

The American Association of University Women

The **TORCH**

March, 2025

Vol. 58, No. 6

AAUW. Vol. 63, No. 7

Peggy Drennan Cihl, Editor.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR MARCH

Happy March!

This month brings our annual meeting and election of officers. We are electing our secretary and Vice President of Programs this year. We will email the details for voting ahead of the March meeting.

As you all know, a key pillar of AAUW's mission is promoting women's economic security. Our March program is focused on that topic as we feature a speaker who recently fell victim to a financial scam. She is now working to educate other women.

Unfortunately, our scheduled talk by Rear Admiral Diane Wolfson at Lakes Library has been cancelled due to unforeseen scheduling issues. We hope that she will be able to reschedule when her travels bring her back to Fort Myers.

We are also making plans for our scholarship luncheon in April and beginning plans for our next fundraising events.

If you would like to volunteer your talents, please let us know.

We are finishing our programming year strong. I am grateful for all of you and everything you contribute.

Thanks,



Lisa Crotty.
Branch President



Support Our Branch

Our annual meeting is in March, and we'll be electing several of our officers.

We will send an email with voting details prior to the March meeting to ensure a quorum. Our slate of candidates proposed by the nominating committee:

Secretary: Patricia Crowe

Vice President, Programs: Tamara Pigott

We also have additional positions available if you are interested in volunteering:

President Elect
Scholarship Chair(s)
Treasurer Co-Chair
Diversity Officer
Fundraising Committee

If you are interested in volunteering in one of these areas or in another capacity, please reach out to any member of the nominating committee:

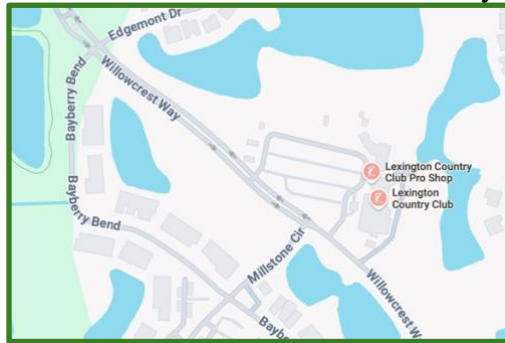
Lisa Crotty (lisajcrotty@gmail.com), Jemetta Hunt (jemetta@aol.com)
or Bonnie Ryan (bonniemarieryan@aol.com)

**Join us for our March Luncheon and Program
at the Lexington Country Club
in the Main Dining Room**



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 to the left.)



Our Meeting Date:

Saturday, March 15, 2025

Gathering: 11:30 AM

We will order from the “Club Favorites” menu rather than ordering in advance.
We ask that you make a reservation to allow us to have the proper size area
assigned and for Lexington to allot the proper staffing.

For your reservation, please email:

aauwleecounty@gmail.com no later than Tuesday, March 11.



AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County
P.O. Box 2115
Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115

<https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net>

Our local e-mail address:
aauwleecounty@gmail.com

Our National Organization
<https://www.aauw.org>

Facebook, linked from the website and the direct link:

<https://www.facebook.com/AAUW-Fort-Myers-Lee-County-Branch-107794550957375>



OH, SO MANY WAYS TO GET YOUR MONEY!

- Lottery, sweepstakes, and competition scams
- Computer hacking
- Online shopping scams
- Banking, credit card, and online account scams
- Job and employment scams
- Government imposter scams

OUR LUNCHEON PROGRAM

Saturday, March 15, 2025

According to the FBI, there were 880,418 reports of fraud in 2023 resulting in \$12.5 billion losses through theft. According to FTC reports, \$10 billion was lost to fraud in 2023. The financial losses are believed to be grossly understated due to many crimes not being reported out of the victim's sense of shame and fear of public reaction.

Anyone can be scammed,

and the schemes are becoming more sophisticated each day.

Mary Ellen Strange, is one of those affected, having suffered life-altering losses just last summer. She is now anxious to educate others on how to avoid such scams and prevent this from happening to anyone else.



**Learn what to watch for and how you can
protect yourself and your financial future.**



Looking Ahead

Theater Event for December
Entertain your family and visiting friends. Get into the holiday mood!



WE HAVE RESERVED THE ENTIRE



There will be a **MATINEE PERFORMANCE DECEMBER 9 EXCLUSIVELY** for our AAUW members and their guests. You can get the best seating by sending in your request for the number of seats you want to reserve right now. (Handicap accommodation is available.)
When the tickets go on sale in the fall, you will be at the top of the list, and you can purchase them then.



Make your reservation by email. Include your name and contact information: address, e-mail, and phone number.

aauwleecounty@gmail.com



Scholarship Co-Chairs: Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

On February 1, Devera, Ron Glasgow, Cathy Tucker, and Cheryl Tromley went to the Water School at FGCU to select our STEM scholars at the *Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair* and the Junior Division of the *Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventor's Fair*. What an amazing day it was. It was so energizing to be among so many talented, dedicated, and excited young people from elementary through high school.

One of the exciting things about our two high-school winners is that both their projects were inspired by issues faced by members of their families, and they were motivated to find out if they could do something that would help them. Amazing and inspiring!!

The AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award, provides a \$500 prize to a promising female entrant in the Thomas Alva Edison & Kiwanis Regional Science and Engineering Fair.

Our winners are:

Anayah Chowdhury and Natalia Rodriguez for their project:
The Differential Impact of Natural Substitutes of Anti-Fibrotic Agents on Tissue Regeneration and Healing Processes in Daphnia: Assessing the Role of Scarring Reduction and Recovery Enhancement Following Traumatic Injury.

This project also won in the regional fair and is on to the state competition. In addition, Anayah also won our scholarship last year.

The AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award, provides a \$500 prize to a female entrant for a project that shows promise with the purpose of encouraging her participation in future years.

Our winners are:

Lauren Swanson and Liya Brown for their project:
Probiotics in Action: Advancing the Science of Gut Health.

Now for our Middle School inventors in the AAUW Junior Division **Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair**.

There were no sixth-grade projects from Lee County, so we elected to give two awards to deserving seventh grade projects. The ability of these young people to find novel ways to solve some of the problems we are all facing was inspiring.

Seventh Grade:

1. *Madison Buermann*
The Fenceless Puppy Door
Cheryl Tomley says, "As puppy owner, I thought this was a great idea and will love to have one when they become available."
2. *Reagan Marks*
Sensory Glider
This invention is geared to kids with special needs.
Devera Graf, who taught Special Education for 25 years, thought this would be very helpful in the classroom; and, as she told Reagan Marks, she would use it in her classroom if she were still teaching.

Eighth Grade:

*Farjana Hera and Mariana Mejia
Aquahook.*

This is a devise designed to be attached to boats to help clean the water and could benefit the environment.

Marie Glasgow and AAUW Friends STEM Award Fund: Festival of Light Regional Inventor's Fair. The projects could benefit mankind or the environment.

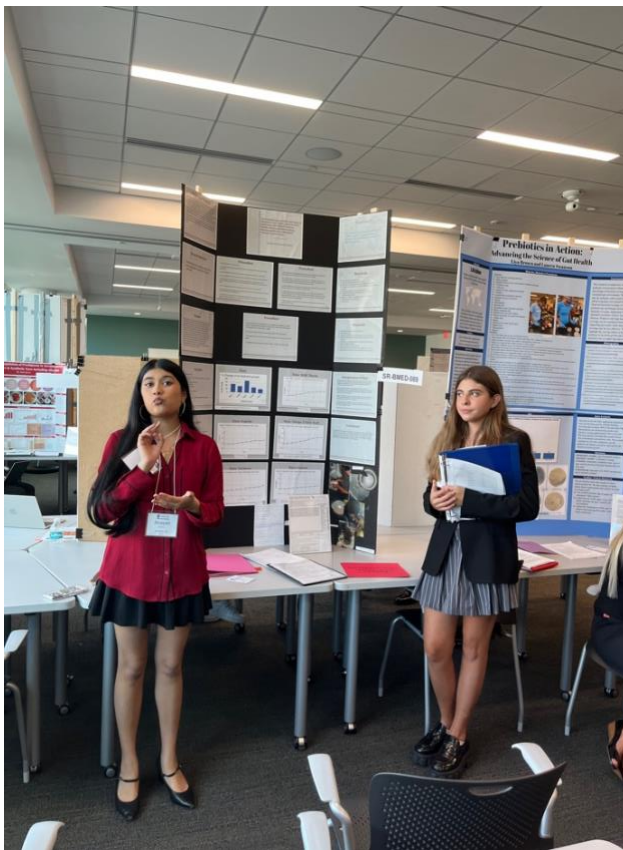
Lela Alsalman

Safe Splash: A Novel Bluetooth Enabled Infrared Motion Sensor for Child Drowning Prevention.

A worthy enhancement to existing products that would be a benefit to anyone with a pool.

Congratulations to all our NEW SCHOLARS

You are urged to attend our Scholarship Luncheon on April 12. Come meet the winners and take advantage of the opportunity to see firsthand the importance of your generous donations.



Our Scholarships

AAUW Star Bright Scholarships: Established in 2005, by Book Club 3, to provide branch members with the opportunity to make donations honoring friends and commemorating special events, this scholarship awards two \$2,000 scholarships to female students attending their second semesters at Cape Coral Technical College and Fort Myers Technical College. The latter is a sponsored scholarship, the “AAUW Violet Roberts Star Bright Scholarship.”

AAUW Lee County High School Scholarship: Established in 2011 in memory of Jane Wagner, a three-term branch president. It awards two \$2,000 scholarships per year to graduating female students with financial need chosen by the school counselor. The award and is paid to the college of the recipient’s choice.

AAUW STEM Awards:

- 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 first award, the **AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award**, provides a \$500 prize to a promising female entrant. The second award, the **AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award**, provides a \$500 prize to a female entrant for a project that shows promise with the goal of encouraging her participation in future years.
- Established in 2025 to encourage middle school girls in STEM fields, this scholarship awards \$200 to three entrants (one each in

grades six, seven, and eight) in the Junior Division of the *Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair*.

Marie Glasgow and AAUW Friends STEM Award Fund: Established in 2019 in honor of Marie Glasgow, president of AAUW Fort Myers/Lee Co. branch for two terms, it is awarded each year with the goal of improving educational opportunities by rewarding young Middle School girl(s) who are winners at the Junior Division of Edison-Kiwanis Science Fair or Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair. In even numbered years the award will go to a Lee County Middle School girl (grades 6-8) participating in the Junior Division of the Edison-Kiwanis **Regional Science Fair**. The winner should demonstrate meritorious effort

AAUW FGCU Endowed Scholarship: Established in 2000, it awards one (approximately) \$2,000 scholarship to a female student who resides in the five-county (Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry) area, with financial need, pursuing an undergraduate degree at FGCU. Priority is given to the current awardee.

AAUW Sue Gottcent Memorial Endowed Scholarship: Established in 2006 with a bequest from the estate of member Sue Gottcent, who was an avid supporter of AAUW’s mission. It awards one \$2,000 scholarship to a Lee County female student aged 25 or older, with demonstrated financial need, who attends an institute of higher education that is part of the Florida State University system. Priority us given to the current awardee.

AAUW FSW State College Endowed Scholarship: Established in 2000, it awards one (approximately) \$1,000 scholarship to a female Lee County student with financial need attending the Fort Myers Campus of FSW. Priority is given to the current awardee.

AAUW Book Clubs

New members are welcome

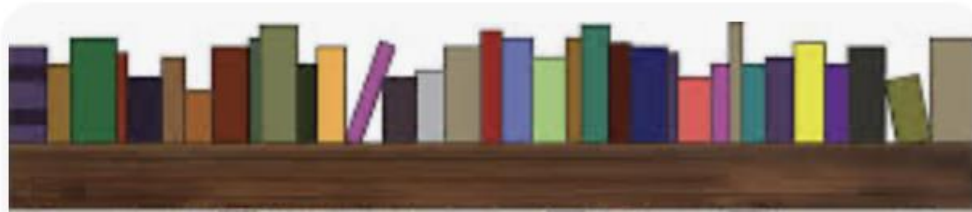
Cover Girls Book Club is meeting in members' homes. Zoom will be available for those who are out of town or unable to otherwise attend. The meeting time is generally the second Wednesday of each month from 1 pm to 3 pm.

The selection for March will be *Mad Honey* by Jodi Picoult to be held at the home of Judi Dixon. In April, the group will be reading *The Mango Tree* by Anabelle Tometich.

Contact Carol **Fuechsel** at cbfuechsel@gmail.com for more information

Page Turners This group will not be meeting until early 2025. The group generally meets in Lakes Library.

Contact Lois Benedetto for more information: benedetl@georgetown.edu



The April Great Decisions meeting will take place Friday, April 4, at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. Kath Haibach will be leading a discussion on the topic, "Competition, Cold War, or Conflict? Navigating U.S.-China Relations in Tense Times." There is an extra book available. If anyone is interested in joining, contact Suzan Harden. This will be the third of eight discussions in 2025, so there is plenty of time left to get involved!

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW FL 2025 PUBLIC POLICY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
Legislative Session Begins Tuesday, March 4, 2025
Report for March

Bill Number Topics	Sponsors	Bill Summary	Current Activity	Support/ Oppose
HB 61/SB72 Use of Campaign Funds for Child Care	House: Kelly Skidmore, Jennifer (Rita) Harris Senate: Lori Berman	Candidates can use campaign funds to pay for childcare expenses if the expense occurs only because of the campaign. Funds cannot be used for normal living expenses. Details must be reported on campaign finance reports.	House: Gov't. Operations Subcommittee State Affairs Committee Senate: Ethics and Elections (favorable 2/18) Judiciary Rules	Support
HB19/SB240 Victims of Domestic Violence and Dating Violence HB41/SB242 Public Records and Meetings - HAVEN	HB19/SB 240 House: Webster Barnaby; Yvonne Hinson Senate: Lori Berman; Ana Marie Rodriquez (Numerous co- sponsors) HB41/SB242 House: Yvonne Hinson Senate: Lori Berman	HB19/SB240 would establish the Helping Abuse Victims Escape Now (HAVEN) Coordinating Council within FDLE. The Council will develop a dynamic website that would allow users to create unique and confidential identifying codes to be used to seek help. HB41/SB242 establishes guidelines for protecting the privacy of users while meeting government transparency laws. Both sets of bills must pass to implement the program.	HB19/HB41 referred to: Criminal Justice Subcommittee Gov't. Operations Subcommittee Judiciary Committee SB240/SB242 Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee on Criminal & Civil Justice Fiscal Policy	Support

PUBLIC POLICY

Bill Number Topics	Sponsors	Bill Summary	Current Activity	Support/ Oppose
SB76 (No companion bill in House, yet.)	Senate: Lori Berman	Would provide eligibility for 12 weeks of paid leave for state Career Services workers following the birth or adoption of a child. Would affect approximately 80,000 workers within 28 state agencies, the largest and lowest-paid category of state employees. Employees could not be forced to use annual or sick leave and would continue to accrue benefits.	Senate: Governmental Oversight and Accountability Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government Appropriations	Support
HB63/SB934 Pregnancy Support & Wellness Services	House: Kelly Skidmore Senate: Carlos Guillermo Smith	Mandates increased accountability for women's health centers in FL's Pregnancy Care Network. Requires: background screenings for employees; provision of medically accurate health care information; the availability of info regarding local rape crisis centers; at least one unannounced annual visit to each center to verify compliance.	House: Health Professions and Programs Subcommittee Health & Human Services Committee Senate: Filed 2/20/25	Support
HB145/SB206 Pregnant Women in Custody (Ava's Law)	House: Dianne Hart Senate: Shevrin Jones	Mandates: female arrestees must be notified of their right to request a pregnancy test; consideration of a stay of up to 12 weeks after birth for pregnant women who are convicted; offer of a postpartum assessment and support services within 10 days after beginning of sentence; Dep't. of Corrections must collect and report info on pregnant women in custody.	House: Criminal Justice Subcommittee Judiciary Committee Senate: Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee on Criminal & Civil Justice Fiscal Policy	Support

Notes

Your FL state legislators are listed on the Lee County Elections website, www.lee.vote.

To learn more about your legislators, read the full text of any bill, and track any bill, go to the following sites:

PUBLIC POLICY

The February AAUW-FL Public Policy Forum was held on Thursday, February 13. Pat DeWitt, co-chair of the AAUW-FL Public Policy Committee, led a review of the bills AAUW-FL has identified for advocacy during the 2025 Legislative Session, which began Tuesday, March 4. A list of those bills, their sponsors, and highlights appears elsewhere in this edition of the Torch.

The next Public Policy Forum is Thursday, March 6, at 6 p.m. Dr. Mary Gatta, co-chair of the AAUW-FL Public Policy Committee, will discuss “Pay Gap, Caregiving, and Economic Security.” Dr. Gatta works for the National Association of Colleges and Employers in research and public policy. These meetings last one hour. You must register to attend, but there is no charge. Go to <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net/public-policy-issue-forums/> to register. You will get a confirmation email; right before the event, you will receive the 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	Topic	Presenter
Thurs., Mar. 6	Pay Gap, Caregiving, and Economic Security	Dr. Mary Gatta, AAUW FL Co-Public Policy Director, Research and Public Policy, National Association of Colleges and Employers
Thurs., Apr. 3	Gender and Race Equity in STEM	Amanda Koontz, Professor 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 <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net/public-policy-issue-forums/>. 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

AAUW-FL Lobby Days

AAUW-FL members will travel to Tallahassee March 17-19 to meet with legislators and observe legislative proceedings. Members will meet Monday evening for dinner and to go over procedures and review discussion points. Tuesday will be a full day of lobbying. Wednesday will also be a lobby day, but members can leave whenever they need to do so since Florida travel distances are long! A limited number of rooms has been reserved at the TRYP by Wyndham on I-10. The cost per night is \$159.85, including taxes and fees. AAUW-FL offers partial reimbursement for travel, hotel, meals, and transportation from the hotel to the Capitol.

You do not have to attend Lobby Days to advocate for AAUW’s mission. Email, post cards, letters, and calls from home can all be part of the effort. There will be more information at the March meeting.

2024-2025 MEETING DATES and TORCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

SEND ARTICLES TO peggycihi@comcast.net

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 5, 2024
*Bingo Dinner December 10	November 20, 2024	November 28 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

**Unusual Day and Date*

IN RECOGNITION OF

ST. PATRICK'S DAY, IRISH HERITAGE MONTH & WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Woman of Interest

TERESA LAMBE

Professor Teresa Lambe is the Calleva Head of Vaccine Immunology and a Professor of Vaccinology & Immunology and PSI Investigator at the University of Oxford. She is leading a research group which improves human health by controlling disease through vaccination – stopping epidemics before they become pandemics.

Professor Lambe is one of the Principal Investigators overseeing the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine program; she co-designed the vaccine in January 2020, led the preclinical studies, and then oversaw the delivery of the immune results needed to support regulatory approval in late 2020. The vaccine has played a pivotal role in the fight against COVID – estimated to have saved >6 million lives globally in 2021 alone. Prof. Lambe was appointed as an honorary OBE for her services to Sciences and Public Health in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honors and received the **Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad in 2022.**



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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

Coordinator: Lois McDougall
lois.mcdougall@yahoo.com

Cover Girls Book Club

Carol Fueschsel cbfuechsel@gmail.com

Page Turners Book Club

Lois Benedetto
benedetl@georgetown.edu

Guided Nature Excursions

Coordinator: Jemetta Hunt
jemetta@aol.com

Great Decisions

For information, see
[Foreign Policy Association website](#)

Coordinator: Suzan Harden
Skh062653@gmail.com

Hand & Foot

Coordinator: Carolyn Nance
cnance5240@gmail.com

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

Mahjong

Coordinator: Carolyn Nance
cnance5204@gmail.com

Tools for Advocacy

[Sign up for Two Minute Activist](#)

Coordinator: Suzan Harden
Skh062653@gmail.com

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 –
Tamara Pigott
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 Cih, Astoria Aviles
Ways and Means – Astoria Aviles

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)



7 - Jeannette Ion
 19 - Bonnie Ryan
 30 - Mary Jane McDowell

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SEND ARTICLES TO peggycihi@comcast.net

Meeting Date	Deadline for Articles	Mail Torch Date
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**Unusual Day and Date*

Please note the next Torch article due date: March 19



AAUW American Association of University Women

Fort Myers / Lee County (FL) Branch Inc.

PO Box 2115
Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115

Donate Today to help the Fort Myers Branch Advance Equity for Women

Use my Gift for: ___ **Operating Expenses** ___ **Unrestricted** ___ **Scholarships*** ___

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State & Zip _____

Phone: (Mobile) _____ (Home) _____

Email: _____

Donation Amount ___ **\$25** ___ **\$50** ___ **\$100** or **Other Amount \$** _____

Is the gift in honor or memory of someone? If so please complete the following:

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Contact information for person honored or family of person remembered:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

Note: Should you want to specify a specific Branch scholarship or award please name below: (See list under: <https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net> under tab Philanthropy; Scholarships, 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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