

Mighty Food Farm—From the Ground Up

Public Branch Meeting on Saturday, February 23, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 108 School Street, Bennington
Hostesses: Madeline Kennedy and Claudia Dalton

As a young woman farmer in Vermont, Lisa MacDougall faced enormous challenges which, over time, led to success and personal growth. The owner of Mighty Food Farm in Shaftsbury, Lisa will tell the story of how she started the farm, its opportunities, and its future. (Ed. Note: Mighty Food Farm is located at 280 Rod and Gun Club Road in Shaftsbury.)

In 2006, Lisa and a business partner leased 5 acres in Pownal to start Mighty Food Farm. But Lisa's dream was to *own* her own land. After six years of searching on her own, she found good, affordable land in Shaftsbury. With the assistance of a Vermont Land Trust grant, she was able to purchase 154 conserved acres.

Lisa graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a Bachelor of Science in Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences. After graduating, she worked on a variety of organic farms in Amherst, MA. With this background, it's not surprising that Mighty Food Farm is an organic farm, certified by the Vermont Organic Farmers. Lisa considers soil the basis of her farm and continually tries to develop its health.

Vern Gruber of the University of Vermont Extension considers Lisa to be "one of Vermont's best young vegetable farmers," one who "demonstrates excellence in production, marketing, and stewardship of the land." He continues: "I have watched her farm enterprise grow in recent years and I'm thrilled that she now has the opportunity to own the kind of farm land that will sustain her business into the future."



Lisa MacDougall (left) at Williamstown Farmers' Market

Mighty Food Farm (MFF) is what is called a "CSA"—a "community-supported agriculture" program. A CSA includes a farmer and a community of supporters (members) who purchase a "share" or portion of the farm's harvest each year before the growing season. Farmers benefit from this arrangement, for it gives them money to purchase seeds, supplies, and equipment as they prepare for the growing season. Unlike many CSA's which offer only pre-selected packages of food, MFF members pick and choose from a variety of vegetables that have been harvested that week.

Thirty-three year old Lisa does it all: drives the tractor, plants the seeds, manages the books, hires the crew, and much, much more. To prepare for the move to Shaftsbury, Lisa had a new "wash and pack" shed constructed, a place where she and her crew can safely wash, store, and pack produce for delivery to local farmers' markets, farm stands, restaurants, and other retail outlets. If she sounds like a superwoman, you're right!

February First Monday Meeting

Monday, February 4, 2019 at 12:30 pm
The Federated Church of East Arlington
102 Ice Pond Rd., Arlington

Jennifer Schoerke, a former medical illustrator who was born with single sided deafness, will present an illustrated discussion of issues about hearing loss as we age. She will cover changes that occur in the brain and in cognitive functioning following hearing loss. She will also explain how hearing technology can offset these changes.

Bring a sandwich for your lunch, dessert and beverage will be supplied by the hostess, Nancy Schoerke. Please email or telephone Nancy at nts1016@comcast.net or 802-447-0829 if you are planning to attend.

AAUW Calendar

Monday, February 4, 2019 at 12:30 pm
First Monday Meeting at the Federated Church of East Arlington. See announcement above.

Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Scribble Sisters Meeting at the home of Suzanne Kirkpatrick. Information: Suzanne Kirkpatrick at suzykirkpa@gmail.com or (cell) 314-496-5628.

Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at 12:00 noon
Book Group Meeting at the Martha Canfield Library in Arlington. *The Cailiffs of Baghdad, Georgia* by Mary Helen Stefaniak. Information: Mary Feidner at 442-7845 or mfeidner@comcast.net.

AAUW Calendar continued

Saturday, February 23, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Branch Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House. Lisa MacDougall, owner of Mighty Food Farm, will talk about her journey to become an organic farmer. See page 1 for more information.

Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Scribble Sisters Meeting at the home of Nancy Schoerke. Information: Suzanne Kirkpatrick.

Monday, March 4, 2019 at 12:30 pm
First Monday Meeting at the Federated Church of East Arlington. Denise Main, Executive Director of Sunrise Family Resource Center will speak about current Sunrise Programs.

Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Scribble Sisters Meeting at the home of Claudia Dalton. Information Suzanne Kirkpatrick.

Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at 12:00 noon
Book Group Meeting at the Martha Canfield Library in Arlington. *Going up the Country: When the Hippies, Dreamers, Freaks, and Radicals Moved to Vermont* by Yvonne Daley. Information: Mary Feidner.

Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Scribble Sisters Meeting at the home of Margaret Howland. Information Suzanne Kirkpatrick.

A Second Scribble Sisters Group?

Scribble Sisters, a writing group that AAUW Bennington Branch started 2 1/2 years ago, is now at full capacity. We are considering forming a second group. Would you be interested in joining if we meet in the evenings? If yes, or for information, call Margaret Howland at 802-379-2638.

The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, 2019

By Catherine McClure and Gudrun Hutchins

The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) supports court cases to fight sex discrimination in higher education and the workplace. AAUW works together with a consortium of other organizations to challenge or support selected cases in court.

Bennington AAUW members have been generous in supporting the Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) with donations totaling \$602 and \$715 during the last two years. These totally voluntary, tax-deductible donations are collected at the same time as the reservations for our social lunch in March. To help you understand the kinds of legal cases your donations support, we want to share two examples.

Contraceptive Coverage

The most recent court cases pursued by AAUW involve contraceptive coverage in health care plans offered by employers. The Affordable Care Act (“Obama Care”) mandates that employers provide contraceptive coverage with very few exceptions for religious organizations. The Trump administration has vastly expanded the rules for exemption so that most employers can refuse contraceptive coverage on moral grounds. The new exemption rules were scheduled to become effective earlier this month.

California and Pennsylvania have sued the Trump administration and have asked for injunctions to stop implementation of the new rules while these court cases go forward. AAUW is among a group of Amici Curiae (friends of the court) who are participating in the suits. AAUW claims that no-cost contraceptive coverage is vital to a woman’s ability to plan to enter, remain, and grow in the workplace or in higher education.

The state requests for injunctions were successful. Last week a federal judge in California ruled that the final exemption rules would cause harm to 13 state plaintiffs represented in the suit and issued an order preventing the rules from going into effect while the lawsuit proceeds. A day later a federal judge in Pennsylvania issued a preliminary injunction blocking the Trump administration’s harmful contraceptive rules from taking effect nationwide while the Pennsylvania court case proceeds.

Pay Equity



During the past several years, Bennington AAUW members have closely followed the impact of AAUW legal assistance in the case of Rizo vs. Fresno County Office of Education.

Aileen Rizo worked as a math consultant, a teacher of math teachers, as she explained in one of her interviews. During a casual lunch conversation she discovered that a male colleague with less education and less experience was paid considerably more than she was because their current salaries were based on their salaries in a previous job. After her employer refused to increase her salary, Rizo took her case to court.

Rizo prevailed in California District Court, but her case was appealed by the superintendent to the Ninth Circuit Federal Court. The suit would now be argued under the Equal Pay Act of 1963 rather than much more recent California state law.

A panel of three judges of the federal court ruled against Rizo. With a new brief claiming that the three-judge panel had made an error, Rizo requested a rehearing of her salary discrimination case “en banc” (in front of all the judges of the Ninth Circuit Federal Court). The “en banc” hearing was granted more than three years after Rizo’s initial California suit.

On April 9, 2018, the judges of the ninth circuit ruled that using prior salary alone “as a factor other than sex” cannot justify a wage differential, “further reasoning that this would allow employers to profit on this inequity and perpetuate a gender wage gap in direct contrast with the intent of the Equal Pay Act of 1963.”

Although Aileen Rizo was successful in the rehearing, the case continues with AAUW support. On August 30, 2018, the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools filed a petition for appeal with the Supreme Court of the United States. It is not yet known whether the Supreme Court will hear the case.

Branch President's Column

By Ruth Botzow

We are well into the New Year and I hope 2019 is off to a great start for each of you.

January begins the calendar year, but our AAUW year isn't so neatly defined. In June and July we concentrate on getting our membership house in order. Come September, the branch organizes most of the programs for the next 10 months and puts our annual fundraising for our scholarship awards on the front burner. In January we continue our branch meetings and begin to look forward to our spring luncheon and another outstanding lecture in our non-Western series.

January is also the traditional time to make resolutions and set goals. Our National AAUW office has been doing just that and I'd like to share the content of an outreach call I received from Angela Cooper in December. Angela is the Senior Manager in the Connect in Advancement & Partnerships Department. She began the conversation by asking if I was aware of the new strategic plan: *Beyond Aspirations: Advancing Equity for Women and Girls*, which ensures that AAUW is mission-focused with an eye toward meaningful impact for women and girls. It was easy to assure her that I was, and although I know I've mentioned it before, I encourage you to read it if you haven't already. The plan sets out goals and action steps for AAUW and is available to read online or download as a pdf on their website: www.aauw.org/who-we-are/strategic-plan/. It is both aspirational and inspirational. They, and we, have done so much and there is still so much to do.

Angela next asked if I was aware of their salary negotiation e-course. I'd heard of it, but hadn't explored what the course covered or how to take advantage of it. Here is her description: "Our new, free e-course, AAUW Work Smart Online, empowers women with the skills and confidence they need to negotiate a fair salary and benefits."

AAUW's ambitious goal is to train 10 million women in salary negotiation. The course focuses on women in, and entering, the workforce so if that's you, please register and complete the course putting this link in your internet browser: <https://salary.aauw.org>. It will be time well used and has pointers on the when and how of salary negotiation as well as how to ask for (and get) a raise. There is a module with statistics about why this is so important and how you can use those statistics to help you get a fair salary. This course's content, and AAUW's continuing drive to eliminate the gender pay gap, dovetails with last year's successful efforts to pass legislation in Vermont preventing employers from requiring prior salary history information during an application process.

Training 10 million women in salary negotiation is an ambitious goal, and they are asking for our help in taking the online course and sharing it with everyone we know. Most of the questions don't apply to those of us who are retired, but if you are still employed, or seeking employment, please give it a look. I will share the link with local institutions and encourage broad participation.

In closing, I wish each of you a successful 2019 filled with joy, discovery, and friendship—and I hope to see you at many of our branch activities throughout the year!

AAUW Public Policy Advocacy, 2019

By Catherine McClure

Congratulations Bennington Branch AAUW members! You have been advocates for women and girls through local scholarship donations and awards, legal advocacy through the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, and legislative advocacy at the state and national level.

“In recent years National AAUW has encouraged AAUW members to lobby for State Equal Pay Laws as the best way to move forward. AAUW Washington staff has analyzed the employment laws of each state and has created individual “roadmaps” for achieving pay equity in each state. New pay equity laws were passed last year in California, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and now in Vermont.”

Quote from AAUW email newsletter

Our members used the AAUW roadmap to advocate here in Vermont for House Bill H. 294 with great success. Vermont H.294 prohibits employers from requiring an applicant to disclose his or her salary and benefit history and from seeking an applicant’s salary history without his or her authorization. Testimony by Bennington AAUW member, Julie Mackaman, specifically influenced legislators to support this bill. Our voices make a difference. You can read Julie’s testimony and the text of the new law on AAUW of Vermont website www.aauwvt.org.

Women working full time in the United States are typically paid 80% of what men are paid, and the gap is even wider for many women of color and women with disabilities. Despite federal and state equal pay laws, the gender pay gap persists. But Congressional action can help change this.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is proposed legislation that would take meaningful steps to update and strengthen the Equal Pay Act of

1963 to help close the gender pay gap, including:

- closing loopholes that have weakened the law over time to allow employers to justify paying workers unfairly,
- creating more robust remedies for those who have suffered discrimination,
- preventing employers from retaliating against workers who discuss or disclose their wages,
- prohibiting employers from relying on salary history to set wages, and
- providing much needed training and technical assistance, as well as data collection and research.

The original bill was introduced in 1997 and it has been introduced in every Congress since that time. It passed the House in 2009.

Title IX

Ever since Title IX was established, educational institutions have been required to investigate and report their students’ experiences with sexual harassment or abuse. This requirement includes colleges as well as K-12 schools.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has proposed new rules that narrow the kinds of cases that schools must investigate and give the accused—not the student accuser—more rights. Instead of investigating any assault allegation, the harassment must be “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to education.” Unlike the less formal Obama era guidance that is being replaced, the new regulations will carry the force of law after the 60 day comment period which ends on January 30.

For additional information and to sign a petition against these new rules, go to www.aauw.org/article/the-attack-on-title-ix/