

***Promoting Women's Equity Through Education For Over 100 Years***

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

## **Presidents' Message**

*Our co-presidents, Jeanmarie Mason and Evelyn Caterson, will alternate submissions for the President's Message. We begin Newsletter Volume 125 with Jeanmarie Mason.*

I am pleased and excited to serve with Lynne Caterson as the Co-President of AAUW Atlantic County Branch for the 2025-2026 year. I retired to Ocean City full time seven years ago. I was excited to find AAUW and all of the wonderful women I have met in this organization. My past career in PA and NJ included teaching and administrative roles in Special Education. I currently teach part time for Saint Joseph and Rowan Universities. In addition, I serve as an advocate and trainer for Metastatic Breast Cancer and the National Alliance for Mental Illness. My interests support the mission and values of AAUW through advancing equity for girls and women through higher education, research and advocacy. Education has played a pivotal role in my development as a woman and in my career. I often end my college courses with a story of "My Why."

I am an only child. I was born and raised in Philadelphia. We lived in a Section 8 apartment building- low-income housing. My father was a school custodian and my mother was a waitress. My father quit high school when he had to take care of his father when he was wounded in WWI. My mother said that her happiest memory of school was when her parents signed her out at age 16 from Wildwood High. When I was in high school at age 14, my father went back to night school to get his diploma. I helped him study for his courses and can still remember the books and our study sessions. We cheered him on as he received his high school diploma at his graduation. He received his diploma and his high school ring. (Some of the students in his school where he worked thought it was a "Super Bowl" ring.) A few years later, my mother wanted to get her manicurist license. She quit being a hair stylist because the hair dye in the 40s and 50s made her hands break out. So, I helped her study for her manicurist license on a small blackboard as I quizzed her on diseases of the nails. She went on to become a successful men and women's manicurist.

I became an educator because of the impact that I had on my parents who were two high school dropouts. The proudest moment was when I dedicated my dissertation to my parents. Always remember your "Why."

I look forward to working with all of you this year.

Warmly,

Jeanmarie Mason, Co-President

jeanmariemason54@gmail.com

## Officers' Reports:

### Program Officers

Jean McAlister

McAliste@atlanticcape.edu

Shelly Meyers

SFMECLLC@gmail.com

Greetings AAUW members as we look forward to the 2025-2026 program agenda. We are fortunate to have an active program committee that includes Kathy Ziegenfus, Shelley Cohen, Lynn Caterson, Jeanmarie Mason, Mary Lou Breidenstine, Tula Christopoulos, Carol Zerbe, and Linda Karp. Through a preliminary planning meeting, we established several program ideas that align with AAUW's mission as well as the interests of our AAUW branch members.

Our first meeting of the year is scheduled for **September 25, 2025**, which is a Welcome to new members and a welcome back to our existing membership. We will meet at the Linwood Library, on Davis Avenue in Linwood, at 6:30pm, where we will enjoy appetizers and desserts, hear from the leaders of our interest groups and committee chairs, and play an AAUW trivia game.

We are always seeking new participants to the program committee and appreciate suggestions for program ideas. Please contact us should you have questions, suggestions, or want to help.

### Membership Officer

Shelly Meyers

SFMECLLC@gmail.com

The Atlantic County Branch of AAUW is pleased to inform you that our membership is active, for a total reaching 124. We have new members who have recently joined from both Atlantic and Cape May Counties, and our renewal rate among existing members is 99%.

When I first became an AAUW member, I educated myself on the organization's mission. The advancement of equity for women and girls in higher education and the work force must be deliberately enforced and protected, without ever assuming it will take place without advocacy.

We recognize that not all women have access to higher education, whether because of financial or family/social constraints. AAUW works to assist women who wish to pursue an education with the tools to overcome the barriers. We provide scholarships and programming that encourage women realize their potential and the value of the contributions they make to our community.

I am so grateful that I chose to be a member in an organization whose emphasis is on women's education, leadership, career development, economic security, and the safeguard of our healthcare and wellbeing of our families.

Should you have questions about membership or any of the interest groups and programs, do not hesitate to contact me.



## Finance Officer

Jackie Shelley-Tasoff

[jacalyn\\_shelley2003@yahoo.com](mailto:jacalyn_shelley2003@yahoo.com)

My thanks to Linda Karp for her many years of service to our Branch as our Treasurer. And I'm pleased to announce that Marcy Shomo is now our Treasurer effective September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### What you need to know:

Marcia Shomo's address is: 407 Danielle Drive, Linwood, NJ 08221

Her phone number: (609) 335-7058

Email address: [masho@comcast.net](mailto:masho@comcast.net)

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DUES:

#### Current dues for new and renewal members are a total of \$94

(\$74 National, \$10 State and \$10 Branch).

In the past, each member's dues were due before July 1<sup>st</sup> of every year. Because every member had the same due date, the Membership VP would call members who missed the deadline. **This is no longer the case.**

Three years ago, National began sending dues notices based on the date each individual member joined AAUW. For example: If you joined on March 12, 2015, your renewal dues will be due every year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March.

**Want to know your renewal date?** Simply click on the Membership Directory button on the Newsletter email, find your name and you'll see your renewal status and renewal date.

#### AAUW sends up to 4 online reminders to pay your dues.

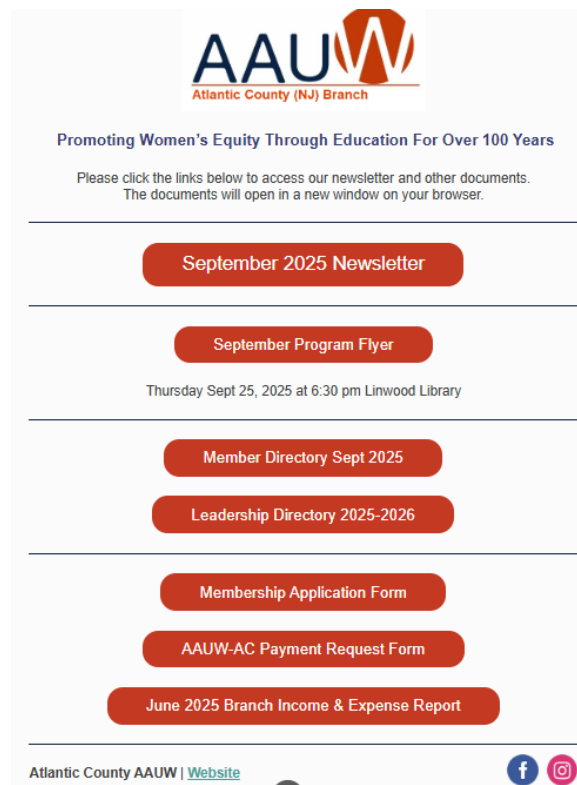
We appreciate you paying renewal dues online.

#### Attached to the Newsletter email you'll find two important forms and our year-end June 30, 2025 Income and Expense Report:

**AAUW-AC Payment Request Form:** To be used by members who are seeking reimbursement for expenses or for deposit checks required for Program and Interest Group functions.

**New Membership Form:** To be used by women who would like to become AAUW-AC members. Please note that dues for National has increased to \$74 while both State and Branch dues have remained at \$10 each.

Finally, for those of you interested in a detailed review of our Branch's year-end finances, the **June 30, 2025 Income and Expense Report** is attached to the Newsletter email.



## Fundraising Officers

Kathy Zeigenfus

kzeigenfus@aol.com

Carol Zerbe

czpaints45@gmail.com

Mark your calendars! Our fall fundraising luncheon, "High Tea at High Noon," will take place at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean City on Saturday, November 15 at 12:00 Noon. We welcome all of you and your friends to join us with our new theme and new venue. The Flanders is known for its classic ambience, beautiful interior design, and fabulous food. In November, parking is free. Invitations will be sent out in October with more details.



Our Fundraising Committee has already met to begin our preparations. We are calling on you to help us make our Basket Raffle a success by acquiring **gift cards** from local businesses and restaurants as they are very popular gift basket items. If you can each find one or two places that you frequent, we will include them in attractive baskets for our special event. Or, you may have a hobby or passion that would motivate you to make up a basket yourself. In the past, many members have creatively put together baskets featuring dogs, cats, birds, shore items, books, wine, movies, Italian, Irish, Polish, or any ethnic themed ideas. Just let us know at our September 25 meeting.

Likewise, if you have any new items which can be used in baskets like gourmet food items, jewelry, handbags, wallets, scarves, or decorative items for the home, just bring them to the meeting in September. Just think of some gifts you've received that don't suit your tastes, they might be perfect to fill one of our baskets.



We are still selling Boscov's Friends Helping Friends \$5.00 coupons for a 25% off shopping spree on October 22. Call Kathy at (609) 457-5245 or email her at kzeigenfus@aol.com to order your coupons. Proceeds go to our Community Partnership program which is currently contributing needed items to the Community Food Bank. Our next collection will be for Baby Products. Everyone giving a little will make a big difference.

Thanks for your continued support for our very important programs helping young women with their educational development. Enjoy the rest of your summer and let's hope for a glorious fall.

## Community Partnerships Officer

Nicola Tasoff

nicolatasoff@gmail.com



Atlantic Cape Community College

17,171 followers  
3w • Edited •

Atlantic Cape would like to say "thank you" to the Association of American University Women (AAUW) Atlantic County Branch's Community Partnerships Committee Chair Nicola Tasoff and Finance Officer Jackie Shelley-Tasoff, who donated numerous lightly-worn men's and women's business attire for the College's Campus Closet on May 13.

The AAUW's donation efforts for the Campus Closet gathered men's pants, shirts and jackets, and women's suits, pants, blouses, jackets and dresses. Tasoff and Shelley-Tasoff were joined by Atlantic Cape's Victor Moreno, Student Affairs Project & Operations Lead and Student Affairs & Enrollment Management and Jean McAlister, Chief of Staff, and AAUW Co-President of Programing and Community Partnerships.



### Announcement - Diaper Drive – Supporting the Community Food Bank of NJ

We're kicking off the year with a special way to give back! Did you know that 3 in 5 parents miss work or school because they can't afford the diapers required for childcare? Lack of diapers is a hidden consequence of poverty, and together we can make a difference.

At our Welcome Back Meeting on Thursday, September 25, at 5:30 PM (Linwood Library), we'll be collecting:

--Packs of diapers (all sizes welcome!)

--Baby wipes (all brands welcome)

--Diaper creams (all brands welcome)

📦 Please be sure items are in their new, original packaging. Every donation helps families in need and supports the Community Food Bank of NJ.

Let's start the year by supporting our community—thank you for helping us make a big impact with such small essentials! 💙 Contact Nicola with any questions: 609-226-5547

## Scholarship Officer

Lois Fried

loissfried@gmail.com

One of the most gratifying missions of our Branch is funding scholarships for worthy students. The scholarship committee is charged with establishing the criteria for the recipients and the amounts to allocate to each institution. The money for the scholarships comes from our annual fundraising efforts and an endowment established many years ago by a member of our Branch which has been increased by additional member contributions over the years. If you would like to be part of the awarding (and rewarding) process, please contact Lois Fried at 609-742-4286.



## STEM Officer

Theresa Basquez

tbasquez\_86@hotmail.com

A lot of good things happen at Tech Trek Summer 2025. This year, 45 rising 8th grade girls (five from Atlantic County) attended Stockton University from July 20-26th, and had a very busy week filled with classes, workshops, and activities. There is time to eat, rest and play too!

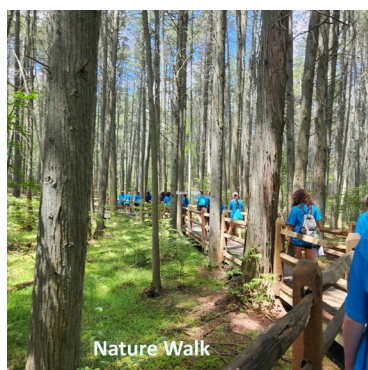
Real-life exposure comes to the campers, not only from STEM class and workshop subjects, but from teachers, camp and workshop leaders, counsellors and guides. They hear the career and



educational paths of professional women and educators, which often take twists and turns. They see what a college campus is like and live a dorm life.

To set young minds thinking about where to go and how to get there, the motivational speaker on the first day of camp offered a famous line from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” The week that followed was filled with challenging, mind-opening adventures in the possibilities offered by a STEM education and career.

As in past years, Tech Trek Alumni (now college students and graduates) returned as dorm moms and counsellors in appreciation for the experience they received as campers. Thanks to AAUW members and volunteers who supported the endeavor, both financially and by dedicating time to support camp. In attendance from Atlantic County were Kris Baker, Theresa Basquez, Janine Brown, Holly Cyrus, Gay Laubert, Jane Pearlman, Susan Remster, Beverly Schectman, Joan Vicari, Bonnie Warwick, and Kathy Zeigenfus.



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## Diversity Officer

Sharone Brown-Jackson

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### ALL PEOPLE SMILE IN THE SAME LANGUAGE

“One size fits all” – how many times have we heard that only to realize that a garment may actually be too big or too small? But let’s examine this perspective from the lens of a common health issue – back pain. Under the expert care of Dr. Shelby Petrella at Strive Physical Therapy (Northfield, NJ), I am undergoing physical therapy for my back pain. I have also taken notice that many other clients have the same problem due to various reasons like jobs that require one to sit, stand, lift too much or stem from accidents. But each of us has our own individual exercise plan. For example, when I do step-ups, I hold on to the railing for support but others don’t need the support.

Sometimes, we don’t realize the Diversity afforded us in our daily lives. Thus, Diversity is all kinds of people having the singular health issue of a bad back. Equity is having complete access to treatment. And Inclusion is benefiting from a specific plan of action to instill positive change.

Sad to say, CBS News legend Scott Pelley spoke on what is coined as “new speak” – Diversity being described as “illegal”, Equity is to be shunned and Inclusion is a dirty word! Imagine how our legendary Carolyn Bassett would react and what she would have said to that!!

The popular cartoon character, Dennis the Menace summed it up best when he introduced his African-American friend to his mother – “Me and Jackson are exactly the same age. Only he’s different, he’s left-handed!”

And lest we not forget, National Hispanic Heritage Month takes place from September 15 to October 15; the 2025 theme is Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future.

“Con tu luz, si se puede”...(Carlos Santana)

Respectfully, Sharone

## Public Policy Officer

Jean McAlister

McAliste@atlanticcape.edu

To quote AAUW, "On Women's Equality Day (which was August 26), we honor the progress made while recognizing the challenges that remain, especially for underrepresented groups. Student debt, policy rollbacks, and the urgent need to expand opportunities for diversity, equity, and inclusion continue to stand in the way of true access and opportunity."


Education remains essential for securing higher-paying jobs, eliminating or minimizing poverty, fostering economic growth, and narrowing the gender equity gap. What we do as AAUW members to support women and girls, especially in Atlantic and Cape May counties, makes a difference! Providing college scholarships and access to STEM programs helps ensure the next generation of women and girls acquire the tools and resources necessary for creating an education and career pathway. We are making a difference!

AAUW advocates for increased access to affordable higher education and works to alleviate the disproportionate debt burden on women, particularly women of color. AAUW champions increased support and programming for girls and women in STEM to close the gender gaps and ensure their success in technical fields. (AI-assisted)

In New Jersey, the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) funding was restored this year for free or partially free tuition for only those students with a family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of less than \$65,000, compared to up to \$100,000 in the prior two years. This change has limited access to education for many students at community colleges. Additionally, the [Garden State Guarantee](#) (GSG), which can make tuition free or significantly cheaper at four-year public colleges for students with lower incomes, was also trimmed.

Thank you for your annual giving to either the STEM/or Scholarship programs. Your attendance at the upcoming luncheon also makes a difference in our fundraising efforts to raise the bar for local women and girls.

## Matters of Interest

Website Update	Board Meeting Scheduled
<p>Added to our web site are copies of our <b>Branch Bylaws</b> and <b>Branch Policies</b> concerning a variety of topics. These are the documents which guide us through our work and mission. Coming soon will be the current State and National Bylaws which also govern us. Take a look at: <a href="https://ac-nj.aauw.net/">https://ac-nj.aauw.net/</a></p>	<p>Mark your Calendar: The next Board meeting will be held on Zoom on October ____ at 6:30 pm. Look for the agenda and Zoom link in your email. All members are welcome to attend!</p> 

### Demystifying AAUW's Greatest Needs Fund

Thank you! to the thirteen AAUW-AC members who donated \$463 during the first half of this year to National's Greatest Needs Fund.

During our Branch's August 28th Board meeting, the Board decided to make explicit to all our Branch members that this Fund is an Unrestricted Fund. Unlike the Scholarship and STEM donations you make during our annual fundraiser event in November, your contributions to the Greatest Needs aren't designated for a specific purpose. Here's a brief explanation of where your dollars have been spent:

- **Research:** Updates to and dissemination of our widely-cited signature reports such as Simple Truth and Deeper in Debt.
- **Programs:** Staff time and other direct expenses for NCCWSL (an acronym for the National Young Women Leadership Conference sponsored by AAUW), Salary Negotiation, Financial Literacy and Leadership Programs.
- **Policy:** Advocating for AAUW's Values – the majority of our Policy Team's entire budget is supported by your Greatest Needs donations.
- **Operations:** Infrastructure and sustainability – ensuring AAUW has the funding necessary to run efficiently and effectively to execute our mission.
- **Membership:** Supporting our members with resources and opportunities to engage – dues do not cover the full expense of our membership support.
- **Communications:** Keeping AAUW at the forefront of a National dialogue about Women's Equity, growing our media exposure and maintaining our prominent seat at the table.

Read more here in this informative [document of a Presentation](#) accessed on Aug 29, 2025 from [aauw-ca.org](http://aauw-ca.org). If you'd like to learn more, follow this [link](#) to our National website.



## Interest Groups:

### Short Films & Documentaries

Jeanmarie Mason

jeanmariemason54@gmail.com



Welcome to another fun year of relaxing and enjoyable short films and documentaries.

We meet on the **First Monday of the Month at 1:00 at the Linwood Library.**

Monday, October 6 at 1:00. *Hear Me-* "A girl struggling with selective mutism is given an opportunity to attend her dream college. However, in order to do so, she's required to give an oral interview. Determined to keep her dream alive, she enlists the help from the most unlikely place."

**Trailer-** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWkl1cdawjU>

A discussion and light snacks after the film about the disorder, "Selective Mutism."

Monday, November 3 at 1:00. *Dancing Birds-* "From ruffling their majestic feathers to nailing impeccable courtship routines, birds in paradise flaunt their best moves in hopes of landing a mate."

**Trailer-** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6po8dWuvCI>

A discussion and light snacks after the film on various bird species, bird cameras, and our backyard bird friends.

## Explorers Club

Kris Baker

kristinabaker2014@gmail.com

Our interest group meets once a month on the second Friday about 1 PM. If you want to join our group, contact me so I can add your name to my group email list for updates.

In June we visited the Aviation Museum and had a docent tour of "The Longest Yarn" which displayed hand knitted and crocheted figures honoring the 80th anniversary of D Day..

July brought us to a microgreen farm, "Sacred Sprouts," where the owner Ozzy sells many varieties to various restaurants in the area. We learned about the health benefits and process in growing them without the use of pesticides or fertilizers.

A presentation at the Ocean City Library on chocolate was given by the Rutgers Family and Community Health in August. The representative explained the history, growing process and possible health benefits of chocolate.

### Upcoming:

September 12

Time: 1 PM

Location: Belleplain Nature Center, 1 Henkinsifkin Road Woodbine

Rain or Shine - we will be sitting in the nature center

Program: Our docent will explain that the Belleplain state forest is located within the Pinelands National Reserve which contains the greatest variety of habitats anywhere in NJ. This includes saltwater marsh, Atlantic white cedar swamp and mixed hardwood swamp and oak-hickory forest. She has extensive knowledge of the flora and fauna there. Bonus: If interested you can join others for a 1 mile flat surface nature walk after the presentation

Cost: Free

RSVP: to me if you plan to attend or TO ALL if you want to carpool

October 10 - Rowan University, Edelman Fossil Park and Museum

November 14 - to be determined

December 12 - to be determined

Contact me by email (above) or cell if you have a question or concerns 609-602-4467

## Bon Appetit

Christine Gaudry-Hudson

drmom1986@yahoo.com

This interest group meets monthly on the third Monday of each month from 1 PM to about 2:30 PM to explore cuisine and cooking techniques in our homes. Each meeting takes place at a different member's home where they or a guest presenter will prepare a dish for us to sample (this is not a lunch meal). The cost at the door is usually between \$5 and \$10. Participants are informed ahead of the anticipated menu and cost in order for you to have cash on hand.

In June, our guest vegan, Pat Pfeiffer, made two kinds of tomato pies for us to sample but the picture below does not do it justice.



In July, Pam Family invited us to her home and demonstrated how to make an easy pasta salad as well as a delicious blueberry cake.

Christine Gaudry had planned to explain the history of French madeleines and have the participants blind test several of those traditional butter cakes. Unfortunately, the event had to be rescheduled at a later date.

Save the date: September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15

If you would like to join our group and be included in updates, I can be reached by email or at (717) 553-3115.

## The Salon Discussion Group

Shirley Belitsky

Shir1son@msn.com

The Salon discussion group is continuing for another season with new leadership. Please welcome Shirley Belitsky as our group leader. We meet monthly to discuss a timely issue or a philosophical question. Each month, a member volunteers to facilitate; they choose a topic and prepare questions to pose at the meeting. There are no right or wrong answers, and we are not searching for a consensus. The discussion is the point! Over the past years, we have hit on a wide range of topics, including: Controversial Works of Art, Obesity and New Weight Loss Drugs, How to Find Happiness, Trends in US Education, Homelessness, Banned Books, Religion in Society, Trans Girls in Sports, The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence, Ethics and Euthanasia, Growing Old in America, and more.

We meet from 2:30-3:30, on the second Monday of each month, usually at the Margate Library, though if the library is closed, we meet at a member's home. If you want to join the Salon group, or learn more about it, please email Shirley.

## Book Club

MaryLou Breidenstine

breidensti@aol.com



Book club meets monthly and discussions are lead by various members. All are welcome. Next meeting: Friday October 3 10:30 at Linwood Library. Audrey Owen will lead discussion of "west with giraffes " by Lynda Rutledge. Send me an email to be included on the distribution list of updates.

## International Studies

Lynne Walters

rrwalters321@hotmail.com

Our Great Decisions Group finished another year of discussions on major problems and difficult situations throughout the world. We will meet again next spring for another round of discussions. Please look for our announcement in the January issue of the newsletter.

If you have any questions, please send me an email. Thank you, Lynne Walters



## Stockton Theater

Theresa Sartorio

theresasartorio@comcast.net

The Stockton Children's Playhouse series is looking for volunteers to usher. The next show is Tuesday, October 21 at 10:30, Professor Wow's Space Adventures.



The responsibilities are simple, we work together to get the students seated and make sure the students enjoy the show. After the show, we all go out to lunch and enjoy each others company. If you would like to volunteer please email or call 609 965-9521

## Spanish Group

Jeannette Flax

jcflax@yahoo.com

This group continues to meet weekly at the Linwood Library from 4:15 to 6:00 on Mondays. Whether you are trying to improve or maintain your fluency, consider joining us for lively discussions. We are informal and have only two rules: please don't speak English, and let's all be patient with one another as we try to express ourselves.

