

**Coming in December:**

**An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence**

AI represents a remarkable leap forward in human innovation, allowing machines to mimic human intelligence and to perform tasks that were once the sole domain of our minds. From voice assistants, to self-driving cars, to writing, to creating art works and to producing videos, AI is already becoming an integral part of our daily lives, transforming industries and reshaping the way we interact with technology and with other people.



Following a short presentation on AI development history, on its current status and on its most

common applications, we will discuss some of AI's impact on the economy and on our society. As we delve deeper into the advanced capabilities of AI and of its applications, it is essential for us to become aware of some moral and ethical considerations: the reshaping of many jobs, the spread of fake information, the loss of privacy, and the need for wise regulation of AI.



**The 2024 U.S. election will have a major impact on gender equity in education, women's economic security, and reproductive and civil rights. The good news?**

**When women vote, we change the conversation.**

**Last Day for Voter Registration: October 26, 2024**

**Early voting: Oct 26-Nov 3**

Check NY State Board of Elections for polling places  
<https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>

**MEXICO AND DUTCHESS COUNTY:  
WE ARE ONE HABITAT**



**Speaker:**

**Maureen Brennan Lashlee,**  
CEO, Habitat for Humanity,  
Dutchess County

**Thurs., November 14, 2024  
7:00 PM**

**Location:**

Freedom Plains United Presbyterian  
Church, 1168 State Route 55,  
Lagrangeville, NY

Creating community, personal security and generational wealth through home ownership is the mission of **Habitat for Humanity International**.

It may look different in the 70 countries we build in, but it is all part of the same goal. Tonight's presentation will look at both local and international need and the key ways we can address both. An often-heard phrase at Habitat: "You don't need a hammer to build a home".

**Maureen Brennan Lashlee, CEO:**  
With over 40 years of experience in not-for-profit leadership, her vision of a stronger community through affordable housing is making this vision a possibility here in Dutchess County. She advocates locally and nationally and implements programs that serve people and neighborhoods most in need.



The organization is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally and worldwide through constructing, rehabilitating and preserving

homes; by advocating for fair and just housing policies; and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. Habitat for Humanity was founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a simple, durable place to live in dignity and safety, and that decent shelter in decent communities should be a matter of conscience and action for all.

## NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Online Calendar: <https://poughkeepsie-ny.aauw.net>

Calendar listing: Philippa Goodman,  
[communications.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:communications.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

To contact interest groups: [interest.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:interest.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

- 1 Movie Mavens:** *details TBD*  
Coordinator: Linnea Mason
- 4 Word Games:** *1:30 - 4:00 pm*  
Coordinator: Sharon Fleury
- 5 Election Day -VOTE**
- 5 World Travelers:** *7-9 pm on Zoom and live*  
Details TBD  
Coordinator: Bonnie Auchincloss
- 6 Gourmet: Out & About:** *6:00 pm*  
Savona's, 1 Collegeview Ave, Poughkeepsie, 12603  
Coordinator: Michelle Miller
- 7 Intermediate Bridge Instruction:** *1:00 - 2:00 pm on Zoom*  
Coordinator: Cathy Kinn
- 7 Board Meeting:** *7:00 pm on Zoom*
- 11 All those books...:** *2:30 pm*  
*Beloved*, by Toni Morrison  
Presenter: Ruth Kava  
Coordinator: Carol Loizides
- 12 Reely Together:** *2:00 pm on Zoom*  
Discussion of the film **After Yang**  
Coordinator: Jackie Vierno
- 14 Monthly Program:** *7:00*
- 16 Days for Girls Poughkeepsie NY Team**  
Work session: *1:30-4:30 pm*  
Zion Church Parish Hall,  
12 Satterlee Place, Wappingers Falls , NY  
Coordinators: Judy Longacre and Sabashnee Govender
- 18 Manderley Literary Society:** *4:30 pm*  
Details TBD  
Coordinator: Shelly Friedman
- 19 Cuisine:** *Details TBD*  
Coordinators: Barbara Van Itallie
- 20 Bridge I:** *1:00 - 4:00 pm*  
Coordinator: Susan Fink
- 21 Aventures en Soleil:** *2:30 pm*  
Planning Meeting  
Coordinator: Terry Jackrel
- 22 Art on the Go:** *10:00 am*  
Details TBD  
Coordinator: Mary Coiteux
- 25 Craft 'n' Create:** *1:30 pm*  
Contact coordinators for project & location  
Coordinators: Pat Luczai and Mary Ann Williams
- 27 Mah Jongg:** *Noon - 4:00 pm*  
Lunch from 12-1. Play from 1 to 3:30/4:00 pm  
TGI Fridays Restaurant in the Poughkeepsie Plaza  
Contact: Blanche Bergman
- 28 THANKSGIVING**

### Dec 3: Contemporary Literature: 2:00 pm

*(This is the November meeting, which would have been held Thanksgiving week)*

*Absolution* by Alice McDermott

Hostess: Pat Luczai

Coordinator: Linda Freisitzer

**Bridge II:** No meeting in Nov.

**Poetry & Play Readings:** No meetings in Nov. & Dec.

**Pedal Pushers:** See you in the Spring!



### POUGHKEEPSIE BRANCH OFFICERS 2023-2024

President	Celia Serotsky
Program Co-VPs	Kay Saderholm Gail Sisti
Membership VP	Bonnie Auchincloss
Development VP	Betty Harrel
Communications VP	Pat Luczai
Secretary	Cindy Emmer
Treasurer	Diane Jablonski
Membership Treasurer	Kathy Friedman

President: [president.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:president.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

Board members: [board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

Association: [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org) NY State: [www.aauw-nys.org](http://www.aauw-nys.org)

Poughkeepsie Branch: <https://poughkeepsie-ny.aauw.net>

**MISSION:** To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

**VISION:** Equity for all.

**VALUES:** Nonpartisan. Fact-based. Inclusive. Intersectional. Empowering.

AAUW Poughkeepsie values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

THE **BRANCH** is published ten times a year, September through June, by the Poughkeepsie Branch of the AAUW, Inc. Submit articles by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication. Cyd Averill, editor.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Celia Serotsky [president.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:president.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

At our October Board meeting I said to the members, “The positive thing about our Branch is that we are so active. The negative thing about our Branch is that we are so active.” On October 9<sup>th</sup> I attended the first Presidents Meeting of branch leaders throughout the state held by Suzanne Young-Mercer, the current President of AAUW New York. The intention of that meeting was to let the leadership of the state affiliate know what we as branch leaders need from them. However, during that discussion a few presidents talked about the difficulties they are having keeping their branch functioning. Although we are the largest branch in the state, we share some of those concerns.

It is no secret that the average age of AAUW members is well into the upper numbers. We all struggle to attract younger members. Our revised Strategic Plan has several goals and objectives designed to tackle this issue. Implementing those objectives is only getting started, but in the meantime, several of our leaders are making inroads with students at Marist College. We'll keep you posted about that.

We have 16 Interest Groups and 5 Community Service Initiatives. The Interest Groups serve our personal and social needs and are generally well attended. The coordinators of those groups keep their members well informed of activities and the members suggest and help plan those activities.

Our Initiatives are very healthy with consistent attendance and support. *Days for Girls* continues to receive praise from the international organization complimenting not only the quality of their work, but also the quantity of items our group has provided girls in countries where lack of sanitary supplies prevents the young women from attending school—losing as many as five days of education a month. The members of *Leading to Reading* meet several times over a two month period to organize and package books that are given to every family of a newborn at Vassar Hospital and to various organizations where children can come and choose books to take home. *Court Watch* continues to provide monitoring of court proceedings involving domestic abuse cases, collecting data, and making recommendations, if needed. *Extending Girls Horizons* meets regularly with Girl Scout troops and creates programs that enable the girls to work towards earning merit badges. *Math Buddies* provides support for students struggling with mathematics at the elementary level. The coordinator of the group works hard to attract members and match them with a teacher. Despite these challenges, this initiative will continue for as long as it is feasible.

Other branches in New York State mainly contend with is dwindling membership and therefore, lack of support. Leadership positions go unfilled, and the same women continue to take on these roles even though they have been the ones to volunteer for them for a long time. We have the same issue in our branch. As you have read in the paragraph above, we are very actively providing both personal and social

opportunities for our members as well as supporting our mission statement of providing equity for women and girls through our Initiatives.

We need your help, both as volunteers for leadership positions and for small, individual tasks. There are many little jobs that would support the work we do and would not take up a great deal of your time. At Open House in September you probably saw the table where you could sign up for “Additional Opportunities.” We have a few names on the list, but we would love more. I plan to bring that sign-up sheet to our Program meetings so that you will have a chance to consider writing your name on the list. We will not ask for a large chunk of your time or effort – just a little - that would help us a great deal to fulfill our mission.

## MEMBERSHIP COUNTS

Bonnie Auchincloss and Linda Eagleton  
[membership.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:membership.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

If you have not yet renewed your membership this year, you likely received an email reminder from Margaret Nijhuis, and possibly a phone call from someone on the Membership committee. If you have not renewed by the first week in November, you will not be listed in the directory and will not be eligible to participate in interest groups or community initiatives. **If you accidentally missed the deadline** and want to continue your membership, please call me, Bonnie Auchincloss, ASAP at 845-625-4925.

Our monthly membership meeting for October was well attended and provided information about **Proposition 1**. Be sure to check the *Branch*, our monthly newsletter, for information about future meeting topics. Remember, our monthly programs are open to members and non-members, so bring a friend.

### New Member Glimpses:

New member **Laura Ramsey Russell** has lived in the Hudson Valley since 1982. She is a choral conductor, singer, pianist, and organist who has taught at Poughkeepsie Day School, Marist College, and Dutchess Community College. From 2001 to 2022, Laura directed the choir at Christ Episcopal Church in Poughkeepsie. She was co-founder (in 2000) and conductor for many years of the Hudson Valley BachFest. Her blended family includes four adult children and four grandchildren. Widowed in 2015, Laura lives in the City of Poughkeepsie where she enjoys gardening and hanging out with her two cats.

### November birthdays:

Cyd Averill, Blanche Bergman, Helen Buhler, Susan Fink, Liz Graham, Marcine Humphrey, Maura Kristofik, Judy McGowan, Jewel Ratzlaff, Janet Santoro, Ruth Sheets, Marla Sherman, Kathy Smith, Fran Traver.





## PUBLIC POLICY

Patricia DeLeo [board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

### Don't you think it's time?

On the 2024 New York State ballot will be **Proposition 1**, an amendment to the state constitution guaranteeing equal and civil rights to New York's communities who suffer discrimination. A YES vote supports passage of this amendment. A NO vote will allow continuing discrimination against the defined groups. This topic is located on the back of the ballot.

A federal ERA was proposed in 1923 and despite rewrites, failed to pass every session of Congress since. Thirty-seven states ratified the federal amendment, but time for national action has expired. It is now incumbent on states to protect its citizens and pass ERA's.

### At this time the NY State Constitution only protects us against discrimination because of race and/or religion.

This proposal amends and expands Article 1, Section 11 of the New York Constitution to explicitly **prohibit discrimination based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, age, disability or sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes and reproductive healthcare and autonomy.** These are protections to secure individual rights against changing political tides. They also provide a means to codify meaningful equity-based safeguards in the New York State Constitution for large groups of citizens who do not have those protections, including women.

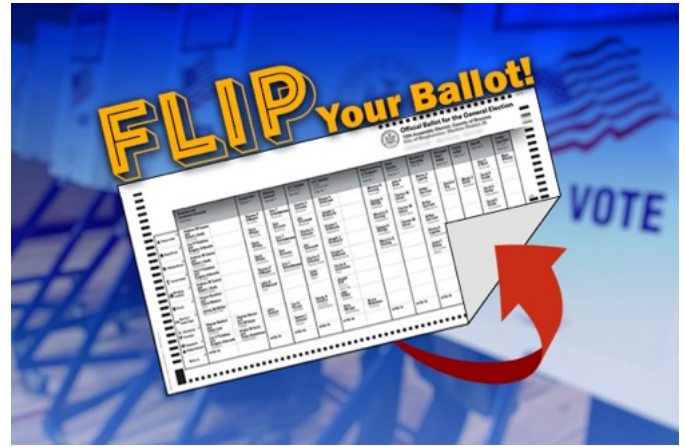
### The proposition as worded.

§ 11. a. No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws of this state or any subdivision thereof. No person shall, because of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, creed [or], religion, or sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive healthcare and autonomy, be subjected to any discrimination in [his or her] their civil rights by any other person or by any firm, corporation, or institution, or by the state or any agency or subdivision of the state, pursuant to law.

b. Nothing in this section shall invalidate or prevent the adoption of any law, regulation, program, or practice that is designed to prevent or dismantle discrimination on the basis of a characteristic listed in this section, nor shall any characteristic listed in this section be interpreted to interfere with, limit, or deny the civil rights of any person based upon any other characteristic identified in this section.

### Organizations in support of Proposition 1 include:

New York Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood, Empire State Acts, PowHer NY, National Institute for Reproductive Health, LWV, NOW, New York Association Of Independent Living, and LatinoJustice/ PRLDEF (Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund).



## Member news: Carol Loizides

Celia Serotsky

We have so many talented members in our Poughkeepsie AAUW Branch, and Carol Loizides is one of them. Carol is a long-time member of our group and is the Coordinator of the Interest group "All Those Books." She is also a very talented artist. Some of her works are being shown at the Hancock Gallery across the street from Cunneen Hackett in the City of Poughkeepsie from September 4 through October 31. The newsletter arrives in your inboxes before the end of the month so, you may still have time to view her paintings.



I visited the Gallery at the opening of Carol's exhibit and had a chance to chat with her. I am not an artist, nor knowledgeable enough about art to write about it. However, I found Carol's paintings to have a vibrancy and movement that held my gaze.

Read more about Carol's background and artistic influences at <https://cunneen-hackett.org/galleries/>

*Date: September 4, 2024 - October 31, 2024*  
*Time: Hancock Gallery Viewing Hours: Monday - Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 (call 845-486-4571 for access) and during events at the VBI Theatre*

## DEVELOPMENT

Betty Harrel [board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)

### Strong Start for Centennial Endowment Fund

Our generous members are once again supporting our efforts. We have already collected **\$2,555** toward our goal. Be sure to send your donation while it's on your mind. Our fund drive will run from October 2024 to November 2025. **We need you!**



### What is the Centennial Endowment Fund for DCC?

As we prepare to celebrate our branch's **100<sup>th</sup> year**, we have an opportunity to act on our mission to promote access to education by establishing a **new DCC endowment**. This significant effort is possible thanks to a generous member who will **match all donations – up to \$20,000**.

A scholarship from these funds would be presented annually to a student entering DCC in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) field. We can request that the funds support a non-traditional woman student.

#### Donate by check or online:

Checks payable to Poughkeepsie Branch AAUW, Inc. can be sent to PO Box 1908, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601. Online donations can be made by clicking on <https://poughkeepsie-ny.aauw.net/about-us/donations>. Click on the **Donate** button and type **DCC endowment** in the *Write a Note* box.

#### Another giving option: IRAs and AAUW

As we near the end of the year, many people who have IRAs must take a required minimum distribution (RMD). If you're in that situation, consider using some funds for a donation to our Centennial Endowment Fund for DCC. Normally distributions are taxable income, but **if donated directly to a qualified charity** they are tax-free. Most companies will mail a check directly to the recipient organization. Use PO Box address, above.

Your donation will help a local student start her college career. Since our scholarships are designated for non-traditional students, we often help a single parent, older student, or someone who has overcome adversity.

## LEADING TO READING

Betty Harrel  
[board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com](mailto:board.aauw.poughkeepsie@gmail.com)



### Mountains of Gifts



Get out your wrapping supplies – it's time for our annual gift wrapping at Hudson River Lodging! Leading to Reading donates a new book for each child living at the center. Families can stay at this temporary shelter for up to two years while a parent takes classes, gets counseling, or completes job training. In addition to our books, we wrap gifts donated to the center or purchased with funds from Holiday Helping Hand.

We will be wrapping on Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 – 11:30. The sessions take place at Hudson River Lodging, 391 Manchester Road (Route 55), LaGrangeville. To sign up for December 4<sup>th</sup>, please contact Flo Mondanaro. For December 11<sup>th</sup>, please contact Judy Linville.

### Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drive

Our Leading to Reading community project will once again receive books donated at the **Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drive**. When you do your holiday shopping between November 1st and December 19th, please consider purchasing a book as a donation. We'll be distributing them during the coming year. Thank you!



## IN MEMORIAM: PATTY CERNIGLIA



Patricia Jean (Patty) Smith Holbrook Cerniglia died peacefully on October 1, 2024, surrounded by her family and friends. Up until the end of her life, Patty maintained her kindness, grace, strength and compassion for others. She will be missed deeply but will continue to live in the hearts and memories of those whose lives she touched.

Patty graduated from Clarkstown High School in 1966 and attended the University of Vermont, where she received a degree in elementary education. Upon graduation from Vermont in 1970, Patty began a long career in teaching, highlighted by 25 years in the Clarkstown School District.

During her career, she mentored several young teachers and developed lasting friendships with many of her colleagues. After her retirement, Patty served as a mentor for student teachers at Marist College from 2005 to 2024. Her student teachers were fortunate to benefit from her insight, love, and compassion as she guided them toward a career in education.

Patty was a long-time member of AAUW, where she played bridge and worked with Leading to Reading. She will certainly be missed by all who knew and worked with her.

*Poughkeepsie AAUW members received an email on Oct 4 with Patty's full obituary; you can also read it here:*  
<https://www.wmgmillerfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Patricia-Patty-J-Cerniglia?obId=33244930>

## October Collection a Success!



Members were asked to donate women's panties for **Hope on a Mission**, the non-profit started by our 2024 Woman of the Year, CaraMia Bacchiochi. The collection was a joint effort of our branch and the Poughkeepsie South Rotary.

In all, we collected **356 pairs of panties, 15 pairs of socks, and \$150** to purchase additional necessities. These items will be distributed on street corners in the City of Poughkeepsie, along with food, clothing, and emotional support. **A BIG thank you** goes to the many who so generously participated!

Rotary   
Poughkeepsie South 7210



## Dutchess Outreach Needs Volunteers

Dutchess Outreach, which provides services to the less fortunate in our community, is in need of volunteers. They need help at The Lunch Box, the Food Pantry, the Children's Clothes Closet and their monthly Food Stand. They will work around your schedule. If you have a few hours, they would really appreciate your help. Check them out at [DutchessOutreach.org](https://DutchessOutreach.org)

### SUPPORTERS OF <sup>THE</sup> BRANCH

Many thanks to our newsletter Patrons (\$25 or more) and Sponsors (\$10 or more). Their annual contributions help defray the expense of publishing <sup>THE</sup> BRANCH and other communication expenses. To add your name, send a check, payable to: "Poughkeepsie Branch AAUW, Inc." to Cyd Averill, editor.

**Patrons:** Ruth Aldrich Gau, Mary Ann Boylan, Sandra Goldberg, Shaileen Kopec, Margaret Nijhuis