

Bennington Branch, AAUW Special Board Meeting

November 13, 2020 by Zoom

Notes

Present: Mary Brady, Claudia Dalton, Margaret Howland, Gudrun Hutchins, Jennifer Kern, Suzanne Kirkpatrick, Julie Mackaman, Norma McShane, Sheila Mullineaux, Judy Murphy, Dawn Rodrigues, Kathy Wagenknecht

Call to Order

President Wagenknecht called the special meeting of the Board, combined with the Program Committee for the purpose of discussing 2021 programs, at 10:10 am.

Theme: Inclusivity and Diversity

We want to explore the theme of inclusivity and diversity, selected by national AAUW for 2021, in our branch programs in the coming year. Thematic programs will be designed to help us and our community talk candidly about such topics as privilege, discrimination and learning how to become anti-racist. Art offers a way to invite people into discussions that might otherwise be uncomfortable. The range of potential topics is great. While AAUW is about girls and women, we're also interested in gender's intersectionality with race, caste, sex and sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, etc.

The theme need not dictate the entire year's programming: a year's worth of programs should also include fun and social events. Theme-related programs might be presented periodically, with monthly continuity provided through the newsletter. Nota bene: this theme could become an ongoing annual series, as the Middle East (non-Western) guest lecture series did.

Programs Discussion

Guest Speakers

- Guest speakers can be invited to address particular topics within the theme, perhaps serving as an introduction for the whole branch of a topic to be considered in more detail in a book selected and discussed by the book group.
- Bennington and Williams Colleges have diversity programs and might be a good source for guest speakers.
- Each fall Williams College's diversity program chooses a "Williams Reads" book for incoming students to read and discuss, supplemented by free public programs throughout the year include talks by the author, panel discussions, films, etc. Perhaps our branch could read the book selected for Fall 2021 and attend the public programs (as a Pop-up?).

Book Group

- Book selections may focus on different discriminated groups, including doubly marginalized communities (e.g., Black and disabled).
- See guest speakers, above, re: lectures on the book topic prior to the book group meeting, so as to include branch members who may be interested in the topic and speaker but not in reading the entire book.

Films

- Amazon Prime appears to have a platform for groups to watch films together. We could host screenings of films that address some aspect of our theme, followed by discussion, perhaps in breakout groups.

Plays: Read-Around

- Working with theater and radio artist Ruth Giordano of Williamstown, we could host a branch Read-Around of a play related to our theme. (This idea morphed into a proposal for an AAUW holiday party featuring a Read-Aloud of *A Christmas Carol*, as abridged by Charles Dickens himself. Julie, Kathy and Dawn followed up and confirmed with Ruth, setting the holiday party date for December 5.)

Newsletter

- Comics on the theme to run in the newsletter (monthly or periodic), and a logo to identify theme-related programs on the newsletter calendar. (Julie has contacted comics artist and graphic novelist Anna Moriarty-Lev of Williamstown.)
- Guest columns (monthly or periodic), "Pick a Branch," that describe selected programs of other branches — with an eye toward, but not limited to, diversity programs.
- Guest columns (monthly or periodic) that pick up on some aspect of national AAUW programs (e.g., webinars, with links to AAUW features and services).
- The idea of guest columns is to give branch members a broader view of what AAUW does and looks like in other regions, and promote the value of national AAUW.

Virtual Tours

- A guided online tour, *A Feminist Walk Through Harlem*. (Judy has confirmed with Leigh Hallingby)
- We could consider other tours, e.g., museums.

Scribble Sisters

- While Scribble Sisters were not mentioned specifically in terms of thematic programs, the theme offers a subject that its members may want to write about and submit to the newsletter.
- In a separate vein, Kathy and Suzanne will also ask interested Scribble to write personal stories about holiday traditions in their families for the December newsletter.

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Dues

The national dues will be progressively increased across the next three (?) years. We discussed raising the \$10 fee of non-degree community members, with suggestions ranging from a total of \$20-\$25 to \$30-\$35 (or half the national dues). This needs input from Beth Hardesty.

Membership Outreach

- We discussed following up with non-member attendees of the Park-McCullough House movie premiere and other public events (where we've captured email addresses) by sending them the newsletter and adding them to the mail list. There was some unresolved concern about personal information in the newsletter, e.g., names, addresses, contact info. (Kathy)
- Membership brochure describing benefits and programs needs to be updated. (Gudrun, Claudia)

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mackaman
Board Secretary