

May 1, 2025

THE MONTHLY MONITOR

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



Saint Cloud Area (MN) Branch *Memo From The Board*

IN THIS ISSUE

Memo From The Board

Branch Update(s)

SCSU Student Organization

Events/Programs

Book Club

AAUW State & National

And More...

Another lively Board meeting (you guys elected such a great Board!). Pat, our VP of Membership, wanted to remind us that most of our annual renewals expire on June 30th, so please look out for the email reminders from National and renew in a timely manner. Do note again that National has raised their dues by \$2, so our full dues are \$110 this year.

With our Program Deficit voting completed, we had 5 votes for Option #1: Raise dinner cost to \$25, 5 votes for Option #3: Serve only coffee/tea and charge \$10 for the meeting, and 31 votes for Option #2: Move from a buffet meal to simply snacks and/or hors d'oeuvres. So next season we'll be snacking, and our deficit days will be over.

We're going to be starting a new feature on our website. The right side of each web page will not contain one or two quotes from various members, stating why they joined AAUW or what they get out of it. Rene Kaluza (our webmaster) will be soliciting quotes from you, and we'll rotate new ones in regularly.

Jamie Swenson and Chris Lepkowski are the advisors to our SCSU Student Organization. We had a very fruitful meeting last week, and we are all excited about seeing how the Branch can support the students, and how the students can support the Branch. Your Board voted to ask Branch members sponsor the students meals for any monthly meetings they can attend (cost per student: \$10). We also voted to fund graduation cords from AAUW for our graduating students.

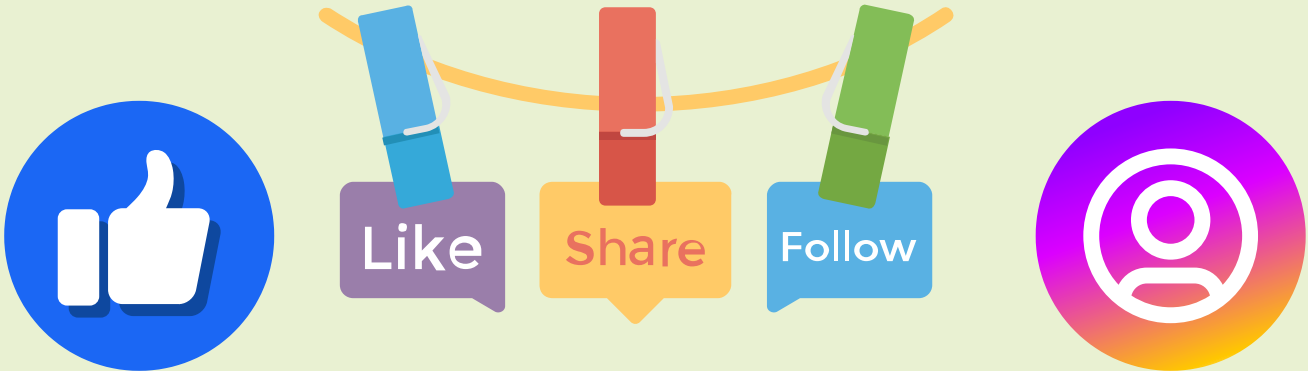
In response to your requests, we are working on setting up some "fun" meetings for June and August this summer. More on this to come!

Remember, our May program is our Member Appreciation meeting. We're going to play that game where we select our programs for next season, so bring your ideas! And our speakers via Zoom will be two representatives from AAUW National, discussing the latest lobbying and advocacy efforts of our national organization. See you there! (Reservation deadline is May 6.)



May 1, 2025

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

We are happy to have anyone contribute to the social medias and continue to stay active, reach out to Ceci McNair through email: cecimcnair@gmail.com to have any photographs or updates posted! By maintaining an active social media presence, we can find new members and keep the community posted on our events. Thanks so much for your engagement and support!

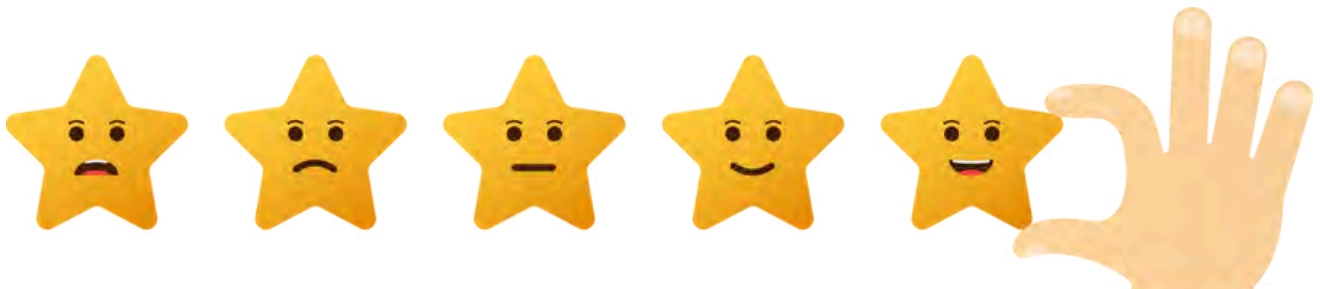
May 1, 2025

Member Feedback



We're starting a new feature in the newsletter and calling it "Member Feedback". If there is anything you wish to comment on (either positive or negative), do please let us know.

Send your comments to Jamie Swenson, jamie_2992@yahoo.com by the 15th of the month, and she'll add it to the next month's newsletter. We're looking forward to hearing from you!



May 1, 2025

AAUW Student Organization at SCSU

Meet The AY 2025-26

AAUW Student Organization Officers at SCSU

Meet Aditi, SCSU Student Organization President

"I am originally from Nepal and came to the U.S. to pursue my bachelor's degree in information systems. Leaving my parents behind especially with both my sibling and I studying abroad, was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made. But this journey has been full of growth, challenges, and unforgettable moments.

My time at SCSU has been truly transformative. I have connected with amazing people, gained real-world experience, and learned so much about myself. This campus has shaped me into a more confident, independent, and open-minded person. Through AAUW, I aim to create a welcoming space where students can have open, meaningful conversations about equity, empowerment, and education. I believe learning should be exciting and engaging, not just something we do for a grade. I want to encourage more students to get involved, speak up, and explore leadership opportunities. My hope is to help others feel as inspired and supported as I have felt during my time here." - Aditi



Aditi Dhakal, President

Meet Maria, SCSU Student Organization Vice President

"Hello! My name is Maria Shavers, and I'm an incoming freshman at St. Cloud State University, majoring in Political Science. I'm incredibly excited to join the AAUW student organization and bring my ideas, experiences, and passion for leadership to the table. As the former Student Council President at St. Cloud Tech High School and a proud member of the Young Women's Initiative Governor's Cabinet, I've had the opportunity to grow as a leader and advocate. These roles have shaped my drive to make a difference and uplift others, especially young women.

Volunteering at past AAUW events has been both inspiring and motivating. It's what encouraged me to take a more active role in this organization and continue contributing to meaningful change. I believe in the power of student voices and want to help empower others to step into leadership, get involved, and use their talents to create a better world. I'm especially passionate about creating space for conversations that matter and encouraging students—on campus and beyond—to participate in causes they believe in. I can't wait to meet everyone, exchange ideas, and work together to make a positive impact throughout the year ahead!" - Maria



Maria Shavers, Vice President

Meet Victoria, SCSU Student Organization Secretary

"Hi! My name is Victoria Helfenstein, and I'm a dedicated biochemistry student with a deep passion for science, advocacy, and community engagement. I'm committed to advancing equity in education and creating inclusive spaces that empower women and underrepresented voices in STEM. My academic journey is driven by curiosity and a desire to make meaningful contributions both in the lab and in the broader community. Outside the classroom, I'm actively involved in student organizations where I support initiatives that promote leadership development, academic success, and social responsibility.

As a student officer in AAUW, I'm excited to contribute to an organization that aligns so closely with my values. I hope to help foster a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all backgrounds feel encouraged to explore leadership opportunities and advocate for meaningful change. Through outreach, collaboration, and shared purpose, I'm committed to helping AAUW continue its mission of empowering women and advancing equity on campus and beyond!"

- Victoria



Victoria Helfenstein, Secretary

May 1, 2025

AAUW Student Organization at SCSU

MINDSET
IS
EVERYTHING

✓ believe
✓ achieve
✓ succeed

note to self:
**DO NOT
QUIT**

IT'S
always
SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE
until IT'S
DONE

WHAT'S NEXT for the STUDENT ORGANIZATION

Possible Campus Involvement Ideas

Host booth during Orientation

Sign-Up for Mainstreet Fair

Team up with the Women's Center

Fall 2025 Bake Sale

Use Bake Sale funds to plan a social event for members
of both the Branch and Student Organization

Lead a Branch Monthly Program

Campus Chalking

Poster making event

Host Huskies Pantry Food Drive

Do you have more ideas? If so, please share with one
of the RSO Officers or Advisors.

Action Items

- Renew RSO registration for AY 2025-26
- Create a Recruitment Flyer



Some of the AAUW Saint Cloud Area (MN) Branch Board Members met with two of the three Officers for the SCSU AAUW Student Organization.

May 1, 2025

2025 High School Art Exhibit at the Paramount



President Barb Wismer is at the AAUW information table at the Art reception.



Mary Lou Lentz and Joyce Hummel (AAUW judges) standing in front of 3-D winner "Peacock."



AAUW member Ginny Bisek and her husband Attended the Art Opening. Their grandson also had art in the exhibit.

2025 HIGH SCHOOL JURIED ART EXHIBITION

Derick Segerstrom | January 9, 2024



Annually, the Paramount Center for the Arts, along with our dedicated sponsors host a regional art show, in which schools across Central Minnesota are invited to participate. This year, we are working with 25 teachers representing 19 schools, with 130 student submissions.

OPENING RECEPTION AND AWARDS CEREMONY
Friday, April 4th • 5:30-7:30PM

May 1, 2025

2025 High School Art Exhibit at the Paramount **WINNERS**



Peacock on a Cherry Blossom Branch

Yasli Jimenez Pesqueda
Melrose High School

“The work created of pieces of glass is visually stunning esp. under the picture lights. Color, balance and creativity are apparent in this delightful whole. Yasli Jimenez Pasqueda notes that the peacock symbolizes both beauty and pride as well as the trap of focusing on imperfection. No problem for this young artist as this piece is about as perfect as one can get.”

ML

Self Portrait

Abbigail Knudsen

New London-Spicer High School

This is a happy young woman, using striking colors and shadows. We selected this one for an AAUW award because we believe it encapsulates our mission to help girls and women. (BW)

“My goal when creating this collage was to let my personality shine through it. I chose blue accents and flowers because they are two of my favorite things and I believe they are representations of myself. I recreated a happy photo of myself because I feel that it encompasses my personality!” The artist statement says it all!! kG



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May 1, 2025

2025 High School Art Exhibit at the Paramount

A "THANK YOU" FROM ONE OF THE WINNERS



Dear the women of AAUW,

Thank you so much for choosing me to receive your award and for the cash prize that comes with it. I was initially surprised that my work was even selected to be displayed at Paramount, so winning an award (especially such a meaningful one) is a great honor. I am sorry I was not able to receive it in person as I was attending my cousin's wedding that night. My art teacher explained to me the importance behind your award and your organization as a whole. Your mission deeply resonates with me as I strongly believe women are so powerful and I ~~love supporting~~ love supporting influential women. Thank you for all you have done for women and girls like me. Athletics has always been my place to show women's greatness, especially in the sport of gymnastics, but I am grateful to now have that opportunity in art as well. Next year I will be attending Minnesota State University Moorhead to study Psychology. The money given to me from this award will be used to support my education there. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Abby Knudsen

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Derick Segerstrom | January 9, 2024



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May 1, 2025

April 2025 Program Review

Ellen Heneghan and Charlotte Stephens spoke at our April meeting, discussing how the local Natural Parks and Trails Coalition has worked for the past 30 years to create park land acquisition and trail development. They explained the group's origin, and continuing efforts to save wilderness areas from development. The photos they shared were just beautiful and we are so grateful for all their hard work! Working with politicians and developers can be quite stressful, and the group has had to really keep alert to establish and protect the parks and trails. There are currently five parks in Stearns County, one in Benton County, eight parks in the St. Cloud area, and one each in Rockville, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Augusta, and Rocori. Visit and enjoy – take a hike!



May 2025 Program

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Atwood Memorial Center

Parking: 4th Avenue Ramp or Miller Pay Lot

(Barb) Annual Business Meeting plus AAUW National Speaker (Video or Virtual)

“Current Status of AAUW National Lobbying Efforts”

In addition to holding our annual Member Recognition and Business Meeting (including reports from our Financial, Membership, and Public Policy chairwomen), we have requested a speaker (either on Video or Virtually) from AAUW National. We're hoping to secure an update on National lobbying and advocacy efforts, including what is being promoted, current status and how AAUW National promotes issues in support of our mission.

Deadline to RSVP is May 6, 2025

May 1, 2025

HOW TO MAKE A RESERVATION FOR A MONTHLY PROGRAM...

Email: aauwsaintcloud@gmail.com

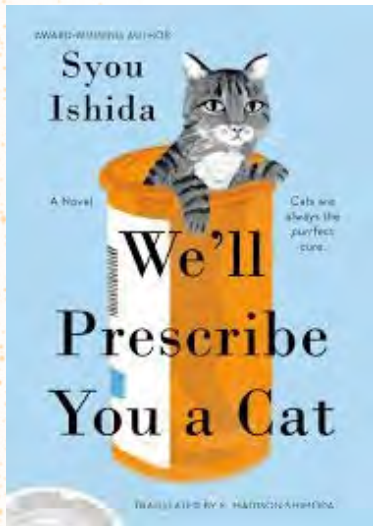
Subject Line: Reservations

Email Body/Message: Please
reserve [#] places for [Name] for
the program on [Date]. I am a
[Member, Student or Guest] and I
require a
[Special Dietary Needs] meal.
Thanks!

**Deadline to make reservations is ONE WEEK from
the date of the program.**

May 1, 2025

AAUW Book Clubs

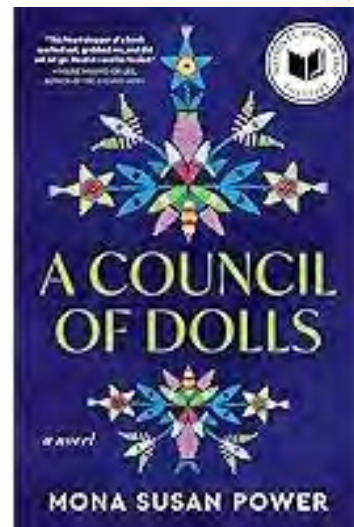


The Thursday AAUW Book Club meets next on Thursday, May 22, 2025 @ 6:30p.m. to discuss “We’ll Prescribe You a Cat” by Syou Ishida.

Hosted by: Linda N-S
AAUW members can contact Mary Harlander-Locke if they are interested in joining.

The AAUW’s Wednesday Literature Group meets next on Wednesday, May 7, 2025 @ 12:00p.m. to discuss “A Council of Dolls” by Mona Susan Power.

Hosted by: Mary Lou Lenz
Presenter: Molly Ewing
Want to join in on the fun, contact Molly Ewing at 320-252-2166



May 1, 2025

AAUW 2024 Webinar Schedule

These webinars are designed to provide you with the tools and knowledge needed to negotiate better salaries, enhance your career, and achieve financial independence. Whether you're a student stepping into the professional world or a seasoned professional aiming to advance, our webinars offer valuable insights for every stage of your career.

Check out our schedule and secure your spot to start transforming your future today.

All the below webinars are FREE for students from member institutions.

AAUW Work Smart: Develop Your Value Statement Deep Dive	Wednesday, May 13, 2025	3:00 - 4:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW
AAUW Start Smart	Thursday, May 21, 2025	4:00 - 5:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW
AAUW Money Smart: Smart Finances	Tuesday, May 27, 2025	3:00 - 4:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW
AAUW Work Smart: Refresher	Wednesday, June 11, 2025	4:00 - 5:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW
AAUW Start Smart	Wednesday, June 18, 2025	4:00 - 5:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW
AAUW Money Smart: Smart Future	Thursday, June 26, 2025	5:00 - 6:00 p.m. ET	REGISTER NOW

[Please join us for a special AAUW Strategic Plan Launch Event](#) on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. ET. We're excited to unveil our new strategic plan — highlighting the vision and priorities that will guide AAUW's future.

[Sign up for the webinar here](#)

During the session, you'll:

- Get an inside look at our strategic objectives and key initiatives.
- Learn how branches, states, and members can align with and support the plan.
- Have the opportunity to ask questions and share your perspective.

Your voice matters, and your engagement will help bring this plan to life. We hope you'll join us as we shape the future of AAUW — together.

May 1, 2025

AAUW Advocacy In-District Recording & Resources

Thank you again for attending AAUW's training on "Defending Higher Education: Advocacy Strategies for In-District Meetings." Please see the resources below to help make your visit impactful, and share out this call to action in your states and branches.

Training recording: [Advocacy Strategies In-District 4-8-25.mp4](#)

Recess Toolkit: [Meeting Your Members of Congress Toolkit](#)

Request a meeting with your members of Congress:
aauw.quorum.us/campaign/115857/

You can reach the Policy & Member Advocacy Team with any questions at advocacy@aauw.org.

Thank you for making your voice heard!

Kalina Majercak (she/her/hers)
Advocacy Manager



Removing Bias from Education

Startling inequalities persist in American education. Gender, economics, race and ethnicity should not limit our opportunities.



Fighting for Fair Pay & Economic Equity

It's time to close the pay gap and for the work world to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion so we can all thrive.



Advancing Women in Leadership

Women make up more than half of college graduates and half of the labor force. But we're still not represented at the upper levels. We need equal representation.

May 1, 2025

AAUW Election



It's now time to vote in the AAUW Election 2025.
The election ends on May 13, 2025 at 5:00 pm ET.

To vote, follow this link to access your ballot
directly: [HERE](#)

For more information on the candidates and ballot
initiatives, please visit
<https://act.aauw.org/MemberVote2025..>

If you have any questions, or updates regarding
your membership or changes to your address or
email, please contact connect@aauw.org.

May 1, 2025

Message from Membership Matters



Renewal Notice Reminders: Branches that have not opted out of having National handle renewal reminders will have emails sent to their members the week of the 20th of each month in conjunction with the schedule below. Finance officers receive confirmations as members pay online.

Month of	Expire Group Reminder #1	Expire Group Reminder #2	Expire Group Reminder #3	Expire Group Reminder #4
Apr 2025	5/31/2025	4/30/2025	03/31/2025	02/28/2025
May 2025	6/30/2025	5/31/2025	4/30/2025	03/31/2025
Jun 2025	7/31/2025	6/30/2025	5/31/2025	4/30/2025
Jul 2025	8/31/2025	7/31/2025	6/30/2025	5/31/2025
Aug 2025	9/30/2025	8/31/2025	7/31/2025	6/30/2025
Sep 2025	10/30/2025	9/30/2025	8/31/2025	7/31/2025
Oct 2025	11/30/2025	10/30/2025	9/30/2025	8/31/2025
Nov 2025	12/31/2025	11/30/2025	10/30/2025	9/30/2025
Dec 2025	1/31/2026	12/31/2025	11/30/2025	10/30/2025
Jan 2026	2/28/2026	1/31/2026	12/31/2025	11/30/2025
Feb 2026	3/31/2026	2/28/2026	1/31/2026	12/31/2025
Mar 2026	4/30/2026	3/31/2026	2/28/2026	1/31/2026

May 1, 2025

Message from Membership Matters



Make Your Voice Heard

As an AAUW member, your voice counts. If you need help having conversations surrounding the dues increase with your members, consider AAUW National's value to affiliates such as:

- monthly salary negotiation and financial literacy **trainings**;
- administrative support for branches related to dues processing, Community Hub, 990Ns, branding materials, and the other various **toolkits and resources**;
- advancing AAUW's member-supported policy agenda
- **speakers for branch meetings** and state conventions to provide subject matter expertise and updates;
- **weekly office hours** and support from the Connect Team;
- and many other **benefits**.

May 1, 2025

Message from Membership Matters



Please join us for a special Leadership Briefing on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. ET. We'll share information on our upcoming strategic plan launch, outlining the vision and priorities that will guide AAUW into the future.

[Sign up for the briefing here](#)

During the session, you will:

- Gain insight into our strategic objectives and key initiatives
- Learn how your leadership and branch and state engagement will be vital to the plan's success
- Have the opportunity to ask questions and share feedback

Your voice and leadership are essential as we prepare to meet this important moment. We hope you'll join us to stay informed and inspired as we move forward—together.



Regards,

Shannon Wolfe

Managing Director & Chief of Staff

May 1, 2025

Political Vs. Partisan

501c(3)s and Political Activity

- The distinction between partisan and political activities is very important
 - Prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office
- Not all activities or expenditures are prohibited as long as they are conducted in a non-partisan manner
- "No substantial part of the activities" of a nonprofit can be spent influencing legislation
- What is substantial?

Laying the Groundwork

- Political: of, relating to, involving, or involved in politics and especially party politics
- Partisan: a firm adherent to a party, faction, cause, or person
- Political does not mean Partisan
- Non-Partisan does not mean Indifference

Issues are not Partisan

- AAUW's Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.
- AAUW's advocacy work is based on this mission
- Hyper-partisanship can lead people to draw conclusions
- No party has a claim on any particular policy issue

So, What's Prohibited?

- Evidence of bias towards or against a particular candidate
- Direct opposition to a candidate
- Spending a "substantial" amount of budget to influence legislation
- No contributions can be given to candidates
- No coordination of nonpartisan work with candidates for elected office
- No coordination with organizations who have made endorsements
- Care should be taken during election years

FAQ's

- Can an individual make endorsements of candidates? Yes
- Can we be involved in elections? Yes
 - Voter guides
 - Candidate forums
 - Ballot measures
 - Voter education
- Remember to include all candidates when doing outreach

Guidelines from National

- | Do | Do Not |
|--|---|
| ○ Remain nonpartisan. Do not endorse candidates in partisan races. | ○ Expressly advocate for or endorse any particular partisan candidate. |
| ○ Work on issues guided by our values and mission, including taking positions on ballot initiatives that are in line with AAUW's Public Policy Priorities. | ○ Encourage voter registration for a particular party. Share AAUW membership lists with campaigns or political parties. |
| ○ Engage with candidates and elected officials from all major parties equally, making sure questions are phrased in a neutral manner. | ○ Fundraise for partisan candidates or coordinate any election activity with a campaign or political party. |
| ○ Encourage voter registration for everyone, regardless of their political persuasion. | |

May 1, 2025

Meet Your Board Members

Executive Board Members



Barb Wismer
Branch President



Jan Benson
Co-VP Finance



Mary Harlander-Locke
Co-VP Finance



Molly Ewing
Recording Secretary



Kathryn Gainey
Recording Secretary
Alternate



Pat Obstarczyk
Co-VP membership



Leah Stanek
Co-VP membership



Jan Benson
VP Public Policy



OPEN
VP Programs



OPEN
VP of
Communications

Executive Board Members

Voting - Standing Board Committee Chair Members



OPEN
Monthly Program
Chair



Caroline Williams
Co-Social
Chairwoman



Joyce Hummel
Co-Social
Chairwoman



Rene Kaluza
Website



Jamie Swenson
Monthly Newsletter



Cecilia McNair
Social Media

Voting - Standing Board Committee Chair Members



OPEN
Meet-a-Member



Kathryn Gainey
Directories



Kathryn Gainey
Ads & Fliers



Joanna Pucel
Archives



Chris Lepkowski
SCSU Representative



Whitney Court
CSB Representative

Non-Voting Advisory Board



Jan Benson
Tech Savvy Event
Chair



Keshia Anderson-King
JEDI (Justice, Equity,
Diversity & Inclusion)
Chair



OPEN
NCCWSL Event Chair



Whitney Court
Scholarships for
Young Leaders



Barb Wismer
Flash Funds Chair



Keshia Anderson-King
8th Grade Graduation



OPEN
Start Smart Event -
SCSU



Christi Siver
Start Smart Event - CSB



OPEN
Student Membership
Liaisons - SCSU



OPEN
Student Membership
Liaisons - CSB



Fay Bolin
Fundraising
Committee



Peggy Lodewyk
Fundraising
Committee

Non-Voting Advisory Board



Joyce Hummel
Fundraising
Committee



Kathy Kampa
Fundraising
Committee



Kathryn Gainey
Fundraising
Committee



Cindy Leigh
Fundraising
Committee



OPEN
Fundraising
Committee



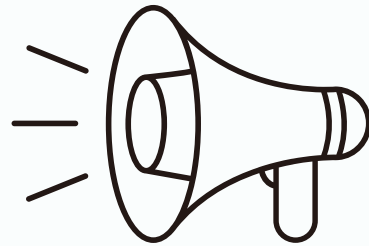
OPEN
Fundraising
Committee

May 1, 2025

AAUW Newsletter Welcomes New Submissions

Do you have a special announcement or event you would like to share with all the AAUW St. Cloud Area (MN) Branch members?
Want it included in our next Monthly Newsletter?

**LATEST
NEWS**



**SEND YOUR ANNOUNCEMENTS
AND EVENT DETAILS WITH
PHOTOS TO JAMIE SWENSON
JAMIE_2992@YAHOO.COM
BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH TO BE
INCLUDED IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER.**

Disclaimer: There is no guarantee that your information will be shared but we will do our best to get it shared in the following newsletter.