

President's 2023-2024 Annual Report

I am so proud to have served as your President during the second year of my term (2022-2024). The vibrancy of this organization and the dedication of so many of its members continues to impress me even as I complete this term of office. For these reasons, among others, I have accepted the nomination as President for a second two-year term. The vote will take place at our Annual Meeting on June 13, 2024.

Using Zoom, I presided over nine Board meetings this year, exceeding the Working Rules requirement of seven. Board members attended meetings, gave reports, and worked collaboratively to further the business of our Branch. They are a dedicated group of hard workers with whom I am proud to serve.

I also attended New York Presidents' meetings, AAUW national webinars, and NGO CSW workshops through the UN in March via Zoom. Our national organization held an online vote regarding a major change to the Bylaws: eliminating the education requirement for membership in AAUW and its affiliates. Flyers and reminders were sent to our members alerting them to the vote and what it involved.

In October we had a fund raiser entitled "Women and Wine" conducted by Arnold Serotsky, my husband. Arnie presented information about women wine makers from hundreds of years ago to the present and accompanied his powerpoint presentation with wines from the vineyards of some of the more contemporary wine makers. It was a successful event.

In November, we held our first required business meeting at our Program meeting of that month. The Treasurer gave her report and the Nominating Committee was voted on and accepted.

In April we honored Cara Mia Bacchiochi, the Founder of Hope on a Mission, Inc. at our annual "Woman of the Year" luncheon. Cara Mia's work was recognized by all of us who attended, and we look forward to providing necessary items to her organization as needed.

In the Fall the Board approved a contract with Ingrid Kulick of Forward Solutions, Inc., to work as a consultant with a committee to do a comprehensive review of our Strategic Plan. The committee consisted of members Cindy Emmer, Betty Harrel, Maria DeWald, Diane Jablonski, Pat Luczai, and me. In February we provided Ingrid with the names of 21 people – current members, former members, and community people with whom we have worked. Ingrid collated the results of her interviews with 20 of those people and presented her findings to an expanded committee in a retreat setting at Vineyard Commons on April 6, 2024. The expanded committee had Gwen Higgins, Jackie Vierno, Barbara Hespenheide, and Beth DeFiglio as added members. We met again with Ingrid at my home on May 8, 2024, to begin the work of writing a revised edition of

our Strategic Plan. We are contracted with Ingrid through the end of June and will continue to do the work needed to complete the project. I am grateful to the committee and to those who gave extra time and energy to this endeavor.

I was invited to present at the Poughkeepsie-Arlington Rotary monthly luncheon in February, giving that group a comprehensive overview of our Branch, its mission, and especially the important work of its community service initiatives.

Once again, I chaired the Annual Meeting Planning Committee comprised of Margaret Nijhuis, Barbara VanItallie, Jackie Goffe McNish, Kay Saderholm, Barbara Hespenheide, Michelle Miller, and me. We began meeting in January of 2024 and completed our tasks in time for the June 13, 2024 meeting that was held at Coppola's Ristorante in Hyde Park. This is our second required business meeting where we also honor our members who have given outstanding service, our Cornerstone awardee, our named fund awardees, our Emerging Leader, and our long-term members. Our new officers were installed, and we were entertained by County Players Readers Theater. This annual event is a wonderful opportunity to come together and socialize with each other and recognize the efforts of so many of our dedicated members.

On June 28 and 29, 2024, the New York State Annual Meeting was held in person here in Poughkeepsie at the Doubletree Hotel. We are allowed six voting delegates who voted on the amendments and other issues at the Saturday morning business meeting that was also held via Zoom. Friday evening was a social event at which some of us attended. Carol Griffith completes her term as President, and Suzanne Young-Mercer begins her two-year term.

Finally, I am excited to be a part of our Centennial Committee, chaired by Barbara Durniak and Cyd Averill. Our branch was founded in 1925, and this committee has already begun work researching our archives at the Adriaance Library and planning events and opportunities for all of us to celebrate this significant milestone.

This is such an exciting time to be a part of Poughkeepsie AAUW. I really believe that we are at a significant moment in our organization. We will reflect on the past 100 years, and we will plan and envision our next 100 years. It is such a wonderful time to be a member of this branch, and I hope you will find ways to participate in our endeavors.

Respectfully submitted,
Celia Serotsky
She/her
President Poughkeepsie AAUW
May 2024