

# ERIE PRESSIBLE May 2026



## Annual Meeting, Awards and Scholarship Presentations



Come celebrate our new officers and award recipients! Please plan to join your AAUW friends and guests at our branch's annual meeting on **May 11** at **Nick's Place** located at **12250 Edinboro Rd** in Edinboro.

Socialize with fellow members beginning at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner being served at 6:00 p.m.

**Awards** will be presented to branch members in the following categories: Woman of the Year, Member Making a Difference, the Gateway to Equity Award, and Named Gift Honorees.

The **Scholarship Committee** will be awarding scholarships for the **Next Chapter** and **RISA scholarship** recipients. These individuals are chosen based upon their high scores on our scholarship applications, their goals for further education, and dedication to the Erie Community.

During this annual meeting, outgoing officers will be thanked for their dedicated work on behalf of our branch and our AAUW mission. We are grateful for the service of each of the board and committee members, and appreciate rotation in office to give everyone a chance to share their talents and leadership.

New officers for the upcoming year will be voted on and installed so that they will have time to prepare for their new roles beginning on July 1, 2026. See page 3 to view the upcoming slate.

Nick's Place has kindly honored the price that has been given to us in the past for complete meals. This year's entrees include grilled salmon, sirloin steak, and chicken Florentine. All meals include appetizers, rolls and butter, a house salad with mandarin oranges, raisins, and pecans with poppyseed dressing, twice baked potatoes, a vegetable medley, and a fruit parfait for dessert. Coffee, tea, and pop are included.

**Paid reservations** for the dinner in the amount of \$30.18 must be received by Candy Brown at 4123 Vassar St., Erie, PA 16506 **by May 6**. Please include your entrée selection on your check. Checks must be made out to AAUW-Erie Branch, Inc. You may also pay online by going to our branch website [www.aauwerie.org/events](http://www.aauwerie.org/events) and following reservation/payments directions (\$31.40 with surcharge)

If none of the entrée choices are acceptable to you due to dietary restrictions, please contact Candy Brown at (814) 873-486 by phone or text.

## President's Message

Friends,

The spring weather is finally here after what felt like the longest and coldest winter. In places like Erie, we usually welcome the sunshine and longer days with a sense of relief, but this year that feeling is overshadowed by the uncertainty many of us are experiencing. There is a shared sense of worry in our community, and I've felt it too.

Over the past few months, I've learned far more about global politics than I ever expected to. I've seen how decisions made far from our daily lives can shape the fate of ordinary people. The Strait of Hormuz—just a narrow stretch of water—has revealed how fragile the global economy can be, especially when it comes to energy and agriculture. It has also made the need for true energy independence impossible to ignore.

Many poorer nations are already feeling the strain. Schools and colleges have gone remote, businesses are shortening hours, and offices are shifting online. A worsening fertilizer shortage is deepening food insecurity, where even small disruptions can push families into hunger. Women and children are often the first to feel the impact. And in times of war, the suffering is even more severe. Families who want nothing more than safety and stability bear the heaviest burdens. Conflict destroys homes, disrupts food supplies, and fractures communities. In moments like these, compassion matters.



Sharmin Khundker

That's why Pope Leo's recent message resonated so strongly. He urged world leaders to lower tensions, reminding them that peace is built through dialogue, not escalation. He warned that harsh rhetoric can heighten global uncertainty in an instant. His call was simple but profound: responsible leadership must always put human life first.

Here at home, we're already navigating high inflation, and global pressures only add to the strain—especially for women, who often shoulder the greatest economic and caregiving burdens. Rising costs and unstable supply chains stretch already thin resources. It's a reminder that global events don't stay distant; they eventually reach our own communities.

From our April program, I also learned how much research and innovation are driving the global shift toward cleaner energy—and how far ahead other nations already are. Countries like China, Japan, and many in Europe have embraced electric vehicles and invested heavily in the research, infrastructure, and long-term planning needed to support them. Their progress shows what becomes possible when public investment and policy work together. For this transition to succeed anywhere, governments need to put clear, stable policies in place that encourage innovation, expand charging networks, and support consumers. That's why our discussion on EVs felt so timely: reducing our dependence on oil and accelerating clean-energy research isn't just forward-looking, it's necessary. Each of us has a role in supporting solutions that strengthen economies and protect the planet. **(continued on next page)**

I'm still searching for silver linings, and while it isn't always easy, I do believe challenging times push communities to come together, support one another, and adapt. That belief gives me hope that we'll emerge from this moment stronger, more informed, and more resilient. —Sharmin—

## AAUW Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is presenting the following slate of officers for the 2026-2027 program year for your review prior to the May 11th annual meeting.

Any member may be nominated for any office from the meeting floor. The nominating committee members were appointed by the President, Sharmin Khundker and include chairperson Ellen DiPlacido, Edie Cultu, Barbara Hutzelman, Karen Miller and Matasha MurrellJones.

For more information about board roles, you can find position descriptions on our website, [aauwerie.org](http://aauwerie.org), under "Get Involved" in the Job Position Description section.

|                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| President                | Matasha MurrellJones             |
| President Elect          | Barbara Hauck                    |
| Immediate Past President | Sharmin Khundker                 |
| Membership V.P.          | Anne Marie Kumhera               |
| Membership V.P. Elect    | Karen Miller                     |
| Program V.P. Co-chairs   | Pat Benekos and Soledad Traverso |
| Recording Secretary      | Sarah Larson                     |
| Finance Officer          | Barbara Hutzelman                |
| Parliamentarian          | Loretta Seigley                  |
| Public Policy            | Ellen DiPlacido                  |

## Reminder — Your Dues are Almost Due

For the majority of Erie Branch members, annual dues of \$109 are due by June 30th. Life Members' dues are \$33 and Honorary Life Members pay no dues. Dues may be paid online at [aauwerie.org](http://aauwerie.org) or by check payable to AAUW Erie Branch, Inc. and mailed to P.O. Box 9264, Erie PA 16505 or in paid in person to Barb Hutzelman, the branch Finance Officer.

Note: Due to the rolling membership year, there are members who will not owe dues until July or later. If in doubt, contact Barb at 814-881-7339 or [barbhutz@yahoo.com](mailto:barbhutz@yahoo.com).

## AAUW Public Policy

Recently, AAUW National issued a 2026 Updated Report entitled "The Not So Simple Truth." The report details the current status of the Gender Pay Gap. According to the report, pay inequity affects all women and the gaps faced by women are persistent and related to how various workplaces have developed. Numerous and important issues are detailed in the report including the following:

"Full time female workers earn .81 for every \$1 full time men earn. Part time female workers earn \$0.76 per \$1 earned by men. The amount of money women working full time lose due to the pay gap over a 40 year career is \$542,800."

"Equal pay for work of equivalent value is about more than fairness in a paycheck. It shapes women's economic security over a lifetime."

"There isn't one pay gap-there are many. Even after controlling for level of education, choice of college major and job tenure, women are still paid less than similarly educated and experienced men."

"Women lose income over a lifetime for two connected reasons. The gender pay gap lowers their wages at work and our economy still does not account for childcare responsibilities at home which women are more likely to shoulder."

Because women earn less over their lifetime, they face greater economic security later in life. Among people age 65 and older, women are more likely than men to live in poverty and more likely to have incomes below 200% of the poverty line. Fair pay, paired with strong public investments in childcare and eldercare, would help women grow their earnings and retire with security."

"There isn't one pay gap-there are many. Progress requires policymakers, employers and workers moving together to change the rules, incentives and practices that shape pay."

"In 2025-26 federal actions have narrowed the tools that help prevent and address pay discrimination. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rescinded its 2024 workplace harassment guidance, weakening a roadmap for women of color and for LGBTQ+ workers to challenge harassment at work. In addition, budget proposals seek to eliminate the US Department of Labor's Women's Bureau which researches data re: women's work and wages."

"These moves are reminders that pay equity is not automatic. Congress and federal agencies must strengthen and enforce civil rights protections, monitor transparency tools that make inequities visible and set national standards that cannot be easily reversed."

The report is available on the AAUW National website and is worth a full read. It includes much more data regarding this topic including suggestions for Federal, Employer and Individual solutions to correct Pay Inequity.

## Branch Study/Interest Groups

**AAUW Book Club** meets the **first Thursday** of every month at **1-2:30 PM** at **Springhill**, 2323 Edinboro Road, Room 316. Cindy Belczyk is the coordinator for the group (814-873-5401 or BelczykCA@gmail.com). **Next meeting is May 7.**

To be discussed, ***Miss Morgan's Book Brigade*** by Janet Skeslien

***Games, Games, Games!*** Susan Roehrl is hosting the next Games meeting at her house, 626 Mohawk Drive on **Tuesday, May 19 from 2-4 PM**. If you plan to come, please call Susan at 814-868-4537 to make your reservation.

***Global Friends*** is an outreach program to immigrant women in our community. It is open to both AAUW members and immigrant women. Our **annual picnic** will be held **Monday, May 18 at 6:00 PM** at Glenwood Park (behind Erie Zoo). Hamburgers, drinks, and paper products will be provided. (Please let Edie know if you want a vegan burger). Bring a dish to share! R.S.V.P. to Edie Cultu (814-397-2975, edie\_cultu@yahoo.com). Spouses and children are welcome.

***Global Friends Book Club*** is a new group formed after our meeting at the Blasco Library. It is open to both AAUW members and immigrant women. *Threading My Prayer Rug* by Sabeeha Rehman will be discussed **Monday, July 20 at 6:30 PM** in **Room 219** at the **Blasco Library**. Global Friends is chaired by Edie Cultu (814-456-5406 or edie\_cultu@yahoo.com).

***Gourmet*** Join us for lunch at **The Boardroom** located at 4353 W. Ridge Rd. with the gourmet group on **Thursday, May 28 at noon**. Please call Candy Brown (814-873-0486 or candybrown1@gmail.com) on or before May 23 to make your reservation. Their lunches are as good as their dinners, but less expensive.

***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** and/or **6:30-8:30 PM** at chair Asuman Baskan's house 3838 State Street. Finger foods will be served. Please R.S.V.P. when you receive the reminder email earlier in the month (814-282-8277 or ***irrepressibleturk@gmail.com***). Feel free to switch between afternoon and evening groups as they will meet on the same day.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**MEMORIAL DAY**  
 HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

# May 2026

**Sun    Mon    Tue    Wed    Thu    Fri    Sat**

|    |  |  |    |  |    |    |
|----|--|--|----|--|----|----|
|    |  |  |    |  | 1  | 2  |
| 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7<br><b>Book Club</b><br>1-2:30 pm<br>Springhill                 | 8  | 9  |
| 10 | 11<br><b>Branch Meeting</b><br>5:30 pm<br>Nick's Place         | 12   | 13 | 14   | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18<br><b>Global Friends Picnic</b><br>6:00 pm<br>Glenwood Park | 19<br><b>Games</b><br>2-4 pm<br>626 Mohawk | 20 | 21<br><b>Politalk</b><br>1-3 pm &<br>6:30-8:30 pm<br>at Asuman's | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25<br><b>Memorial Day</b>                                      | 26   | 27 | 28<br><b>Gourmet</b><br>Noon at<br>The Board-room                | 29 | 30 |
| 31 |  |  |    |  |    |    |

## Gift Baskets for Harding Elementary School

Hello friends! Harding Elementary School will be hosting their **SpringFest on Friday, May 15th from 5:30–7:00 PM**. The event is typically held outdoors, with additional tables set up inside if needed. SpringFest is a carnival-style celebration featuring face painting, inflatables, food, and plenty of fun activities.

Harding will be **collecting gift baskets** for the SpringFest raffle. We've contributed in past years and hope to do so again. We're asking for donations to fill a kids' summer-fun-themed basket. **Please bring items to our Annual May Dinner**. If you can't attend but would still like to donate, drop items off at Joan Cacchione's home (1817 Oxford St.) or contact her at [jbc1817@icloud.com](mailto:jbc1817@icloud.com) to arrange another drop-off option.

— Sharmin Kundker —

## Welcome our Two New Members, and Add Them to Your Yearbook

### Alice Edwards

We welcome Alice Edwards to our Erie branch. Alice has been teaching Hispanic language, culture, and literature at Mercyhurst University since 1989. She is currently the chair of the Department of Anthropology and World Languages. She has also worked as a doula in our area. Alice is very interested in anti-racism and immigration causes and supporting LGBTQ+ youth. She has served on the boards of MCRC, MPS, the Script Project, and AmeriMasala. When she has some free time, Alice enjoys poetry and literary translation.

Alice Edwards

348 Blackstone Drive, Erie 16505

814-450-5880

[aedwards@mercyhurst.edu](mailto:aedwards@mercyhurst.edu)

Ph.D. University of Pittsburgh, Hispanic Literatures; MA Middlebury College, Spanish Literature

### Paula Green

We also welcome Paula Green to our Erie branch. Paula moved to the Erie area three years ago in order to be closer to her family. Before making Erie her home, Paula lived in Indianapolis, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and California. She lived in all of these places in her work roles with Cort Business Services. Her last position being Vice President of Learning and Development. We are glad that she has decided to settle down in our town. Paula enjoys singing, reading, exercising, meeting new people, and learning new things. Our branch will be a great place to meet people and learn new things.

Paula Green

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703-728-2678

[paulabgreen3807@gmail.com](mailto:paulabgreen3807@gmail.com)

BA Indiana University, Music & Theatre Arts, Communications



empowering women since 1881  
Erie Branch—Founded in 1902

### 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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### Swing into Spring BOOK SALE

In the Admiral Room of the Blasco Library  
160 East Front Street, Erie PA 16507

Thursday May 21: 10 am - 6 pm  
Friday May 22: 10 am - 4 pm  
Saturday May 23: 9 am - 3 pm

Sponsored by the Friends of the Erie County Library  
and the Bayfront Bookshelf



## LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.  
Contact us at: [lwverie@gmail.com](mailto:lwverie@gmail.com)

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