



Bennington (VT) Branch



Bennington Branch News—April 2020

Meetings Canceled Through May

Because of the COVID-19, we have decided to postpone programs and activities through May, including Scribble Sisters and Book Group meetings. The Sojourner Truth performance originally scheduled for March 21 will be re-scheduled for fall, as will the screening and discussion of “[Suppressed](#)” a video about the continuing struggle for voting rights for all Americans.

We hope that we will be able to hold our Annual Picnic in June. In the meantime, stay well and keep in touch!

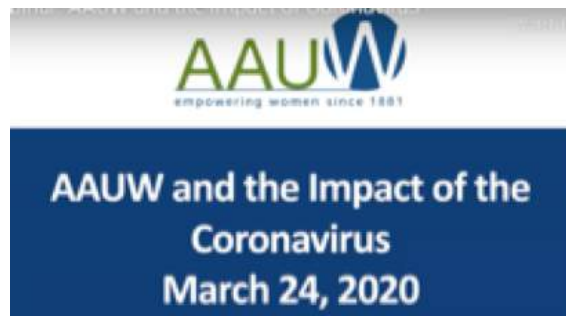
—Gudrun Hutchins and Dawn Rodrigues, newsletter co-editors

AAUW National Offers Webinars

While taking a break from monthly programs, you might want to learn about the series of webinars that the national office is hosting. An excellent webinar to start with is the January 28 session called “A 2020 Vision for Equity.” In this session, Kim Churches and Kate Neilson discuss the array of policy issues that AAUW is hoping to advance this year. You can Watch the webinar on [YouTube](#).



Kim Churches, AAUW CEO



On March 20, AAUW held a webinar on the “Impact of the Coronavirus.” (See [bit.ly/AAUW Coronavirus](https://bit.ly/AAUW_Coronavirus).)

In this session, Kim Churches stressed that AAUW’s mission to advance equity won’t change; we’ll just adapt how we get there. Over 300 AAUW members took part in this meeting, including our own president, Kathy Wagenknecht, and newsletter co-editor, Dawn Rodrigues. Attending this session made us aware of the work of so many statewide AAUW branches across the country. Perhaps we can invite a speaker from another New England branch to one of our meetings next year.

Online Socializing with Zoom

Phone calls and text messages help us visit with friends, but what if we want to talk with or meet with a group? The answer is an easily accessible technology called “Zoom,” a technology used by churches, schools, and colleges across the world to stay connected during the pandemic.

With monthly programs canceled, we can still stay in touch. Scribble Sisters plans to meet virtually using Zoom. We’re also planning to use Zoom for a new Online Pop-Up Book Group. See page 4 for additional information.

Support AAUW's Policy and Legal Advocacy

by Cathy McClure, LAF/Public Policy Chair, AAUW Bennington Branch

AAUW has signed with other organizations a letter to members of Congress urging a swift passage of the Paid Sick Days for Public Health Emergencies and Personal and Family Care Act (S. 3415/H.R. 6150), [paid sick leave for public health emergencies](#). Also, National AAUW's support for court challenges to sex discrimination in higher education and the workplace (Legal Advocacy Fund) continues.

We can support National AAUW action for policy and legal advocacy by continuing our spring collection of funds. The cancellation of our spring luncheon need not impact our support of National AAUW action. This financial support for AAUW advocacy is one of our AAUW Branch's strengths. Please give as you are able as we attempt to meet our yearly average of just over \$600.

Please send a check made payable to AAUW to Norma McShane (329 Elm St., Bennington, VT 05201) by May 1.



Meet Kate Nielson

Kate is AAUW's top policy advisor and counsel. In this role, Kate drives the organization's advocacy and legal work. She leads AAUW's policy and government relations work at the federal, state and local levels, devises AAUW's grassroots field strategy and manages the AAUW's Legal Advocacy Fund.



State of Vermont Executive Department A Proclamation

Governor Phil Scott signed a proclamation recognizing March 31, 2020 as Equal Pay Day in Vermont. He noted that "the median income for women working full-time in Vermont is about \$8,000 less than the median annual salary for men, which equates to a wage gap of 16 cents on every dollar earned." The proclamation further notes "the importance of promoting women's equality in the workforce."

AAUW Bennington Branch was instrumental in getting equal pay legislation passed in 2018—with help from Kate Nielson and others at the national office. Equal Pay Day represents how far into the year women must work in order to earn what men earned the year before.

Remembering Jackie Ostrander

We have sad news to report. Jacqueline Ostrander died on February 15, 2020, at her home in Arlington, VT. Jackie joined AAUW in 2015 and served as board secretary in 2017 and 2018. She developed close friendships with Arlington AAUW members and attended First Friday Meetings and book group meetings. Jackie had been ill for some time and was receiving home care by Visiting Nurses and later Hospice Nurses. She and her husband Ray moved to Stowe, VT in 1982 where they managed properties and later owned and operated an Italian Restaurant. Jackie was a great cook, loved playing tennis, walking her dogs and spending time with her family. Memorial gifts can be sent to VNA and Hospice, P.O. Box 885, Manchester Center VT 05255.

From our Members: What We are Doing While Staying in Place

From Margaret Howland

Hi – bored yet? I'm not, too many books to read and finally perhaps time to read them!
And I'm lucky as Judy Kniffen and Judy Murphy are my neighbors and we can chat ---standing the requisite 6 feet apart, outside. if any of you get lonesome out there in the country, give us a call. We can certainly arrange something not dangerous.

From Cathy McClure

Steve and I are going through all our books to start downsizing our collection. I found a book of local published writings that you will recognize *Southshire Peppercot* with an entry from Jane Chamay and a review quote from Lea Newman on the back. This reminded me that I hadn't finished reading our local *AAUW Scratchings II* and I am now searching for my copy of *At Grandmother's Table*, by Ellen Berkeley—another book with AAUW connections. All keepers!

from Gudrun Hutchins

I haven't watched any movies, so I can't recommend any. I can read or listen to operas or classical music only so long, so I am considering another passion -- my next needlepoint project. I have been thinking of a number of ideas but have not decided on anything definite yet -- I am still in the graph paper stage. I may try to do something very different to use up a lot of my left over yarn of many different colors from different past projects.

From Dawn Rodrigues

I haven't wanted to go to the grocery store, so I signed up for a meal kit. I've tried them in the past few years, usually in February. They are good, and even better this time around. Some meal kit recipes are easier than others. Right now, I'm in a lazy cooking mood, so Gobble is the service I chose. Garlic is minced, celery and even onions are chopped. There's not much to do! I may switch to Blue Apron, which I have used before. They have even better meals, albeit longer prep time.

From Nancy Shoerke

Recently I came across a documentary on PBS (New York's channel) titled "Anne Morgan's War." It is part of the PBS celebration of Women's History Month. It had already started when I began to watch. I wanted to see it from the beginning and knew my husband would be interested because he enjoys history films, especially with archival film. We were able to stream it on PBS Passport. It's quite a remarkable story. (See listing on p. 5)

Helping Others

We hope that you are all coping as well as possible in these extraordinary circumstances. Here are some ways we can help others:

- Help local business owners by ordering curbside pickup from local restaurants and markets including Allegro, Bringing You Vermont, Elm Street Market, Madison's Brewery, Henry's and more. Just call ahead to order and get further directions.
- Call or text neighbors and friends, both those who are alone or those who you just want to spend time with.
- Offer to pick up groceries or prescriptions for neighbors.
- Support AAUW's Policy and Legal Advocacy Programs. (page 2).

Call for Member Submissions

We'd like to continue sharing ideas about what we're reading, watching, and listening to—as well as other ways that we are passing our time. Book suggestions and photos with commentary are especially welcome.

If you'd like to add your suggestions to the May newsletter, please send an email to aaubennvt@gmail.com by April 20.



A Pop-Up Online Book Group

We're launching an Online Book Group!

The book for April is *Journal of the Plague Year* by Daniel Defoe. Written in 1772, this novel is surprisingly relevant today. In *A Journal*, the narrator leads readers through the streets and alleyways of 1665 London beset with a pandemic more horrifying than the one we are facing today.

The novel is available free on Kindle. It can also be downloaded free in various formats from Project Gutenberg, a collection of public domain books: <http://www.gutenberg.org>. Choose among free epub and Kindle eBooks; download them or read them online. The paperback version is \$5.00 from the Northshire Book Store.

Would you like to join us? Do you have questions? Send an email to aauwbennvt@gmail.com.

We'll write to all who respond and try to find a date that works for all of us. Here is a [tutorial on joining a meeting](#) from the Zoom Help Center that will help you get started.

Suggested Readings

"What Social Distancing Looked Like During the Year of the Plague" by Annalee Newitz, New York Times, March 29, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/29/opinion/covid-plague-samuel-pepys.html>

"This Too Will Pass: What Defoe's Plague Journal Can Still Teach Us" by John Mitchinson, March 30, 2020

<https://bylinetimes.com/2020/03/30/the-upside-down-this-too-shall-pass-what-defoes-plague-journal-can-still-teach-us/>



Credit: *New York Times*

From Kathy Wagenknecht: "This poem seems particularly apt in these "Stay-at-Home Times":

Things to Do in the Belly of the Whale

by Dan Albergotti (2008)

Measure the walls. Count the ribs. Notch the long days.
Look up for blue sky through the spout. Make small fires
with the broken hulls of fishing boats. Practice smoke signals.
Call old friends, and listen for echoes of distant voices.
Organize your calendar. Dream of the beach. Look each way
for the dim glow of light. Work on your reports. Review
each of your life's ten million choices. Endure moments
of self-loathing. Find the evidence of those before you.
Destroy it. Try to be very quiet, and listen for the sound
of gears and moving water. Listen for the sound of your heart.
Be thankful that you are here, swallowed with all hope,
where you can rest and wait. Be nostalgic. Think of all
the things you did and could have done. Remember
treading water in the center of the still night sea, your toes
pointing again and again down, down into the black depth.

Stay Home. Save Lives.

LISTEN

Bedtime with Bach—The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra has responded to the COVID-19 crisis with the creation of a new video performance series: Bedtime with Bach. They hope that these bedtime performances can help soothe audiences during a stressful time.

<https://www.arkansassymphony.org/bedtime>

Idagio —The leading audio streaming company has made the entire catalog of classical music available free of charge: <https://app.idagio.com/discover>

Audible— For as long as schools are closed, Audible is making a collection of stories free for children (and adults) to listen to, including *Anne of Green Gables*, *Frankenstein*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *Indian Fairy Tales*, and *Japanese Fairy Tales*. Audible's expert readers bring books alive. All stories are free to stream on your desktop, laptop, phone or tablet. <http://stories.audible.com>

WATCH

Occupied (Norw.) (Netflix)

A near-future geopolitical thriller by best-selling crime writer Jo Nesbo. This series treats the climate crisis seriously.

Modern Love (Netflix)

An anthology of 30 minute episodes based on a weekly column in the Style Section of the New York times in which guest writers tell a personal tale of love.

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (Amazon)

An upper west side housewife stops facilitating her husband's failing career as a standup comic (after learning about his affair) and starts one of her own, as she navigates life as both a divorcee and a standup semi-professional comic.

Anne Morgan's War (PBS)

This series chronicles how American heiress Anne Morgan poured both her own fortune and the fruits of intense fundraising into rebuilding Picardy, a region in northern France which had been devastated by the Great War.

WATCH (cont'd)

Nightly Met Opera Streams—Each day, a different encore presentation from the company's Live in HD series is available for free streaming on the [Met Website](#). Each performance is available for a period of 23 hours, from 7:30 p.m. EDT until 6:30 p.m. the following day.

Broadway HD — You can watch Broadway musicals and plays online during the coronavirus outbreak: [BroadwayHD](#). The platform has over 300 titles to choose from and gives first-time users a 7-day trial.

Mini-Broadway Shows — The Actors Fund is producing free, mini-Broadway shows at 2pm and 8pm on their own YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcLevqLUq4hzVxLn3b_ubNw

EXPERIENCE

Oldcastle Theatre — Take part in a "Guess That Tune and Guess That Play!" contest on its [Facebook Page](#). After watching a video posted on the page, participants are asked to correctly identify the name of the song and show or the name of the play.

Bennington Museum — Behind the scenes tours into the museum's extensive collection on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/benningtonmuseum/>

Virtual Museum Tours—Visit an array of museums, such as the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, the British Museum in London, and the National Museum of Art in Washington, DC. Click on the [The CNN Style Page](#) to find a long list of museums.

CAPA Program at Bennington College—Take part in Susan Sgorbati and Brian Champion's six-week course (via Zoom) on "Participation in a Democracy: What Can I Do to Make a Difference?" The course starts on April 13th and is open to the public. More information to follow.

Happy Spring!

By Gudrun Hutchins

For many enthusiastic gardeners, early spring is a time of watching and waiting for the beauty and riches that will start to arrive during the next weeks and months. However, there was a lot of activity in March 2020. Below are some of my gems.



Colorful patches of crocus are one of the early signs that spring is on the way. Have you looked at the blossoms closely? The cultivar on the left is the showiest and the detail in the veining is extraordinary. Its purple forbear (center) also shows veining but of much less contrast. And the yellow crocus wins the survivor award. This photo was taken after they had bloomed for 2 weeks and had survived two snow storms and pouring rain. They are very light sensitive and close up tightly whenever the sun get weaker (even in temporary shade).



Clint hung feeders so that I can watch the birds from the kitchen window while having a cup of tea. Male finches are molting and turning bright yellow while becoming more competitive. Downy woodpeckers attack the block of suet.



The squirrels are the clean-up crew for all the seeds that the birds drop. This year we even have a black squirrel. Yes, those are daffodils; they opened last Wednesday. The big concrete doorstep and the dryer vent help to warm the soil in that area.

Meanwhile the first oriental lilies are pushing their buds out of the ground. I will need to cover them with old bedsheets and inverted buckets whenever nights turn cold.