

Mt. Vernon Voices

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

Volume 68 Issue 9

May 2025

Mt. Vernon Branch



CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Dear AAUW Sisters:

These continue to be troubling, even terrifying, times. But we all have the ability to be part of the solution (probably long-term) to prevent the complete dissolution of DEI and equity policies that AAUW supports. If you haven't signed up for the [Two Minute Activist on AAUW's site](#), please do so.

Also, from time to time, **Patsy** shares alerts from groups that share AAUW's positions and those alerts often provide an easy way to file a comment and let your voice be heard. And of course, many groups fighting for the rule of law and equity need money. **Elaine** proudly reports that she recently learned that her 19-year-old grandson donated \$100 to the ACLU because he was impressed with its work and was appalled by the deportation of people without due process to foreign countries. Surely, we can do as much to support organizations that support AAUW policies and the rule of law.



We've now reached the stage of our year, where after many excellent programs and speakers, we are moving to socializing (**potluck dinner at Paula Lettice's home**), fundraising (**Little Theatre play**) and planning (**meeting at the library**) for our next year. Please check the calendar on page 6 and jot those dates/times/locations down on your calendars. In particular, we encourage all members to buy or sell at least two tickets to our **Wednesday, June 18 fundraiser** at the Little Theatre. **Liz Promen** epromen2@gmail.com now holds the tickets, so please contact her for yours.

See you soon,

Elaine and Patsy



Mark your calendar for our
AAUW Mount Vernon
Annual Potluck – Dinner and Awards
Thursday, May 29, 6:00 p.m.
Home of Paula Lettice

Paula will be sending an invitation
and your "potlucks" request soon!



AAUW NATIONAL AND AAUW-VA ELECTIONS

AAUW-VA One Member/One Vote



The online voting process for the election of state officers and a bylaws amendment will begin **May 1** and will close on **May 20, 2025**. **Voting will be available online to all AAUW of Virginia members with email addresses.**

WATCH FOR YOUR VOTING INSTRUCTIONS IN EMAILS COMING SOON.

It is very important that you cast your online vote by the deadline of May 20, because a quorum of seven (7) percent of the membership is needed for the election. If we don't have a quorum, the new state officers cannot take office July 1, 2025.

Please take the time to vote as a responsible AAUW of Virginia member. For more information on candidates and bylaws amendment see the [Voter Guide in the Annual Business Meeting 2025 Book](#)

AAUW National 2025 Member Vote

Voting is open for the 2025 AAUW national member vote! AAUW members will vote on the AAUW Board of Directors and proposed changes to the national Bylaws and Public Policy Priorities.

Emails with voting link have been sent out in April (AAUW Election 2025.)

The election ends on May 13, 2025 at 5 p.m. ET.

For more information on the candidates and ballot initiatives, please visit <https://act.aauw.org/MemberVote2025>.



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

Appointed Chairs

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

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

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

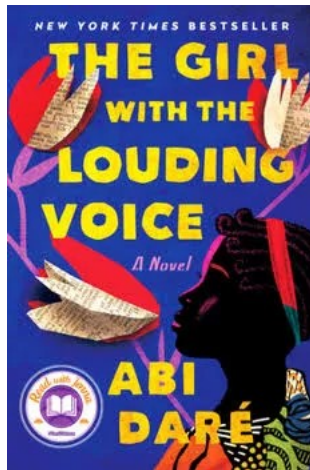
Monday, May 19, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.

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

HOSTESS: Liz Promen

2210 Cavendish Drive
Alexandria

CO-HOST: Betty Demarest



BOOK: The Girl With The Louding Voice
by Abi Daré

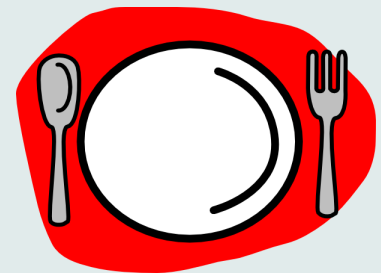
REVIEWER: Patsy Quick

NEXT BOOK: Age of Wonder
by Richard Holmes

Contact Liz Promen if you are interested in joining the group.

**DINING OUT WILL BE BACK FOR
RESTAURANT WEEK IN AUGUST.**

EMAILS WILL GO OUT CLOSER TO THE DATE.



Don't miss our Annual Fundraiser at the Little Theatre of Alexandria



The Play That Goes Wrong

Called "the funniest play Broadway has ever seen" (Huffington Post), this classic murder mystery is chock-full of mishaps, mayhem, and madcap mania!

Wednesday, June 18, 2025
7 P.M. Reception / 8 P.M. Performance

Hurry, tickets are selling out fast!

Contact **Liz Promen** to purchase your tickets.
Tickets are \$40 pp. which includes food and drinks
at the 7 p.m. reception.

GAME NIGHT

Full House at April's Game Night!
No fierce competition, but camaraderie, fun, and laughter!



"The Gamers"

Photos courtesy of Tom Jacobus

Join us for another fun evening with various games.

Friday, May 23, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Home of Anne Simpson

Spouses and significant others are welcome to join in!

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

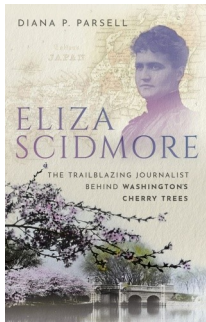
AAUW.MtVernon@gmail.com

A DREAM DEFERRED FOR 25 YEARS: BRINGING CHERRY BLOSSOMS TO THE TIDAL BASIN

On April 17, 2025, writer, editor, and former journalist, **Diana Parsell** fascinated a large audience at Sherwood Regional Library with stories about the trail blazing, 19th century photographer/journalist, **Eliza Scidmore**.

Parsell was working in Indonesia when she came across a guide-book about the area by an E.R. Scidmore. Back in Washington, she decided to explore this author at the Library of Congress.

Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore (1856-1928) “turned out to be even more extraordinary than I expected,” she said. Parsell discovered that her many travel books were very popular at a time that did not favor working women. A main reason for her popularity is that Americans did not travel much in those days. “She blazed trails to tourism when tourism was just taking off,” Parsell noted.



In 1873 Scidmore went to Oberlin College and dropped out after 1.5 years. But George Washington University gave her an honorary doctorate in 1919 in recognition of her travel writing. As soon as she got her PhD, she joined AAUW.

As a reporter she attended the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia and wrote five articles under her middle name, Ruhamah. Inspired by the glaciologist, John Muir, Scidmore traveled by mail steamer along the inside passage to Alaska. As the first tourist to sail into Glacier Bay, she reported on Alaska for 15 years, producing writings that so impressed the scientists at the National Geographic Society that she ultimately became their first corresponding secretary.

Although her dream to plant Japanese cherry trees along the tidal basin was deferred for 25 years, she never gave up on it. The dream began with Scidmore's ride in a cage to the top of the unfinished Washington Monument in 1883. Looking down on a muddy swamp from the top, Scidmore thought and later wrote, “one day this will be a magnificent park.”

When she visited her brother George, serving as U.S. consul in Japan, she had the opportunity to witness the beauty of Japanese cherry trees. Remembering that view from the Washington Monument and the muddy swamp below, she used every opportunity to promote her idea of bringing cherry trees to Washington DC. Finally when she mentioned the idea to First Lady, Helen Taft, wife of the 27th president William Howard Taft (1909-1914), she received a positive response. On April 7, 1909 Helen Taft wrote Scidmore a letter saying she very much liked the idea of planting cherry trees in Potomac Park.



Photos courtesy of Elaine Kolish

A wealthy Japanese man gave Washington, DC 2,000 cherry trees, which arrived in 1910.

Parsell did much of her research on the life of Eliza Scidmore and the so-called “Gilded Age” of her era at the Library of Congress. Today she is a docent at the Library, where she leads tours for visitors.

Her book is *Eliza Scidmore: The Trailblazing Journalist Behind Washington's Cherry Trees*. Visit her website at www.dianaparsell.com

*Solveig Eggerz
Program Vice President*

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, 11:30 AM Cedar Knoll , 9030 Lucia Ln, Alexandria, VA 22308	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
Saturday, March 15, 2025, 10:00 AM Via Zoom	Annual Business Meeting
March 28-29, 2025 Sheraton Suites of Old Town Alexandria	AAUW-VA Conference
Thursday, 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.
Thursday, May 29, 2025, 6 PM Home of Paula Lettice	Annual Potluck
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
Saturday, June 21, 2025, 10:30 AM Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306	Annual Planning Session

Annual Planning Session

**Saturday, June 21,
starting at 10:30 a.m.
Sherwood Regional Library**



In preparation for the Planning Session, **Elaine Kolish** emailed a link to a survey to get your thoughts on our branch's operations and policies. (see her emails March 24 and April 28.)

Please complete this short survey soonest (no later than end the of May)!



May 2025

- **6 Board Meeting, 7:30 P.M.**
Contact Patsy Quick/
Elaine Kolish
- **19 Book Group, 7 P.M.**
Contact Liz Promen
- **23 Game Night, 7:30 P.M.**
Contact Anne Simpson
- **29 Annual Potluck, 6 P.M.**
Contact Paula Lettice



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Board Meeting	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Book Group	20	21	22	23 Game Night	24
25	26 Memorial Day	27	28	29 Annual Potluck	30	31



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

