



Mission Statement: AAUW advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

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

APRIL 2011 NEWSLETTER AAUW Bridgeport Area Branch
www.aauwbridgeport.org

President's Message

I saw a forsythia bush in bloom! Hello spring and goodbye five feet of snow, crumbling roofs and flooded basements.

Meanwhile natural disasters abound, as we watch events unfold in Japan. Is this a sign of climate change or just a natural occurrence? Yet winter has seen a few exceptional programs here in Bridgeport. Members, me included, thoroughly enjoyed "Music Under the Stars" at the Discovery museum. Most expect to attend next year.

Due to a family emergency, I was unable to attend the full CSW55 conference but was able to hear former President of Chile and current Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet give an inspiring speech at the "Girls Stand Up" orientation day at Pace University.

With all the discussion of balanced budgets, we look to AAUW for continued support of Planned Parenthood's efforts in women's health and reproductive rights. AAUW/LAF also supports women's economic security in the historic class action suit Dukes v. Wal-Mart.

Meanwhile, the White House issued a report on the status of women in the US. In my opinion, it's about time, as this hasn't been done for 50 years since JFK issued the first report in 1963 at the request of Eleanor Roosevelt and the Commission on Women.

March 20th brings the first day of spring and we look forward to Dr. Laura Nash at the Trumbull Library on March 30th at 7:00 p.m. In April we also have a special luncheon event honoring "Women in Flight" on the 16th at the library at noon.

I hope that with the renewal of spring, our thoughts turn to nature planting gardens and feeding birds. "Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life." Rachel Carson

Judith Polizzotti, Co-President AAUW Bridgeport

AAUW General Meeting

Saturday, April 16, 2011

12:00 noon

Trumbull Library

Women in Flight: Past and Present

In keeping with our STEM program, on Saturday, April 16 our annual luncheon meeting will be an event celebrating the six CT women who served in the Womens Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS) in WW II. I'm happy to announce that three of the six will be attending: Anita Matthews from Litchfield, Jane Tedeschi from Bethany, and Jane D. Miller from Branford. Gloria Heath of Greenwich and Ann Gleszer of Danbury may not be able to attend. I was unable to reach Marcia Milner of Essex.

These women have great stories to tell, of hard work and long hours, winks instead of salutes, and pillows some had to sit on to reach the plane's pedals. Other guests will be William Cornell, a B-24 pilot who flew with some of the WASPS and his wife Mary Jo who has her own stories to tell of the WASP flight school where she trained.

A simple luncheon at noon (suggested donation \$5.00) will be served. AAUW members are requested to contribute a variety of finger foods for the many attendees we are expecting.

In addition to our WW II guests, we plan to have representatives from CT flight schools and the Civil Air Patrol to inform us of the status of women in the aviation industry as a whole in the 21st century. There will also be books and other materials from the Women's History Museum of Dallas, Texas which had an exhibit last year titled Dreams of Flight celebrating the women pioneers of flight, science and space.

Check out the great photo on the flyer of some WASPS in front of their plane! Please call Linda De Leon at 362-1844 or e-mail me at lindeleon@optonline.net for information.

Linda De Leon, VP Membership

Networking

It's time to gather and celebrate spring. Wednesday March 30th, the networking group will gather at Marisa's, 6540 Main Street in Trumbull at 5:30 p.m. prior to the Dr. Laura Nash program at the Trumbull Library at 7:00 pm. All are welcome, as it's an opportunity to meet new members and reconnect with old friends. Please RSVP to me at judy poli@hotmail.com so we can give the restaurant a count of diners.

Judi Polizzotti
Co-President AAUW Bridgeport

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Public Policy

Do you realize that public sector employees, on the whole, earn less than private sector counterparts, including both wages and benefits? However, unionized women make, on the average, more than non-unionized. Women are now making an increasing proportion of union members. Firefighters, police, and sheriff's assistants have been exempted from the proposed laws, but teachers, primarily women, have specifically been targeted. AAUW believes collective bargaining loss would have dire effects on women and their families. As I write, this is what the state of Wisconsin has succeeded in doing.

Budget cuts proposed by House Republicans would have significant impacts on job training and employment programs over the next two years. More than 8 million workers would lose job training and the programs funded by the Workplace Investment Act. This is key to improving access to higher skilled jobs and higher wages. In the midst of this tough economic climate, this does not seem to be the best time to cut programs that will help the economy grow.

Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, offered his solution to concerns about the future solvency of Social Security. Social Security payroll tax only applies to earning up to a ceiling of \$106,800. Reich proposes to raise the level to \$180,000. That would shift the barrage of the most recent proposals to raise the age of recipients. To raise the retiring age would disproportionately harm women, who earn less and live longer. AAUW believes, while not sufficient to live on, Social Security is vital to women's economic security.

Jean Weicker

International CSW 55

Our branch sponsored two students, Laiali Alzaydeh from Jordan who is in a Doctorate of Computer Science program at UB and Mina Tomba, a graduate of HCC in Accounting, to attend CSW 55 (Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations). Mina founded the non-profit America Moms for Africa Moms to provide economic security to rural women in Congo and fight abuse.

From a Chinese proverb “women hold up half the sky” but do women have access to half the pie? Women make up half the population but do they have equal access to education, jobs and health care.

Women still comprise the majority of the world’s absolute poor and those without access to education. Additionally, disparities in equal pay for equal work, unpaid work, continued high maternal mortality, prominent HIV infection rates, and a pandemic of violence against women are clear indications that solutions to these gender specific issues must be implemented now. The special needs of girls and women of all ages must be recognized in the context of human rights. Women’s rights are human rights.

Today we see worldwide individual empowerment with the advent of social media like face book and twitter that are impacting governments all over Arab world. And at the same time, we are also seeing the impact of solidarity on people and institutions. That’s the significant impact of attending CSW 55. It’s seeing strong, powerful women in leadership positions that are working together and changing the world.

CSW Background

CSW the Commission on the Status of Women is the primary global policy making body of the UN that is entirely devoted to examining the state of progress for women. Thirty-six years ago, the international movement for women’s rights was launched with World Conferences in Mexico City, followed by Nairobi, Copenhagen, and Beijing to advocate for women’s rights and to assess its progress.

Theme-STEM

This year’s theme of “access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work” emphasizes the importance of societies using all of their resources to play on the international stage in today’s global economy.

“Science and technology are increasingly major contributing elements for the achievement of development goals: eradicating poverty, fighting disease, improving education, achieving food security, addressing environmental problems. They are also a means for Countries to improve productivity and competitiveness and to create decent work opportunities.” Over the two week conference, CSW members discussed how women could have a voice in planning the education and training requirements for participating in STEM fields.

AAUW's role

AAUW is one of the many organizations, NGO's, who have a representative at the UN, Carolyn Donovan is the AAUW representative. She also serves on UNICEF's Working Group on Girls committee.

AT CSW 55, AAUW participated in several workshops and panels, and showcased our research report, *Why So Few? Women in Science, Engineering, Technology, and Mathematics* that examines the issues with women's participation in STEM fields.

UN Women

In Gail Collins NY Times OP ED column she reminded us that Eleanor Roosevelt was a powerful founder of the UN Commission on the Status of Women over 50 years ago. Ms. Roosevelt also a tireless worker for American women, created a report on the status of women for President John F. Kennedy. In those days, women were closed out of 200 of 454 federal job categories. Things have changed.

The Obama administration established a White House Council on Women and Girls headed by Valerie Jarrett.

Now fifty years later Collins reports on a new survey:, "Men have to be reminded that women exist....And the pay gap is still real; financed day care is teetering; we need to think of work/life issues as family issues" so we can plug the leaky pipeline of women in the workforce. In fact, Collins reported talking to young male college students who reported expecting their wives to be good earners.

Currently, there are nine women heads of state. In the US there are 88 or 16.4% women in congress out of 535 seats, 17 or 17% in the senate and 71 or 16.4% in the house.

Women lost ground in the mid-term election.

This brings us to the newest thrust at the United Nations: a new entity for women called UN WOMEN, an entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, headed by the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. In only 8 months Ms. Bachelet has brought together the women of the world. All of us here, no matter what our backgrounds are UN WOMEN.

These are the four main focus areas of UN Women:

- 1) Women's empowerment through political participation, decision making and leadership skills so they can take part in governance;
- 2) Women's economic empowerment, credit, access to banking services for all including rural women and access to the technology to improve their families' lives;
- 3) Ending Violence Against Women which depends on good enforceable laws and engaging men;
- 4) Follow up on the several Security Council resolutions which call for stopping sexual violence as a weapon of war and giving women a voice at the peace table;
- 5) Finally, countries need to develop national plans of action which emphasize women's participation and include educating and empowering girls as well as women.

Judith Polizzotti

Co-President AAUW Bridgeport

Bridgeport Branch Calendar- 2010-2011

April 12- Contemporary Global Issues-9:30 am-Bayview

April 12th - Branch Board Meeting-12:00 noon-Unity Hill United Church of Christ,
264 White Plains Rd., Trumbull

April 14th - Evening Book Group-home of Gretchen Goethner

April 16th (Saturday) - General Meeting-Luncheon Program "Women in Flight"-12:00
Trumbull Library

April 26th -Morning Book Group-Watermark

May 4th - Finance Committee Meeting-home of Gloria Francesconi

May 10th - Contemporary Global Issues-Bayview

May 12th - Evening Book Group-home of Phyllis Mankowitz

May 19th - Annual Meeting & Dinner-6:00 pm-Holiday Inn, Bridgeport

May 24th -Morning Book Group-Watermark

June 7th – Branch Board Meeting-Bayview

June 9th - Evening Book Group-Dinner Meeting

June 14th - Contemporary Global Issues-Bayview

