



THE SAGE HEN

A Quarterly Publication of the AAUW Nevada State Council

2025 - 4th Quarter



Mission Statement: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



The holiday season is definitely upon us. We enjoyed the costumes and merriment of Halloween, paid homage to friends and family members who have died on *Día de los Muertos*, honored our veterans on November 11, feasted on scrumptious fare with family and friends on Thanksgiving, survived Black Friday, supported local businesses on Small Business Saturday, and donated to our favorite non-profits (including AAUW) on Giving Tuesday. Yet, we are not done!

There are so many traditions during this time of the year. Many of them include lights in anticipation of the shortest – and darkest – day of the year, the winter solstice on December 21. **Hanukkah**, this year from sundown on December 14 to nightfall on December 22, is the Jewish Festival of Rededication. **Las Posadas**, December 16 to 24, is celebrated in Mexico and many parts of the U.S. **Christmas** is on December 25, with **Boxing Day** on the 26th. **Kwanzaa**, celebrated from December 26 to January 1, was inspired by African harvest celebrations.

Regardless of how you celebrate this season, as friends and family gather, two concepts are central: generosity and gratitude. Generosity involves giving not only material goods, but giving time and energy to others without expectation of return. The gift of fearlessness means providing protection and safety to others, particularly those who are vulnerable for one reason or other. Generosity is particularly important to extend to people whose worldviews differ from our own. Kindness extends emotional support and compassion. Joy is cultivated by giving and appreciating the opportunity to help others.

Gratitude allows us to recognize and appreciate the kindness received from others. Although we immediately think of family and friends, it is important to pause and reflect on the interconnectedness of everything that supports our lives: the nurturing sun, the abundant earth, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the diversity of all living creatures, the people who grow and harvest the food we so enjoy, all of the people who make living in a complex world possible, the wisdom we derive from others with whom we both agree and disagree, the list goes on. Gratitude helps counter negative states like greed, hatred, and delusion. It shifts what we lack to what we have.

Taken together, gratitude and generosity are foundational to developing compassion and seeing the interconnectedness of all beings and all things. In this season, when chaos and division seem to be the order of the day, practicing generosity and gratitude may be just the right antidote.



Janet Usinger, President
AAUW Nevada State

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message	1
Public Policy	2-3
Branch News	4-9
State Council Information	10
Branch Flyers	11-14



Public Policy: Where We Were ... Where We Are

During our recent AAUW State Leadership Council meeting, several of our seasoned members reminded us that AAUW's 144-year legacy includes periods of real struggle—not just unity. We have weathered internal disagreements, national upheavals, and difficult reckonings about who was welcomed into our movement and who was left out. Much like the early suffrage movement, which pushed women's rights forward while excluding Black women and other marginalized groups, AAUW has had to confront painful truths, endure division, and do the hard work of course - correcting.

We have experienced losses, including members who disagreed during pivotal debates around the Equal Rights Amendment, reproductive rights, Title IX, and other landmark issues. Yet each time, AAUW chose to hold fast to its mission and continue moving forward. We find ourselves in another such moment today — one that reflects both the divides in our country and the courage, honesty, and wisdom required to navigate them.

This mirrors conversations taking place at National. At our recent National Public Policy Chairs meeting, we discussed the nuanced distinction between partnerships and coalitions, supporting issues while remaining nonpartisan, and how Branches across the country are responding to perceptions of division. These discussions are not signs of fracture; they are signs of engagement. They reflect what it means to be an organization actively advancing change in a shifting world.

From this place, I invite you to reflect on what public policy actually is: *the set of choices a society makes about how we live, learn, work, and care for one another*. Public policy touches everything, from our bodies and our economic security to education access, safety, and dignity. These are not abstract concepts. They are deeply personal.

I rarely share my own story in AAUW communications, but as we close the year, I feel compelled to do so. I am a woman of color. My birth mother was white. I was placed for adoption at nearly three years old and adopted into an abusive family. I share this not for sympathy, but to illustrate how profoundly policy failures in the United States shaped the circumstances of my early life. When we debate AAUW's policy positions, I ask us to consider not only our own experiences but also those of women and girls whose stories may be unfamiliar to us — those who live at the intersection of vulnerability, resilience, and systemic inequity.

We are, at our core, an intelligent, benevolent, and passionate community. Public policy is not about unanimous agreement; it is the ongoing process of sharing ideas, refining solutions, and pursuing the public good. We may not always land at 100% alignment, but disengagement, apathy, or silence have never served us. Our mission has always required courage and compassion.

National Highlights

Working in Coalition: Building Power Through Partnerships

AAUW recently convened a compelling panel sharing successes, challenges, and lessons learned in coalition work. Check out AAUW's new resource on building coalitions:

<https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2025/11/Working-in-Coalition-Building-Power-through-Partnerships-Resource.pdf>

View the webinar recording: <https://youtu.be/im6VsWTi7X8?si=4OteRrdhwhxSezoi>



AAUW It's My Vote!

AAUW is a proud Grassroots Power Partner with the League of Women Voters US on the *Unite & Rise 8.5* nonpartisan campaign, alongside the National Council of Jewish Women. This work is part of AAUW's *It's My Vote!* initiative as we prepare for the 2026 midterm elections.

- Press release (11/7/25): *Women-Led Organizations Join Forces to Strengthen Democracy Nationwide*: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/women-led-organizations-join-forces-to-strengthen-democracy-nationwide/>
- AAUW Voter Engagement: Unite and Rise 8.5 FAQs: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/women-led-organizations-join-forces-to-strengthen-democracy-nationwide/>

Federal Policy Updates:

Key actions and statements from AAUW National include:

- Updates on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) lawsuit, negotiated rulemaking, and ongoing federal budget concerns.
- Explainers and messaging guides on PSLF litigation.
- AAUW's statement and sign-on letter regarding the administration's "Compact for Academic Excellence."
- Full archive of AAUW policy letters and coalition sign-ons: AAUW Policy Documents: https://www.aauw.org/?s=AAUW+Policy+Documents+&wp_resource_types=policy

Resources:

- AAUW Action Network: <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>
- AAUW Advocacy Toolkit: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/>
- AAUW is proud to be a Grassroots Power Partner with the League of Women Voters US on their nonpartisan Unite & Rise 8.5 campaign, alongside the National Council of Jewish Women.
 - AAUW Voter Engagement: Unite and Rise 8.5 <https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2025/10/Its-My-Vote.pdf>
 - AAUW Press Release (11/7/25): Women-Led Organizations Join Forces to Strengthen Democracy Nationwide: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/women-led-organizations-join-forces-to-strengthen-democracy-nationwide/>
 -

Please reach out to advocacy@aauw.org with any questions.

Conclusion

As we move into a new year, my invitation is simple: stay engaged, stay curious, and stay connected. AAUW has never been — and must never become — a passive observer of the world around us. Our responsibility is not only to uphold our mission, but to embody it. Thank you for your commitment, your courage, and your willingness to build a more equitable future — together. Happy Holiday Season. In Peace & Solidarity



From the Boulder City Branch:

We continue to grow: Boulder City Branch has increased its membership to 31 members! We also will have completed our big Fall fundraiser - the 48th year of the Home Tour on November 15, 2025. This fundraiser will support scholarships for Spring 2026 term. We have enjoyed our *Let's Do Lunch*, with most recent visits to Boulder Creek Grill and Toto's Mexican Restaurant in Boulder City. We will end the year with a Holiday Festival luncheon at the newest restaurant in Boulder City - The Supper Club.

November 7th, the Las Vegas Branch Presidents met up with the Boulder City folks to get to know each other and discuss our Branches' goals, which focus on reaching out to the younger women in the community, building networking and collaboration, and learning more about archiving materials.

November's regular meeting drew crowds with the dynamic speaker and local author, Pat Murphy. On her website, she defines herself as a "fiction writer and troublemaker." She writes about women who "defy and subvert their societies' expectations." Pat kept the audience entertained with her personal accounts of crossing literary genres of fantasy, science fiction, and historical literature. She aims to expand the readers' knowledge across women's and indigenous peoples' perspectives and histories, while still using the ol' 3x5 cards to organize her story lines!



From Left: Afi Bruce (Las Vegas Co-President,
Linda Gardner (Boulder City Membership VP)
Angel Ball (Boulder City President),
Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert (Las Vegas Co-President)



From Left: Judi Hoskins, Author Pat Murphy,
Chris Ward



From the Capital Branch:

The biggest news at Capital Branch is that Pecans are here! This delicious fundraiser supports our annual college scholarships and contribution to AAUW's Greatest Needs fund. Please see the flyer at the end of this newsletter for info on how to order!

Capital has also been busy making holiday ornaments for Silver Belle, the first National Christmas Tree from Nevada, participating in Interest Groups, including a hike at Caples Lake, and attending our regular monthly programs.

In October, we heard from Dr. Rebecca Bevans of Western Nevada College about the adverse effects of food dyes on behavior and chronic disease; and in November from Dr. Jill Derby on the 20th century history of war in the Middle East. We also made an \$850 donation to the Carson City Symphony's Youth String Programs in memoriam of Jane Johnson. Jane was a long time Capital Branch member, past Branch and AAUW Nevada officer, and AAUW Lifetime Member, as well as an active member of the Symphony and Consort Canzona. We invite all AAUW members in Northern Nevada to join us in remembering Jane at the Symphony's annual Holiday Treat Concert in Carson City on December 14!



From Left: Capital Branch members Kim Nieman and Stephanie Facchini



Capital Branch Ornaments



From Left: Patty Almond (Capital Branch Public Relations Coordinator), Nancy Scott (Capital Branch and Symphony member), and Youth Strings Program Teacher present the donation check to David and Ellie Bugli of the Carson City Symphony (right)



From the Fallon Branch:

Instead of homemade candy this year, we are selling organic walnuts and have a quilt raffle at the local Christmas Fair.



Fallon American Association of University Women – Fall Fundraiser 2025 Raffle and Walnut Sale All proceeds fund scholarships for Fallon women high school seniors



1. Crazy Colorful Quilt – 53" x 65"
Anonymous Donor

WALNUT SALE

Fresh organic
Franquette walnuts from
San Joaquin Co., CA
Available after Nov. 10
Will be sold at
EC Best Craft Fair
For pre-orders or questions
call
Joanne 775-427-5452
\$6.00 per pound



2. Ginkgo Leaves Quilt – 66" x 66"
Donated by Linda Hickok
Restonored etsy.com



3. Fall Barn Hanging Quilt – 33" x 34"
Donated by local quilter Cheryl Scherschel

Back to School Bundle

\$110.00

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 3-1/2lb Smoked Ham | 1. 4pc Pork Steak |
| 1. 3-1/2lb Chuck Roast | 1. 2 lbs. Ground Beef |
| 1. Whole Chicken | |

Meat product will be frozen. Pre-Order to miss the wait. Recipes upon request. Make dinner easy with Momma's.

250 E. Main St. Fallon, Nevada (775) 423-2341

4. Back to School Meat Bundle
donated by Momma's Meat Company

Raffle Ticket Prices:

1 ticket = \$1.00
6 tickets = \$5.00
14 tickets = \$10.00
30 tickets = \$20.00

Be sure to write on each ticket

- Name
- Phone number
- Raffle item number

Drawings will be held November 20, 2025

Winners will be called and quilts can be delivered

Tickets available at the Craft Fair or from AAUW members

Come and see us at the Christmas Craft Fair – November 14 & 15, EC Best School

From the Las Vegas Branch:

Honoring Our Roots, Embracing New Growth This Season

As the holidays approach, we celebrate connection, tradition, and the new energy taking root across the Las Vegas Branch.

As the Fall season unfolds and the holidays draw near, the Las Vegas Branch is thriving with new energy and ideas. This quarter, we focused on connection and collaboration — blending the wisdom of long-time members with the enthusiasm of newer members to keep our mission vibrant and inclusive.

We recently met with Boulder City Branch President Angel Ball and Past President Linda Gardner to explore opportunities for cross-branch collaboration and shared programming. We also continue to stay in touch with Pat Dalpaiz, VP of Membership from the St. George, Utah Branch, with a tentative visit planned after the holidays to strengthen our regional ties.

Our partnership with the League of Women Voters of Las Vegas Valley continues to grow, reflecting AAUW's national collaboration with LWV and our shared commitment to civic engagement and equity.



From the Las Vegas Branch: continued from page 6

Our November 15th fundraiser turned into a most festive success, featuring hand-crafted baskets by Marian Stanton, and other Las Vegas Branch members, along with door prizes and a 50/50 raffle. Events like these remind us that advocacy and fellowship go hand in hand, each nourishing the other.

We're also proud to celebrate Claudia Merrill, founder of Nevada's first African American Opera Company, Grace City Opera Theatre, who will open for the Nutcracker (performing The Journey of Mary and Joseph to the Birth of Christ) at The Smith Center of the Performing Arts, December 23, 2025 — a shining example of the talent and leadership within our branch. More information at info@GraceCityOperaTheatre.org or <https://thesmithcenter.com/>

As we enter this season of gratitude, we hold space for every member — those celebrating, those reflecting, and those facing challenges. May this time bring peace, comfort, and renewed inspiration to all.



Marian Stanton, Fundraising Chair



Co-President, Afi Bruce

Warm holiday wishes,
Afi & Evelyn



From Left: Margo Tello, Public Policy Chair, Las Vegas;
Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert, Co-President, Las Vegas,
Pat Dalpaiz, VP of Membership, St. George, Utah Branch



Longtime member Anne, Guest Speaker
Jenna Heath, Director of Student & Community
Engagement at UNLV's College of Liberal Arts)
and Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert, Co-President
(at the podium).



Silent Auction
baskets from
November
Fundraiser



From the Reno Branch:

Now that we've passed through the beautiful colors of October (at least here in Reno they were spectacular!), we are heading relentlessly for the major holidays of the year. This brings joy for many, heartache for others who have an empty chair at Thanksgiving or fewer presents to give at Christmas. Shalom, shalom.

We in the Reno Branch have been fairly quiet this Fall since we decided, when revising our Bylaws, that we would no longer require a monthly meeting, but rather meet (sort of) quarterly: we decided on three (3) in-person meetings a season: a September get-together to begin the year, a December holiday party, and a Spring picnic. All other meetings are via Zoom, in October-November or January, March, and April (our business meeting).

Our December meeting will feature one of our scholarship recipients and is also a fundraiser for scholarships which is managed by Nevada Women's Fund. This proved to be very successful last year. In March, we hope to have Senator Angie Taylor speak to us about how she will be helping shepherd our proposed bill on candidate transparency through the legislature in the next session. An additional planned speaker in the Spring is Courtney Burns, a past president of the Branch, but also a Director of Girls State, who will speak to us on the status of that organization, which we have supported for many years.



From the Tahoe-Nevada Branch:

The Tahoe Nevada Branch of AAUW has been busy this past quarter. We are currently running a matching funds campaign to raise funds for scholarship, grants, and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. Four generous donors have raised \$10,000, which we are hoping to match with our membership and community members. If you would like to donate to our fundraiser, see our flyer toward the end of this newsletter.

We participated in several fun events this past quarter. Our local Trail of Treats took place on October 30th and we're also participating in the community's Holiday Giving Tree event on December 6th.

Our October program dinner meeting, as well as our Special Interest Book Club focused on Mark Twain. We were fortunate to be joined by McAvoy Lane, who is the reincarnation of Mark Twain. His presentation was delightful.

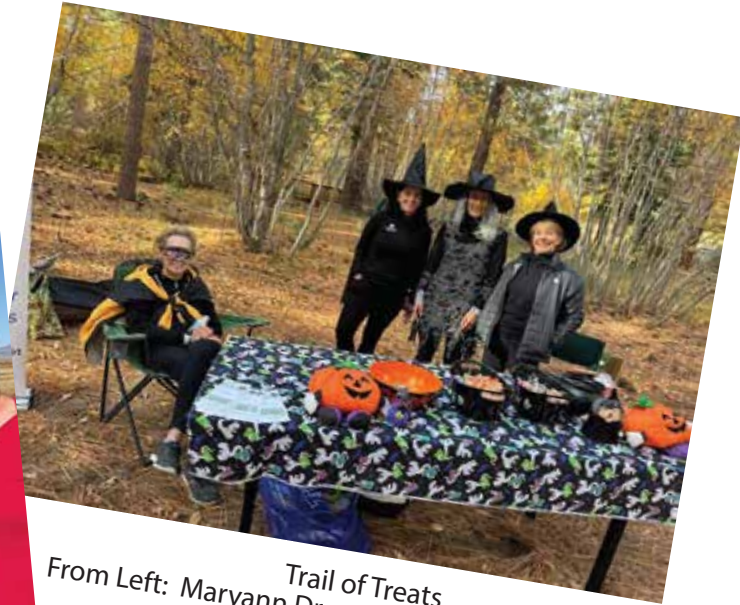
Our other Special Interest groups have been vibrant and well-attended. Our Cooking Club hosted *Thanksgiving with a Twist* at a member's home. We are saying our last goodbye to summer activities like hiking, biking, and kayaking, but we will be welcoming snowshoeing and skiing. The Travel Club ventured to Gerlach, Nevada to visit the Fly Ranch geyser and Burning Man artwork. AND, our Holiday Celebration party is on December 10th. You are welcome to join us! (See flyer toward the end of this newsletter).



From the Tahoe-Nevada Branch: continued from Page 8



Fly Geyser at Black Rock desert
From Left: Millie Szerman, Stacy Stewart, Janet Usinger,
Edie Farrell, Millie Clarke, Debbie Nicholas, and Carolyn Usinger



Trail of Treats
From Left: Maryann Dresner, Kathy Vanlandingham,
Barbara Meyers, Leann foster





AAUW NEVADA
Sage Hen
4th Quarter 2025

AAUW of NEVADA
2025-2026 State Leadership Council Members and Branch Presidents

AAUW Nevada State Council Roster			
State Officers			
Janet	Usinger	President	usingerj@unr.edu
Terry	Owens	Secretary	terry49408@gmail.com
Debbie	Nicholas	Treasurer	nicholas89451@gmail.com
Evelyn	Thompson-Hilbert	Public Policy	evelyn.AAUW@gmail.com
Doris	Dowden	Membership/Communications	dsquared2@sbcglobal.net
Millie	Szerman	Newsletter	milliesz746@gmail.com
Caroline	Punches	Bylaws/Past President	cpunches206@charter.net
Holly	Gallup	Archivist	galluph@gmail.com
Jennifer	Verive	At Large	jmverive@gmail.com
Branch Presidents			
Angel	Ball	Boulder City Branch President	1dalmom@gmail.com
Patricia	Cuocco	Capital Branch Past President	patricia@fullerton.edu
Carol	Roeder	Fallon Branch President	ccroeder@charter.net
Evelyn	Thompson-Hilbert	Las Vegas Branch Co-President	evelyn.aauw@gmail.com
Afi	Bruce	Las Vegas Branch Co-President	afibruce@yahoo.com
Joanne	Walen	Reno Branch President	joanne.walen@me.com
Esther	Levandoski	Tahoe Nevada Co-President	president@tahoenvaauw.org
Carolyn	Smith	Tahoe Nevada Co-President	president@tahoenvaauw.org



TAHOE NEVADA

AAU



YOU ARE INVITED

2025 Holiday Celebration

Join us for delicious appetizers, scrumptious entries*
and a special Holiday dessert!! No Host Bar!

- Where:** The Chateau
- When:** Wednesday,
December 10th
- Time:** 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- With:** Your Spouse,
Your significant other,
or yourself!
- Wear:** Dress for the Holidays
- Cost:** \$40 pp

R.S.V.P.: By Noon December 4th

<https://pci.jotform.com/form/251975562612159>

Questions? President@tahoenvaaauw.org

* Gluten Free and Vegetarian entries available

George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*

PRESENTED BY NEVADA BALLET THEATRE

PRE-SHOW PERFORMANCE

The Journey Of Mary and Joseph To The Birth of Christ

AN ORATORIO PRESENTED BY THE GRACE CITY OPERA THEATRE



December 23, 2025

5:30 pm followed by

7:30 pm Performance of The Nutcracker

THE SMITH CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

361 SYMPHONY PARK AVENUE, LAS VEGAS, NV 89106

RSVP AT INFO@GRACECITYOPERATHEATRE.ORG

DELICIOUS PECANS

FRESH PICKED FROM GEORGIA

Proceeds benefit AAUW Educational Projects



- ✓ **Mammoth Halves** (12 oz. \$12)
- ✓ **Milk Chocolate Covered**
- ✓ **Dark Chocolate Covered**
- ✓ **Caramel Clusters**
- ✓ **Cinnamon Glazed**
- ✓ **NEW! Southern Praline**
- ✓ **NEW! Sweet Georgia Heat**

Perfect for Holiday Baking
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FOR ORDERS CALL/TEXT/EMAIL

Sharon

(925) 550-1758

aauwcapitalpecans@gmail.com



MATCHING GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Every dollar donated supports education and grants
to deserving women and girls in our community!
Your donation is **DOUBLED**, i.e. \$100 become \$200!!

OUR GOAL IS TO RAISE
\$20,000 BY DECEMBER 31st

DONATE HERE 



<https://tahoe-nv.aauw.net/donate/>

or send a check to AAUW Tahoe Nevada
P.O. Box 5465
Incline Village, NV 89450

Your donation IS tax deductible!!

American Association of University Women Tahoe-Nevada is a
non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation formed in Nevada and registered
with the Nevada Secretary of State (Federal Tax I.D. #943055754).
Our purpose is the advancement of equity for women and girls
through advocacy, education, and research.