVOCATE

The deadline for each issue of the Advocate is the 10th of the previous month. Submit articles to the editor: (NEWSLETTER@AAUWBUFFALO.ORG) via email by November 10.



THE BUFFALO BRANCH ADVOCATE

is published monthly, September to June, as a bulletin of events for members and as an update on AAUW issues and programs.

The opinions expressed within the newsletter are those of the individual writers and may or may not reflect those of the Branch.

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Congratulations and thanks to Nan Scinta, who will be presented with an AAUW Legacy Circle Pin at an upcoming Adirondack Branch meeting. Nan, who is a member of three NYS branches (Buffalo, Adirondack, and Empire State NYC), has provided for AAUW through her estate plan. It is through such gifts that AAUW will live on!

President's Message

Lilyen Mascellino

Greetings Branch Members!

What does our national Thanksgiving holiday have in common with the beloved nursery rhyme "*Mary Had a Little Lamb*"? Well, the passion of one tenacious woman, of course!

During November we have a heightened awareness of the things for which we are thankful. This is in part due to our Thanksgiving holiday. And for the women at our feasts who have marched, carried banners or have signed petitions throughout the years to advocate for women's rights, Thanksgiving can be a time to remember the pioneers who impacted American history. One such trailblazer was author Sara Josepha Hale.

It's interesting, although not surprising, that the 1st female magazine editor in the U.S., Sara Josepha Hale is more famous for penning "*Mary Had a Little Lamb*", than for being a major influence on American culture in the 19th century. As editor of a popular periodical for women, Sara Josepha Hale utilized her platform to defend political issues such as abolition and to argue in favor of higher education for women. Although she had stereotypical views about women's roles as mothers and homemakers, she used the power of the pen to advocate for, as well as challenge, cultural norms at the time in favor of a woman's right to own property and to gain economic independence via occupations outside of the home.

Sara was also a patriot who believed that Americans needed a shared experience; a national day of thanks. (Thanksgiving was only celebrated in New England at that time.) For years, she tirelessly lobbied state and federal officials to establish such a day. She also encouraged her readers to do the same. And when tensions grew between the North and the South, she wrote the President, declaring that a national day of thanks could help unite us. It was in the midst of the Civil War that President Lincoln agreed with her. He declared Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863, but Sara wasn't content with that. She then directed her efforts to have it become an act of Congress. This would happen decades after her death when Congress passed a bill establishing the 4th Thursday in November as our nation's Thanksgiving Day. On 11/26/41, President FDR then signed the bill into law.

It is due to the author of a popular nursery rhyme that we celebrate Thanksgiving as a nation this month. Although she didn't support the suffrage movement, she did advocate for women in the areas of higher education and financial independence. As we gather with loved ones this holiday season and as we work together this year as AAUW members, let us focus on the things that unite us, as it's inevitable for our opinions to vary on some issues.

SEPTEMBER 2023 INTEREST GROUPS

DINNER BY THE BOOK

When: Wed. Nov 15 at 5:30 pm
Where: Family Tree Restaurant, 4346 Bailey Ave.
Book: Ashton Hall by Lauren Belfer
Facilitator: Judy Huber
Discussion Leader: Leona Barback
RSVP: Judy Malamas at 716-632-0461 or tsagewood@aol.com

CLUELESS MYSTERY BOOK CLUB

When: Wed. Nov 29 (5th Wednesday) at noon
Where: Family Tree Restaurant, 4346 Bailey Ave.
Book: Secrets Typed in Blood by Stephen Spotswood
Discussion Leader: Barbara Libby
RSVP: Barbara Libby at 716-836-8303 or bplibby1@verizon.net

HAPPY WANDERERS

When: Thurs, Nov 2 at 10:45 am
Where: The AKG.
 We will meet inside the Art Gallery at 10:45 for an 11:00 tour. If we have 10 people, we can have a docent. They say to allow 2 hours to visit. We will then have lunch in their Cornelia Restaurant. The menu is online and parking is available underneath or you can park out on Lincoln Parkway.
 Tickets to the AKG are \$18 for Seniors.
RSVP: Please respond to Judy Huber **ASAP** if you are coming so we can buy group tickets.
Judyhuber62@yahoo.com or 716-529-9881.



Would you like some ACTION???

Why did YOU join AAUW? Were you interested in community service, socialization, specific activities (i.e. the Book Sale, Tech Savvy, etc.), your own life-long learning, activism in the area of equity for all? If the last (activism) was part of your thought process, would you like to be doing more? If so, you will be glad to hear that the branch is working on a plan for all who are interested to become involved as an ActionTeam!

AAUW nationally has more than 30 public policy priorities ([AAUW Public Policy Priorities – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881](#)). There may be some with which you disagree – that’s fine, just let others work on those. You could even be personally fighting against those, just not in the name of AAUW.

Our idea (“borrowed” from the Naperville, IL Branch) is to:

- Through surveying the branch and analyzing the results, narrow all those 30+ priorities down to about four topics that OUR branch members agree with and think most important.
- Each month, include education on those issues and possible action to be taken by members in the newsletter.
- Encourage members to use the “two minute activist” ([Two-Minute Activist – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881](#)) to lobby the appropriate officials for those topics, especially when there are specific bills to address.
- Meet personally with the appropriate officials to inform them of our concerns and introduce them to AAUW.
- Canvass the community to see what other organizations might join us in fighting for these issues.

Are **YOU** interested? We need a few enthusiastic members to take on this project – the work won’t do itself. If you’re willing to help spearhead this, please contact our Public Policy chair Dr. Marian Deutschman (deutscht@BuffaloState.edu). We look forward to hearing from you!

PRESIDENT Lilyen Mascellino	VP MEMBERSHIP RETENTION Dr. Susan McClary	BRANCH TREASURER Mary Crocker	CHAMBERLIN/FUNDS FOR EDUCATION TREASURER Kathleen SantaMaria
VP PROGRAM Dr. Marian Deutschman	SECRETARY/PARLIAMENTARIAN Judy Huber	EAP TREASURER Sue Stapell	SCHOLARSHIP DIRECTOR Melissa White
VP MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT Diane O’Brien	CFO Shirley Joy	FUNDRAISING TREASURER Mary Crocker	

The Questions We Would Have Asked Dr. Ophir!

Dr. Marian Deutschman, Public Policy Chair

Unfortunately, we ran out of time at our October program on Misinformation and Artificial Intelligence, so there was no opportunity to ask questions of Yotam Ophir. Dr. Deutschman sent some to him later, which he has graciously answered:

Will AI help us to work faster and improve productivity? Will it aid us in learning and development?

- *Yes. Absolutely. If there's one thing that AI seems to be very good at is performing tasks rapidly and efficiently. At the moment, for most serious applications, a human will need to go over it and double check the performance. But I can only assume that over time AI will become more independent with sophisticated tasks as well.*

Can organizations face legal repercussions themselves for using outputs from generative AI?

- *These questions are somewhat in the air still. The legislation is lagging behind technology at the moment and there are multiple legal cases being considered regarding copyright and other complications. I believe that in the next few years we'll know more.*

What happens to your own data once AI has it?

- *That's a great question and we don't fully know the answer to it yet. Our data are being harvested by so many companies all the time. ChatGPT is but the last to join the data mining frenzy. These companies also frequently share data with one another, i.e., with "third parties". This could grow into a serious problem in the near future.*

Isn't there a fear of sharing potentially proprietary knowledge?

- *Yes. Part of the Hollywood strike in recent weeks had to do with copyrights issues. Some authors are suing Open AI as well, claiming the algorithms used their books for learning without consent. It's not fully clear at the moment who should get credit (and compensation) for work that AI had created based on copyrighted materials.*

What does an AI classroom look like?

- *We'll have to wait and see. Students are already beginning to adopt ChatGPT, for example asking it to do their homework for them. I'm sure there's also a positive potential here, but it will take time to fully understand it. Remember that many educators resisted the digital calculator when it was first introduced, and now we are pretty much all in agreement that calculating by hand is a waste of time. We'll have to wait and see, and find creative new ways to evaluate our students (e.g., maybe oral exams?).*

Will AI help to train students for a global workforce?

- *Probably. It's also safe to assume that the jobs of the future (present?) will require knowledge in operating and optimizing AI.*

Isn't there a question about lack of accuracy and misinformation? And about legal uncertainties, data security and privacy?

- *Absolutely. AI makes mistakes all the time. But so do humans. It does seem to become better and more accurate over time. The general rule of thumb in machine learning is that the more data the better performance is.*

Congress is playing catch-up to regulate social media. Are we in the same situation again?

- *Congress had done little to nothing to regulate social media. Based on decades of libertarian and absolutist interpretations of the first amendment, social media in the US is a wild west with no Sheriff around to make sure malicious actors don't harm us. Since AI is also being perceived as "tech" and not "media", I can definitely see us going down the same path here as well, with the result probably being lagging behind many other developed countries in regulation.*

Can't AI increase victimization of vulnerable people?

- *For sure. As always, vulnerable people suffer more from these issues. For example, many have found that AI is not very good at identifying the faces of African Americans, which has resulted, for example, in mistakes in incarcerations of Black people. Part of the reason is that AI was mostly trained by white people on white people for white people. It also incorporates our biases and amplifies them.*

Can we trust what we see and some of the sources of information?

- *As always, we need to remain skeptical. Not cynical—there's no help in rejecting all sources of information, but staying alerted to potential deception, especially from less reliable sources, is always a good idea*

Will a supercomputer take control?

- *Some are worried that it's possible. But it's important to remember that AI doesn't have consciousness or "will". It's a very strong calculator that works well with probabilities and can create images and text, but to the best of our knowledge, we're not facing a Frankenstein situation (yet?)*

Continued on next page...

Public Relations Update

Pat Miceli, PR Chair

The PR Team welcomes new members to the AAUW Buffalo Branch. By way of reminder to new and existing members, monthly programs on varied topics are offered for your enjoyment and interest.

The pictures included with this article are from the 9/28/23 program on Artificial Information and Misinformation, presented by Dr. Yotam Ophir, Ph.D.

The PR Team is looking for someone willing to be a photographer. If you are interested call Pat Miceli at 716-626-0234 (H) or 716-880-0042 (C).

Watch for us - AAUW will be featured in the 11/1/23 Life-styles section of the *Bee Newspapers*.

Ophir, continued from previous page

What will it change in our society?

- *Everything. Some have argued that the AI revolution will match or even surpass the effect of Gutenberg's movable type.*

Can artificial intelligence allow us to speak to another species?

- *As science-fiction as it sounds, maybe. If machines can effectively learn patterns in animal's use of voice, facial expressions, and other communications, maybe we'll get better over time at understanding what they're trying to tell us. Not sure how exciting the results will be for us, though. Most animals lack the brain areas we have that are responsible for creating fiction and complex ideas. And for basic language, I think most dog owners would tell you they are already pretty good at knowing when their little pup is hungry...*



BOOK SALE REPORT

Jayne Murray

BOOKS AND SORTERS NEEDED!

Help us spread the word!



TRACKING OUR EXPENSES:

Costs are rising!

The doors are now open weekly at **37 Anderson Road in Cheektowaga** and donations have begun. We have met some very kind donors and always enjoy hearing their “book” stories. One gentleman visited us several times to deliver over 20,000 sci-fi, western, and mystery paperbacks from his mother. She had been a voracious reader, finishing each in approximately three hours and often re-reading them. He was pleased to know that her legacy would be that her precious books would continue to be read and also be used to promote education here in WNY. Sci-fi is a big seller at the Sale each year and we are pleased that they were all in good used condition! Each donation is “like a box of chocolates.” You never know what treasure you will find.

We sort on **Tuesdays and Wednesdays in two shifts: 9-11 a.m. and 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**; however, you are welcome to *join us for whatever amount of time works for you*. A supervisor will be there for each shift and training is provided. Directions (and a box-packing video) are on the Book Sale Page of our website, <https://aauwbuffalo.org>.

*Reminder: If the schools are closed due to the weather, so are we.

Many donors tell us that they hear about us through our colorful **WE WANT BOOKS** bookmarks which are posted and distributed in all public libraries in Erie, Niagara, Orleans, and Genesee Counties and the Miller Library in Chautauqua. If you can't make it to the Sorting Site to pick up our bookmarks to distribute, **please download a printable [copy](#) from our website**. Do you have a bookmark story to tell? I visited my local garden nursery after the Sale last year and there was a weathered and faded bookmark stapled to the post near the outdoor checkout. The cashier told me that her daughter puts one there every year because she loves the Sale and wants to share it with their customers.

Thanks to Sorting Supervisor Pat Stotsky for suggesting that we gratefully hand each donor a thank you slip (bright yellow) which also links them directly to our AAUW webpage **and scholarship info**.

Each year, our Committee works with our faithful long-time moving company to transfer all of our boxes of thousands of books from our Sorting Site to the Sale Site for ongoing sorting and setup. \$2600 moved all our equipment back to our Sorting Site on Earhart and other sites for storage. In August, we paid \$1140 to move into our new Sorting Site on Anderson Road—an extra move for us while we searched for this new Site. Thanks to the dedicated volunteers who moved all our empty boxes in a morning-long caravan of cars to lessen the cost!

Your sponsorship will help us to defray these costs

Sponsorship Categories:

- Louisa May Alcott, \$25 – \$49
- Toni Morrison, \$50 – \$74
- The Bronte Sisters, \$75 – \$99
- Jane Austen, \$100 +

If you are interested in being a sponsor, please send a check made out to AAUW Buffalo Book Sale, to PO Box 894, Buffalo, NY 14225. Friends and non-members are also encouraged to help sponsor our sale. What a wonderful gift or memorial idea! Donations are tax deductible.



Ready for Tech Savvy 2024???

Tamara Brown

After a semi-hiatus and virtual programs during the pandemic, we are looking forward to an in person Tech Savvy! For those who are newer to the branch (and for those of us who have had a LONG three years), this is our branch's initiative to inspire girls-- and the adults in their lives-- to consider STEM careers. We look forward to welcoming guests and volunteers back for workshops, exploration, and fun!

The world is not quite the same- so we need your help to envision a post-pandemic Tech Savvy that is safe, engaging, and more relevant than ever-- including borrowing some elements from another homegrown creation Sister to Sister.

One thing hasn't changed: Women still earn less than one-quarter of degrees in engineering and computer science. Girls need Tech Savvy, and Tech Savvy needs you and your ideas.

We will schedule a planning meeting shortly. Please email Tamara at tbforaauw@cs.com if you are on the TS team.



It's also time to be thinking about EDUCATIONAL FUNDS!



The deadlines for applying for our “regular” scholarships aren't until February—but we have other assistance programs as well. Were you aware of our Chamberlin and Funds for Education **interest-free** Loans and Grants?

The **Chamberlin Loan Fund** was established by Sarah A. Chamberlin in 1937 to help provide financial support, mainly in the form of interest-free loans, for full-time higher education for women of good character and promising scholarship who might not otherwise be able to procure a college education. Preference will be given to students in attendance at Cornell University, as stipulated in the will, and to students whose legal residence is in Western New York.

Funds for Education was established to provide additional financial support to full-time college students in the Western New York area in the form of specialized loans, grants, or scholarships. These funds are obtained from proceeds from our Annual Book Sale and generous donors. The funds include several named awards. Applicants, women or men, must demonstrate superior academic achievement, have potential for achieving their academic and career goals, and show financial need.

The Buffalo Branch of AAUW administers both these interest-free loan and grant funds and gives awards as packages to be accepted or rejected in their entirety. Applicants must be residents of Western New York and/or attending colleges in that area.

The next deadline is **Dec. 1st**.

The [application form](#) is available on our website.

AAUW PRIORITIES:



Removing Bias from Education

Startling inequalities persist in American education. Gender, economics, race and ethnicity should not limit our opportunities.



Fighting for Fair Pay & Economic Equity

It's time to close the pay gap and for the work world to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion so we can all thrive.



Advancing Women in Leadership

Women make up more than half of college graduates and half of the labor force. But we're still not represented at the upper levels. We need equal representation.

DATES to REMEMBER

Please note: All events are possibly subject to change or cancellation. Please check our website for last minute information.

Wednesday, Nov 1, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting at Christ United Methodist Church, Harlem/Saratoga in Snyder **NOTE CHANGED LOCATION!**

Thursday, Nov 16, 6:00 pm, Branch Program at the Harlem Road Community Center. Jim Heaney, from *Investigative Post*, will discuss post-election politics in Buffalo and Erie County.

Wednesday, Dec 6, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting at Christ United Methodist Church, Harlem/Saratoga in Snyder

Saturday, Dec. 9, Branch Program - Lunch and tour at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site

AAUW has been empowering women as individuals and as a community since 1881. For over 140 years, we have worked together as a national grassroots organization to improve the lives of millions of women and their families.

Mission: *Gender Equity & Economic Security*

Vision: *Equity for all*

Values : *Intersectional. Inclusive. Intergenerational. Empowering.*

In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.

Moving? Please contact Mary Crocker 716-838-2796



Return Service Requested

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University Women
Buffalo Branch Inc
PO BOX 894
Buffalo, NY 14225-0894

