

ERIE PRESSIBLE October 2025

Underwater Archaeology – Pulling Back the Blue Curtain to Reveal History

On **Monday, October 13, at 7 PM** bring your friends to the first of two AAUW events open to the public! This event will be held in the **Walker Recital Hall in the Audrey HIRT Academic Center at Mercyhurst University**. Doors open 6:30 PM. Historic and maritime archaeologist Dr. Ben Ford, Chair of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Anthropology department, will speak on his work with the PASST (Pennsylvania Archaeology Shipwreck Survey Team).



Dr. Ford helped to found this team which trains SCUBA divers to record Lake Erie shipwrecks and serve as ambassadors for the lake's maritime history. He is also working with representatives of the Seneca Nation to explore submerged landscapes in Lake Erie. The title of his talk is **"Lake Erie Underwater Archaeology – Pulling Back the Blue Curtain to Reveal History."**

He will discuss how underwater archaeology is occurring throughout the Great Lakes and contributing to our understanding of past cultures from thousands of years ago through the early 20th century. Additionally, he will speak about recent underwater archaeology projects undertaken by the PASST and what these shipwrecks tell us about Great Lakes maritime culture. The talk is co-sponsored by our Erie AAUW branch as well as the Mercyhurst Departments of History and World Languages/Anthropology. We will look forward to having students will attend also.

Directions:

After driving through the main gates of Mercyhurst, take a left at the fork in front of the Mary rose garden. Drive past the covered parking garage and library. When you see the Audrey Hirt sign, take a left. Police and Safety recommends parking in those lots by the side entrance of the HIRT building. Walk or take the elevator up one level. The Walker Recital Hall is at the top of the steps. (Do not park in the covered parking garage). The Hirt building has a green light dome on top.

For a campus overview, see the Mercyhurst University campus map: [campus map](#).

Thank you to our member, Christy Rieger, for helping to coordinate this special event with our program chairs, Pat Benekos and Soledad Traverso!



Dr. Ben Ford

Public Policy Update

A wave of states' redistricting initiatives is currently making national news. According to Spotlight PA, Pennsylvania is not among them.

Spotlight PA is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit newsroom, dedicated to investigation and public service Journalism. Recently, an article in Spotlight PA focused on the wave of redistricting initiatives. According to the article, despite many states' exploration of unusual, mid-decade efforts to redraw congressional maps for potential political reasons, Pennsylvania legislators have no plans to do so. Governor Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania has stated "We're not doing that!" He has discussed his belief that efforts "to rig the election in a way that preserves a US legislative majority is shameful!"

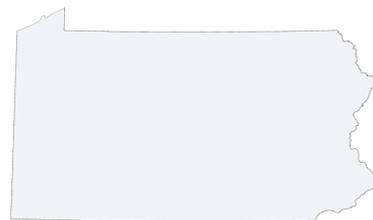
The redistricting wave is an effort by states to give one party a wider majority. Congressional redistricting usually happens over a decade, after a new US Census is completed in order to reflect population shifts. In Pennsylvania, congressional maps are passed like any other legislation, with both chambers of the legislature passing a bill outlining the new districts and requiring the Governor's signature.

(Public Policy Update continued)

State Senate Majority Leader Joe Pitman (R., Indiana) said in a letter to Spotlight PA that "the realities of divided government make this a non-issue in Pennsylvania".

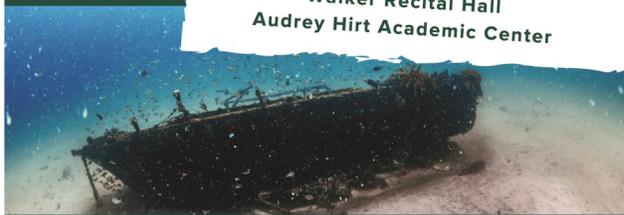
Chris Borick, political science professor at Muhlenberg College, said that competitive political environments "keep everyone on guard" and while it produces gridlock at times, Borick states "Our system has produced balanced control that, in some ways, is going to prohibit us from going down that path."

State House Democratic spokesperson Elizabeth Rementa, told Spotlight PA. "We are exploring all actions possible to ensure Pennsylvania voters are not disenfranchised by the actions of our sister states".



LAKE ERIE UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY - PULLING BACK THE BLUE CURTAIN TO REVEAL HISTORY

Monday, Oct. 13, 7-8 P.M.
Walker Recital Hall
Audrey Hirt Academic Center




Speaker, Dr. Ben Ford, Professor of Anthropology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and founding member of the Pennsylvania Archaeology Shipwreck Survey Team (PASST)

Underwater archaeology is occurring throughout the Great Lakes and contributing to our understanding of past cultures from thousands of years ago through the early 20th century.

Dr. Ford will speak about recent underwater archaeology projects undertaken by the Pennsylvania Archaeology Shipwreck Survey Team and what these shipwrecks tell us about Great Lakes maritime culture.

Open to the public

Questions? Please contact Christy Rieger at crieger@mercyhurst.edu.

This event is co-sponsored by AAUW-Erie branch, Thomas B. Hagen Department of History, and Department of Anthropology and Archaeology.





President's Message

Friends,

We began our September 9th Erie Branch Meeting with a fascinating and informative program about Overcoming Fear that sparked great conversation. It was wonderful to see so many of our members in attendance. There was a genuine sense of excitement as we reconnected after the long summer break.

At the end of August, our Erie Branch was honored with a Five Star Award from AAUW National for Fiscal Year 2025! We earned stars in Public Policy & Advocacy, Governance & Sustainability, Programming, and Communications & External Relations—a testament to our alignment with AAUW's Strategic Plan and our unwavering commitment to advancing gender equity for women and girls.

This recognition marks a proud milestone for our branch, and reflects the dedication, collaboration, and heart behind everything we do. Thanks to our incredible Board members and committee members, who lead with purpose, and to each and every member who contributes their time, energy, and ideas to bring our mission to life through advocacy, philanthropy, and research.

Browsing through the Yearbook you may have noticed that our Program Committee has worked very hard curating events that reflect the heart of our mission as well as the vibrancy of our branch. These programs aren't just for us — they're opportunities to welcome friends, neighbors, and potential new members into the AAUW community.

Please remember to invite someone and encourage them to come to our open meetings. When you invite someone to attend, also let them know they're also welcome to join our branch. That's how my own AAUW journey began, Niken Carpenter encouraged me to get involved and invited me to join Edie's Global Friends study group. Without her engagement and thoughtful outreach, I might never have discovered this incredible organization. Each conversation, each invitation, can open a door. So, as we kick off another exciting year, I encourage you to spread the word and to bring a friend or two to our October 13th open meeting. You never know whose life you might impact with a simple gesture of inclusion.

As we continue our important work with our own Erie AAUW Branch, I encourage everyone to take advantage of the broader opportunities available through AAUW National. From insightful webinars to the informative Keystoner newsletter, these resources offer valuable perspectives on public policy, diversity, leadership, and more. Engaging with these materials not only deepens our understanding. It strengthens our collective impact.

Together, let's grow our community and continue advancing equity through connection and shared purpose!



Sharmin Khundker

Getting to know AAUW

We invite new members from the last 3 years and prospective members to a social gathering on **Thursday, October 23rd at 7:00 pm** at the home of Asuman Baskan, 3838 State St.

This will be an opportunity to learn more about our local branch and its activities as well as to meet other members of our branch. If our current members have friends who might be interested in joining our branch, please invite them to this event. R.S.V.P. to Edie Cultu at edie_cultu@yahoo.com.

Boscov Fundraiser

Dear AAUW members,

We are participating in Boscov's Friends Helping Friends Fundraiser Program, again. We did well, raising just over \$2000, last year and we can try and do better this year!

I am inviting you all to volunteer for this effort, as the more of us do so, the less each of us will have to share the burden for a better outcome.

Volunteering involves committing to two hours in the store, selling the shopping passes for the October 22nd sale.

The shopping pass "pre-sale" days and times reserved for AAUW - Erie are each weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday,) beginning September 5th through October 19th from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. each of these days. Pick as many as you can fit into your schedule.

On the SALE DATE of Wednesday, October 22nd, we have two times reserved for us: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Please let me know if you can staff our station for any of these days and times.

Also, the store is willing to accommodate weekdays, if those are the only options for you. Just let me know what week day and the 2-hr. period you can help us and I will see if we can set that up. (Again, the 2-hr. periods start at 11 a.m.)

I will provide the table top materials and the cash purse, so I need to put as many volunteers as possible on the schedule before September 5th.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me. (irrepressibleturk@gmail.com) or call/text 814-282-8277.

Let's do our very best for Erie County's women and girls.

— Asuman Baskan —

Member Name Tags

In order to visit freely with new as well as long time members we now have name badges with lanyards to wear at our meetings. We were able to use them at our September event at Asbury Woods and they were a hit.

Thank you to our board members who suggested the idea and provided the materials as well. Just remember to turn them in at the end of each event so they are available for the next time.

Branch Study Groups

Computer Knowledge is ready to begin! This is your opportunity to refresh and update your skills. Our instructor will be Mark Schaaf who recently worked in Information Technology for the government in Washington DC.

He has created a four-session syllabus that will cover how to use software applications including email, documents and spreadsheets. Topics will also include web browsing, social media, online bill paying, social media, web meetings, and ways to make you a better computer or tablet user. Mr. Schaaf is open to including suggestions from participants. The room where we are meeting has laptops for our members and a large screen for the instructor's presentation.

We will be meeting 1 – 3 pm on Tuesdays, **starting October 7**, and on **October 21**, November 4 and November 18 at the **Afghan Community Center** located in Patrick Henry Square at **4801 Peach St.** The cost is \$5 a session for a total of \$20 for all 4 sessions.

We have been signing up interested students for several months, and if your name is on that list, you will receive emails updating you on the program.

If you didn't sign up yet and you'd like to receive the email updates, please contact Loretto.bellicini1@gmail.com or (814) 449-8839.

Global Friends is an outreach program to immigrant women in our community. It is open to both AAUW members and immigrant women. The intent is to understand and respect other cultures. Global Friends **usually meets the Fourth/Last Monday of the month at 7PM** and is chaired by Edie Cultu (814-397-2975).

Come hear Naphtali Fields-Forbes talk about an **underground school for Afghan girls, October 27th** at Edie's home at 638 Vermont Avenue. (edie_cultu@yahoo.com)

Food and Friends Step into a world of intrigue at the "**Murder at the Theatre**" **Mystery Dinner!** This interactive dinner party will place diners in the spotlight-as suspects in a murder investigation! Each guest will receive a role and clues. Over dinner, participants (who are actually all murder suspects) will work to study clues and uncover secret information which will be shared with others at your table. Remember one diner is also the murderer and you will participate in identifying who that is!

Join us for an evening of fun, food and intrigue on **October 29 at 5:30PM** at St. Steven's Episcopal Church Hall, 2070 Dutch Rd., Fairview.

The \$15.00 cost will cover dinner and the game (payable at the door). Reservations are due by October 25th. Contact Loretta Seigley by phone (814-520-8784) or by email at lseigley@yahoo.com.

The **AAUW Book Club** **meets the first Thursday of every month, from 1-2:30 PM** at SpringHill, 2323 Edinboro Road, room 316. Cindy Belczyk is the coordinator for the group (814-873-5401) (BelczykCA@gmail.com).

Politalk is an unstructured discussion about domestic and international political events which leads to brainstorming about ways of coping with such events. Politalk **meets the 3rd Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM** at chair Asuman Baskan's house 3838 State Street. (814-282-8277) (irrepressibleturk@gmail.com)

Branch Study Groups (continued)

Gourmet The October event will be **Thursday the 23rd at 5:30 pm at the Olive Garden** at 5945 Peach Street. Reservations can be made with Candy. Please notify her no later than Oct. 16th. The Gourmet Study Group chair is Candy Brown (814-873-0486) (candycbrown1@gmail.com).

Get Your 2025-26 Yearbook/Directory

Our annual Yearbook Directory is now available for distribution from Barb Hauck. It will also be available online (with password access) on our AAUW website. Contact Sharmin Khundker for the password. For the security of personal information (member names and addresses), DO NOT SHARE the password. More info to come.

Harding Elementary School — Trunk or Treat

Shanna Potter, Community School Director at Harding School has invited AAUW members to volunteer and/or contribute candy supplies to Harding School for their annual Fall Fest and Trunk or Treat event scheduled for **Friday, October 17th**.

A list of event details for those who may want to volunteer for the event is below. Candy donations may be dropped off at Harding or given to Edie Cultu if you attend Global Friends on September 29. Members may also email Edie at edie_cultu@yahoo.com to make other arrangements for candy drop offs. Thank you in advance for your generosity!



- Friday, October 17th at Harding School
- Event time is 5:30-7 PM with arrival for set up encouraged between 4:45-5:00 PM
- Our parking lot will be filled with cars with decorated trunks, passing out treats to our students. Staff and families are all welcome to decorate trunks. Community partners are also welcome to participate in this way. This is a great way to pass out treats, and also share information about your programs or services. If you'd prefer, you can set up another activity for students to participate in, such as a game or a craft.
- If you are handing out candy, plan on about 400 people. We do collect candy donations to help if you run out!
- Let us know if you can join us by completing this online form: <https://forms.gle/eu6RmWDv3DYXdaiS6>

Introducing—Ride Share Connections

Some of our members are unable to attend AAUW Branch meetings and events due to transportation challenges. To support one another and ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate, Membership is creating Ride Share Connections, a simple but meaningful way to help more of our members join in the programs, events, and opportunities our branch offers.

If you are interested in being part of the Ride Share Connection either as an occasional driver or as someone who may now and then need a ride — please contact Anne Marie Kumhera at annemarieku@gmail.com or 440-670-5899.

Together, we can make sure that transportation is never a barrier to participation.



October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Book Club 1-2:30 pm Springhill	3 Wine/Choc. 5:30 pm Barb's	4
5	6	7 Computer Club 1-3 pm 4801 Peach St	8	9	10	11
12	13 Underwater Archeology 7:00 pm Mercyhurst U.	14	15	16 Politalk 1-3 pm Asuman's	17	18
19	20	21 Computer Club 1-3 pm 4801 Peach St	22	23 Gourmet 5:30 pm Olive Garden	24	25
26	27 Global Friends 7 pm Eddie's house	28	29 Food & Friends Murder Mystery 5:30 pm St. Stephen's	30	31 	



Erie Branch ♦ Founded in 1902

P.O. Box 9264 Erie PA 16505

AAUW's Mission

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through education, philanthropy, and research. By joining AAUW you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance. In principle and in practice AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in the organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or class.

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