



# PIECES AND BITS

American Association of University Women

*AAUW's mission: Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research*

Beaver Dam, WI Branch

January 2026

## President's Message

Thank you to Robin Hanson for organizing the social at Ooga Brewery in December. Sixteen members had the opportunity to enjoy the company of AAUW members that evening.

Did you know that your membership entitles you to some perks? Companies recognizing AAUW and offering discounts include AVIS and Budget car rental agencies, Travel Saving Center, and a one-time MS magazine membership. Sign up on the national website to receive four print issues of the magazine. Even UPS has some postage perks for members.  
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/why-join/discounts-and-perks/>

Our membership is growing and we encourage you to be aware of women/men who might want to join our branch. Whether it is joining either of our book clubs, attending a monthly program, participating in our Unity in Community committee or contributing to our basket auction; members can enrich their lives and contribute to the well-being of others. We continue to promote gender equity for women and education beyond the high school level.

Cindy Noe and I recently attended a District 1 meeting in Madison. We met with other presidents and membership chairs to reexamine the requirements for belonging to AAUW. It is our desire to fine-tune a plan that fosters a sense of belonging and recognizes the leadership qualities of women who contribute to the well-being of others and their communities. We are highlighting examples of these individuals and you may recognize some of them.

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Editor: Mary Kahler  
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**President:** Andrea Utrie, **Vice-President:** open **Finance:** Jan Sutter **Membership:** Cindy Noe

Former state senator, Barbara Lorman, and several Wisconsin state representatives do not have advanced degrees. Other examples of accomplished women who did/do not have a degree include Dolores Huerta (labor leader), Eleanor Roosevelt, Lilly Ledbetter, Rachael Ray, Mary Kay Ash, Estee Lauder, and Taylor Swift. A current candidate for WI governor, Representative Francesca Hong, and twice elected state representative would also be a very valuable member but cannot because she does not have a college degree.

Our district is leading the way to asking AAUW national to approve a two year pilot program to extend membership beyond our current criteria. This is an effort to recognize the challenges of receiving a degree given financial issues, rural locations, and reduction of community campuses.

In my opinion, this is an important step in honoring the gifts women bring to our communities, state, and nation. While the train moves slowly on change, let's chug along to a renewed sense of purpose that is more inclusive.

Happy New Year and may 2026 be a year of good health, exciting adventure, and self-fulfillment.

*Andrea*

*Happy Birthday*

**January 3:** Teresa Haack

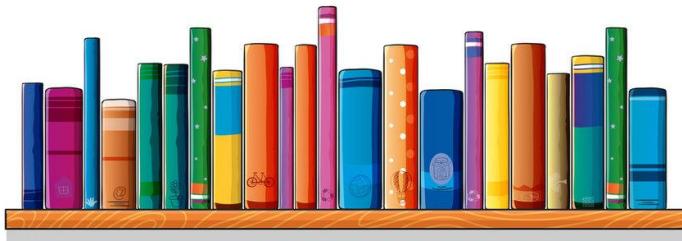
**January 6:** Judy McDonald

**January 6:** Chelsey Seippel

**January 10:** Emily Shier

**January 28:** Audrey Paar





## Back to the Books

Careless People: A Cautionary Tale of Power, Greed and Lost Idealism by Sarah Wynn Williams is the book up for conversation by the Morning Book Club on Tuesday, January 13. If you are interested in the backroom story of Meta (formerly Facebook), this is the book for you. Come prepared for a great discussion beginning at 9:30 a.m. at Higher Grounds Coffee Shop. And if you want to get a head start for next month, the bookchat will focus on The Briar Club by Kate Quinn.

The Evening Book Club reconvenes for the New Year on January 26 at 7:00 p.m. Yellow Face by R.F. Kuang will be discussed. What an interesting book—totally not what I expected—hope you find this true (in a good way) as well. The discussion will be at Robin Hanson's home (N7010 Airport Road). Everything is Tuberculosis, by John Green, is the book for February (if you want to get a jump on it).

### January Meeting



On Wednesday, January 21, we will meet at City Hall for a program about women working in non-traditional professions. Emily Seifert is a firefighter/paramedic with the Beaver Dam Fire Department. She will talk about her experiences and give a tour of the fire department. Did you know that Beaver Dam has one of the highest percentages of women in their Fire Department? The program will begin at 6:30 in the fire department conference room. Park in the lot behind City Hall, enter the City Hall doors and take a left.

### February Meeting

Have you heard of one of newest additions to Beaver Dam—GPS—Education Partners? February 18 at 6:30 p.m. will be your opportunity to learn more. This program focuses on high school students who have trouble finding a connection between their current high school education and the career that they want. It provides them an education while giving them an opportunity to work in a job that they may be interested in and gaining the experience that they need to gain a possible profession. We will meet at their offices—Generac (110 Tower Drive).



## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FOOD-IS-FREE???

We are participating in the maintenance of the Food-Is-Free pantry again after clarifying what is needed and how we can help. As you may know, the pantry is located in the Re-Store building. It has its own entrance and unlike the past has no affiliation with Re-Store. Some obstacles that were in the way were cleaning supplies and where to put the garbage. As of now, those obstacles have been resolved and Bobbi Marck is in the process of setting up a weekly cleaning schedule (Wednesdays). Please contact her at if you are interested in volunteering on a rotating basis for this service. Please contact Bobbi Marck at (920)382.1356. .

## AAUW-WI Public Policy

The AAUW-WI Public Policy Committee meets monthly via Zoom to talk about state and national politics that affect our members and mission. To see our national AAUW Public Policy Priorities for the next two years, click here: [AAUW Public Policy Priorities](#). Our State priorities, which are similar to the national ones, can be viewed here: [WI Priorities](#).

One recent area of great concern has been the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education by the current administration.

The Department of Education (DoE) is undergoing major restructuring under the Trump administration, shifting functions to other departments (Labor, State, HHS) to downsize the federal role and empower states. This is impacting K-12, postsecondary, and Native American programs, while also introducing new AI initiatives, streamlining student loan rules, and launching other new initiatives, signaling **a significant federal pullback in direct education oversight and spending**. Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" which passed Congress this summer, not only cut SNAP and Medicaid funding, which have impacts for schools, but also created a federal private school voucher program.

Education has always been one of our core AAUW values. We believe education is a powerful catalyst for opportunity — but persistent barriers continue to hold women and girls back. From civil rights rollbacks and rising tuition to disproportionate debt and campus discrimination, systemic obstacles threaten access and equity at every level. AAUW works to remove those barriers and advance inclusive, affordable, and equitable education, because when women learn without obstacles, entire communities thrive. For more information, go to AAUW.org or check out:

AAUW Press Release: [Gutting the Department of Education Betrays Students' Civil Rights](#) (11/20/25).

- TAKE ACTION - Urge Congress to ensure the Dept. can fulfill its mission: <https://aauw.quorum.us/campaign/148631/>.
- Overview of litigation re: dismantling of Dept. of Ed. from [Democracy Forward](#) and [Higher Ed Dive](#).

Want to make an impact on national issues but don't know where to begin? Be a 2-minute activist! Click this link to see fast, easy ways you can make a difference: [It only takes 2 minutes!](#)

### **Save the Date**

The AAUW State Convention will be held April 17 and 18 in Madison at the Double Tree by Hilton. Keynote Speakers include: Judge Janet C. Protasiewicz, Melissa LaDuke, and Jessica Calarco. Added breakouts include a panel of legislators, Artificial Intelligence, Kim Simes and Natasha Kassulke. If interested in attending, contact Andrea Utrie. Stipends are available for attending.

**"PEOPLE WERE DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD WITH A HANDFUL OF GIFT CARDS...You just never expect that kind of stuff. Everybody has their own life and their own problems. You don't think that they're going to come all the way here to help you with your problems. "**

--Donald Dow as shared with John Noltner. '

Can the Beaver Dam branch of AAUW match this generosity? It would be so helpful to the clients at the Noble Clinic, if our members could donate shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, feminine hygiene products and diapers. At our next Wednesday program, January 15, you can also put some cash into our AAUW box. In addition to the above items, personnel at the clinic use the cash to purchase gift cards from Aldis to help with those who come hungry. NO FOOD DONATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED .

Noble Clinic is a nonprofit organization which provides medical, dental and behavioral health care to underserved populations on a sliding fee scale. All clients pay something.