

ERIE PRESSIBLE February 2023

Zoom meeting Feb. 13 will introduce us to Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

The Erie AAUW Branch's February meeting will feature the Sisters of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Network, SSJNN.

The speakers for the evening will be Executive Director Heather May Caster, Neighborhood Manager Margarita Dangel, and Sister Phyllis Hilbert SSJ, Neighborhood Advocate. Their presentation will feature the agency's mission: "Revitalizing a Neighborhood, Empowering its People."

The SSJNN serve the needs of impoverished residents in several of Erie's oldest neighborhoods, which span an area roughly bounded by East Avenue and Cranberry Street between 12th and 26th streets.

The Network is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Their mission statement says the following: "The SSJ Neighborhood Network, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, provides leadership, advocates for local residents and partners with the broader community to develop opportunities for both personal growth and neighborhood revitalization."

SSJNN fulfills its mission by creating many programs that include one-on-one advocacy for the residents, emergency assistance with food and hygiene products, a weekly soup kitchen, affordable housing, as well as community gardens and a seasonal farmers market.

Other endeavors include a community bike program and enrichment programs for the youth in the neighborhoods.

Join us Monday, Feb. 13, at 7 p.m. to learn more about their vision and the wonderful programs that are a part of the SSJ Neighborhood Network.

This program will be via Zoom, so check your email for the link. We look forward to seeing you!



Mission

*Revitalizing a
Neighborhood,
Empowering
its People*

By Sharmin Khundker and Sarah Larson

President's Message

I am taking this opportunity to give a big shout out to all members of the AAUW Erie Branch. You have continued to support our mission to empower women and girls.

Many good things are happening within our local organization.

We have three new members — Gloria Pulford, Matasha Murrell-Jones and Ann Bomberger. Welcome ladies!

There is a new Study Group — POLITALK. If you enjoy good conversation, plan on joining and sharing your thoughts about current events and other worldwide happenings. No preparation is necessary! Contact Asuman Baskan.



Ellen DiPlacido

Global Friends and many other Branch members deserve a huge round of applause. They continue to provide support to agencies that are responsible for resettling the many refugees and immigrants who are coming to Erie fleeing wars, hunger and discrimination. If you want to help in any way contact Edie Cultu.

The Scholarship Committee is hard at work. Welcome to our newest chairperson, Deborah Tonkin, for accepting this very important role. Thanks also to Cindy Belczyk for joining this hardworking Committee. Thank you Marjorie for all the time and dedication you gave to the Scholarship Committee over the years.

The Program Committee has provided membership with four tantalizing mission focused Branch meetings. The meetings have been well attended and are providing room for much more discussion and follow-up.

We will soon have a new website. Christy Reiger has given us an update in this issue of the PRESSIBLE.

Last, but not least, thank you to the entire Board and Committee Chairpersons! With all of our membership working together anything is possible. Many people must cooperate to achieve a goal. "It takes a village."

New Branch website will launch soon

The team at Epic Web Studios has been hard at work on our new branch website, which will launch soon. Beyond creating a new look for our site, they have constructed a website builder customized to our needs. This will make postings and redesign of the website far easier than they have been in the past.

Many of these updates will be news items, and I will need your help to get these into our "Recent News" section. I can pull many news items from the *Pressible*. In some cases, though, an officer or study group may want to report on an item that does not call for a full *Pressible* article. In that case, simply send a 100-word news item and photo to crieger@mercyhurst.edu or eriebranchaauw@gmail.com.

Because the website is public facing, please keep the following best practices in mind for photos:

- **Take several photos so that you can choose the best shot.**
- **Capture action when possible.** For instance, if the Gourmet group visits a local ethnic restaurant, a picture of the chef talking to the group, or a close-up of a photogenic dish being handed to a member, is more dynamic than a photo of group members sitting at a table. We need to think about what the photos convey to viewers who do not know us as individuals.
- **Feature the AAUW logo/name in the shot if applicable.** This can be a sign, a banner, or promotional materials. These express our identity immediately and visually.
- **Convey diversity.** Whether we envision diversity as age or race/ethnicity, we want the website to show how we represent various identities and life experiences.

By Christy Rieger, AAUW Webmaster

Help support our Celebrity Judge, St. Martin Center

A shout out to Niken Astari Carpenter! She has been selected to be a Celebrity Judge at ERIE'S BEST COFFEE 2023.

"She is proud to support St. Martin Center's BEST COFFEE fundraiser that benefits the Center's programs that provide food, financial assistance, early childhood education and much more."

To support Niken click on: <https://bit.ly/Niken>.

The following notice was received from the Erie County Board of Elections.

Be a champion for your community

Running for office is one impactful way to take your leadership to the next level and have a real impact on public policy affecting your community. You, yes you, can run for office! Curious? Your Erie County Board of Elections is offering an opportunity to learn more.

The Elections Office will host a Candidates' Night at the Hirt Auditorium, Blasco Library, on Feb. 8, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Topics to be discussed include nomination petitions, campaign finance reporting and more. More information as well as a sign-up document can be found on the "Information for Candidates" webpage <https://eriecountypa.gov/departments/elections-voting/information-for-candidates/>

Click on *Running for Office*. You will also find offices to be elected in the 2023 Election.

Public Policy Matters

How Constitutional Amendments get on the ballot

How a constitutional amendment gets on the ballot in Pennsylvania is drawing interest. I got some articles from the Pa state AAUW, but it was definitely too much information to put in the *Pressible*. However, the League of Women Voters sent me the following links to WHYY.org that everyone could use to look it up on their own.

<https://whyy.org/articles/pa-legislature-constitutional-amendments-voter-id-abortion-explainer/>
<https://whyy.org/articles/pa-legislature-constitutional-amendments-voter-id-abortion-explainer/amp/>

By Loretto Bellicini, Public Policy Chair

A letter from state advocacy chair Sandra Miller

As we passed what should have been the celebration of *Roe v. Wade's* 50th anniversary on Jan. 22, we now have an exciting advocacy opportunity.

The Women's March organized "Bigger Than Roe" (<https://www.womensmarch.com/initiatives/bigger-than-roe-march>), a decentralized day of marches that day (Sunday 1/22) in statehouses across the country. AAUW signed on nationally, partnering on behalf of the entire organization. While these events occurred last month, info is available at the following websites.

- Marches near you: <https://action.womensmarch.com/local>
- https://action.womensmarch.com/calendars/biggerthanroe/events/organiser_instructions
- **Please take pictures if you planned anything** and send them to me (and the group, if you want to share!) Please tag AAUW (@AAUW on Twitter and Facebook, @AAUWNational on Instagram) and use the movement hashtag #BiggerThanRoe.

Sandra Miller is currently the Advocacy Coordinator for Education Voters of PA and has been working with the campaign, PA Schools Work, for many years. Newly retired after 16 years as a school director at Saucon Valley School District, she hopes her volunteer time with AAUW will be an asset to the organization and is looking forward to working with all the branches and other statewide organizations in fulfilling the mission of AAUW - empowering women through advocacy.

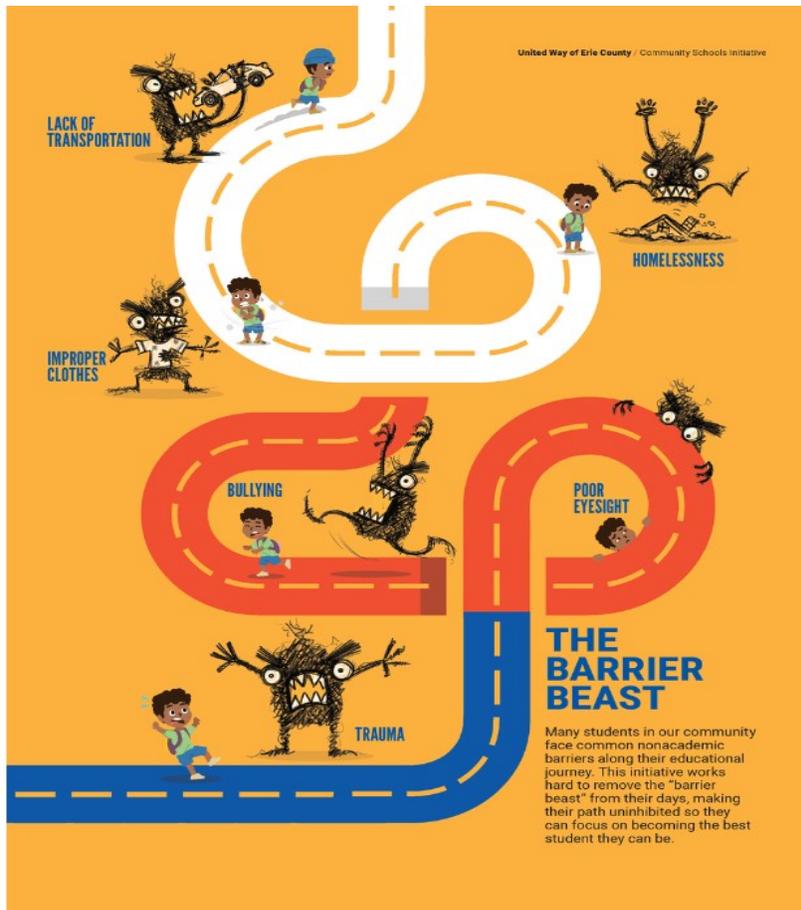
<https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/meet-the-aauw-pennsylvania-officers-board>

AAUW national has resources to support your advocacy

- See How to Hold a Meeting with Your Elected Officials to get the scheduling and planning process started! The guide has been updated to include specific advice and tips for shifting meetings to a virtual format. Stay engaged this year with our Two-Minute Activist tool!

Community schools target barriers to learning

All 13 Erie middle and elementary schools, as well as some in the Girard, Union City and Iroquois school districts, are participants in the United Way of Erie County's Community Schools initiative, branch members learned at January's virtual meeting.



The Community Schools initiative aims to crush generational poverty, Julie Chacona, Chief Development Officer at United Way of Erie County explained. To do so, it relies on the collaboration of many partners. In addition to the school districts, social service organizations, businesses, the public sector, universities and more participate.

Via a data-driven process, the 16 member schools receive help with non-academic barriers, allowing the school administrators to focus on academics. Pillars of the Community Schools model are: family engagement, expanded learning times, providing a positive environment for wellness/learning and cementing a community/neighborhood partnership.

Chacona introduced those attending the Zoom meeting to a history of Erie's Public Schools, which have served as learning centers in their neighborhoods. Now the collaboration with United Way aims to fight the high child poverty rate.

While the program is already delivering some measurable results from the increased community involvement, including school attendance, "it will take a generation" to make an economic difference, she said. "Investing in our next generation will be the way our city thrives in the future."

Each participating school faces its own unique challenges – as an example she noted that students at East Middle School speak 23 languages. Many schools have students who walk the 1.5 miles to school, leading to the development of "walking school buses" to improve safety. Partner organizations created murals on some buildings along the way for beautification.

With parental approval, students' health issues are addressed via screenings for dental, vision, and other health issues. In some buildings with medical partnerships, these can be treated right in house.

Teachers currently working in community schools tend to stay on, she said, as those who don't believe in the concept left early.

Con't. on P. 6



Community schools

Con't. from P. 5

United Way of Erie County, as initiative coordinator, employs the individual Community School Directors, who in turn provide technical assistance, maintain alignment, see to clear communication, and assure the work is being implemented with fidelity by all partners and meeting goals and measurements.

Corporate partners commit to financial and volunteer support for a minimum of three years for each participating building.

Every resource and program that is brought into the community school is aligned with the Action Plan developed by the Community School Director and United Way with input from partners. The plan is updated regularly and ensures all activities in the school are aligned to address identified needs.

Detailed strategies, action steps, outputs, outcomes, indicators, data sources and measurements are included for four domains: student, family, school, and district.

Pregnant Worker Fairness Act to take effect

The United States Senate voted 73 to 24 recently to pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA).

With this overwhelming bipartisan support, PWFA passed as an amendment to the omnibus bill.

This momentous win allows millions of pregnant people to finally provide for their families without compromising their health or pregnancies.

The PWFA will:

- Give pregnant workers access to basic accommodations like carrying a water bottle and taking bathroom breaks.
- Clarify that it is unlawful to discriminate against pregnant workers by forcing them out of their jobs unnecessarily or denying them reasonable accommodations.
- Prohibit employers from retaliating against pregnant workers who request accommodations.

It's your AAUW, and your voice counts. It's time to comment on and propose changes to the AAUW bylaws and Public Policy Priorities.

This spring AAUW members will be asked to vote on amendments to the national bylaws recommended by the AAUW Board of Directors and AAUW Governance Committee.

In accordance with AAUW's bylaws, every AAUW member has the right to comment on proposed changes to the bylaws before they are put to the membership for a vote. Members may also propose changes to the Public Policy Priorities.

You'll find all the information you need to comment on the proposed bylaws changes and propose your own changes to the Public Policy Priorities online. Comments were due Jan. 27.

Branch Study Groups

Book Discussion

Thursday, Feb. 2, at 1 p.m. Loretta Seigley will review "The Lincoln Highway" by Amor Towles via Zoom.

Regular attendees will automatically receive the link to the Zoom meeting.

If you are not a regular member of the group, but wish to attend, please contact Loretta Bellicini to be included in the Zoom link.

Email Loretta.bellicini1@gmail.com

Global Friends

Niken Astari Carpenter will give an update about refugees and immigrants in Erie for Global Friends on Feb. 27.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Edie's home, 638 Vermont Ave.

Gourmet

TBA. Members will be contacted by email.

Politalk

Politalk will meet Thursday, Feb. 16, 2-4 p.m. at Asuman's house, 3838 State St.

February 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Book Discussion Zoom 1 p.m.	3	4
5	6 Board mtg. 6:30 p.m. Zoom	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 Branch mtg. 7 p.m. Zoom	14	15	16 Politalk 2 p.m. at Asuman's	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Global Friends 7 p.m. at Edie's	28				



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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