

Mt. Vernon Voices

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

Volume 68 Issue 3 November 2024

Mt. Vernon Branch



CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE



Autumn, with its vibrant colors and crisp air, is a season that naturally lends itself to introspection and reflection. As the leaves change and fall, we are reminded of the beauty and impermanence of life. It is during this time that poets often find inspiration in the transformative power of both the season and personal change.

<https://poemverse.org/poems-about-autumn-and-change/>

I didn't find a poem, but I found the words above that express exactly what I was thinking as I searched for inspiration for this newsletter article. Change beyond the normal is what I am associating with autumn this year. Changes in clothing, in the foods we eat, a change in the amount of daylight, changes in the colors that surround us, and changes in some of the activities that we do... these are changes that we accept as "normal" for autumn. But this does not seem like a "normal" autumn. There is turmoil and anxiety on both sides as we approach a change that speaks to the impermanence of life. We know life is always changing, and we are facing possibly an unwelcome change in the life of our country come November 5. It is a harrow-

(Continued on page 2)

BRANCH PROGRAM—NOVEMBER 2

Please join us!

Grammy-award Winning Music Educator

ANNIE RAY

**Speaks on her Success Working with
Students with Disabilities**

Saturday, November 2, 2024 10:30 a.m.

Sherwood Regional Library

2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306

Annie Ray is a talented young orchestra teacher at Annandale High School. She speaks eloquently and enthusiastically about her work and her students. She won a Grammy last year for her work.



Please come and support this young woman and be prepared to be awed!

More information on page 4

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

ing thought for many of us, but whatever the outcome, the result will need to be accepted and/or tolerated for a specific amount of time. For now, we will have to wait and see and prepare ourselves mentally for that result. As the saying goes, "There must be reason for whatever happens." As Americans, we know that our current ways are not working well. Must we reach the bottom before we can climb out of this "mess?" Might this be our bottom? Might this be the beginning of the climb out? We'll have to wait and see. I hope that our work of writing and mailing postcards, the work of individuals from our branch at polling places, and any of the actions you have taken to spread truth and equality for all will be the small things we do with great love... our contributions to the cause. Thank you to those who attended the Rank Choice Vote program. This was a great contribution to our community to encourage us to begin to think differently about the election

process. Will this be a change we will see in the future? Like everything else, we will have to wait and see. I have no answers. But, no matter the outcome, together we will face changes with strength and continued commitment to the values we hold dear. That is something that will not change.



Patsy



BRANCH LEADERSHIP 2024 – 2025

Elected Officers

Co-Presidents:	Patsy Quick Elaine Kolish
Program Vice President:	Solveig Eggerz
Membership Vice President:	Susan Farmer
Treasurer:	Anne Simpson
Secretary:	Joanna Crane

Directory Distribution:	Mary Ellen Mehler
Nominating Committee Chair:	Lois Passman
Hospitality:	vacant

Interest Groups

Book Group:	Liz Promen
Dining Out:	Cathy Conron Paula Lettice
Game Night:	Bianca Daugherty Paula Lettice
ImpromptEvent:	All Members

Appointed Chairs

Bylaws:	vacant
AAUW Funds:	Cathy Krebs
Public Policy:	Mary Ellen Mehler
Newsletter/Website:	Bianca Daugherty
Newsletter/	

Contact Email: AAUW.MtVernon@gmail.com

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

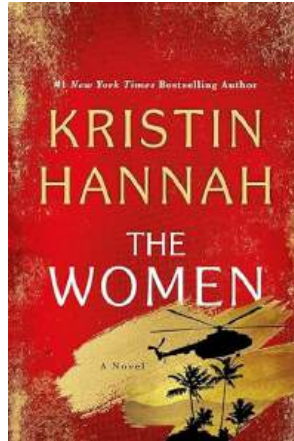
BOOK GROUP

Monday, November 18, 2024 - 7 p.m.

Please inform the hostess whether or not you plan to attend.

HOSTESS: Susan Farmer
7758 Belvale Drive
Alexandria

CO-HOST: Anne Simpson



BOOK: Women
by Kristin Hannah

REVIEWER: Ebba Jo Spettel

NEXT BOOK:
Unfinished Love Story
by Doris Kearns Goodwin

GAME NIGHT



Join us for a fun evening with various games.

Friday, November 22, 2024, 7:30 P.M.

Home of Patsy Quick

Patsy will send out a reminder and address to the group via email.
Spouses and significant others are welcome to join in!

Contact Paula Lettice or Bianca Daugherty
if you would like to join the group.

AAUW.MtVernon@gmail.com



Sunday, December 8
for AAUW's Holiday Luncheon

This year our event will be on a Sunday, rather than a Saturday. Please save the date,
Sunday, December 8 for our luncheon.

Invitations with details and a RSVP request
will follow in November.

Elaine and Patsy
Co-Presidents



Alexandria & Mt Vernon Branches



Sherwood Regional Library

Grammy-award Winning Music Educator, ANNIE RAY, Speaks on her Success Working with Students with Disabilities

November 2, 2024 10:30 a.m.

Sherwood Regional Library , 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306

Discussion Topics to Include:

- Special education inclusion in performing arts
- Working with a diverse population of students
- Performing Arts/electives being a core part of a students education and the impact on chronic absenteeism
- Annandale school as a whole - dramatic shift in approach school wide
- Being a working mother and balancing a demanding career

Our Speaker:

Annie Ray currently serves as both the Orchestra Director and Performing Arts Department Chair at Annandale High School (AHS) in the Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) system. Annie is an advocate for providing universal access to quality music education and is known for founding and developing creative opportunities to make music accessible to students of all demographics. Her establishment of the FCPS Parent Orchestra teaches about 200 caregivers annually to learn to play their student’s instrument and provides mentorship to upcoming music teachers.

Annie also began the Crescendo Orchestra program to make Orchestra curriculum accessible to students with significant developmental or intellectual disabilities. In January 2022, this program was featured and acclaimed on the cover of the Metro section in The Washington Post.

TEDx invited Annie to give a talk in April 2022, on The Sounds of Success, based on her approach in the classroom and how to meet all students where they are at. She has been a guest lecturer at colleges across the country and keynote speaker at numerous national/international conferences, and was named the 2024 Grammy Music Educator Award recipient and the 2023 FCPS Outstanding Secondary Teacher of the Year for her work on equity in education.

Annie is a member of the StringRise professional development team. She is an active performing harpist and currently resides in Arlington, Virginia with her husband Dr. Irving Ray and their daughters Eloise and Millie. Annie is an adventurer at heart, and her biggest bucket list item is to one day win The Amazing Race.

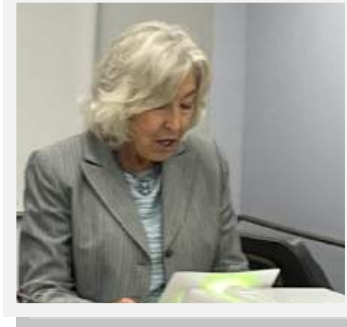


The meeting is free and open to the public.

For more information: AAUW.MtVernon@gmail.com

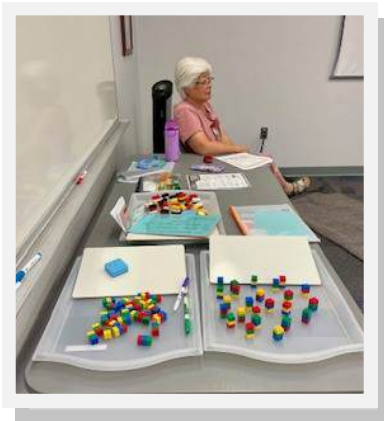
RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Ranked choice voting (RCV) is a voting method in which voters rank candidates in order of preference (1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice). This method allows your vote to count towards another candidate if your 1st choice candidate receives the least amount of votes. UpVote Virginia notes that RCV ensures winners with majority support, rewards candidates who build consensus, diminishes negative campaigning, eliminates "spoilers", and elects more non-traditional candidates. According to FairVote, RCV is currently reaching 13 million voters in 51 cities, counties and states in the U.S. Since 2004, there have been over 500 RCV elections in the U.S with tens of millions of ranked ballots cast.



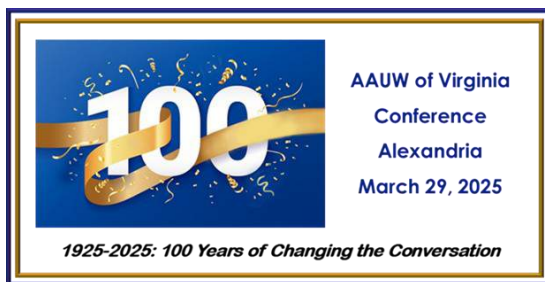
Mount Vernon AAUW's program on Rank Choice Voting (RCV) on October 15, 2024, at the Sherwood Regional Library was very informative. Topics included: what it is; why and how it can strengthen democracy; what Virginia can/and cannot do with RCV; a look at where and how RCV has been used elsewhere; what is happening in Arlington with RCV; and what folks can do now (in Fairfax, Alexandria City). Attendees enjoyed a voting tabulation activity with Legos.

Bev Dyer



Above: Branch Member Bev Dyer, who organized the program introduced the speakers.

Left: Program Speakers from left Janice Morris, Liz White, Chris DeRosa



**Celebrating Virginia AAUW's
100th Anniversary in March 2025:
Two Ways You Can Help Make it a Success!**

As you might expect, plans are well underway for the conference that will be held **March 28-29, 2025** at the Sheraton in Old Town. The conference will celebrate Virginia AAUW's 100th anniversary. Our branch has volunteered to do the "welcome" bags for the attendees. These will include some tourist information about Old Town Alexandria and the wonderful attractions we have here in S. Fairfax County. We already have a committee, **Sandy Doyle, Paula Lettice, Anne Simpson, Elaine and Patsy**. We welcome additional members to help us gather appropriate items for the welcome bags and to fill the bags. Please let Patsy and Elaine know if you would like to volunteer.

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CELEBRATING VIRGINIA AAUW'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

(Continued from page 5)

Additionally, to mark Virginia AAUW's 100th anniversary, every branch has been asked to donate 100 items or 100 dollars to a local non-profit or to AAUW's funds. Our board has decided to recognize and build on the volunteer work that two of our members do for **United Community**. On a regular basis, **Joanna Crane** and **Anne Simpson** put together bags of food and other supplies that are delivered weekly to UC's home-bound clients. Kudos to them for their wonderful contribution to our community's welfare through UC. The "other supplies" include personal toiletries, such as shampoo, soap, dental care products, and adult diapers. These needed items are always in short supply. Consequently, at our holiday event on December 8 (details later), we are asking members to bring full-size bottles or tubes of toiletries or adult diapers. We hope to collect at least 100 items that we will then donate on behalf of the branch. We thank you for your generosity in advance.



Elaine Kolish

**A POST ELECTION
CONVERSATION WITH
REPRESENTATIVE
GERRY CONNOLLY**



Monday, December 2 at 5 p.m. on Zoom



SPONSORED BY:

- ◆ Alexandria Branch
- ◆ Arlington Branch
- ◆ Falls Church Branch
- ◆ McLean Branch
- ◆ Mt. Vernon Branch
- ◆ Reston-Herndon Branch
- ◆ Vienna Branch

ADVANCE REGISTRATION HERE:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IbHEq8JMTUmEPCp1MxPquQ

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Our branch members really rocked our **Get Out the Vote** post card campaign. So many members volunteered to write postcards at home that **Patsy** had to order another 200 so the group that wanted to write them together had some! Altogether our branch sent out 429 postcards!!! These were sent to voters in districts in Florida and Texas that traditionally have low voter turnout. The scripts were customized for each state.

Many thanks to Patsy who got all the materials for us and got a reimbursement of \$61 for postage from the state (representing the 1/3 they were offering all branches that participated in the postcard campaign). And many thanks to those who did so many postcards at home: **Bev Dyer, Louise Priest, Betty Demarest, Kathi Hanrahan, Joanna Crane, Liz Promen, Anne Simpson, Suzanne Cleary, and Anu Soi** who sent a picture. On October 1 I had the pleasure of welcoming 10 members to my home to write about 200 postcards. We had fun and did good work!

Elaine Kolish



Anu Soi wrote postcards while in Pittsburgh



Top:

Clockwise, Cynthia Jacobus, Mary Ellen Mehler, Joanne Clark, and Patsy Quick

Left:

Clockwise: Catherine Krebs, Bev Dyer, Ofelia Perotti, Anne Simpson, Elaine missing at head of table, new member Sandra Doyle, and Joanna Crane

SUCCESSFUL FIRST ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE



Cheryl and Anne

From New York to Florida, AAUW members gathered for the first biennial **Atlantic Regional Conference**, held at the beautiful Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center in Glen Allen, VA. The conference was hosted by AAUW-VA and our branch was represented by **Cheryl Spohnholtz and Anne Simpson**. The conference featured a wide variety of presentation topics, including Generative Artificial Intelligence, Equal Rights Amendment status, Immigration, Reproductive Freedom, and Voting Rights. All the speakers were excellent. We also got updates on AAUW current and future activities from AAUW President, **Gloria Blackwell**. The conference was not all work - there were numerous opportunities to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Additionally, following the Friday night dinner we were entertained by a musical cabaret from the Sassy, Soulful Sirens.



From left: Cheryl with AAUW-VA president Lane Stone and AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell

This regional conference was a huge success, and it was well worth attending. Being able to hear from sister branches across the region was very interesting, and it was a great way to get additional ideas for how to keep our branches vibrant and meaningful.

Cheryl Spohnholtz

A NOTE OF THANKS



Dear Patricia, Elaine and the AAUW Mt. Vernon Branch:

Greetings from AAUW National—Welcome to Fall! (I hope you enjoyed your summer!)

AAUW continues to focus our mission on the most pressing issues facing women and girls. There's still so much at stake. Please accept my sincere gratitude for your very generous branch donation to support AAUW's Greatest Needs Fund. You are empowering the next generation of women leaders and

advocates, and it is only *together* that we will continue to make progress in advancing gender equity through research, education, advocacy and VOTING. **You are making a difference.**

Your contribution is a powerful investment in the future of women and girls. Thanks to you, we can continue to break barriers and create opportunities that transform lives. And thank you for being a true champion for gender equity.

Please stay well, and stay connected with AAUW National (through our webinars, our national newsletters, our [Two-Minute Activist](#) appeals and more!), or locally with your fellow AAUW members. Please also feel free to be in touch with me if you ever have any questions or want to share your thoughts and ideas.

With deepest gratitude,

Gloria

Gloria L. Blackwell
Chief Executive Officer and
Main Representative to the United Nations AAUW

2024 - 2025 MT. VERNON BRANCH PROGRAM YEAR

Meeting Date and Place	Focus/Activity
Thursday, September 12, 2024, 1:30 PM Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306	Fundamentals of Estate Planning (estate planning, wills, trusts, beneficiaries) Speaker: Gretchyn G. Meinken, Esq.
Tuesday, October 15, 2024, 1:30 PM Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306	Election 2024 Speaker: Liz White of Upvote VA and Chris DeRosa & Janice Morris , of the League of Women Voters of Arlington/Alexandria "Ranked Choice Voting" team. (Discussion of Rank Choice voting.)
Saturday, November 2, 2024, 10:30 AM Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306	Speaker: Annie Ray , Grammy Award Winning Orchestra Teacher
Sunday, December 8, 2024, Time TBD Location TBD	Holiday Event
Saturday, January 11, 2025, 10:30 AM Sherwood Regional Library (Zoom if bad weather)	AI Unleashed: The Future and Its Risks Speaker: Jennifer Swann , Director of Information Security at Bloomberg
Thursday, February 20, 2025, 1:30 PM Sherwood Regional Library (Zoom if bad weather)	Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions Speakers: Meg Tuccillo and Patty Hagen
March or April Location, Date and Time TBD	Annual Business Meeting
March 28-29, 2025 Sheraton Suites of Old Town Alexandria	AAUW-VA Conference
April 17, 2025, 1:30 PM Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306	Eliza Scidmore: The Trailblazing Journalist Behind Washington's Cherry Trees Author Diana Parsell will speak about her book and research.
May Location, Date and Time TBD	Annual Potluck
June Location, Date and Time TBD	Annual Planning Session
Wednesday, June 18, 2025 7 PM Reception / 8 PM Performance Little Theatre of Alexandria 600 Wolfe St, Alexandria, VA 22314	LTA Annual Fundraiser The Play That Goes Wrong



November 2024

- **2 Branch Program, 10:30 A.M.**
Contact Solveig Eggerz
- **12 Board Meeting, 7:30 P.M.**
Contact Patsy Quick/
Elaine Kolish
- **18 Book Group, 7 P.M.**
Contact Liz Promen
- **22 Game Night, 7:30 P.M.**
Contact Patsy Quick



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2 Branch Program
3	4	5 	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 Board Meeting	13	14	15	16
17	18 Book Group	19	20	21	22 Game Night	23
24	24	26	27	28 Happy Thanks-giving	29	30



Check out our website <https://mtvernon-va.aauw.net/>
Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/mtvernonvaaauw/>

