

Let's go to the library!

AAUW's February meeting will be on Saturday, Feb. 8, at 10 a.m. in the Admiral Room at the Blasco Library, located at 160 East Front Street, Erie. Our guest speakers will be Jessica Spitulski, the Executive Director of the Erie County Public Library, and Rachel Stevenson, the Programming Librarian.

Jessica Spitulski is well-qualified to assume her present role as Executive Director of the Erie County Public Library and District Administrator for the PA Northwest Library District. She holds a master's degree in library science and has worked within corporate, nonprofit, and municipal settings with career experience in education, brand protection, intellectual property support, accessibility, communications, and the creative arts. Jessica is a life-long Erie County resident and looks forward to supporting the growth and success of the Erie region.



Ms. Spitulski plans to discuss the evolving nature of libraries and how the Erie County Public Library bridges the divide between honoring the past and preparing for the future. She will address the essential function of a public library and touch on some of the challenges we've faced over the past year or two. She will also share her perspective on leadership in the library profession as all libraries today face unprecedented challenges. Remaining committed to serving entire communities – especially in times of division – requires strong professional values and guiding "North Star" ideals. Jessica will further explain her vision and expand upon her plans for the future of our library during her talk with us.

Rachel Stevenson is certainly well-qualified also. She received her master's degree in library and information science from the University of Pittsburgh and her Master of Arts degree in Arts Administration from Goucher College, where her thesis focused on programming in museum libraries. She has presented at the Pennsylvania Library Association's annual conference and at other conferences in Pennsylvania as well as teaching classes to librarians in New York and Ohio.

For all those times when your roommate at college told your parents that you "went to the library", it is time to make those words ring true. Please come to our library on Saturday, Feb. 8!

Ms. Stevenson plans to discuss the importance of programming for all ages in public libraries and why it is important to program for all ages. Programming for children has been a vital part of public librarianship for decades, but it was not

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President's Message

Hello Friends,

Hope you are keeping warm in this unexpectedly persistent snowy weather. Recently I joined a group, Keep Our Library Public (KOLP.) They ask for our support for their cause, and I would like to tell you about it. I find it relevant to our mission, which includes education.

I am sure you are familiar with the controversial lease signed by Gannon University to lease a significant portion of the public asset that is the Blasco Library. This space was paid for by a grassroots fundraiser (some donors' names are on the bricks in the lobby, attesting to the numerous contributions) and a generous donation by Dr. Raymond Blasco. Thus, the space in question was **intended** to be open to **public**, forever, just like the rest of the library.

The problem is that Gannon is a private entity and a religious one as well. The transfer of user rights of a public entity (or a part thereof) to a private entity violates the definition of a public asset, thus diminishing its value to the community. The county executive has eschewed his fiduciary responsibility of putting the interest of the public ahead of private interests.

The lease was signed between Erie County Council and the University, with very little opportunity for public comment. Moreover, the lease price per square foot is below market and will be fixed for the next 25 years. Therefore, both **what** was done and **how** it was done are the crux of the problem. Including Michele Ridge and Kathy Dahlkemper, many opposed the lease, some displaying yard signs asking for the lease to be rescinded. Eventually they disappeared because the Council approved the lease. The public assumed it was a done deal.

Not so...KOLP is the group of private citizens who have hired a Pittsburgh law firm to take this to court. Attorneys have said they have a case and that a jury trial would likely find in favor of the lease being canceled, again on the grounds that a public asset cannot be leased/sold without the consent of the public who paid for it in the first place. This group has been raising funds to pay the legal fees.

If you agree that Blasco Library, all of it, should remain in service to the public, please visit the website of KOLP (keepourlibrarypublic.com) and find out more about the details of the lawsuit, how you can contribute/volunteer and join their email list to get updates.

You will also get notice of a documentary being produced, all with donated time and materials, when it is published. Here is the link to the trailer:
<https://youtu.be/iKn1toap-QY>

We are the public and we are in this together...

All the best.



Asuman Baskan

Food and Friends invites all branch members to Mardi Gras


Mardi Gras, French for "Fat Tuesday," is a vibrant celebration that dates back centuries, rooted in Christian traditions marking the last day of indulgence before the Lenten season of fasting and reflection.


Originating in Europe and brought to Louisiana by French settlers in the 1700s, it has become famous for its colorful parades, lively music, elaborate costumes, and joyous festivities. Today, Mardi Gras is a cherished cultural event that combines historical customs with modern revelry, creating a unique celebration of community, creativity, and tradition.


Food and Friends invites you to an afternoon of fun, music, and celebration as we bring the spirit of New Orleans to life with good friends on Saturday, March 1, from 2-5 p.m. at 3226 Rustic Lane (Barb Hutzelman's house.)

The theme includes: Beads, Masks, Hats and Food, Games and Fun (Themed outfits or colors not required.)

What to Expect:

 Delicious drinks and traditional Mardi Gras fare.

 Wear your best purple, green, and gold or come masked in mystery? Hat and mask decorating supplies will be available so you can be as creative as you wish.

 Games, giveaways, and plenty of beads on hand or bring your own.

COST is \$10 at the door and includes all food and supplies.

RSVP by Feb. 20. To RSVP and for more information, contact: Barb Hutzelman, 814-881-7339.

Get ready to celebrate Mardi Gras in style – see you there!

In memoriam

Vicki Baldwin passed away Jan. 5.

Members may attend her memorial service on Saturday, Feb. 8, at 2 p.m. at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church. Her family will be there at 1 p.m.

Condolences may be sent to her husband, Dean, who resides at #30 Garden Home, 2323 Edinboro Rd. Erie, Pa. 16509.

Have computer questions?

Sign up for the computer study group

There's still time to sign up for the new study group on refreshing your knowledge of computers.

At the branch meeting at the Tom Ridge Center in January we had 10 people sign up, but it had been a low turnout for the meeting due to the inclement weather.

At this time we are still getting organized, so take advantage now and contact Loretto Bellicini at loretto.bellicini1@gmail.com or 814-449-8839.

By Loretto Bellicini

Public Policy Highlights

In 2014, the Public Interest Law Center and the Education Law Center-Pa filed a lawsuit over school funding. The plaintiffs included six Pennsylvania school districts, along with the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools, the NAACP-Pa. Conference and a number of families. The lawsuit went to trial in 2021.

Early in 2023, the verdict was reached. The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania returned a monumental decision determining that the funding mechanisms for Pennsylvania's public schools were unconstitutional and must be remedied.

The Pennsylvania Constitution requires that all students have access to a comprehensive, effective and contemporary system of public education. A clear directive from the court required the state legislature to fix the system. The state legislature assigned the task to a Basic Education Funding Commission.

Pennsylvania funds its schools through a combination of federal, state and local revenues. The state contribution has been low compared to other states and the local funding has varied widely resulting in a large gap between wealthy and poor school districts. In Pennsylvania, a typical wealthy district spends \$4,800 more per student than a typical low income district.

Students in poorer districts have gone without functioning libraries, up to date curriculum materials, insufficient school personnel and crumbling buildings. Diminished resources in too many schools prevent students from meeting academic standards set by the state.

In 2024, the implementation of the remedy for the School Funding Lawsuit began. Adequacy gaps were determined and the General Assembly initiated the process to fill those gaps. Over 300 school districts received resources to meet their adequacy gap.

In 2025, Pennsylvania students and parents need a timeline for completing the process so that each child has access to a comprehensive and effective system of public education.

By Loretta Seigley, Public Policy chair

Time to enter the AAUW art contest

The 2025 AAUW Annual Art Contest is now open!

This is your opportunity to showcase your artistic talents and have your work featured in our annual notecard collection, distributed to members nationwide.

Women artists remain underrepresented in galleries and often face pay inequity. Our annual contest spotlights the creativity and contributions of women artists within our community, advancing gender equity through art.

How the Art Contest Works: AAUW members can submit up to two entries featuring their photography or a digital photo of their painting, drawing, sculpture, collage or other form of art through national's AAUW Art Contest page.

Sign-up is easy and only requires your email address or AAUW member ID!

Entries are accepted through January 31.

welcome to our new members!

Welcome to our two new members, Sarah Humphrey and Kristin Headley!

Kristin Headley

5730 Larchmont Dr., Erie PA 16509
814-806-4305 Kpkiheadley@msn.com

In 1989 Kristin received a BA from Hope College with a major in religion and a minor in English. In 1990 she received a MA-TESOL from Eastern Michigan University and, in 2007, received her post-bachelor's teaching certification from Gannon University.

Kristin is a Michigan native and has lived in the United States, Canada and Japan. She has lived in Erie, where her spouse is a Gannon math professor, since 1999.

Kristin has been an elementary ESL teacher in Erie's Public Schools since 2007, currently teaching grades K and 1 ESL at Pfeiffer-Burleigh. Kristin has two adult children.

She is interested in travel and international issues, especially those pertaining to refugees. She is a member of First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant and a past member of One Table.

Sarah Humphrey

1521 Hardscrabble Blvd., Erie, PA 16505
(814)490-0663 sth1224@gmail.com

Sarah grew up in Findley Lake, NY, in Chautauqua County. She received her BSN degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH and worked at the Cleveland Clinic for many years before moving to Erie. Her specialty at the Clinic was surgical oncology.

Once in Erie, she became the nurse manager and recruiter for the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Disease. She moved on to the Regional Cancer Center, where she developed cancer awareness, prevention and survivorship programming.

She went back to school in 2018 and received an MSN from Mercyhurst University.

In 2019, while developing and managing the oncology navigation program at AHN Saint Vincent, she began working on creating and building a new non-profit in Erie called the Erie Cancer Wellness Center, which opened in 2022. Its mission is to serve all people living with and affected by cancer by offering free-of-charge programs that nurture mind, body and spirit.

She stepped down from the position of founding director in June of 2024 and is now enjoying having time to enjoy winter sports, knitting, gardening, cooking and baking (especially bread!)

Sarah is married to Todd and the couple have three adult children, residing in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Sacramento. Her career focus has always been in disease prevention as well as the mind-body interaction and the crucial role that plays in overall health.



Members enjoyed hearing about the Regional Science Consortium last month. The meeting was held at TREC. Those unable to attend due to the weather can check out the details of the research conducted there on the consortium website by clicking on Proceedings.

Legal Advocacy Fund collection nets \$595

Our very generous members have contributed a total of \$595 to AAU-W's Legal Advocacy Fund.

By Barbara Hutzelman, Finance Officer

Want to get involved?

Stay engaged this year with national's Two-Minute Activist tool!

February meeting

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until more recently that libraries began to program for young adults and adults; and library schools began to teach future librarians how to plan adult programs.

The American Library Association is studying the importance of programming and Ms. Stevenson will discuss the Pennsylvania Library Associate's nationally recognized platform, PA Forward, which encourages librarians to program in five major literacies that help forge highly effective citizens.



Branch Study Groups

Book Discussion

Book Discussion will meet on Thursday, Feb. 6, from 1-3 p.m. at Springhill 317.

Food and Friends

Food and Friends invites you to an afternoon of fun, music, and celebration as we bring the spirit of New Orleans to life on Saturday, March 1, from 2-5 p.m. at 3226 Rustic Lane (Barb Hutzelman's house.)

Global Friends

Global Friends will meet Monday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. at Edie's home, 638 Vermont Ave.

Program is on Umrah, A Journey to Mecca, by Niken Carpenter.

Gourmet

Gourmet will meet on Friday, Feb. 28, at 5 p.m. We will be having our meal at a festive place, Firebirds Woodfired Grill, 680 Millcreek Mall.

Please reserve your place as soon as possible if you are planning to attend. Call Nickie Azicri at my home phone 814-835-3780 or call 814-504-8258.

Please do not text or email me.

Politalk

Politalk will meet Feb. 20 at a time to be announced at Asuman's home, 3838 State St.

February 2025

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1
3 Board mtg. 6:30 p.m. Zoom	4	5	6 Book Club 1-3 p.m. Springhill 317	7	8 Branch mtg. 10 a.m. Blasco Library
10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20 Politalk Time TBA at Asuman's	21	22
24 Global Friends 7 p.m. at Edie's	25	26	27	28 Gourmet 5 p.m. at Firebirds	1 Food & Friends 2 p.m. 3226 Rustic Lane (Barb Hutzelman's house.)



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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The Friends of the Erie County Library present

Book Lover's Sale

THURS. FEB 13	10AM - 6PM
FRI. FEB 14	10AM - 4PM
SAT. FEB 15	9AM - 3PM

The sale will be held in the
Admiral Room of the Blasco Library

Over 5,000 titles available!

A variety of genres will be available including fiction,
non-fiction, children's books, audiobooks, puzzles, CDs and DVDs.

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