

AAUW Annual Report 2020-2021
Mothers Project
May 2021

AAUW has been the major supporter for the Mothers Project since 2013. The Mothers Project started as a small project to provide education and support for low income mothers in Poughkeepsie, and has developed into a multi-program, community volunteer organization. AAUW has been instrumental in our multi-program development, and now continues to provide the main support for the Mothers Project Women's Health Packages program. This Annual Report will describe the Mothers Project Women's Health Packages program, as well as a new project to collect baby blankets and diapers for our mothers in Poughkeepsie. At the end of this report is a short list of Poughkeepsie Mothers Project programs that are now supported by other community partners in Poughkeepsie.

Mothers Project Women's Health Packages program

The Women's Health Packages program has been providing 25-50 packages per month to low income women in Poughkeepsie relating to monthly women's health themes. These packages contain items relating to the monthly theme as well as health information and information on community resources.

The program is a great success, with a lot of positive feedback from our new mothers. Since last July, we have made nine different types of health packages. The packages all focus on a unique health topic, and we fill it with advice and items relating to that topic. We also add a cooking utensil and spice that corresponds with a healthy, WIC-friendly recipe from our on-line WIC-friendly cookbook.

Our topics this year have covered healthy sleep, spending time in nature, winter health, holiday stress management, parenting resources, healthy nutrition, reading for adult and child education, contraception and family planning, and healthy relationships. The up-coming packages include information and items to educate and encourage healthy goal-setting and financial planning, exercise for health, and creativity for health in the next few months. These health packages have been given out at our Women's Health tables at the two Sun River Health centers, and by our AmeriCorps volunteers who give them directly to the patient during their prenatal and postpartum appointments at the health centers.

Before the epidemic, the health packages were being assembled by the mothers and volunteers participating in our monthly mothers support group, and distributed to mothers through multiple community organizations, including Sun River Health, WIC, Healthy Families, and

Family Services. All of these organizations have been meeting only virtually for the past year, except Sun River Health, so the packages have been assembled and distributed there. We had also arranged our first AAUW monthly afternoon meeting to bring AAUW members together to assemble the monthly packages, but that has been on hold as well.

Baby Blanket and Diaper Drive

The COVID epidemic has hit mothers the hardest of anyone, both personally and financially. Low-income mothers in particular have been struggling with child-care, employment lay-offs, and the ability to provide basic necessities for their children. In response to this need, we have an up-coming baby blanket and diaper drive, that will be organized and distributed through our Americorps volunteers at Sun River Health, and details of which will be in the AAUW June newsletter.

Expressive Art Program

The Expressive Art Program was able to provide some virtual art programs for our mothers during the pandemic, but is currently on hold until it is possible to meet again in person.

Vassar College Student Interns

The Mothers Project has had the privilege of working with Vassar College students for over five years. AAUW has an arrangement with Vassar College, offering free membership to young women who are interested in joining. The arrangement has been of great benefit to the Mothers Project, and is an excellent way to introduce these college students to AAUW.

We have worked with students from the Vassar College Office of Community Engaged Learning, the Public Health Intensive class, the Introduction to Grant-Writing class, and the Summer Community Fellows Program. This year we have had four part-time students working on projects for us including a peer-educator program, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy assessment, and education on health effects of environmental chemicals. We have two students who have received full-time grants to continue work on these projects through the summer.

Involving more AAUW members in the Mothers Project

A new monthly meeting for AAUW members had been planned, once a month on a Thursday afternoon, at the Poughkeepsie United Methodist Church on New Hackensack Rd., for AAUW volunteers to assemble these packages, however the COVID epidemic has put that on hold. We

are looking forward to starting this monthly meeting for AAUW members as soon as group meeting restrictions are lifted.

Poughkeepsie Mothers Project

List of programs supported by AAUW, as well as other community partners

- Monthly new mothers support group at the Family Partnership focused on creative arts and stress management
- Women's Health Packages program
- Mothers Project quilt project
- Group prenatal care/postpartum education
- Peer educator training
- Peer educator support for new mothers at group and individual appointments
- Accessible prenatal phone line
- Doula services
- Community connections including Healthy Families, Family Services, DOH visiting nurses
- Educational speakers at prenatal/postpartum groups and monthly support groups
- Short documentary film on the Poughkeepsie Mothers Project
- College interns assisting with group programs and patient education
- Community partner in a Vassar College project on Social Determinants of Health
- Community partner in a Vassar College class on grant writing
- Community Partner in Vassar College Office of Community Engaged Learning
- Vassar College project on Food/Nutrition Insecurity

Submitted by Kay Bishop, Mothers Project Chair

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