

THE MONTHLY MONITOR

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF AAUW ST. CLOUD (MN) AREA



IN THIS ISSUE

NEW MEMBER
WELCOME

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

EIGHTH GRADE
GRADUATION

ST. CLOUD BRANCH
JEDI DIRECTOR

SEEDLINGS SERIES

SCSU'S LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

AAUW MEMBERSHIP
RENEWAL

EVENTS SCHEDULE

Memo from Mahogany

BY MAHOGANY MORRISON, BRANCH PRESIDENT

Happy Summer everyone! It seems like not too long ago we were in the deep throes of winter and longing for spring (only to experience that season in the blink of an eye). Now, here we are almost to the middle of our MN-Summer which always seems to fly by so darned fast! What a whirlwind I've been in since our last communication and I have lots to share! We successfully completed our **1st BIPOC Boundary Water Outdoor Excursion** at the end of May. In early June, we hosted the **2nd Annual St. Cloud North & South Junior High Community 8th Grade Graduation** that was held on the SCSU campus in the Performing Arts Center Auditorium with a standing room only attendance! We then sponsored a group of SCSU AAUW Affiliate University student members participating in the annual **SCSU President's Leadership Program**, under the leadership of SCSU University President, Dr. Robbyn Wacker (more details later in this communication.) What an absolutely empowering and life-changing experience it was to join Dr. Wacker in workshops and intimate conversations regarding **what are important characteristics of a good leader, how to identify and cultivate our individual leadership skills, and what qualities are important in establishing good leadership** (among many other topics).

This trip was even more meaningful, as many of you know, since Dr. Wacker is also a member of our St. Cloud AAUW Branch. So I can assure you that not only were we in “excellent” company, we also enjoyed numerous activities we participated in during our time in Washington, D.C. and left with unforgettable team-building memories and experiences that will never be forgotten.

After returning from D.C., I went to Vegas for a week vacation in the sweltering desert heat! The day I arrived, it was 112* and the temps did not change much during my visit around the 4th of July. **WHY**, you may ask? Because I wanted to see the 4th of July fireworks on the Strip (Caesar’s Palace)! As an added bonus, the **Sphere** at the Venetian Resort, launched their first extraordinary performance on the 4th of July. It literally took your breath away (and not just from the heat!) J Now, I’m back and attempting to get back in the saddle again, as most of you experience when you have traveled and returned from the lake, cabin, vacation, visiting friends and loved ones, and the myriad of other adventures we seem to find during our brief summer months.

As I hit the ground running again, I would like to introduce you to one of my new ideas for the coming year called, the “**Seedlings Series**” of programming (more details later in this communication). We each steward “seeds” which are planted through our daily actions. Thus, when you plant BAD seed – you reap bad crop. Likewise, when you plant GOOD seed – you reap good crop. We can **intentionally** “sow” GOOD seed that can be groomed, fertilized, pruned, and cultivated into yielding “good” crop and a bountiful harvest. **Intentional** programming designed to complement these efforts will include the “**Teach a Girl to Lead**” workshop we will introduce this fall, hosting the **St. Cloud North and South Junior High 8th Grade Community Graduation**, and community partnership and collaborative endeavors we are currently exploring (more details later in this communication).

My goals include continuing to aggressively recruit students and professionals members to join our organization. Our branch membership has grown to 154, of which 42 are student affiliate members!

We are on the **MOVE** and looking forward to continuing to do more and to increase our engagement and visibility.

I love to hear from you and may be reached via cell @ 612 – 644 – 7705 or mmorrison1@stcloudstate.edu.

Welcome, New Members!

- **Veronica De La Cruz Sevilla Rubi**, Student Member, SCSU, College Counseling & Student Development Master's
- **Zoe Larson**, Student Member, SCSU, Psychology Bachelor's, Minor in Ethnic Studies
- **Norha Nguema**, Student Member, SCSU, Social Work Bachelor's, Minor in Human Relations
- **Yasmin Hussein**, Student Member, SCSU, Information Systems Bachelor's
- **Ayeyemi Oluwaselin Yinka**, Student Member, SCSU, Engineering Management Master's



AAUW Ice Cream Social

Content submitted by Jamie Swenson

On July 20, 2023, about 20 AAUW St. Cloud Area members gathered together on the Eastman Hall patio at the St. Cloud State University campus to celebrate with a successful ice cream social. The cheerful servers included Maddy and Maria (pictured bottom left below), two of our New Honorary High School Future Members.

As pictured below, the weather was perfect, the view was amazing, and fun was had by all!

The ice cream social is an annual event, and we look forward to even more members joining us next year!



AAUW 8th Grade Graduation

AAUW St. Cloud Area Hosts 2nd Annual Event for North & South Junior Highs

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

On June 3rd, 2023, AAUW hosted a graduation for 8th grade students from North and South Junior High School in St. Cloud. This community event was held on the SCSU campus in the Performing Arts Center Auditorium. This event was the brain child of both our “new” AAUW Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Director, **Keisha Anderson-King** and **Bianca Blake**, owner and director of the **D Blake Center** (a St. Cloud community youth organization.) AAUW President, Mahogany Morrison, was invited to be the guest speaker at the event which was later followed by a community barbeque in Husky Plaza.

CO-SPONSORS OF THE EVENT INCLUDED ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY, UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA, HIGHER WORKS COLLABORATIVE, FULKNER DOGS, 2MT, MORNING OPTIMIST CLUB, AND YES NETWORK.



More graduation pictures...



Meet St. Cloud's New JEDI Director

J.E.D.I. = Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

Please help me officially welcome our new **J.E.D.I. Director**, Keisha Anderson-King, to our St. Cloud Branch! Keisha and I met during our AAUW TechSavvy Event in February. She works as a School and Community Resource Navigator and Family Advocate for District 742 South/Tech. She also works with the United Way of Central Minnesota and is well connected with community organizations that champion working with students from vulnerable, low-income, marginalized, and under-represented populations. She is the founder of **Keshia's Closet**, a free, volunteer run, supply closet filled with clothing, food, and other essentials located in the United Way of Central Minnesota's Volunteer Action Center available year-round available to all those experiencing financial hardship or crisis in central MN.

*(Pictured from left to right – St. Cloud Branch
President, Mahogany Morrison
Keisha Anderson-King, St. Cloud AAUW, J.E.D.I. Director)*

As if that was not enough to keep her busy, she is also a travel agent and assists those in need of household items and furniture through the “Bridging” program. As a life-long community advocate and activist, she has grown up in the same types of communities she now passionately serves and is always looking for ways to provide a “better” experience for all of who she fondly refers to as, “her kids.”



You will hear more from Keshia as we work together to create and implement programming targeted at addressing systemic financial, economic, educational, racial, and cultural disparities in our community. What we do CAN make a difference. Therefore, it is our duty to **TRY!** I am truly honored and excited to work with someone that has the background, experience, knowledge, and contacts to actually “reach” and “connect” with the various populations she has been working with for decades!

Welcome Keshia!

"Seedlings Series" of Programming

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

As many of you know, by way of my introduction to the membership, I am completing my Doctoral in Higher Education Administration at St. Cloud State University. Education has always been an important family value planted early in our lives by my parents who were both educators who each held multiple Masters Degrees. They always reinforced the notion that **"education was the key to having a better**

quality of life." Not only do I wholeheartedly believe that, but I have now lived long enough to have experienced the negative systemic cultural, financial, economic, mental, emotional, psychological, sociological, and even physical disparities that have plagued communities of color often in correlation with a lack of opportunity. Recognizing that there is truly not a "one-size-fits all" solution to such a polarized, multilayered, and multifaceted pandemic, intentional efforts must be consistently implemented if we are truly invested in not only lasting equitable change within these populations, but to most importantly give these communities "hope for a better and brighter future and quality of life."



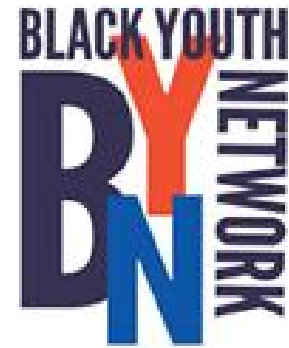
Investment, requires **ACTION!** It cannot be accomplished by standing at a distance looking in. It requires rolling up one's sleeves and being willing to be a part of the process. Thus, the birth of the **"Seedlings Series"** of Programming, which will provide us with opportunities to partner with community partners who are engaged in intentional programs focused on providing educational and recreational activities targeting marginalized underrepresented populations. These partnerships and collaborations will enable us to "plant good seeds" within the lives of the students we will touch, many of who come from broken homes, troubled pasts, and experienced a loss of a loved one during COVID.

One such partnership under current development, is a collaboration between AAUW, United Way of Central Minnesota, D Blake Center, Optimus Morning Club, Optimus Evening Club, and St. Cloud State University. The plan is to provide a ½ day of classroom educational programming on the SCSU campus for students and parents regarding the importance of civic and community engagement (a discussion that is often lacking in communities of color) as well as planting "seeds" through workshop presentations focused on conveying "college can be a reality" for these students of color. There will also be a 2 - day outside classroom and recreational component that will involve a trip to the Wisconsin Dells area where students will participate in 1-day of team building and experiential learning activities and 1-day of recreation at the Noah's Ark Water Park.

"Seedlings Series" of Programming

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

Recently, United Way of Central Minnesota (UWCM) along with four Black-led, youth-serving organizations (D Blake Center, HigherWorks Collaborative, Promise Neighborhood of Central Minnesota and Too Much Talent) working to positively shift outcomes for underserved kids and their caregivers, received a \$246,950 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Summer Enrichment Grant.*



“United Way’s Black Youth Network (BYN), comprised of various local agencies and partners that serve Black youth, played a crucial role in identifying strategies and actions that create systems of support for Black learners. Some of these plans included increased access to summer programming made possible through ESSER funding. They recognize that kids who live at or below the poverty level benefit the most from excellent, out-of-the-classroom experiences. They also recognize that these students may be the ones who are unable to participate because they do not have adequate transportation or cannot afford program fees. In addition, these kids often face food insecurity, especially in the summertime, and would benefit significantly from the basic needs local programs provide.” **See complete story [here](#).**

Partnerships like these, our continued work as a co-sponsor of the Paramount High School Student Art Exhibit, and TechSavvy, are wonderful opportunities to show our support and investment in the future success of our community youth. In addition, our inaugural **“Teach a Girl to Lead,”** 1-day workshop we will launch this fall, will also fall under the newly created “umbrella” of the “Seedling Series,” of AAUW programming. I am excited and look forward to partnering with our community partners to explore additional collaborative opportunities to advance our mission.

**An ESSER grant is federal and state funding that supports initiatives, activities and tools that lessen the negative educational impacts brought on or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

SCSU President's Leadership Program

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

Initiated during COVID as one of the few approved opportunities (at that time) for student engagement and travel, this is the third year that the Multicultural Student Services Center and Center for International Studies have offered this phenomenal leadership program at St. Cloud State. This year, AAUW graciously sponsored (6) SCSU

students – (2 graduate affiliate student members and 4 undergraduate student affiliate members) to participate in this event from June 25th – 28th.



Dr. Robbyn Wacker, SCSU President, held informal breakfast leadership discussions with students as well as leading more formal group sessions where we explored topics ranging from “what characteristics are required to be a good leader?” to “how to navigate difficult conversations as a leader.”

Students interacted with Dr. Wacker during many of our group activities, having further time to for dialogue with her while getting to know her better. We even had a chance to view her “playlist” of songs on her phone, and were surprised to discover she listened to some of the same musical artists many students in our group liked!



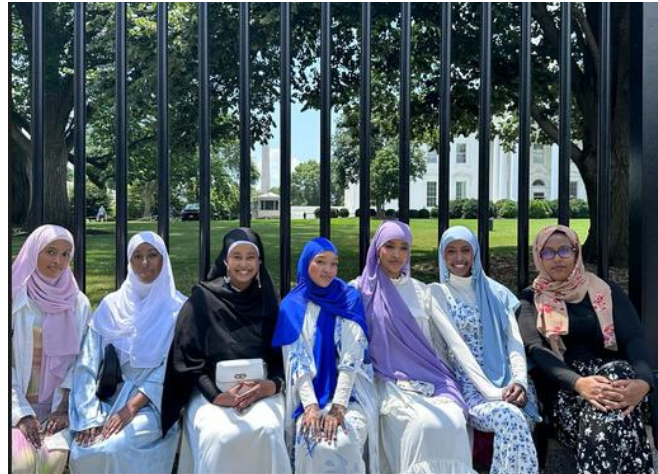
SCSU President's Leadership Program

Submitted by Mahogany Morrison

In fact, imagine our shock when she shared she recently took her niece to the Taylor Swift concert last month at the Xcel Energy Center Arena in St. Paul! **Dr.**

Wacker, a “**Swiftie**??!!” Who’d have “**thunk** it? Right? 😊 We truly had a remarkable time participating in these leadership discussions with

Dr. Wacker where she challenged each of us to reflect deeper upon our own abilities and capacity to lead others. Not only did she teach and share with the group in a transparent and authentic way, but we could each “feel” her genuine passion and concern for our success as both students, and as individuals. As a special, unique person.



This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to travel, connect, and learn from a remarkable leader, and I can’t tell you enough, how transformational being a part of this program has been not only for me, for the other five young ladies sponsored by AAUW, but also for the remaining students who were a part of the DC23 President’s Leadership Program!



Don't Miss Out - Renew Your Membership!

Summer is short and full of fun activities that keep us busy with friends and family! If your membership expired on June 30th, you still have time to renew before the September 12th meeting. Won't you take a few minutes to renew your membership in the St. Cloud Area branch? I know you won't want to miss our kick-off program with John Oxton, Chief of Police for St. Cloud!

Renewing your membership is easy - for fiscal year, 2023-2024 the dues are **\$72 National + \$9 State + \$27 Branch for a total of \$108. You have two options for renewing:**

1. **Pay by check:** Make payment to AAUW St. Cloud. Feel free to use the stamped, address envelope that Pat Obstarczyk sent to you in June. If you misplaced that, then mail the check to:

Pat Obstarczyk, AAUW VP-Membership
6907 Northwood Lane
St. Cloud, MN 56303

OR

2. **Renew on-line by credit card:** Log in at AAUW.org and follow the instructions in the User Guide that Pat sent out in June.

If you have questions or need assistance, feel free to contact Pat Obstarczyk, VP Membership via phone or text at (320) 333-2552 or email at paobstar@yahoo.com.

Thanks for your attention to this matter and we appreciate all that you do to help us meet the challenges today's women!

Upcoming 2023 Events Schedule

- **September:** Our monthly dinner program will feature St. Cloud Police Chief Jeff Oxton who will speak about the Community Outpost (COP House)
- **October:** Save the date for our annual fundraiser! An Evening of Inspiration and Empowerment Masquerade will be taking place October 12 from 6-9pm at Coyote Grill. [Buy tickets](#), [donate](#), and [check out the Facebook event](#) today!