

WEST HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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morriscs@aol.com

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January Newsletter deadline:

December 15, 2020



President's Message

Dear Members,

Happy Holidays! Would you like to get together with a few friends but need help accessing Zoom? You can use our AAUW account. The account can be used by members to keep in touch with other members, even former members. Why not plan a virtual holiday party with some of your AAUW friends. Just email me at morriscs@aol.com to arrange a day and time.

Many AAUW members in Orange, TX have been hit hard by the series of hurricanes that went through the area this year. I asked our district representative, Betsy Cabalro, for the addresses of the members so we can express sympathy and invite them to our Zoom meetings and activities. Many are just now getting some services back. Our board will reach out by email, but a snail mail letter is always more personal. If you would like to write a note, please let me know. I will be happy to pair you with a name and send you the address.

Are you missing the Cultural Tours? I am! I recently watched a Preservation Houston tour of Mission Control at NASA. It was a wonderful walk down memory lane. Check out this link for interesting Houston tours
<https://preservationhouston.org/goodbricktour>.

Arlene Baker called to thank all her WHC friends for making her move so much easier. She is now settled in her apartment. Do you know AAUW members who have moved? Sometimes in the excitement of the move, they forget to send us their new address. Please help us keep our database up-to-date. While we have joined together because we believe in equity for women, our branch is strong because of the relationships developed between members.

All I want for Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanza, and all the other holidays is a good vaccine!

*Stay Safe! Have Fun!
Carolyn Morris
Branch President*

Note:

There is no monthly meeting and program in December.



Membership

As the holidays draw near, please remember that we have many members in a restrained environment due to the COVID-Virus. Most members can still be reached by telephone or email. As we found back in the Spring, reaching out to our friends in WHC-AAUW means a lot; that we care! Please share a few minutes of your time with any of those on your page of the wonderful directory that you received recently.



Remember, you can sign up with Rose Ennis for "Meet a Member in December" event.
roseennis@att.net or [281-755-6483](tel:281-755-6483)

Stay safe and **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Carolyn Stoffel
Membership Chair



Five Star Recognition Program



AAUW's Five Star Recognition Program rewards affiliate branches for aligning our local work with AAUW's Strategic Plan to advance gender equity for women and girls. AAUW-West Harris County Branch recently received our first Star in the area of Communication and External Relations. Susan Boone's excellent work updating our website helped us earn this Star. Please visit aauw-whc.org to see the changes. Susan has done an incredible job, so please check it out! Everything you want to know about our branch can now be found online.

Four additional Stars are being sought: Programs, Advancement, Public Policy & Research, and Governance & Sustainability. Future newsletters will keep you apprised of our progress.

Mary Peterson and Rose Ennis

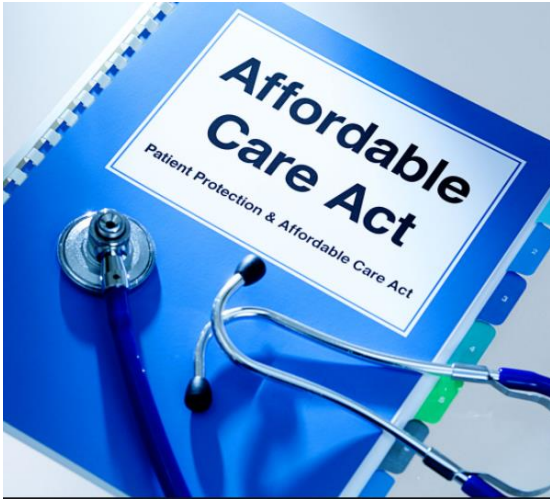
Public Policy

Healthcare Access

The American Association of University Women believes that everyone is entitled to high-quality, affordable, and accessible health care.

We are familiar with the threat of losing coverage under the ACA for pre-existing conditions and for adult children over the age of 26. However, there is a less known risk.

The Affordable Care Act has made a significant impact on women's health.



- **Fewer women of reproductive age are uninsured.** The number of uninsured women ages 15–44 has dropped by 36 percent under the first two full years of ACA implementation
- **The practice of “gender rating” ended.** Now banned by the ACA, gender rating is the process by which insurance companies charge men and women different premiums for individually purchased health care plans.
- **Coverage of women's reproductive health services is required.** Under the ACA's coverage of contraception, 67 percent more women have been able to access birth control without a co-pay, which has led to a decline in unplanned pregnancies.

· **The ACA ensured access to and coverage of preventive services and care.** The ACA has secured preventive services to women including contraception, breastfeeding support, and sexually transmitted infection and HIV screenings.

Health care security is intrinsically tied to economic security, and this relationship is particularly true for women who earn less than men on average and less able to afford insurance or care. Despite massive spending, health care outcomes in the United States continue to lag behind many other Western nations.

The ACA is making progress in reducing ethnic disparities in health care access, with 5.2 percent more young women, 5.1 percent more black women, and 6.5 percent more Hispanic women gaining access to a regular source of care. According to the Department of Labor, women make approximately 80 percent of all family health care decisions, and about 60 percent of women report that they assume primary responsibility for decisions regarding family health insurance plans.

When it comes to their own health care, women face unique challenges. Women earn around 80 cents for every dollar men earn, but also utilize more health care services than men. As a result, women face a high level of health care insecurity. Too many women and their families are left with unpaid medical bills and long-lasting debt problems.



Two major challenges to ACA are important to note: The Supreme Court ruled that the federal government cannot make states' current Medicaid funds contingent on participating in Medicaid expansion. The 2019 edition of a report on health care by The Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation focused on promoting high-performing health care systems, ranks Texas last in access and affordability. One of the authors of the report told *Houston Matters* that Texas' failure to expand Medicaid eligibility is a crucial factor to explain the poor ranking.

Congressional Republicans would like to change the structure of Medicaid by converting it into a block grant, providing a set dollar amount for each state. By changing how Medicaid works, states would gain the ability to restrict eligibility, cut benefits, and increase barriers to enrollment. As healthcare coverage changes and new legislation is introduced, we must continue to let our legislators know that we support quality, affordable, and accessible health care for all.

Diane Statham
Public Policy

Thinking of Your Good Health: Get Out to Enjoy the Weather!

Are you ready to get out, but do not feel comfortable with what or who you might encounter? Taking a walk in this now cooler, fall weather, is more and more of an option for you to consider. It will do wonders for your heart and your mind. Masks are not required if you are outdoors and using social distancing. Many people you encounter in the parks are wearing masks. I keep mine handy when I go out, especially if I stop and ask questions or talk.



The first is Buffalo Bayou Park just west of downtown Houston. Celebrating its 5-year anniversary with a new art installation, the park has proven to be resilient during our storms. Especially during the weekday, you will not find this park crowded. This special space has lovely art, over 4 miles of walking trails, all within eyesight of the bayou. The trees, flowers, insects, reptiles, and animals are natives. You might even see

some canoers or kayakers. Parking is available at the Dunlavy on Allen Parkway (closed but the parking lot is available), and at the cistern on Sabine Street (take the tour, check out the visitor center, and bathrooms) or along Allen Parkway using Park Houston meters.

My second suggestion is the newly designed Arboretum on Memorial Drive. Thursdays feature free parking. The flora and fauna are teeming in this rejuvenated park full of trails, signage, and a nature center. It is a good place to wander. You will not have to walk far before you spot something moving in a pond, in a tree, or beside the trail.



Lastly, Edith Moore Bird Sanctuary is located on Memorial Drive on the west side and serves as the headquarters of Houston Audubon Society. This park has a lovely array of paths through the woods. Catch the large assortment of birds that make this nature preserve their home. There is ample parking in the front and back of this park at no charge.

For more help with these ideas, you can contact Jane Wood at 832-767-4146.

Chapter Wellness Network

The last eleven months have been uniquely instructive; life has changed and will remain somewhat challenging in 2021. The incidence of loneliness-related depression, stress, the loss of social engagement, and compromised personal security are rising as people cancel activities or appointments, and sometimes skimp on basic self-care requiring visits to public spaces. Nearly half of adults ages 65+ report worry and stress around the coronavirus pandemic; nearly one quarter report depression and loneliness.

The way we go about our daily lives today is significantly different, leaving many of us more vulnerable and disconnected. In our chapter, Zoom has been implemented for a number of activities, but many members, like myself, live alone with very little regular social contact and no family close by. Having a local “buddy” is a real mental health and safety benefit to both individuals.

Establishing an informal “buddy” system to check on each other is one way we can leverage our association to help break up long days at home, safely engage socially to reduce the stress of isolation, and make sure everyone is physically well. The simple act of texting, emailing or calling just one person each day can extend some much-needed interaction and engagement during this difficult time.



This kind of simple commitment can also save lives; it saved my mother-in-law’s life when she developed pneumonia and lapsed into feverish delirium. It saved my neighbor last week when she fell on her slippery sidewalk walking out for the newspaper. With the Coronavirus spreading widely, having someone ask after our health is prudent and caring.

There is no formula or structure required for this activity. Simply arrange to text, email, or call another chapter member by a set time each day. It is a “wellness check,” a simple way to make sure everyone has someone who is aware of their situation and will investigate if no message is received or returned.

If you would like to share information about your “buddy” arrangement, have one person send me the names, phone numbers and email addresses. I will create a spreadsheet to share with our Board in case a concern or need arises.

Sources:

Christine Moutier. COVID-19: We Must Care for Older Adults’ Mental Health, (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Mar 23, 2020) <https://afsp.org/story/covid-19-we-must-care-for-older-adults-mental-health> (Accessed Nov 10, 2020).

Wyatt Koma, Sarah True, Jeannie Fuglesten Biniek, Juliette Cubanski, Kendal Orgera, and Rachel Garfield. One in Four Older Adults Report Anxiety or Depression Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, (KFF, Oct 09, 2020) <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/one-in-four-older-adults-report-anxiety-or-depression-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/> (Accessed Nov 11, 2020).

Janice Feistel-McNeil

DECEMBER, 2020 ACTIVITIES & INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Sharon Jorgeson, Activities Coordinator

Book Groups

All groups are meeting via Zoom until further notice. Please contact Coordinator or Co-coordinator if interested in joining the group and to be put on contact list. Group members will be contacted prior to each book club meeting with Zoom information.

Afternoon Contemporary Literature

Wednesday, December 2, 1:30 p.m. The Dutch House by Ann Patchett. Coordinator, Daphne Scharar 713-412-2140, dascharar@gmail.com, Co-Coordinator, Linda Morgan, 281-293-0976, amorgan352@sbcglobal.net.

Evening Contemporary Literature

Monday, December 7, 3:30 p.m. The Sisters Weiss by Naomi Ragen. Coordinator, Jo Glidewell, 936-327-2085, WCGLIDE@gmail.com. Co-Coordinator, Sharon Jorgeson, 281-703-5939, sjorgeson@gmail.com.

Contemporary Readers

Wednesday, December 2, 1:00 p.m. The End of Your Life Book Club by Will Schwalbe. Coordinator, Margaret Gruss, 281-589-0411, mgruss@att.net. Co-Coordinator, Sharon Pope, 713-376-0940, slpope@comcast.net.

Mystery Book Club

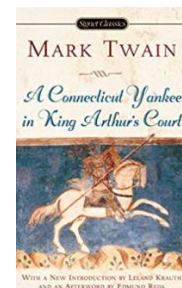
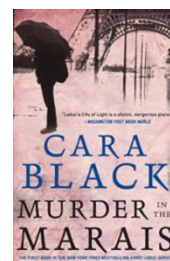
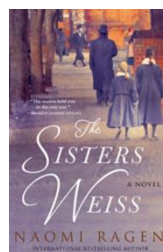
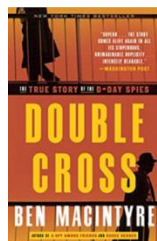
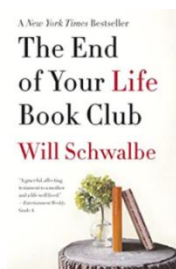
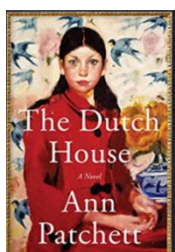
Tuesday, December 15, 1:30 p.m. Murder in the Marais by Cara Black. Coordinator, Melba Armstrong, 281-392-3190, armstrong.melba@comcast.net. Co-Coordinator, Pat Pease, 713-824-1681. popease@aol.com.

Enjoying History Book Club

Tuesday, December 14, 1:30 pm. Double Cross by Ben Macintyre. Coordinator, Nancy Guilloud, 713-785-6336, nanguilloud@aol.com

Outstanding Literature

Tuesday, December 8, 9:30 a.m. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain. Coordinator, Leigh Rappole, 281-596-0161, leighrap@aol.com. Co-Coordinator, Barbara Butler, 713-305-0570, barbarabutler1959@att.net.



Hiking Honeys

There is no hike scheduled for December. If this changes, you will receive a notice from your coordinator. If you are interested in joining the Honeys, contact Melba Armstrong at 281.392.3190 or armstrong.melba@comcast.net.



Melba Armstrong

Garden Divas

The Garden Divas had a great time learning how to make wreaths in November and are looking forward to celebrating in December! In case you need some holiday inspiration you can view this instruction video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1kUKXIEouE&feature=youtu.be> (This is a 5 minute video and really is very good!)

The December 'EVENT' will be a 'Garden' Gift Exchange.

Our Diva email list is pretty large. I think it would be a LOT of fun to have a 'party' and be able to get in the spirit of the 'holidays in a cloud' (also known as virtually) with some folks that you may only know by email! We will be exchanging 'green' elephant gifts; with the same rules as white elephant, only based on a garden gift. (live, practical, or just cute!). Limit your gift to \$10-\$15, wrap it, and email a photo. Please let me know if you want to be part of the gift event by **December 4** by emailing smboone@gmail.com with a picture of your wrapped gift included in your RSVP. (ALL are welcome even if you have not been part of the Divas!) The celebration will be scheduled for **December 8 at 10:00 a.m.** Hope to see you then!



1. By Georgia Kimmel

We may not be able to compete with the poinsettias at Brookwood, but our cheer will be dear; I guarantee!

Hope to SEE you in December.
Susan Boone

WISE Women

Please join us for a WISE Zoom conversation **Monday Dec. 7th at 10:00** as we share a "cup of coffee" and learn about Jane Goodall. We will show video lessons on *Chimpanzee Behavior*, *Chimpanzee Development* and *Animal Intelligence*. Then discuss how her ideas and questions apply to us.



In November we watched her first 3 lessons hoping "Dreams of finding interconnections in the world will bring breakthroughs to our understanding of sustainability by studying outcomes of behavior." – Diana Please see <https://buildagarden.edublogs.org/bees/jane-goodall/> for more details.

You can sign up for her course at <https://www.masterclass.com>. Please let Karen North, Coordinator at knorth@me.com if you would like to join our Zoom conversation. She will send out a link on **Sunday Dec. 6th**.

Karen North

Byway Birders

Byway Birders will be looking for birds in December at Bear Creek and Paul Rushing Park. Some of the birds we have seen in the past at this time of year at Bear Creek are merlins, kestrels, robins, blue birds, woodpeckers and others. Ducks are the draw at Rushing Park. This will be done individually, not as a group. We will have a Zoom meeting at **7:00 p.m. on December 5th** to discuss our recent birding observations and recommendations. If you would like to be included in our birding conversations and you are not on the group list, please contact Coordinator, Pat Dach at patdach@gmail.com or Co-coordinator, Pat Pease at popease@aol.com.



Pat Dach



Great Decisions



The Great Decisions Thursday Afternoon Group 2021

This group will have its first meeting on Zoom, **Thursday, February 4, 2021 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.** The topic will be “Global Supply Chains and National Security”. The **February 18** meeting topic will be “Persian Gulf Security Issues”. All meetings will be via ZOOM until further notice. Briefing books for the spring discussions will arrive in January. Please contact Coordinator, Martha Ewell if you would like to join this group or have any questions, 713-782-2084 or marthaewell@att.net.

Great Decisions Inside the Loop

This group continues to meet via Zoom twice a month on **Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.** December meetings will be on **December 8 and 22**. The Zoom link will be sent in time for the meeting. All AAUW members are welcome. For more information, contact Coordinator, Pat Thomsen at 713-302-8899, patthom2@sbcglobal.net or Co-Coordinator, Linda Marlin at 832-533-31265, marlinl@comcast.net.

Great Decisions Evening Group

This group meets from **7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. the 2nd and 4th Wednesday February through May**. For additional information or order topic discussion book, contact Coordinator, Willette Norman at 281-497-3626 or willetten@gmail.com.

Bridge Groups – Various



Current Bridge Groups

1st Thursday (7:00 p.m.) Jane Judson 713-528-6105

3rd Thursday (10:30 a.m.) Peg McNealy 281-679-7299

3rd Monday (10:00 a.m.) Melba Armstrong 281-392-3190

The bridge groups are not planning on meeting in November.
If there is a change to this, you will be advised by your coordinator.

Vicarious Voyagers

There are no meetings currently scheduled for December. Depending on those in the group who wish to continue chatting via Zoom, plans will be determined for the new year. For more information please contact Diana or Nancy if you wish to be added to the group's distribution list. Coordinator, Diana Guarniere, 281-493-2997, guarniered@gmail.com. Co-Coordination, Nancy Bowden, 281-589-7423, nanbowd@sbcglobal.net.

Diana Guarniere

Classic Gourmet

Ongoing safety concerns related to the Coronavirus means we will not be able to gather in person to share a meal in the near future. We normally do not meet in December. On **January 9, 2021**, we will get together virtually to celebrate the Asian New Year with a Chinese menu and a glass of wine (or Tsingtao beer). There will be lots of conversation and laughter via Zoom. We have had great fun with every meal and this will be no different. For further information, please contact the co-coordinators: Barb Cook 713-705-7832, chefbjcook@sbcglobal.net or Kris Bybee-Finley 304-610-8708, brazitku@gmail.com.



Nouveau Gourmet



Nouveau Gourmet does not meet in December. Our next Zoom dinner will be in **January**. If you would like to join this group, please contact Coordinator, Diane Statham at distatham@msn.com or 281-497-6259.



Jane Wood Dec 6

Imelda Beauchamp Dec 7

Patricia Dach Dec 9

Margaret Gruss Dec 10

Fran Podell Dec 10

Cindy Hickok Dec 11

Anna Belle Anderson Dec 12

Bridgette Mongeon Dec 13

Jami Jones Dec 14

Jan Kerekgyarto Dec 14

Ruth Fowler Dec 16

Barbara Hopkins Dec 19

Peggy Strong Dec 20

Dede Statham Dec 22

Margaret Carlson Dec 23

Pat Pease Dec 26

Loretta Coussirat Dec 27

Mary Peterson Dec 27

Peg McNealy Dec 28

Directory Updates

Jane Wood (as of December 1, 2020)
1401 Calumet Street, Unit 304
Houston, TX 77004-7162

Julia Ray new address
5055 Gold Haven Dr.
Richmond, TX 77407

Anna Belle Anderson new address
14520 Highway 3, Apt. 1224,
Webster, TX 77598-1832.
cell phone numbers 713-822-9199.

Edie O'Brien new email edie.obrien@yahoo.com