

PRESIDENT' S MESSAGE FOR JANUARY



Dear Members,

I hope you had a happy and healthy holiday season. Here's to a good new year. First, I want to thank the members of the gala committee for all their hard work – what a lovely evening we had. While the final accounting is still pending, after expenses we raised over \$8,000 for our scholarships. Everyone who participated should be very proud – what a success and a high note to start our year supporting our core mission.

Speaking of success, as of November, our branch was the 6th largest in the state of Florida and St. Augustine only edged us out for 5th place by one member. We have a new membership survey coming to you in January – please be sure to complete that and help us in our annual planning. I also hope you will commit to bringing a member to a meeting this year.

Our monthly meetings will move to Lexington Country Club beginning in January.

At Lexington, we will be able to order from a menu, offering more control over our costs and meaning the branch does not have to collect the funds in advance. We still ask that you RSVP to allow us to get an accurate count for our room size and staffing levels.

Our speaker for January is our rescheduled speaker from October – he will be speaking on the hurricanes that shaped our area and how to deal with future storms. That is an unfortunately timely topic. I hope to see many of you there.

It is also nominating season – Bonnie Ryan, Jemetta Hunt and I are on the nominating committee. If you are interested in serving on the board, please let us know. We have several open positions and would love to have you be involved.

I look forward to seeing you in January at Lexington Country Club.

Lisa Crotty Branch President



Our annual meeting is in March, and we'll be electing several of our officers. We also have current vacancies on our board as well as several positions coming available.

Current vacancies include:

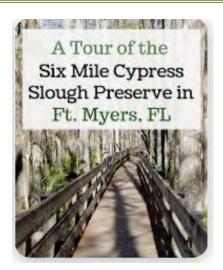
- President Elect
- Ways & Means
- Diversity Officer

We have two elected positions on the slate for March:

- Secretary
- Vice President, Programs

In addition, our hard-working scholarship team of Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf has provided us with 18 months' notice of their intention to step down - allowing interested volunteers to work side by side with them for a full scholarship cycle.

If you are interested in any of these positions or volunteering in another capacity, please reach out to any member of the nominating committee: Lisa Crotty (<u>lisajcrotty@gmail.com</u>), Jemetta Hunt (jemetta@aol.com</u>) or Bonnie Ryan (<u>bonniemarieryan@aol.com</u>)



SIX MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH PRESERVE

7751 Penzance Blvd, Fort Myers, FL Open Daily- Sunrise to Sunset Guided Tours are available on Wednesdays at 9:30 AM

The preserve is a 3,500-acre wetland which filters rainwater on its way towards Estero Bay. The preserve contains a 1.2-mile boardwalk trail, interpretive center, and amphitheater.

The Interpretive Center hours are from 10 AM - 4 PM Tuesday through Sunday. The Parking fee is \$1 per hour per vehicle, maximum \$5 for the day. Picnic tables are available as well as restrooms.

AAUW BRANCH NATURE EXCURSION FOR JANUARY

JOIN US Monday, JANUARY 8 and/or Monday JANUARY 29th Gathering at 9 AM

Wear appropriate clothes and footwear. It is advisable to wear a sunhat or visor. Remember your camera and binoculars. Bring your water and a snack to enjoy after our walk. There are numerous benches and shelters along the boardwalk to rest if needed.

I hope you decide to join us .

Please let me know if you plan to attend.

Jemetta Hunt 203-249-6545 jemetta@aol.com

Be sure to check out the February Torch for our next Nature Excursion.



Join us for our January Luncheon and Program *Note change of location.*



Lexington Country Club 16257 Willowcrest Way Fort Myers, FL (Near the Intersection of Bass Road & Summerlin; follow the entrance road to the turn-in for the Country Club.)



Our Meeting Date: Saturday, January 18, 2025 Gathering: 11:30 AM

Due to changes at the Landings, we are moving to Lexington Country Club as a trial. We will order from the Club Favorites menu rather than needing to order in advance. This will allow more control over costs and not require that we collect funds in advance.

We do still ask that you make a reservation to allow us to have the proper size room assigned and for Lexington to allot the proper staffing.

Please email: <u>aauwleecounty@gmail.com</u> no later than Tuesday, 14 January.

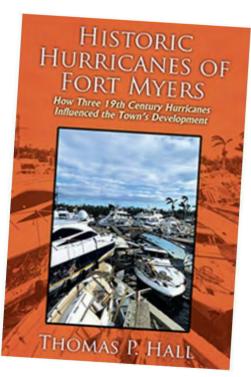
Historic Hurricanes of Fort Myers

How Three 19th Century Hurricanes Influenced the Town's Development by Thomas P. Hall

Long before Ian, Helene, and Milton, three historic hurricanes in the 1800s shaped where and how Fort Myers developed. Hurricanes are continuing to shape our present-day Fort Myers.

Our Guest Speaker for January is Thomas P. Hall, author of *Historic Hurricanes of Fort Myers*. Thomas is an art journalist, arts advocate, and local historian. He has authored three books including *Epic Fires of Fort Myers* and *Female Pioneers of Fort Myers*.

As the public art consultant for the City of Fort Myers, Tom advises the City regarding the administration, expansion and promotion of its art collection. He is also responsible for placing the narrative and audio recordings on Otocast – a free phone app that lets users listen to the stories of the City's public art works, early history and cultural heritage. As the voice of WGCU's *Spotlight on the Arts*, Tom highlights plays, musicals, art exhibitions and other cultural events taking place in Southwest Florida.



Come and hear this dynamic speaker describe where and why Fort Myers and the surrounding areas are vulnerable to storm surge, wind damage and inland flooding during tropical storms and hurricanes. Learn about three 19th century hurricanes.

Thomas P. Hall gives specific guidance to preparing for, surviving during and evacuating from tropical systems.

Thomas P. Hall's book will be available for purchase after the luncheon.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

Broadway Palm	Key West Express	
Bonnie Ryan	The Landings Yacht, Golf & Tennis Club	
Cheryl Tromley	Luminary Hotel & Co.	
CIBO	Lynda Leonard Boyce	
Congress Jewelers	Margaritaville Beach Resort Fort Myers Beach	
Cooper's Hawk	Mary Kellner	
DeRomo's Gourmet Market and Restaurant	Naples Zoo	
Driftwood Garden Center	Nothing Bundt Cakes	
Edison and Ford Winter Estates	Peggy Cihi	
Enjewel Boutique	Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina	
Naomi Bloom	Player's Circle Theater	
Florida Repertory Theatre	Pure Florida	
Gloria Currie	Ron Glasgow, in honor of Marie Glasgow	
Gulf Coast Symphony	Taco's & Tequila Cantina	
Hyatt Regency Coconut Point	Tokyo Bay	
Janet George	Total Wine	
Jemetta Hunt	Trader Joes	
Judith Sims		

thankyou

In this season it seems appropriate to stop for a minute and express our profound gratitude to all of you who have done so much to support our mission. As we have been saying, we are changing the world one girl/young woman at a time.

What a wonderful night we had at our gala fundraiser!! We want to thank those of you who contributed to making it such a smashing success. You contributed in many ways. There were those who spent months and countless hours doing all the work of planning, organizing, and producing the event. If you weren't directly involved, it is hard to imagine how many details go into something like this. There were those who worked at the event to make it come to life and run smoothly. In that regard, a special shout-out to Astoria and Beverly Aviles who did such an amazing job leading the effort and acting as Master of ceremonies of the event!!

We also want to thank those who donated to the event. There were those who donated the baskets and other items for our silent and live auctions. There were those who created and ran the "money tree." There were those of you who bought tickets and brought your friends and bid on our auction items. And those who made direct cash contributions.

As you can see, it really did "take a village," our Lee County AAUW village, to make it a success. We cannot, on behalf the girls and young women we support, thank you enough.

Scholarship Co-Chairs: Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

PHOTOS FROM THE GALA

Some of the Folks Behind the Scenes and Running the Show



PHOTOS of TABLEMATES at THE GALA



PHOTOS of WINNERS at the GALA





















A NOTE FROM THE BINGO GALA CHAIR...

Bíngo Gala a Resounding Success!

Another December fundraiser is in the books! Over 90 attendees enjoyed the festivities including raffles, five rounds of bingo with cash prizes, bidding for Florida Rep tickets, silent auctions and culminating in the live auction for two hospitality stays – each going for over \$900!

Each table was decorated with a theme highlighting the achievements of women including some prominent AAUW members. Featured women included Clara Barton, Shirley Chisholm, Jennifer Doudna, Grace Hopper, Elizabeth Warren, Amelia Earhart, Hedy Lamar and more.

One of our previous scholarship recipients, Melissa Delmasse, was in attendance. She had to leave early as she is graduating this week; and, as class president, she has a key role in the graduation rehearsal. She has promised to attend the scholarship award luncheon in April. Make your plans to attend, because it is an exciting time to see our efforts pay off in the presentation of scholarships.



We would like to thank the committee for all their hard work in making this event happen:

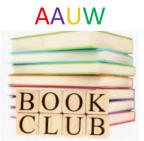
Astoria Aviles, Chair Beverly Aviles Judi Dixon Janet George Kathleen Haibach Bridget Hampson Jemetta Hunt Mary Kellner Tam Pigott Lyn Ranno Bonnie Ryan

As well, thanks to our sponsors – both the local businesses who donated prizes, the members who solicited, donated and collected prizes, and especially Naomi Bloom and Ron Glasgow for their continued support of our branch and our scholarships.

As always none of this would be possible without our scholarship chairs – Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf. Thank you for everything you do to support our scholars.

If you are interested in beginning a new scholarship, supporting an existing scholarship, or donating in memory of someone, please reach out to the scholarship chairs and read the information later in this issue of the TORCH.

Astoría Avíles, Chaír



Cover Girls Book Club meets in members' homes. Zoom will be available for those who are out of town or unable to otherwise attend. The meeting is generally the second Wednesday of each month from 1 pm to 3 pm.

Next Meeting: 8 January 2025 discussing *The Women* February Book: *Sisters Under the Rising Son*

Contact Carol Fuechsel at <u>cbfuechsel@gmail.com</u> for more information. New members are welcome.

Woman of Interest

A Tampa woman who survived decades in human trafficking has spent the last 14 years providing food and resources to rescue them from the streets. Over the years, Nancy Hernandez has helped somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 women get their lives back. At first, she networked with local ministries. Now, she runs her own advocacy center in Tampa, FL. There's a chapel and a food bank, a safe place for other trafficking victims to find counseling and resources. Now, they're expanding — adding a clinic so they can soon offer free basic medical services as well. The Tampa Police Department, recognizing Nancy Hernandez's contributions, recently awarded her a \$5,000 grant.

https://www.wtsp.com/article/news/community/humantrafficking-tampa-survivor/67-8552f5a0-dd6b-4333-9703-317febf42536

Nancy Hernandez



This year, Hernandez is planning to use contributions, including the grant from TPD, to expand the food bank, and the medical clinic is scheduled to open on Jan. 19.



2024-2025 MEETING DATES and TORCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Meeting Date	Deadline for Articles	Mail Torch Date
September 21, 2024	August 21, 2024	September 9, 2024
October 19, 2024	September 25, 2024	October 9, 2024
November 16, 2024	October 21, 2024	November 3, 2024
*Bingo Dinner		
December 10	November 18, 2024	November 26, 2024
January 18, 2025	December 13, 2024	January 8, 2025
February 15, 2025	January 22, 2025	February 5, 2025
March 15, 2025	February 19, 2025	March 5, 2025
*April 12, 2025	March 19, 2025	April 2, 2025
May 17, 2025	April 23, 2025	May 7, 2025

SEND ARTICLES TO *peggycihi@comcast.net*

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW Fort Myers has a new website homepage *https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net* Find the latest news from National, including links to the seminars for the rest of the year and a link to the replay of *Securing the Future:* A Post-Election Conversation on Women's Economic Security. Gain insights on what's ahead under the new administration and the 119th Congress. Our policy chair, Suzan Harden will provide a recap of the session at the luncheon.

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW FORT MYERS/LEE COUNTY Public Policy Update January 2025

Happy New Year, everyone! Since the election, AAUW and AAUW-FL have been in a hold pattern, as have all organizations involved in advocacy efforts. Many members have expressed concerns about the future of women's rights and the other issues for which AAUW advocates. Within two weeks, AAUW scheduled a Zoom meeting entitled, "Securing the Future: A Post-Election Conversation on Women's Economic Security." A summary of that presentation was available in the December issue of the Torch. With appointed offices at the national and state levels still to be finalized and with proposed legislation at the beginning of the process, it will be some time before we have enough information to develop a strategy. AAUW will keep us informed at both the state and national level regarding proposed legislation and what members can do to protect our hardwon advantages. AAUW-FL is finalizing plans for Lobby Days, which will be held the second week in March. More details to come.

Our first event for 2025 is the AAUW-FL Public Policy Issue Forum to be held on Thursday, January 9, at 6 p.m. via Zoom. Here are the details. Remember, registration is required, but there is no cost to attend.

AAUW FL Public Policy Issue Forum Thursday, January 9th – 6:00 pm held via Zoom Black Girls in Florida Schools

Bayliss Fiddiman, National Women's Law Center, will join us to discuss a <u>case study of Black girls in Miami-Dade schools</u>, and their experience with harsh school discipline policies. The girls reported harassment, harm, humiliation and other challenges. The study provides recommendations to promote a positive school climate through holistic school safety.

Registration required – Registration – Zoom Link

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW Florida's Public Policy Education Forums were such a success last year, another year of discussions has been developed for 24/25. Here is the list of discussions:

Date	Торіс	Presenter
Thurs., Jan. 9	Black Girls in Florida Schools	Bayliss Fiddiman
		National Women's Law Center
Thurs., Feb. 13	Florida Legislative Preview	Dr. Pat DeWitt, AAUW FL Co-Public
		Policy Director
Thurs., Mar. 6	Pay Gap, Caregiving, and	Dr. Mary Gatta, AAUW FL Co-Public
	Economic Security	Policy Director
		Director, Research and Public Policy,
		National Association of Colleges and
		Employers
Thurs., Apr. 3	Gender and Race Equity in	Amanda Koontz, Professor
	STEM	University of Central Florida

All sessions meet at 6 p.m. via Zoom. There is no cost. For more information about each topic, go to <u>https://aauw-fl.aauw.net/public-policy-issue-forums/</u>. You will see there is a reservation link for each topic, and you will need to make a reservation for each topic. Then you will receive a Zoom link for the session.

If you have any questions about these sessions, contact Suzan Harden. skh062653@gmail.com



Great Decisions will meet for the first discussion of the 2025 program year on Friday, February 7, at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. The topic is "American Foreign Policy at a Crossroads." Books were ordered at the discount price for everyone who signed up before the end of October. Books are still available at the regular price (35 plus shipping and handling.) If anyone else would like to join the discussion group contact Suzan Harden for more information. *skh062653@gmail.com*

Tools for Advocacy

As you completed your membership form for the 24-25 program year, you saw Tools for Advocacy listed as an interest group. The purpose of this group is to help interested members develop techniques for advocating with legislators. Contact Suzan Harden if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome! <u>skh062653@gmail.com</u>

INTEREST GROUPS/COORDINATORS

Interest Groups meet monthly for social activities. For details on joining, see contact information for the coordinator of each group.

> Bridge Group Next Meeting: 13 January 2025 Coordinator: Lois McDougall <u>lois.mcdougall@yahoo.com</u>

Cover Girls Book Club Next Meeting: 8 January 2025 discussing *The Women* February Book: *Sisters Under the Rising Son* Coordinator: Carol Fueschsel <u>cbfuechsel@gmail.com</u>

Guided Nature Excursions Coordinator: Jemetta Hunt <u>jemetta@aol.com</u>

Great Decisions Next Meeting: 7 February 2025 (Zoom) For additional details, see <u>Foreign Policy Association website</u> Coordinator: Suzan Harden <u>Skh062653@gmail.com</u>

> Hand & Foot Next Meeting: 6 January 2025 Coordinator: Carolyn Nance <u>cnance5204@gmail.com</u>

(Instruction is available for new players interested in Hand and Foot and Mahjong. Contact Carolyn Nance for details.)

Mahjong Next Meeting: 16 January 2025 Coordinator: Carolyn Nance *cnance5204@gmail.com*

Tools for Advocacy <u>Sign up for Two Minute Activist</u> Coordinator: Suzan Harden <u>Skh062653@gmail.com</u>

To create a new group, reach out to Jemetta Hunt jemetta@aol.com AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch, Inc. 2024-2025 Officers

Elected – Executive Board President – Lisa Crotty Past President – Bonnie Ryan President Elect – Open Vice President of Programs – Jill Jennings Vice President of Membership – Jemetta Hunt, Kathleen Haibach Secretary –Patricia Crowe Treasurer – Mary Kellner and Nancy Schoenstein

Appointed Officers – Board Members Public Policy – Suzan Harden Co-Chairs of Scholarship — Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf Communications (Torch/Website/Facebook) Peggy Drennan Cihi, Astoria Aviles Ways and Means –Open

Standing Committees

Records Retention – Executive Board Science Fair - Cathy Tucker Diversity Officer - Lisa Crotty Strategic Planning— Kathleen Haibach and Tamara Pigott

Ancillary Positions Reservations – Janet George and Bonnie Ryan Sunshine – Margot Flinn Greeters – Board Members Torch Proofreaders: Jill Jennings, Lisa Crotty and Carolyn Nance Torch Circulation – Jemetta Hunt (US Mail) Lisa Crotty (E-mail)



Our club's mission is to **PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO DESERVING WOMEN**

so they can further their education. We have three major methods of funding our scholarships.

- 1. Contribute to a particular scholarship
- 2. Sponsor a scholarship
- 3. Support our Bingo Gala fundraiser in December. Ways you can do this are described on the following pages.

Our AAUW Board approved an exciting new opportunity for our members to support our scholarships. Begun in our 2024/2025 fiscal year, anyone is now able to sponsor and name a scholarship "*in honor of*" someone.

For example, Cheryl Tromley is funding the Fort Myers Technical College Star Bright Scholarship and is naming it "The Violet Roberts FMTC Star Bright Scholarship" in honor of her grandmother. You can do this as an individual or partner with others.

This offer applies to the following scholarships:

- AAUW Star Bright Scholarship (Cape Coral Technical College): \$1,000 per year.
- AAUW Lee County High School Scholarships: 2 @ \$1,500 per year.
- AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award: \$300 per year.
- AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award: \$500 per year.

This opportunity does not change any of our normal donation processes. All opportunities for donating will remain the same, and this is just an *additional way* to contribute to our scholarships and an *additional way* to honor someone. The normal channels will still be available.

In addition, if anyone wants to donate "*in honor of*…" but does not want to commit to a sponsorship, as has always been the case, they may elect to target that donation to a specific scholarship or the scholarship fund. If the latter, the Scholarship Committee and/or Chairs will allocate it where the need is greatest.





Scholarship Co-Chairs: Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

We want to **THANK YOU** for your incredible generosity. Because of that generosity, we can increase our support for several of our established scholarships and fund some exciting additions to our STEM awards.

AAUW FGCU and FSW Endowed Scholarships: These scholarships were established in 2000. They award scholarships to female students who reside in the fivecounty (Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry) area, with financial need, pursuing undergraduate degrees at FGCU and FSW respectively. The amount awarded is a percentage of the endowments and is approximately \$2,000.

AAUW Star Bright Scholarships: Originally established in 2005, by Book Club 3, to provide branch members with the opportunity to make donations honoring friends and commemorating special events. There are now *two* Star Bright Scholarships, and they are a budgeted item that awards scholarships to female students attending the second semester at Cape Coral Technical College and Fort Myers Technical College.

We were able to increase the funding of these life-changing scholarships to \$2,000 each.

AAUW Lee County High School Scholarships: Established in 2011 in memory of Jane Wagner, a three-term branch president. Two scholarships are awarded to graduating female students (from two different schools) with financial need. The scholars are chosen by the schools' counselors and the scholarships are paid to the colleges of the recipients' choice. We were able to raise these awards to \$2,000 each.

AAUW STEM Awards (High-School): Established in 2001 to encourage high school girls in STEM fields, it awards two entrants in the Thomas Alva Edison & Kiwanis Regional Science and Engineering Fair. Recipients must present a unique, quality topic, and conduct their own research. Judging is done by members of the Scholarship Committee. The AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award and Emerging Research Scholar Award will now each provide a \$500 prize.

AAUW STEM Awards (Middle-School): Many of you know that girls often lose interest in STEM in middle-school, so this is an important time to support that interest. As you know we contribute annually to Girls in Engineering, Math, and Science (GEMS) program. Past Torch articles have highlighted this hands-on program dedicated to science education for regional middle-school students. The day-long programs, in a girls-only environment, are presented by enthusiastic professionals with undergraduates participating as facilitators and role models. This year we can increase the amount of our contribution to \$1,500. In addition, for this year, we are going to be able to support young women's interest in STEM by providing awards to middle-school girls participating in the Junior Division of Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair. There will be three Regional Inventors Fairs. There will be three \$200 awards—one each in grades six, seven and eight.

We appreciate your support and donations!



4 Bridget Hampson 12 Nancy Fojo 16 Pat Tillis 20 Cheryl Tromley 25 Colleen Wheeler 31 Faye O'Briant



Melanie Jackman Sharon Kapp

#WearBlue on January 11

January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month. <u>AAUW believes</u> that our global community requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote justice, human rights and sustainable development for all people.

Human trafficking is one of the fastestgrowing criminal activities in the world – claiming an estimated 24.9 million victims of all ages. Traffickers target marginalized populations. Women are most likely to be victims of sex trafficking, while men and boys are most likely to be victims of labor trafficking.

The <u>State Department offers tips</u> of what we can do to help fight human trafficking including being aware of the sources of your purchases, knowing the signs and reporting suspected cases, and recognize recruitment techniques.

The Department of Homeland Security is charged with enforcement and runs the Blue Campaign – a public awareness campaign to educate the public, law enforcement and industry partners. National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is recognized each year on January 11 and includes a social media campaign to #WearBlue. Learn more about #WearBlue. To report a suspected case of human trafficking call 1-866-347-2423. To get help, call 1-888-373-7888.

American Association of University Women	
Fort Myers / Lee County (FL) Branch Inc. Donate Today to help the Fort Myers Branch Advance Equit	PO Box 2115 Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115
Use my Gift for: Operating Expenses Unrestricted Sch	•
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Phone: (Mobile) (Home)	
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Donation Amount\$25\$50\$100 or Other	Amount \$
Is the gift in honor or memory of someone? If so please comp	lete the following:
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In Honor of	
Contact information for person honored or family of person remem	ibered:
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Street Address:	
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Note: Should you want to specify a specific Branch scholarship or below: (See list under: <u>https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net</u> under tab Philanth Awards Scholarship/ Award:	

Please make checks payable to AAUW Fort Myers / Lee County, Inc. and mail to: AAUW – ATTN: Treasurer, PO Box 2115, Fort Myers, FL 33901- 2115

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee Co FL is a 501 (c) 3 not for profit organization and gifts may be tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

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