

# DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION

## Annual Report 2020 to 2021

Though the active membership on this committee dropped substantially this year, those who remained were active in planning activities and providing opportunities for members to get involved in community service, discuss related issues of the day and present ideas that enlighten and inform.

The committee began our zoom meetings with inviting our membership to join our six-session discussion of book "The Sum of Us" by Heather McGhee. Thirty participants were led through conversations about the truths this author spoke concerning the influence of "zero-sum" thinking on the nature of our society.

The second discussion group embraced by the DEI discussion group was "Huddle", by Brooke Baldwin, a read that reminds us of the indomitable power women can wield when they work together in a common cause. The discussion group was much smaller, but much more intense as we related the successes of women groups lauded in this book. All of us highly recommend that every AAUW woman recognize the value of supporting and lifting each other up in the face of modern-day sexism. The book is a celebration of the huddle that is the AAUW Poughkeepsie Branch.

The committee members shared virtual opportunities to participate in webinars both from community organizations and AAUW State and AAUW National. Members created a network of sharing educational opportunities around DEI topics by forwarding email connections.

Each committee meeting begins with a brief awareness of the issues that confront believers in diversity, equity and inclusion as we view a brief video designed to inspire, entertain and highlight some aspect of our committee work. Often, they remind us or clarify our purpose. The meetings encourage reflection and end with a topic to further educate ourselves.

The committee has entertained the idea of several new initiatives and have supported communitive initiatives. The committee supports the community's DAY ONE program to which several members have donated crafts and connected with the organizers. We await the opportunity to do more with this partnership.

A project that we are currently working on is a pen pal connection with incarcerated women. The committee is looking for members who might be interested in periodically writing a note to encourage these women.

We continue to be concerned about the lack of diversity in our branch. At every meeting, we discuss ways to make our membership look more like our communities. We have come up with two ideas. First, we must determine to show up to community events that support the mission of this committee. Visible involvement in community activities will demonstrate our resolve to lend our talents, gifts and time to causes of concern to the community.

The committee is also brainstorming to create an event which will be an educational experience around issues of diversity, equity and/or inclusion. At this point, the event would involve workshops on relevant topics. The exact audience (exclusively AAUW or open to community) is still in discussion. The group is looking to put this together some time in the fall.

The full committee meetings will continue to be on the fourth Thursday in the month and will be virtual until further notice.

Sincerely submitted,

Gwen Higgins