

President's 2021-2022 Annual Report

Despite the continuing pandemic, the Poughkeepsie Branch remained vital and active during the 2021-2022 membership year. As an organization that relies solely on volunteers to make anything and everything happen and thrives on the strength of its membership, this vitality would not have been possible without each of you and the dedication that you have shown these last few years.

By the beginning of the program year, our branch had undoubtedly adapted to a new normal. With the board's decision to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's and New York State's recommendations regarding gatherings instead of maintaining its own restrictions, the format used for branch-sponsored activities was generally based on the adaptability of the activity as well as the comfort level of the leader and participants. A number of interest groups and community service initiatives did resume in-person meetings, implementing safety measures as appropriate. Fully appreciating the conveniences that the virtual platform afforded (e.g., no monthly cost for a physical meeting location; board member participation even when out of town; eliminating the need to drive to meetings in the winter months), the board, however, continued to use Zoom for its monthly meetings. Program, Membership, and various committees also leveraged the videoconferencing system throughout the year. It is worth mentioning that we did receive a grant from AAUW-NYS to help defray the cost of the Zoom account.

Notably, at the start of the year, our Treasurer facilitated a review of our financial records. No deficiencies were identified during this evaluation that was completed by Poughkeepsie Branch member Roz Werner. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Roz for her assistance with this task, which is required by our Working Rules.

September also saw the successful execution of a virtual Open House. This delightful Zoom event, spearheaded by our Membership Vice Presidents, was a fun and informative way for new and prospective members to learn about the numerous activities our branch offers. It was also a great way for returning members to re-engage with one another after a summer away. Membership continued to offer other opportunities for member engagement with its monthly BYOLs.

We rounded out the year with an end-of year fund drive, since we were unable to hold an in-person fundraising event in 2021. Due to your generosity, branch donations exceeded \$4,000.

While there was no District IV or state conferences again this year, there were several virtual meetings held at the state level that allowed branches to come together. There was a statewide vote on several state bylaw amendments associated with the new position of president-elect. Seven delegates, appointed by our board to represent our branch, participated in this meeting.

Additionally, in January, AAUW-NYS held a Zoom meeting to discuss AAUW National's Five Star Program. State president, Janice Brown, strongly encouraged local branches to work towards

achieving one or more stars as part of this program, with the ultimate goal of New York becoming a Five-Star State. Following this meeting, the Poughkeepsie Branch board put together an exploratory committee to see if we were on the path to attaining the branch-level recognition. Since national intends for this to be a rolling program, recommencing on July 1st, we may resume evaluating our five-star eligibility next year, once the new board is in-place.

It is worth noting that as part of this five-star initiative, we did co-sponsor Rockland County AAUW Branch's annual Diversity Brunch in February. Thank you to Rockland Branch member Suzanne Young-Mercer for suggesting this collaboration.

Also of note this year was the successful return of the Woman of the Year event. While there was uncertainty as to whether members would attend due to the pandemic, these concerns were allayed with an impressive number of registrants. The committee organized an enjoyable, well-attended afternoon to honor Jody Miller, a remarkable member of our community.

The year also saw several new projects related to branch operations come to fruition. These included transitions from printed and mailed copies of the Membership Booklet and Membership Renewal Form to web-based and/or electronic formats.

Admittedly, I cannot do justice to all the work that was done this year with my recap here. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to review the annual reports submitted by branch leaders. They are available on our website and better capture the many accomplishments.

Finally, at the time of my writing this, we are looking forward to our in-person Annual Meeting on June 9th at the Poughkeepsie Grand. We will use this time of "coming together" to celebrate membership longevities, honor members, and hear from our Dutchess County Poet Laureate, Dr. Lucia Chercui. Thank you to the committee (Jackie Goffe-McNish, Barbara Hespenheide, Margaret Nijhuis, Kay Saderholm, Barbara VanItallie, and Sheila Zweifler) for helping to plan this end-of-year event.

So, as I end my term as president, I would like to thank the board, including appointed and off-board members; interest group and initiative leaders; and the many members who have worked tirelessly to support our branch and the mission of the AAUW. Stay safe and see you in the fall!

Respectfully submitted,

Monique Jones
Poughkeepsie Branch AAUW President
May 2022