

West Harris County Branch

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

Volume XXXXVI

April 2022 Newsletter

Issue 8

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May Deadline: April 15, 2022

Stay informed

Branch website: <u>aauw-whc.org</u>

National website: <u>aauw.org</u>



West Harris County Branch Meeting Saturday, April 23 at 9:30 a.m. Tracy Gee Community Center and Zoom



Guest speaker:

Bonnie Shereen

Please join at our April Branch meeting which will take place on Saturday, April 23 at Tracy Gee Community Center, program beginning at 10:00 a.m.

When we meet on April 23, we will have filed our taxes (hopefully), but did you know that April 16, the day after tax filing day, is National Healthcare Decision Day (NHDD)! This day was created to inspire, educate, and empower each of us about the importance of our advance care planning and to have a conversation with our loved ones regarding our wishes for healthcare emergency situations, whatever they may be.

To guide us through these steps and tell us more about advance care planning is our speaker, Bonnie Shereen. Bonnie is a licensed BCPA (Board Certified Patient Advocate) and has her own consultancy company called Houston Health Advocacy. Bonnie worked for many years as a medical video writer/producer for MD Anderson Cancer Center and was deeply involved in the patient stories she was hearing. She also worked as a writer/producer on Dr. "Red" Duke's weekly television program.

During her time in the Texas Medical Center, Bonnie acquired an insider view of our health care system. Bonnie shares that patient advocacy continues to be a rewarding journey for her.

Lilian Care, Program Vice President

Dear West Harris County Members,

It has been a busy month as we welcome spring and the delightful profusion of azaleas blanketing the Houston area.



I would be remiss if I did not begin by mentioning the flower that has been emblematic around the world in the last several weeks: the magnificent

sunflower, the national flower of Ukraine. I know our hearts are breaking as we watch the conflict on the news every day. Seeing the mothers and children fleeing their war-torn country is chilling to say the least. I encourage you to do whatever you can to help these refugees. There are so many worthwhile organizations where your help is needed and appreciated.

Our Annual Meeting held on March 19, 2022, was a great success. Attendance in person continues to rise as the Covid numbers in our area diminish and members are vaccinated. Thanks to Sharon Jorgeson and her committee for their work on presenting the slate of nominees for the 2022-2023 Board of Directors positions. The slate was unanimously elected by acclamation. Please plan to attend the Spring

Luncheon on June 4th when the formal transition of Board Members occurs. The date and place for the luncheon will be confirmed soon.

Work continues on the Golden Opportunity themed State Convening on April 30, 2022, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Everyone should have received an emailed copy of the University of Woman Texas newsletter in the last week. It details the specific times of the 5 featured speakers along with their backgrounds. Attendance is on Zoom and free for members. You will have to register to obtain the Zoom link. The link will be sent to your email one week before the event and the day before the conference.



Also, be on the lookout for an email regarding the AAUW Texas Board of Directors election and voting on the proposed bylaw changes that will occur between April 1-15, 2022. A complete breakdown was also featured in the aforementioned state newsletter.

Hoping to see many of you in April as there are so many fantastic activities to attend. Get your calendar out and sign up now. Feel free to attend a program that you might want to learn more about by contacting the coordinators(s) in the newsletter.

Cheers, Rose Ennis, President

Save the Date: Sunday, May 1, Talbot's Style Show



Great news! With COVID numbers falling in Harris County, we invite you and your guests to save Sunday, May 1, around 6 p.m. for our 2022 Talbot's Style Show!

With less than a thousand dollars to go to reach our national fundraising goal, ticket sales for this West Harris County Branch tradition will surely put us over the top. More to come, and please spread the word within your activity groups!

Debbie Campbell



Election Of Branch Officers

Congratulations to the new West Harris Branch officers who were elected at the March 19, 2022 branch meeting.

President-elect: Pat Farnell Program Vice President: Carolyn Stoffel Assistant Vice President of AAUW Funds: Diane Statham Recording Secretary: Sheila Jaynes These new officers will be installed at the branch meeting in June.



A sincere thank you to each of them for their willingness to share their time and talents with the WHC Branch.

Sharon Jorgeson

Membership

June Luncheon

Save the date, June 4, 2022, for our June Luncheon in person! Details are being worked on as to WHERE, but the date is set. We hope to have our scholarship recipients in attendance with a family member. Our plan is to give members choices of food in advance as was done for our Holiday Party.

National Membership dues is going up to \$67.00 this year; State and Branch dues will remain the same, \$13.00 and \$11.00 respectively. We have five prospective members waiting to join. Please let me know if anyone has other names to be added for membership. The August Coffee for New Members is not that far away!

Stay safe and Happy Spring, Carolyn Stoffel VP Membership

Baker/Telfer Scholarships

Please use word of mouth and social media to spread the word about the Baker/Telfer Scholarship. The application is due Wednesday, April 13, 2022, at 11:59PM. More information is found at the following web address. <u>https://westharriscounty-tx.aauw.net/about/scholarships/</u>.

The Baker/Telfer Fund will Award THREE \$2,000 scholarships to senior high school girls entering a field in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics. Each awardee must be enrolled in one of the following school districts: Alief ISD, Spring Branch ISD, or Houston ISD. There is one scholarship for a student in each school district.



Please make this scholarship known to social and church groups, neighbors, friends, and educators. Posting on the social media outlet, Nextdoor, would be very helpful. Thank you for your help!

Carolyn Morris

Public Policy

Why Do Women Have Less Money in Retirement Than Men?

While the gender wage gap has narrowed over the past few decades, one of the primary reasons women have less retirement savings than men is due to lower lifetime earnings. There are many contributing factors:

Lower Earnings Over Their Lifetimes

When they are working, women on average earn less than their male counterparts. Attempting to close this pay gap is the reason AAUW established the "Start Smart" and "Work Smart" programs. Through these workshops, women learn to research their target salary, highlight their accomplishments, and find the right words—and the confidence—to negotiate for better benefits and pay. Negotiating increases their potential to earn more early in their careers and can make enormous differences throughout their lifetimes for paying off loans, supporting their families, and saving for retirement.

Unpaid Caregivers



Women tend to have more frequent breaks in employment due to childbearing, childcare, or caring for elderly parents or relatives. This results in average lifetime earnings being substantially lower for women than for men. Primarily, women provide a majority of unpaid family caregiving, which can lead women to interrupt their careers, seek part-time jobs in the market, or work in low-wage occupations to maintain flexibility.

Longer Life Spans

Women often have insufficient retirement funds because **they tend to live longer than men**, which means they need more savings despite earning less than men do. In 2020, the average life expectancy for women at age 65 was 21.1 years. For men at age 65, it was 18.6 years. Women, on average, are more likely to outlive accumulated personal assets and may therefore be more dependent on Social Security. It is good news that we are living longer than our parents and grandparents. However, our longer lifetimes also lead to significant increases in out-of-pocket medical costs, even with benefits provided by Medicare and Medicaid.



Divorce or Prior Death of Spouse

Women are more likely than men to be unmarried (single, widowed, or divorced) at older ages in retirement. Widow(er)s can continue to be eligible for survivor benefits, but these benefits may be reduced or curtailed upon remarriage before age 60. Furthermore, those who have been divorced before ten years of marriage may not be entitled to survivor benefits at the time of the Social Security beneficiary's death.

Pensions

Pension systems around the world require or encourage the provision of financial support from a range of sources for retired individuals. Yet, every system provides higher retirement income to men than women. This is because the origins of most pension systems have been developed on the basis of a "normal life course," which inevitably defines a standard. This often implies <u>continuous full-time employment for decades</u>. But such assumptions do not represent reality for many women in the workforce due to breaks in service such as leaves for maternity and caregiving.

Lack of Financial Planning

Women are not encouraged to think about money in the way that men often are. The side effect to that is women are often left out of really important financial conversations and planning for their later years.

COVID Has Made it Worse

Over the past two years, women, especially women of color, were pushed into part-time or seasonal work, or out of the workforce all together because of COVID. More than 2.3 million women have left the workforce since February 2020, bringing their labor force



participation rate down to levels not seen in more than three decades. According to a January 2021 survey by Nationwide Retirement Institute, 72% of women with investable assets reported the crisis has negatively impacted their ability to retire.



Higher Poverty

The overall elderly poverty rate is higher among women than men with 12% of women in poverty compared with 7% of men. Unmarried women—including those who are widowed, divorced, or never married—are significantly more likely than unmarried men to be poor. The unmarried elderly are disproportionately poorer than the married elderly. Never-married individuals represent about 5% of the elderly, but 12% of the elderly poor. Likewise, divorced individuals make up 12% of the elderly and 20% of the elderly poor. Widowed individuals make up 25% of the elderly, but 37% of the elderly poor.

Social Security

Thus, women generally receive smaller monthly Social Security benefits as compared to men based on their own employment and earnings histories. The basic benefit structure of the Social Security system has remained unchanged in principle, though modified in many details, since <u>1939</u>. Social Security provides benefits on a gender-neutral basis. Benefits are based on an individual's earnings record, employment history, and family composition. However, gender-related differences in the



American work culture mean that, in reality, Social Security provides different levels of retirement security for women and men. When the current benefits structure was set up, the traditional roles of men in the family as primary wage earners and women as primary childcare providers were predominant. The system provides higher benefits relative to contributions to married couples with a primary wage earner compared to unmarried individuals and couples where both spouses work and earn about the same total amount. As women have increasingly assumed roles as single heads of families or as co-equal wage earners in their families, situations frequently arise where Social Security provides lower benefits for the same contributions, or requires significantly higher contributions with little, if any, increase in benefits compared to the "traditional" family.

What are potential solutions to the gender retirement gap?

- The continued narrowing of the gender pay gap—which has been improving over time—will help.
- Employers can implement more flexible workplaces and policies that will encourage more women to join and remain in the workforce. The pandemic has proven that alternative styles of working can thrive.
- Parental leave for mothers <u>and fathers</u> will lessen the burden on women, typically the primary caregivers. And more gender balance at all levels of an organization will empower women.
- Systems that include private investments in the markets must increase their efforts to promote financial literacy, especially to women.
- Governments can do their part by increasing access to affordable childcare, the lack of which drives many women out of the workforce. Plans should continue to accrue benefits for women during periods of leave. And pension rights must be considered if a divorce occurs; this can and should be codified into law.
- A system like Social Security or traditional workplace plans must not punish women for leaving the workforce, even temporarily, to care for infirm relatives or young children.
- Policymakers who are evaluating various options to reform the Social Security system should consider that Social Security remains an extremely important source of retirement income for women. This reliance on Social Security suggests that proposals to address the unique issues of women and dual-earner families should be studied carefully and modeled to show the impact on families/beneficiaries in a variety of situations before being adopted.

How does the gender pay gap affect savings and retirement planning? A lower salary equals lower pension contributions and therefore less to live on in retirement.

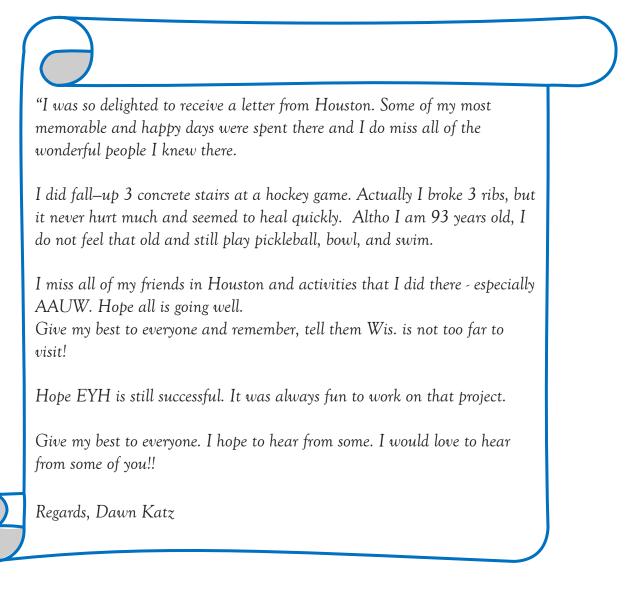
The gender gap in retirement benefits does not grab headlines in the same manner as the pay gap. Yet the issue remains no less urgent. It needs to be fixed before even more women face poverty in retirement.

Margaret Carlson



Outreach

As corresponding secretary, one of the delights I have is sending all of you digital cards for your birthdays or "real" cards to those experiencing a grief event, an illness or injury. Occasionally I get a reply, which helps me get to know many of you better. A couple of weeks ago I got a letter from Dawn Katz, who now lives in Wisconsin and whom many of you know. Our board asked me to send you the letter so you could learn how Dawn is. If you don't know her, you might enjoy hearing from a very delightful person. Here is her letter:



And here's Dawn's address:

Dawn Katz Village Point Commons #2113 Grafton, Wis 53024

Becky French

April 2022 ACTIVITIES & INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Sharon Jorgeson, Activities Coordinator

Book Groups

Afternoon Contemporary Literature

Wednesday, April 6, 1:30 p.m. via Zoom <u>The Horse Dancer</u> by Jojo Moyes Coordinator, Cheryl Smith, 402-651-2445 <u>ccherylsmile@gmail.com</u>, Co-Coordinator, Linda Morgan, 281-989-6499, <u>amorgan352@sbcglobal.net</u>

Contemporary Readers

Wednesday. April 6, 1:00 p.m. via Zoom <u>The Vanishing Half</u> by Brit Bennet For more information, contact Co-Coordinator, Cathy Urquhart (832-454-5017, <u>catherineurquhart@sbcglobal.net</u>).

Enjoying History Book Club

Monday, April 11, 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. <u>The Nickel Boys</u> by Colson Whitehead. Please email Nancy Guilloud <u>nanguilloud@aol.com</u> or Nancy Gusler, <u>ntgusler@gmail.com</u> to be put on the contact list or if you have any questions.

Evening Contemporary Literature

Monday, April 4, 5:00 p.m. <u>A Fall of Marigolds</u> by Susan Meissner The scheduled meeting place is Los Tios Mexican Restaurant, on Memorial and Kirkwood Coordinator, Jo Glidewell, 936-327-2085, <u>WCGLIDE@gmail.com</u>.



Mystery Book Club

Tuesday, April 19, 1:30 p.m. via Zoom <u>The Wolf and the Watchman</u> by Niklas Natt och Dag Coordinator, Melba Armstrong, 281-392-3190, <u>armstrong.melba@comcast.net</u>. Co-Coordinator, Pat Pease, 713-824-1681, <u>popease@aol.com</u>.

Outstanding Literature

Tuesday, April 12, 9:30 a.m. <u>The Joy Luck Club</u> by Amy Tan. Discussion leader is Miriam Vyles and we will meet yet again at La Madeleine, "The Wine Cave", 10001 Westheimer Road, 77042. Please start to think about your book selections for the 2022-23 season. The book selection meeting will be in June and we do not meet over the summer. Contact Leigh Rappole at <u>leighrap@aol.com</u> if you have questions.

Zoom Eclectic Book Group

Thursday, April 28, 2:30 p.m.

<u>Carnegie's Maid</u> by Marie Benedict. Discussion leader will be Margaret Carlson. This is the second book our group is reading by Marie Benedict. These books are based upon the incredible women who worked behind the scenes for some of the 20th Century's most influential men. Email Carolyn Morris at <u>morriscs@aol.com</u> for the Zoom invitation.

May 26: <u>The Other Einstein</u> by Marie Benedict led by Carolyn Morris



Byway Birders - Texas City Dike

On Tuesday, April 26 the Byway Birders will go to Houston Audubon High Island Sanctuaries and Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. We will meet at Boy Scout Woods bleachers at 9:00 a.m. and bird the area and visit the rookery. Weather permitting, we will picnic there. If there is time, we will go to Anahuac NWR.

April is a great time to visit High Island to look for spring migrants and observe cormorants, egrets, and spoon bills at the rookery. Admission is \$8.00.

For questions or further information, contact Sharon Jorgeson at 218-703-5939 or <u>sjorgeson@gmail.com</u>.



Hiking Honeys

The Honeys will travel to Huntsville State Park, which is within the Sam Houston National Forest, for a hike led by Gail Rickey on Thursday, April 21. The park is dominated by loblolly pine and shortleaf pine trees. White-tailed deer, raccoons, opossums, armadillos, and fox squirrels live here along with hundreds of species of birds. The park was



opened in 1956, but initial work on the site was performed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and some of the structures built at that time are still visible in the park. It was the CCC who created Lake Raven around which the park is situated.



We will carpool from the parking lot on Barryknoll across from the Cinemark Theater in Memorial City at 9:00 a.m. Please RSVP to Gail Rickey (patrickey@aol.com) or Melba Armstrong (armstrong.melba@comcast.net) if you plan to go.



Culture Group

Do you like ice cream, shopping, and wine? If you do, the April Cultural Tour to Brenham is for you. The trip is on Friday, April 8, 2022. The bus will depart at 8:45 a.m. from the Memorial City Parking Lot south of Barryknoll.

Our first stop at 10:00 a.m. will be the Blue Bell Ice Cream Factory/museum for a tour and ice cream. With so many flavors, and some not even in

the stores, you can sample all you like. (Their gift shop isn't bad either.) Our next stop is in downtown Brenham for lunch and shopping from 11:15-1:15. Lunch is on your own but *Must Be Heaven* is always a good choice. Their pie is great!

Our last stop at 1:30 p.m. is the Pleasant Hill Winery for a tour, tasting and wine glass souvenir. Jeanne, the owner, tells me that the *bluebonnets* are beginning to pop in the field.

Send your check for \$21 made out to Carolyn Morris, 11159 Riverview Way, Houston, TX 77042 to reserve your place. The \$21 includes the tour and \$1 for the bus driver. Please call Carolyn if you have any questions (713-560-1889).

Save the Date for Buffalo Bayou Boat Tour for May 17

Join your friends on May 17 on a Buffalo Bayou pontoon tour boat *Sprit of the Bayou* for a 1 ½-hour ride through the heart of downtown past Allen's Landing, Sesquicentennial Park and Sabine Promenade, historic McKee Street Bridge, and the industrial side of our city with a professional guide. To save a Seat, Register with Linda Morgan, 281-989-6499 or at (amorgan352@sbcglobal.net).

Cultural Activity Advance Notice for June

After a two-year hiatus, the Texas Music Festival Orchestra Concert at University of Houston Moores Opera House will resume and be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022. Twenty tickets already have been purchased for \$10 each. Reservations for dinner will be made at UH Hilton Eric's Restaurant – the cost is yet to be determined.



A Harris County bus has been reserved and will leave at 4:00 p.m. from our usual Memorial City bus lot on Barryknoll to take us to dinner and then on to the concert which starts at 7:30 p.m. Reserve your spot ASAP, please send your check for \$10 made out to Diana Guarniere and send to her at 13814 Kimberley Lane, Houston, Texas 77079. Your check is your reservation. Further details will be in future newsletters.







Vicarious Voyagers: An interest group for travelers

Vicarious Voyagers has completed its programming for this year. Planning for next year is in process. Suggestions and ideas for future gatherings and programs are welcome.

Coordinator: Diana Guarniere, guarniered@gmail.com Co-Coordinator: Carolyn Morris, morriscs@aol.com

WISE: Women Interested in STEM Education

On April 5th, please join us at the Bunker Hill Treebeards off Gaylord for dinner at 5:30 p.m. to brainstorm our STEM action ideas before the SBISD Community Meeting. Or meet at Memorial High School at 7:00 p.m. to learn about the SBISD \$381M Bond for a world-class Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and the facility and technology improvements needed to move toward that vision. Equitable access to STEM and Computer Science, which is now part of CTE, is one of the Title IX equity issues in the book "Why So Few Women in STEM" that started this activity group. Who was part of our original WISE book study activity group?

Please let Karen North, knorth@me.com know if you would like to join us for dinner.

For more information see: https://sbmd.org/spring-branch-isd-2022-bondcommunity-meetings/ https://www.springbranchisd.com/about/2022bond https://ww3.aauw.org/research/why-so-few/ https://www.aspirations.org/



Bridge Groups

Please contact the coordinators of these bridge groups if you are interested in joining their group as a regular or substitute.

First Thursday (7:00 p.m.) Jane Judson 713-528-6105 Third Thursday (10:30 a.m.) Peg McNealy 281-679-7299

Gourmet Groups

Classic Gourmet: The Classic Gourmet group does not meet in April. Please join us May 21, 2022 for a French brunch and planning session for next year. For further information, please contact the co-chairs: Barb Cook 713-705-7832 or Kris Bybee-Finley 304-610-8708. **Nouveau Gourmet**: The Nouveau

Gourmet group will



not meet in April. Look for information for next dinner in the May newsletter.

Garden Divas

The Divas will check out the <u>Living Bridge</u> that was designed to carry runners and walkers safely across Memorial Drive, a major traffic artery, which runs through the heart of Memorial Park. The design of the bridge considered trail accessibility, conservation, sustainability, and historical features of the park. The bridge structure was designed with terracing for plantings, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and connection of trails from the ends of the bridge to existing trails.

Memorial Park lies within the 610 Loop, adjacent to Buffalo Bayou, four miles to the west of Downtown Houston and at the heart of many Houstonians. At nearly 1,500 acres of parkland in the fourth most populous city in the United States, this former training camp for WWI soldiers is full of rich histories and complicated relationships. Established in 1924 as a memorial to the soldiers who died fighting in the European theater, this landscape and the people who have tended and nurtured it for almost a century have much to reveal about its ecological and cultural origins.

From the founding of Memorial Park to today, numerous highways and roads have been constructed within the bounds of the park subdividing recreational areas and habitats and compromising public safety. One of the most ambitious goals of the landscape design is to construct a pair of land bridges inspired by large-scale wildlife crossings, here planted with trees, shrubs, and prairie grasses. The land bridges would re-stitch the northern and southern halves of the park offering connectivity for the ecology and the people of Houston.

We will leave the Memorial City from the South Parking Lot off Barryknoll at 9:30 a.m. and plan to arrive at the park at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 5. The address is 7575 North Picnic Dr. Afterwards we will have lunch at Becks Prime in Memorial Park.

Please contact Susan Boone, smboone@gmail.com if you are interested in learning more about the recent upgrades to Memorial Park.



*Please note: the construction on the new <u>Land Bridge</u> originally scheduled April is incomplete; therefore, the visit there will be scheduled for next year.

Susan Boone smboone@gmail.com

Great Decisions

The three Great Decisions Groups will continue to meet twice each month until the end of May. All three groups will meet on ZOOM.

The First and Third Thursday afternoon group will meet from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. onApril 7, 2022, to discuss Quad Alliance and on April 21, 2022, to discuss the Drug Policy in South America. If interested in further information and details, please contact group coordinator, Martha Ewell, (tel.) 713-782-2084.

The 2nd and 4th Evening Group meets from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. The April meetings will be on April 13th and April 27th. Please contact Coordinator Willette Norman at 281-497-3626 or <u>willetten@gmail.com</u> for further information.

The Inside the Loop Group will meet on Tuesday April 5, at 3:00 p.m. The topic is Myanmar and ASEAN. The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 19, at 3:00 p.m. The topic is the Quad Alliance. All are welcome. Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84748391332?pwd=bFVjN3VyV1RqZkRqTDBkWDRWL0p6dz09



Happy Birthday April 2022

Rose Ennis	Apr 03	Susan Dunten	Apr 13
Elizabeth Martin	Apr 03	Hazel Kjos	Apr 18
Jane Campbell	Apr 04	Diana Guarniere	Apr 22
Beryl Hogsh <mark>ead</mark>	Apr 05	Fran Macy	Apr 22
Martha Armstrong	Apr 10	Patricia Driscoll	Apr 24
Pamela Ossorio	Apr 10	Barbara Kyse	Apr 25
Marjorie Poole	Apr 11	Carolyn Morris	Apr 25
Nancy Allen	Apr 12	Anne Amador	Apr 29
Carole Ballew	Apr 12	Wendy Stackel	Apr 30
Patricia Cordrey	Apr 13		