**AAUW MISSOURI STATE BOARD RETREAT**

**Trinity Presbyterian Church**

**Columbia, MO 9:30 a.m.**

July 19, 2025

**Attendees** (Bolded names are voting members)

**Su Bacon**, **Lois Domsch**, **Karen Francis**, Marianne Fues, **Alice Kitchen**, Mary Jermak, Diane Ludwig, April McArthur, **Debra McArthur**, **Diana Curry McGuirk**, **Pam Meyers** ,Karol Palmer, **Gail Metcalf Schartel**, **Sue Shineman**, **Sage Taber**, **Susie Watson**

**Unable to attend**: Susan Barley, Jane Biers, Carol Cox, Pam Kulp, Luna Mukherjee, Lynne Roney,

**Motion Log from the Board Retreat – 10 Voting Members were present**

**Motion Approved: Offer a $50 stipend from the Opportunity Grants Fund to any Missouri branch ordering a roll-out sign. (See ratification in Board Meeting Minutes)**

**Board Retreat Welcome and Introductions**

President Sue Shineman welcomed those in attendance at 9:43 a.m. She thanked Marianne Fues for making the arrangements with Trinity Presbyterian Church for the site.

She then indicated that Karen Francis had asked to address the group. Karen briefly reviewed the past month’s struggles with the sudden death of her husband, recounting how family and friends had supported her throughout the time. She noted that her children admired the many AAUW members who reached out and offered their assistance. Her children told her that they now understood why she attended so many meetings and felt so strongly about AAUW and its mission. She went on to comment that as a woman of some privilege she recognized that many women were without the same level of support in times of crisis and pledged to continue to advocate for women’s rights and education.

Sue Shineman then asked members to introduce themselves for the benefit of those attending their first meeting. Each member did so. She then asked each person to select from a list of items provided to say how that could make a difference. Members went in order of birth month.

Sage Taber selected #13: *Be ‘in-the-know’ and educate yourself on the current issues women and families face.*  She said that she would pay more attention to the news, read newsletters and assess information to determine the truth.

Diane Ludwig selected #2 *Celebrate your branch anniversary.* She said that celebrating and sharing the branch’s history and showing pride for what has been accomplished is a positive way to spread the news and value of AAUW. With the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026, she opined that sharing the story of women’s role in the nation’s history was important, given that women were not mentioned in any of the founding documents for the nation. She encouraged all to celebrate every accomplishment. It was suggested that AAUW MO should create a program for the 250th anniversary with a focus on women in education. The following volunteered to begin work on this project: Sue Shineman, Diane Ludwig, Pam Meyers, and Diana Curry-McGuirk.

Karol Palmer selected #1 *AAUW needs to stay in the business of ‘Being in Good Trouble’.* Noting that staying in good trouble takes many paths, including attending rallies in support of issues important to women and AAUW. She related that there were some activities that posed the risk of violence from those with opposing views. Staying informed is important but it is also important not to drown in the deluge of information and misinformation about the issues.

Karen Francis selected #18 *Incorporate as much Action & Advocacy into branch & state programming as possible!* She said it was important to incorporate action and advocacy into all meetings and not take for granted that others will do it.

April McArthur selected #10 *Call your senator & representative! Send them emails! They need to hear from YOU!* She described a program ‘Operation Mail Storm’ where a group of women gather periodically to write letters and postcards to elected officials, mailing them to the appropriate offices. She noted that using such a strategy would provide a visual image of support for any issue whereas calls and emails were less impactful. She did mention the 5 Calls Initiative which encourages constituents to telephone their representatives. The organization provides scripts and issues of importance within the legislature for those making phone calls.

Debra McArthur created her own emphasis and stated that there was a need to update display boards to share with colleges and universities to help spread the messages to students and faculty on campuses. She said that visibility needed to be uncluttered and eye-catching.

Mary Jermak selected #6 *Each branch should have a ‘prepared packet’ of information to give visitors.* She said gone are the days when AAUW supplied branches with membership recruitment information materials. Therefore, each branch should have updated materials to introduce the branch and AAUW to guests and prospective members.

Lois Domsch selected #8 *Request funds from the Opportunity Grants Committee.* She encouraged branches to utilize Opportunity Grants for STEM projects. She noted that the Independence Branch has been asked to do a program for all the elementary librarians and the branch hopes to provide the schools with materials for STEM activities.  With more materials, the branch will be able to extend their efforts. She noted that she provides coloring books for librarians to use.

Susie Watson selected #15 *Enhance our visibility in the state. Social media – follow / like / share / post, table events, share contact person & website info on everything you hand out.* She noted that the roll-out sign used in the Northland had been on display during workshops in public locations and introduced the branch to those in the area. She stressed that having name tags was another way to present a professional image.

Gail Metcalf Schartel selected #12 *Attend webinars, book groups, zoom calls, & committee calls to learn and share new ideas.* She noted that she is able to do these more passive things and share information from and with AAUW and other organizations to which she belongs. She said gathering information from a variety of perspectives allows her to be more knowledgeable about many issues instead of just the ones she tends to focus upon.

Marianne Fues selected #9 *Be an advocate for Women’s Rights! Recruit at least one new 2-Minute Activist!* She said that being supportive of representatives whose actions are in keeping with AAUW’s mission is important. Too often negative communication is received by representatives and not enough supportive comments are received.

Su Bacon selected #19 *Focus on Voter Registration & Education & encouraging everyone to VOTE.* Su noted past events working in senior centers to help residents change their voter registration based upon their change of location and showing them how to request an absentee ballot was very enlightening. She said she and her branch will continue to do outreach to senior apartment buildings and retirement homes.

In discussion, it was noted that unlike other states, Missouri does not allow individuals to register and vote at the polls simultaneously.

Alice Kitchen selected #16 *Collaborate more! Actively focus on WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN & WHY*. Alice spoke about the importance of working with leaders in government to support those who agree with AAUW’s mission and to remain in contact with all legislators to keep the mission in their minds.

Diana Curry McGuirk spoke on the need for members of AAUW to be prepared to speak to other groups to share information. She encouraged members to become speakers and present programs on issues to increase visibility of AAUW and to recruit members. She said speaking to groups would spread the message about AAUW’s mission.

Pam Meyers selected #16 *Collaborate more! Actively focus on WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN & WHY. Collaborate with other branches, other states, other groups / organizations.* She echoed that public policy issues need to be broadcast and suggested that AAUW work with other organizations to spread that information widely.

Sue Shineman asked that everyone type a summary of what they spoke on and send it to her after the meeting.

Sue Shineman spoke on #14 *Succession planning to ensure continued branch and state leadership. Develop, oversee, assist, support, encourage!*  She asked everyone to consider who their replacement would be and consider what their own next roles would be. She suggested developing a job description for the individual and work to prepare them for the role.

A discussion took place about having signs, such as one displayed by the Northland Branch, made with Missouri AAUW QR code and website addresses in place of specific branch names. To attract potential leaders, special events should be welcoming and if possible be held in public places for visibility. Wearing AAUW shirts and/or name badges to identify members is a way to increase visibility and project a professional appearance. Having information about AAUW to hand out at meetings, events, or visits to campuses is critical. April checked the Office Depot website and noted that the cost of such a sign would be about $152. A motion (Susie Watson/ Karen Francis) was made to offer a $50 stipend from the Opportunity Grants Fund to any Missouri branch purchasing a sign. The motion was approved by all 9 voting members present.

Sue Shineman also noted that the Legislation Briefing in February required a team effort.

Sue Shineman then asked Diana Curry McGuirk to discuss her new role as Communications Chair. Diana wants to work toward a consistent, focused message in all communication throughout the Missouri AAUW.  She will communicate regularly about the organization's focus.  The Communications Committee, composed of the webmaster, the newsletter editor, and the social media editor, will hold regular zoom meetings. She encourages collaboration with other groups such as the League of Women Voters. She identified the need for speakers from branches to promote the AAUW mission to groups such as Girl Scouts, teachers and counselors. A committee of volunteers will work on talking points and programs for these speakers to use.  She wants to reconnect and focus on gender equity and education.  AAUW can support issues, not candidates, but should be ready to speak out using all media possible.

Sue Shineman encouraged members to like AAUW posts on Facebook and Instagram and to share the posts, adding statements such as “This is why I am a proud AAUW member.” She also said that the coming year’s focus will be on education. With the federal changes to the Department of Education, it will be important for branches and states to show strength by working to find out what is needed in the local community and attempt to fill the gaps. Our focus on education will be slightly different for each branch based on the strengths of the branch and the needs of the community.

Educating our members and community on the mission of AAUW through our state and branch committee work will be a top priority.

Diana suggested that she would hold Zoom meetings 4-6 times a year to coordinate efforts. She also suggested that a presentation on women’s role in American history be in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Debra McArthur said that the AAUW Strategic Plan Tool Kit includes resources and guides to on-line communication and offers other resources. It was suggested that a presentation celebrating women be generated. Sue Shineman, Diane Ludwig, Pam Meyers, and Diana Curry McGuirk volunteered to work to develop such a program. The committees on DEI and Public Policy will also collaborate.

Sue Shineman then gave directions for break out groups. Each group was given the task of addressing a particular issue.

**Group One – Public Policy**: The group felt sharing public policy priorities was critical. Putting the 2025-2027 AAUW Public Policy Principles and Priorities tri-fold brochure into the hands of college and university students and faculty would be a key advocacy tool. Thanking those legislators whose actions aligned with AAUW and working with like-minded organizations were ways to keep issues at the forefront. Being visible and active when visiting any setting, not sitting behind tables but engaging with people was stressed. . Posting information on every branch website regarding pay equity was encouraged as was including information on branch websites about the motherhood penalty affecting women and how it translates to retirement deficits for women. Another suggestion was to add talking points from the AAUW website and have a QR code that linked to the issues for quick access for the public and for members.

**Group Two Visibility:** The group stressed strategic promotion and increased visibility two-year colleges, focusing on removing barriers to education were vital. National focuses on Post-College Graduate scholarships. The state focuses on NCCWSL and supporting branches, and local branches focus on high school scholarships, middle school and elementary education and recognition. The Columbia Branch works with three colleges and asks science teachers to pick out students from middle school to participate in STEM activities. Independence Branch is considering offering three $1000 scholarships, one to a student in each of the three high schools. In the past middle school students were recognized with non-monetary certificates and t-shirts. Ballwin-Chesterfield has a ‘girls of science’ program. Two longtime members in the Parkville Branch endowed scholarships and the KC Interbranch Council sponsored two students to attend the 2025 NCCWSL conference, promoting leadership opportunities for women. To address barriers to education, additional scholarships are needed. Diane pointed out that there were guidelines on how to navigate the new rules restricting gender-based scholarships on the AAUW website. [[Funding-Futures-Understanding-Changes-to-Sex-and-Gender-Based-Scholarship-Programs.pdf](https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2025/04/Funding-Futures-Understanding-Changes-to-Sex-and-Gender-Based-Scholarship-Programs.pdf)]

Pam Meyers discussed a workshop she attended by Ashley Allen Brown sponsored by the University of Missouri Extension on planning events and fundraising. Linking an organization’s cause or purpose to fundraising efforts was emphasized. Sue Shineman noted that in 1940 the Independence Branch was formed. To celebrate its 80th anniversary, the branch sent letters to all former and current members asking them to help us celebrate with a check for $19.40 which had an excellent response.

**Group Three Membership**: After evaluating various AAUW flyers, it was agreed that too many words on a brochure lessened their impact. Keeping materials visually appealing and the text succinct was thought to help spread the message more successfully. The following plans of action were discussed:

* Developing a group letter or postcard writing group
* Interacting more with K-12 schools
* Providing reading materials to schools
* Encouraging two-minute activists

Additional points offered to the group included:

* An ad appearing on Facebook offering Forever stamps at a discounted rate is legitimate.
* Repetitive postcards and emails bearing the same look and message are less impressive to legislators than individual communications.
* When addressing public officials, it is vital that one sends to their specific representative as writing to someone in another district is generally dismissed.
* A success story is the elimination of Missouri sales tax on diapers and feminine hygiene products. Local taxes have not been eliminated and require action by individual branches.

Discussion then ended and lunch was served and enjoyed by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Metcalf Schartel

Secretary