



GREATER WHITTIER AREA BRANCH AAUW NEWSLETTER

<http://whittier-ca.aauw.net>

**December
2025**



**BRANCH MEETING – December 13, 2025
1:30 PM – FIRST FRIENDS CHURCH WHITTIER**

PROGRAM

Music and Games, the Spirit of the Season

On Saturday, December 13, our branch meeting will move to the afternoon, so please plan to come at 1:30 PM. Our usual time conflicts with the *71st Uptown Whittier Christmas Parade*, scheduled for Saturday, at 10:00 AM. So, we are changing our schedule to avoid traffic, street closures, and so you can take your family to the parade.

So, what is December's plan? Music and games, of course! What else could such a month bring when we have so many important holidays during this season? Our music will be provided by a string quartet led by Music Director, Debbie Carnahan of East Whittier Middle School. Debbie Carnahan has worked for East Whittier Middle School for 40 years and was recently honored with the "Key to the District" from the Board of Education for her work with young musicians. She has toured the country with them, garnering awards from local, state and national events along the way. Her passion and dedication are a hallmark of her work.

As for the other segment of our December Program, we will be engaging in a game of Trivial Pursuit to check our knowledge of things we think we know, but may, indeed, not. It will give us a chance to cull our memories for elusive answers to strange questions and engage in interactive joy. I hope you will join us for this December's delights.

First Friends Church has kindly re-scheduled our meeting even though it is very close to another event to be held at the church that same afternoon. The New Century Singers Whittier will be performing in the meeting hall at 3:00 PM. When our meeting is over, you might want to tiptoe over to the church; all are welcome, it is free of charge.

Claire Koehler, AAUW VP Program Director
Ann Topjon, Program Associate



HOSPITALITY



*At holidays we realize how powerful ritual and tradition
are intimately tied to our identity.*

BRANCH MEETING

Date: Saturday, December 13, 2025

Time: 1:30 PM - raffle, socialize, pastries & beverages
2:00 PM - Meeting Begins

Location: Fellowship Hall
First Friends Church Whittier
13205 Philadelphia St.
Whittier, CA 90601

Directions: The entrance is off the courtyard, facing Washington Avenue.

Parking: Please park in the lot across the street from the church on Washington Avenue. It is accessed from the alley between Washington and Bright; turn north from Philadelphia up the alley, the lot is on the right. First Friends Church has requested we use this alternate parking.

Cost: \$10/person

RSVP: Please RSVP by **December 10th** for the correct food and seating count to:

Kay Clark, Treasurer
Email: kayclark310@gmail.com
Phone: (310) 890-6510

Time Capsule/100

Books in 1925: This is the centennial year for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The Empire State Bldg. lit up in green this past March to celebrate. "I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock."

Arrowsmith by Sinclair Lewis and *When We Were Very Young* by A.A. Milne were also on holiday gift lists. People start by making believe they are grown up and then, the first thing they know, they are. *Winnie-the-Pooh* with its whimsical tales of the bear of little brain, flustered Piglet, gloomy Eeyore, pretentious Owl, and Christopher Robin lived in readers' memories as real childhood friends.

December 1993: There were two events. Members went, before opening, to the new Barnes and Noble in Puente Hills for refreshments and to hear about books from the manager, a former elementary school teacher. We were given books for the schools.

On the second Saturday that month, we sponsored a children's puppet and marionette show at a Whittier church for community children. Minikin Puppet Productions performed "Winter Wizardry." It included all forms of puppetry from ventriloquism with an outrageous dummy named Harold, to hand puppets and a full troupe of marionettes. Willi Hasle coordinated the delightful event and AAUW helpers, in festive holiday sweaters, served refreshments.

Marian Locke, Hospitality VP

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As I write my monthly article, I remind myself of the AAUW mission and our theme this year, *Moving Forward Together: Advancing in Equity and Inclusion*. There was no better example than how members rallied around our speaker last month. A big thanks to Claire Koehler, Program VP who introduced us to Celeste Candida. She was a magnetic speaker, capturing our attention and touching on issues of social justice and racial prejudice as she shared the story of Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman. She was failed by the medical system but her very name was embedded in the name of the immortal HeLa cells taken from her without permission or credit, and used for research to this very day. Celeste also volunteers for Union Station Homeless Services and suggested that we bring canned goods for the holiday food drive. We set up a donation table that was soon laden with donations from our members. Wouldn't it be a great idea if we invited our speakers each month to highlight their favorite charity or social program.?

Thanks again to the wonderful holiday decorations and buffet provided by our Hospitality VP, Marian Locke; a big shout out to the Raffle Committee, Kay Clark, Pauline Rogers, and Quincey Grace; and the many people pitching in for setup and cleanup for the meeting. That fellowship with one another contributes to a rewarding and successful meeting.

Happy Birthday to everyone born in December!

Sheryl Crockey	Dec. 1	Rosemary Bertone	Dec. 12
Ann Topjon	Dec. 2	Joyce Paul	Dec. 23
Carol K Anderson	Dec. 3	Shirley Stewart	Dec. 28
Janice Geiger	Dec. 3	Belen Duarte-Sousa	Dec. 31
Ana Sosa	Dec. 6		

As I announced last month, the date is set for our 100th Anniversary celebration to be held on April 11, 2026. The word is out and people are congratulating our branch. One moving tribute was sent in by Jill Smith, who moved to Colorado 12 years ago, remains a member of GWA, and is currently co-President of AAUW Colorado. We received the following message:



Jill Smith has made a donation to AAUW In Honor of AAUW Greater Whittier Branch 100th Anniversary Celebration.

"Congratulations on this achievement for our branch.
I will be celebrating with you from Colorado!! Jill Smith".

Wishing you all a holiday time of peace, joy, and sharing.

Paula Ocampo
GWA-AAUW President

AAUW MISSION STATEMENT – To advance equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership committee has chosen Saturday, **February 28, 2026** for our annual Meet and Greet. More details soon. Last year was fantastic; we had a large attendance. Everyone enjoyed the festivities. Please **SAVE THE DATE**. Start thinking of people to invite. I will be passing out a signup sheet at the meetings in lieu of payment of \$10 at the door. There will be games, food, presentations and more.

Members have asked about getting the California AAUW state pin which I give out to new members. They are still available. I need to place the order all at once to mitigate the shipping charges. If you are interested, they are \$4.00 each. I will bring a sample to the next meeting. Pins are shaped like the state, a bright blue background with 3 California poppies and AAUW on them. Size approx. 1&1/2" length and 1/2" width. Must prepay. Any questions please contact me.

Let's welcome new member, **Elsa Galvan**.

We have been contacting members who have not paid their dues for the coming year. Many of you are now out of the grace period. Please check your records. Dues are now \$128, which includes your membership in the AAUW California and AAUW national organizations. You can pay your dues on the national website, AAUW.org, or please send to: Kay Clark, 11915 Inez St., #8, Whittier, CA 90605. Checks should be made out to GWA AAUW. You can also pay by Zelle to Kay Clark310@gmail.com. We hope all of you will continue your support of AAUW and remain a member of our Branch - GWA AAUW.

Andrea Bellamy
Membership VP

RAFFLE FUNDRAISER

Our Raffles are going very well. We are getting some wonderful donations and are bringing in some funds for the Branch. So far since September we have brought in \$302.00.

Many thanks to those who donated items and to those who purchase tickets. If you want to donate, gift cards (\$25 or \$30) are popular items and new or gently used items are also welcome. We already have several for the December meeting. But if you want to donate for December or beyond, please let me know. We do need the items at least 45 minutes before the start of our meeting. So, if you want me to pick them up, I am happy to do that.

Kay Clark
Kayclark310@gmail.com
(310) 890-6510



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

The **Me and White Supremacy** discussion group will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 20, **2026** at Pat Dudley's at 2:00 PM. The Week 3 reading quotes and questions will be sent the first week in January.

At the February branch meeting the DEI focus will be on the role of literature on culture and cultural change. There will be a panel discussion and table talks. To "prepare" for the meeting, members are asked to think of a book they have read with a DEI theme. During the table talks members will provide the title, DEI theme (use Goodreads or other book summary sites for information), author and a brief overview of the story. What was the authors message and how were you impacted by the book? Many of the books read in our book sections have had DEI themes. If you would like to read a book new to you, I have a list I can email and will also have it available at the December meeting.

Members who volunteered to be on the panel and/or to be a table leader will be contacted in January with more specific information and the possible discussion questions.

Pat Dudley
DEI Coordinator



AAUW FUND

We are very grateful for our 26 generous members (listed below) who contributed to the AAUW Fund in FY25. Your donations make a positive difference in our mission to advance equity for women and girls through education, research, and advocacy. Please note our donation report is based on Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

We are also rewarded for our branch donations by honors awarded; the AAUW California Named Gift Honoree(s), and the AAUW Five Star program. One of our Five Star goals for FY26 is to raise \$30 per member towards any of the following AAUW Funds: Greatest Needs, Defend Higher Education, or Public Policy Funds.

Thanks to the following member donors of our branch who made individual contributions to the AAUW Fund in FY 25.

Virginia Ball
Tobi Balma
Jacqueline Brearley
Liz Cheh
Kay Clark
Nancy Cowardin
Sheryl Crockey
Patricia Dudley
Carole Duff

Quincey Grace
Linda Harris
Sharon Heck
Peggy Ann Kiefer
Mandy Knight
Paula Ocampo
Rebecca Ramirez
Margo Reeg
Carole Restovich

Lynda Richardson
Francine Rippy
Dolores Seidman
Lavonne Sherman
Ann Topjon
Gen'nel Walters
Nadine Wilcox
Gwen Woirhaye

Thank you!
Sheryl Crockey, AAUW Fund VP

PUBLIC POLICY

School Boards - The Overlooked Frontline of Democracy

By Kathi Harper, Chair, Public Policy School Board Project

Last month, Seena Trigas from the Public Policy School Board Project team, submitted an excellent article reminding members of the crucial role that public education plays in our democracy. The current – and seemingly never-ending - assaults on that institution gave rise to the School Board Project, which is now entering its third year.

When we started this project, our main focus initially was to encourage members to actively participate in identifying, recruiting and supporting candidates to run for school boards whose education values were in line with ours at AAUW California. For a number of reasons, our focus shifted to an emphasis on encouraging and training members to attend school board meetings and let us know what they are seeing in their districts. We had a remarkable response, and we want to thank all our members who have answered that call.

As we enter our 3rd iteration of the project, we want to continue that momentum, but narrow the scope to watching for and speaking out against violations of California’s protective laws; add a new component of learning how to make a greater impact by working in coalition with other public education supportive organizations; and swing back to where we started with re-engaging and increasing our efforts to ensure district board majorities that support **all** students and the free flow of ideas. In this last regard, we have recently discovered an organization called the School Board Integrity Project, and I can’t say it better than their Executive Director, Kyrstin Schuette, as stated in an Op-Ed she wrote on September 3, 2025 in *The Courier*:

“The redistricting battle is important and we shouldn’t minimize it, but it’s equally important that we pursue local pathways to power to protect our families and our neighbors from the extremism sweeping our country. The solution lies in recruiting, training, and electing school board members who will practice good governance, pursue academic freedom and excellence, and foster schools where every student belongs.”

You can read Kyrstin’s full article here: [Kyrstin Schuette: The Overlooked Frontline of Democracy](#), and learn more about her organization here: [School Board Integrity Project](#). Front and center on their webpage you will find their tagline:

“The future we choose for our public schools is the future we choose for our country.”

Margo Reeg
Public Policy Chair



MYRA LONG SCHOLARSHIP FUND (MLSF)

The Myra Long Scholarship Fund (MLSF) committee is made up of volunteers from the GWA-AAUW membership. Most of these women have other responsibilities in the organization, however their dedication to making the world a better place shines through with a smile and professionalism. The adage of, “If you want something done, give it to a busy woman”, certainly holds true.

Some 26 years ago some of us AAUW women felt we needed to do more in our community instead of sending our fundraising dollars to more established causes. Our treasurer, Judy Pappe filed the required State of California incorporation forms, and the Myra Long Scholarship Fund was born. Many dedicated volunteers have given their time and resources to make the Myra Long Scholarship Fund viable in the community. If you want to know why this project succeeded these women would answer: “It was a joy to give to a young woman at the start of her education that will grow as she matures. Educated women help grow our nation.”

This year we have many ways to give and even the smallest gift of time or money is appreciated. We are grateful for all the volunteers that have signed up to help with the Math/Science Conference on Wednesday, January 7, 2026. Many members may not know that the Math/Science Conference was started the year Marion Locke was President of AAUW.

Whatever you do to make the world a little better for someone else you have our gratitude and thanks.

The next MLSF Committee will meet on Zoom Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 8:30 AM. If you would like to attend the MLSF meeting please text Barbara (909) 374-2771 for a link.

MLSF COMMITTEE:

Barbara Gile-Chairperson, Kaye Kidwell-Treasurer, Carole Restovich- Secretary, Susan Halliday, Sharon Heck, Patricia Dudley, Ann Chambers and Dolores Gonzalez-Hayes



MATH/SCIENCE CONFERENCE for 8th GRADE GIRLS

Our Greater Whittier Area Branch will hold our 31st Math/Science Conference for 8th Grade Girls on Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at Whittier College. We will host a total of 400 students and teacher advisors and they will hear from twenty women in STEM related careers. Each girl and advisor will hear from six of the twenty speakers.

I have been organizing this event since September, and we have sixteen schools participating, and the full list of twenty speakers. The speaker lists have been sent to the schools so that the students may choose their favorite five. I use their choices when setting up the three workshops.

Dolores Seidman is collecting volunteers for the event. There are many jobs and the conference begins early in the morning and ends at 12:45 PM. Coffee and rolls are available when you arrive, and you are invited to stay for lunch. If you have not signed up, please email Dolores to volunteer. Her email address is: deeseidman@gmail.com. You will be notified of your job closer to the event. Please do sign up to help make this 31st conference one of the best.

Sharon Heck, Conference Chair

s.heck4peace@gmail.com

MODERN TRENDS IN LITERATURE

Modern Trends does not meet in December. Starting in February, Modern Trends meets the 2nd Thursday of the month, 6 PM at Georgine Sweeney's house; 16411 Pasada Dr. Whittier, CA 90603 (near Whittwood), phone (562) 631-6698. Zoom is also available. The link will be shared two days before the meeting.

Modern Trends Books for 2025-2026

Feb 12 *Beyond the Crushing Waves* by Lily Mirren, reviewed by Carol K
Mar 12 *The Emperor of Gladness* by Ocean Vuong, reviewed by Greta Lebow
April 15 Whittier Reads Book, TBD
May 14 *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon, reviewed by Janice Geiger
June 11 *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge, reviewed by Lisbeth Solberg

Thank you, Georgine



MYSTERY MAVENS

Mystery Mavens will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 6PM at The Original Roadhouse Grill, 15156 Whittier Blvd., Whittier, CA 90603, near Whittwood. Our books for 2026 are listed below, as they were chosen by our members at our May meeting. All are welcome to join us on January 21, 2026.

Books for 2025-2026

January 21 *The Woman in Cabin 10* by Ruth Ware
March 18 *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* by Stephanie Barron
May 20 *The Housemaid* by Freida McFadden

Sharon Heck



MORNING BOOK

We will not meet this month but will resume gatherings in January. If you want to get a head start on the new year's read, *The Mirage Factory*, by Gary Krist, will be discussed on January 26. Complete information about the meeting will be in the January newsletter.

The books for the rest of the year are:

March 23: *James*, by Percival Everett
June 1: *Mother, Daughter, Traitor, Spy*, by Susan Elia Mac Neal
July 27: *Dry Spells*, by Archana Maniar

Happy Holidays!

Ann Topjon, Chair 562-665-1724

WRITING IS FUN

The holiday meeting of Writing is Fun! takes place on Dec. 17 at 11 AM at the home of Carole Restovich. Carole will provide the lunch. If you have a special Christmas memory or event you would like to share, this would be the time! All are welcome. If you are attending for the first time, please let Carole know.

We hope to see you there!
Carole Restovich

INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

On Thursday, December 18, 2025 we will meet at the Thai Table restaurant in Whittwood for lunch at 11:30. We concluded our discussion of the Great Decisions 2025 book in November. We will receive our 2026 books in January, and begin discussing it in February 2026. Please RSVP to Sharon for the lunch meeting at Thai Table on December 18.

All are welcome to join us on the third Thursday each month at Sharon Heck's home, 6032 Comstock Ave., Whittier, beginning on January 15, 2026.

Sharon Heck
s.heck4peace@gm



FIRST FRIDAY

This First Friday will be held at the 1889 historical farm house of Jim and Shirley Stewart. The house will be decorated in all the holiday spirit imaginable!!

WHEN: December 5, 6 TO 8 PM

ADDRESS: 8109 Michigan Avenue, Whittier, CA 90602

DIRECTIONS: The property is between Mar Vista and La Cuarta, North of Whittier Blvd.

Friends and significant others are always welcome!

Just remember to bring something sweet or savory and your choice of beverage for everyone's enjoyment.

Come and spend time with our friends and enjoy the wonderful holiday ambience provided by Jim and Shirley!

Respectfully submitted by,
Belen Duarte-Sousa



REALLY GREAT STUFF

Winter Boutique

14402 WHITTIER BLVD

*December 3, 4, 5
11 AM to 6 PM*

*December 6
10 AM to 5 PM*

LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!!!

20% OF PROCEEDS GO TO OUR GREATER WHITTIER AREA BRANCH

Great Winter & Holiday Fashions

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Free Gift Wrapping

ANY QUESTIONS

CALL Karen van der Baan at 562-695-0048

or TEXT 562-665-4058





COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Ballot Processing Center Tour

An eager group of League of Women Voters and AAUW voters joined **Margo Reeg** for a tour of the Ballot Processing Center (BPC) in Industry on November 5. Our tour guides were Michael Itteralde, Kathay Feng, and briefly Jeff Klein, Director of the BPC.

Highlights of the tour were seeing the drug-sniffing dogs examining the trays of ballots brought in from the Post Office and from the Ballot Drop Boxes. This is to protect the employees who are handling thousands of ballots. The high-tech signature verification machine operates at an amazing speed—about 6 envelopes per second. Any envelope lacking a signature or one where the signature does not match is kicked out for hand examination. Signatures are compared against the DMV signature and all Voting signatures from previous elections. This machine also slits the envelopes. Teams of trained workers did the hand comparison of signatures looking for specific details to verify match.

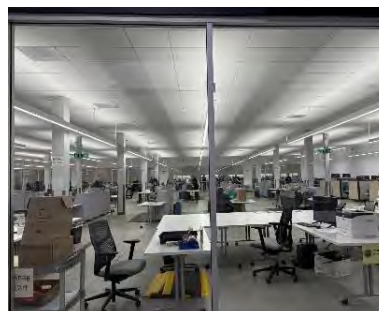


Banks of workers examine ballots which have passed the signature check. They check the ballot for tears, marks, spills, and extraneous extra items in the envelope. Ballots that have stains or tears are sent to a separate area to be remade by a pair of workers. The ruined ballot and remade ballot are kept together.



At about 3:15 PM a batch of ballots that had been scanned and counted was safeguarded inside a glass walled, locked room. The new vote ballot tally of 93,000 additional ballots was posted while we were watching. After being counted the ballots are boxed and stored for 18 to 22 months in case a recount is requested. While we were on our tour representatives from the federal Department of Justice arrived to examine the processes of ballot counting. This is somewhat unusual for a state election with no federal items on the ballot.

The part of the 1% manual count had been done in the morning. Ballots from 1% of the precincts are examined by hand by teams of 3 people as an added accuracy check on the electronic count. About 25,000 ballots had to be hand checked.



This section includes community news as well as your personal news, tips, and stories. Send me yours so I can include them in our next newsletter.

Paula Ocampo
Newsletter Editor
pocampo@aol.com

December 2025

GREATER WHITTIER AREA CALENDAR

Branch Fundraiser	December 3 (Wednesday)	11 AM-6 PM	Really Great Stuff
Branch Fundraiser	December 4 (Thursday)	11 AM-6 PM	Really Great Stuff
Branch Fundraiser	December 5 (Friday)	11 AM-6 PM	Really Great Stuff
Branch Fundraiser	December 6 (Saturday)	10 AM-5 PM	Really Great Stuff
Board Meeting	December 2 (Tuesday)	7 PM	Zoom
First Friday	December 5 (Friday)	6 PM - 8 PM	Jim & Shirley Stewart's
Branch Meeting	December 13 (Saturday)	1:30 PM	First Friends Church Whittier
Writing is Fun	December 17 (Wednesday)	11 AM	Carole Restovich's
International Concerns	December 18 (Thursday)	11:30 AM	Thai Table Restaurant

CHECK WITH YOUR SECTION LEADERS FOR UPDATES AND ZOOM INVITATIONS

Please consult our style sheet and follow it when preparing your newsletter article. It will save me a great deal of time and work. If you do not have a style sheet, please let me know and I will send you one. Thank you for your cooperation and for sending in your articles by the 15th of the month. **All submissions must be in WORD documents as attachments to emails. Please create the document within WORD itself rather than cutting and pasting into WORD. Please DO NOT use TABS. Please, do not type the articles within the email itself. Please give the article a descriptive name, not merely "newsletter article," and use that name in the subject line of the email.**

Please send articles by email on or before the 15th of every month, August through May to pocampo@aol.com

Newsletter Editor – Paula Ocampo

For more information, please visit our websites and social media:

AAUW National www.aauw.org
 AAUW California www.aauw-ca.org
 GWA-AAUW www.whittier-ca.aauw.net

Greater Whittier Area -
 American Association of University Women
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 Whittier, CA 90607



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