



Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

Vision: Equity for all.

April 2025 Edition

AAUW Monthly Meeting April 2025

- What:** AAUW Monthly Meeting
- When:** Saturday, April 5: *Fellowship at 10:00 am *Program at 10:30 am
- Where:** YWCA [4601 Corona Dr.](#)
- Speaker:** Peggy Duran, AAUW Member and League of Women Voters Member
- Program:** Becoming a Volunteer Deputy Registrar

Peggy Duran, a member of AAUW since 1996 and a member of the League of Women Voters for over 40 years, is a graduate of Rosary College (now Dominican University) where she received a BA degree in Spanish. She is also a graduate of Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, where she earned her M.Ed. in Bilingual Education. She taught for seven years in the Chicago Public School System. After moving to Corpus Christi, Peggy earned a Medical Office Assistant certificate from Del Mar College. That certificate helped Peggy in her second career as a medical office administrator in the office of her husband, Dr. Jose Miguel Duran, gastroenterologist, where she has assisted with patient histories and records for 35 years.

Peggy Duran joined the League of Women Voters in 1980 after they moved to Corpus Christi and she realized that she did not know half of the candidates running in that year's election. Peggy has served for many years as a Volunteer Deputy Registrar. She will inform us about the process for becoming a Volunteer Deputy Registrar.



President's Message



Kelly Gonzalez, President

This month I would like to celebrate you, the wonderful members of our branch. While I have always admired you, recently the magnitude of your incredible generosity really hit home.

You will hear a lot of information this month and going forward about the AAUW Five Star Program. This is an initiative from AAUW National designed to recognize and celebrate the branches and members of AAUW. When the Board discussed this at the January meeting, it seemed to be something we would really have to work hard on to achieve. It was when Vickie started reviewing all of the requirements and documenting your efforts, we realized how awesome you all are.

As you read through the newsletter you will see information on this program and at the meeting, the latest update about our progress. What I want you to know is that none of this would be possible without you and your hard work.

Like me, you might be wondering why we should participate. None of us are members for the recognition or spotlight. But I believe our branch works hard and deserves some recognition from the Texas and national AAUW organizations. If we are able to achieve the Five Star distinction, we will receive a banner recognizing this achievement for our website. I believe this will help us attract and recruit new members. We also receive recognition in the AAUW Membership Matters newsletter as well as recognition on their website. We will be in an Elite group within the AAUW network.

So, let's work to finish this and celebrate all we have done to help our community be a better place to live and the fun we have doing it!

The AAUW 5 STAR Program

by Dr. Vickie Natale

AAUW, Inc., has initiated a Five-Star Program to help branches align with AAUW's strategic priorities and advance the mission of achieving gender equity for women and girls. By participating in the program, the branch contributes to a strong network of advocates, elevating both our local impact and our collective efforts nationwide.

After a discussion about the Five-Star Program at the January Board meeting, President Kelly Gonzalez has concluded that our Branch should participate, since we excel in many of the categories. Kelly asked me to begin gathering data and writing sections that would demonstrate to AAUW, Inc., that our Branch has met the criteria of the Five-Star Program. We are in discussions with different Board members about applicable sections, and we will be working on this document through June.

As an example, one of the five-star areas includes criteria about social media. We must name someone to coordinate our social media efforts; that person must ensure that our social media accounts follow the AAUW National accounts; and we must share three to five posts (or re-posts) each quarter that align with AAUW's mission. As you know, Lara Gephart and Kay Pluta volunteered over a year ago to create a Facebook account. We started with a private account, to post items that we might not want publicly shown. Then, in March 2024, Lara and Kay established our public Facebook. With that account, we are now meeting the social media criteria this year. Lara has combed through the posts and re-posts that have been done for this fiscal year (starting in July, which is eight months' worth), and she has listed about 85 postings that we have done already to promote the mission of AAUW. What a stellar job! We thank Lara and Kay for all their work to establish our Branch on Facebook and for their work in far exceeding the metric established by AAUW, Inc. As a side note, if you have not seen the AAUW – Corpus Christi Facebook account, we encourage you to check it out and re-post items to your own account.

In participating in this program, Branches can be recognized as one-star, two-star, three-star, four-star, or five-star awardees. Branches must submit documentation about criteria in these five categories: (1) Advancement; (2) Public Policy & Advocacy; (3) Governance & Sustainability; (4) Programming; and (5) Communications. There are specific metrics posted within each category, and some are items we have not previously addressed, so we are making plans to complete those items before the end of this fiscal year. We will do our best to try to obtain all five stars for FY25.



AAUW and You - Opportunities to Become More Involved

Donations Requested for 2025 NCCWSL

The National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) for 2025 has been announced on the [NASPA website](#). As in the past, the conference will be held on the college campus of the University of Maryland, May 28 – 30. The conference unites women students from across the nation for a transformative experience in leadership development, networking, and inspiration.

The AAUW student group at Del Mar College has several students who are planning to attend. Cheryl Sanders, student advisor to the AAUW group, is working with the students to complete applications and travel plans. As we did last year, we are planning to provide some financial support for these students. For that purpose, we are asking members to provide a donation specifically for the group. Last year, the students did a fundraiser by selling popcorn. You are welcomed to participate in that effort again this year, if you wish. However, many of us know that most of the funds raised through that effort will go back to the vendor, so if you wish to have your entire donation go to the students attending the conference, a direct donation will be more beneficial. We will collect donations at our April meeting, plus you may mail a check to our finance officer, Vickie Natale, with a note to label the donation. Donations need to be received by May 3.



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AAUW and You - Opportunities to Become More Involved

AAUW Two Minute Activist Alerts

Please sign up for the AAUW Two Minute Activist Alerts and make your voice heard. AAUW does all of the work gathering the information, we just need to sign up and participate. Information and the link are below, so please take a minute to sign up to help.



AAUW Two-Minute Activist Alerts

Join AAUW advocates in the fight for equal pay, equity in education, paid leave, protections against sexual harassment and more. Sign up to get regular alerts on when and how to engage, including sending letters to your legislators, writing letters to the editor and other timely calls to action.

Tell Congress to Oppose Attacks on Higher Education Write

Ask the House: Cosponsor the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Write

Tell the House: Oppose the SAVE Act Write

WOMEN'S VOICES FOR WOMEN'S CHOICES
MY BODY MY CHOICE
BE BOLD FOR CHANGE

<https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>

Take Action
Get Empowered
Explore the Issues

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March 2025 Meeting Guest Speaker

by Lara Gephart, Deanne Purcell, and Diana Cardenas

The March meeting was well attended by 26 members who listened intently to the engaging presentation, titled “Using Oral History as a Tool for Genealogical Research,” by Professor Mark Robbins, Ph.D., of Del Mar College. His presentation was based on census data, public records, and stories from his family members.

Professor Robbins was born in Lansing, Michigan, to an elementary school teacher mother and archeologist father. He received his doctorate from Brown University. Dr. Robbins provided important information for those of us who are interested in, or are active with, genealogical research. He used his own family as the basis for his presentation: for instance, how to get to know the grandfather he never met and what he can learn about his family. He pointed to physical, historical, and oral histories to discover the roots of his grandfather. Traces of a synagogue and cemetery in Zhytony, Ukraine, mark where a pogrom caused the deaths of many Jewish inhabitants, and the old railroad station highlights the mass migration of many others, including his great grandparents. Oral histories filled in the gaps to help our speaker get to know his grandfather. An uncle remembers that the family name was changed: Rabinovitz became Robbins.

Professor Robbins received, from President Kelly Gonzalez, a Book Finders gift certificate and the thanks of all members.



International Women's Day March for Equality

by Dr. Vickie Natale

Members of AAUW Corpus Christi Branch participated in the International Women's Day March for Equality on Saturday, March 8, 2025, held at Cole Park. The event was hosted by Progressives of the Coastal Bend. A number of local organizations, groups, and councils were recognized as a partner of the event, including our Branch (see banner).



Over 200 local area citizens marched in the park, holding signs to support women's equality on a number of hot topics from national politics to local area politics, including book banning, women's reproductive rights, and the rights of the LGBTQ community. Branch members who attended this year were Catherine Cox, Kelly Gonzalez, Vickie Natale, Sylvia Whitworth, and Robert Wooster. At the end of the walk, speeches were made and a band was playing. It was a lovely, spring-like, sunny day for a march and a great way to bring awareness to our issues.



Lunch-and-Learn at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

by Dr. Vickie Natale

On March 19, 2025, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi hosted a Lunch-and-Learn event for the AAUW Corpus Christi Branch. Held on the TAMUCC campus, the lunch gathered 19 members who were treated to reserved parking amidst construction on the growing campus. In addition to a catered meal that included grilled chicken, vegetarian options, and apple pie, members listened to a presentation from Dr. Catherine Rudowsky, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.



Dr. Rudowsky spoke about student success measures implemented at the University, including student advising, TRIO programs, Supplemental Instruction, a new “Finish in 4” initiative, and a free summer bridge program focused on entry-level students successfully completing college-level math, which is a particular stumbling block for many students. She also spoke about funding that has been made available through private foundations for students who face issues with personal expenses, such as childcare and transportation. Another expanded program focuses on student mental and emotional well-being which is an issue that has seen an enormous increase in need for services in recent years. We also talked about the current political landscape with the forced dismantling of DEI programs and the need to create a “culture of calm” on campus in response to these pressures. Members gained insight to the education issues and burdens that today’s students face.



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Lunch-and-Learn at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

by Dr. Vickie Natale

The event was sponsored by the TAMUCC Office of Institutional Advancement for our Branch in recognition of the multiple scholarships, both direct and endowed, that we have provided to university students. We thank Jaquelyn Maltby, Director of Development, and Kimberly Becerra, Executive Associate Vice President of Development, for scheduling and hosting this wonderful opportunity to see the beautiful, expanding campus and to hear about new initiatives implemented to increase student success.



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Equal Pay Day Event

by Dr. Vickie Natale

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, was Equal Pay Day this year, a day to remind people that despite civil rights laws and advancements in women's economic status, wage discrimination still persists in every state and virtually every occupation. Women who work full time, year-round take home about 84 cents for every dollar that non-Hispanic, white men earn.

Nancy Wesson-Dodd, an AAUW Corpus Christi Branch member and the President/CEO of YWCA Corpus Christi, coordinated an Equal Pay Day event held on Zoom for our region. The guest speaker was Monica Roers who currently serves with YWCA USA as National Member Services Director, coaching and supporting the CEOs of YWCAs across the US. Ms. Roers had been a leader for nonprofit organizations and governmental systems for over 25 years. She earned a Master's degree in Public and Private Management from the Yale School of Management.

Ms. Roers talked about the need for women to negotiate for their salaries, and she remarked that the best times for salary negotiations are when seeking a new job or when being offered a promotion. There are multiple websites and organizations that provide comparative salary information by occupations, fields, and regions. Women need to utilize these resources to be empowered to negotiate. She remarked that men assume that salaries are expected to be negotiated, while women rarely feel comfortable doing it, which further impacts salary discrimination. Ms. Roers related a personal story from her past, saying that she was being offered a new job at a YWCA where the building was shared with the YMCA, and both organizations used the same gym and the same aquatics center. Yet, when she did her research and found out what the male director of the YMCA was earning, she discovered that the salary she was being offered was half of what the male director was making. She brought this to their attention and worked with the Board to create a multi-year solution for increasing her pay as well as the pay for others at the YWCA who were making less than their counterparts at the YMCA.

Attendees of the event enjoyed a lively discussion during the Q&A session. We thank Nancy Wesson-Dodd for scheduling this important event and providing an expert speaker on the topic.



Committee News

Book Finders

The AAUW Book Sale, held on March 27—March 29 at the Neyland Library from 10:00-5:00 on Thursday and Friday and 10:00-1:30 on Saturday, featured Texana, children's, vintage, and cook books. Monies raised benefit the Corpus Christi public libraries, local women's scholarship funds, and AAUW Community and outreach projects for women and girls.



Community Outreach

The Community Outreach Committee members were pleased to be joined by Miller High School principal, Aurelio Tamayo, who is excited and grateful for the generosity of AAUW to their students. The committee members continue to work with Miller High School Career Counselor, Melissa Jiminez, to celebrate ten senior girls who have worked hard to achieve their educational goals in their senior year and have been accepted to a college or university.

A ceremony will be held in May to honor the selected graduates, each of whom will receive a \$200 gift card from AAUW Corpus Christi Branch.



STEM

Jennifer Gonzalez and STEM Coordinator, Ms. Esquivel led an after school meeting on March 26, for the West Oso Junior High STEM Girls who enjoyed learning from guest speaker, Korinne Caruso, Del Mar College Computer Science Professor, who spoke about her journey in STEM and encouraged the girls to find STEM opportunities. Diana Cardenas provided STEM instruction on the functions and benefits of drones. Nina Fischer donated swag for the gift bags and Jennifer Gonzalez provided snacks for the girls.



AAUW Spring 2025 Mini Session

“Celebrating Successful Women”

April 24, 2025, 6 pm CST via Zoom

Plans are moving forward for a Spring 2025 Mini Session via Zoom on Thursday, April 24, 2025 to celebrate successful women in Texas with a panel discussion. Four or five women will talk about their careers, their challenges and those who influenced them.

We have secured Lauren Cannattela, a retired American Airlines Pilot; Linda Martin, Mayor of Euless, TX; Dr. Pam Wells, a top notch career Educator; Judge Yvonne Y. Ho, Houston’s first Asian American federal Judge. We are still searching for a Legislator.

A flyer with pictures and biographies of the panelists will be sent out soon.


Use this link to register for the event.


<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/4xx2xHtqTMSVr5UEF-5qSQ>


Cheri Butler
VP Programs 2024-2026





Interest Groups


 **Out-to-Lunch Bunch:** Susan Birchfield, chair. Enjoy a delightful lunch on the third Tuesday of the month at local restaurants. RSVP. This month they meet on April 15 at the Ja Ja Café, located at 5714 McArdle Road at 12:30.

 **Bridge:** Lessie Hoffman, chair. This group meets at Silverado Smokehouse, 4522 Weber Road at 12:30 pm on the second and the last Friday of the month from January through November as well as the second Friday in December. Lessie also offered to teach newbies how to play if you contact her personally. RSVP

 **Classics:** Annie Huckabee, chair. This groups meets at on the last Wednesday of the month at local restaurants. On April 30, Michelle Balis will lead a discussion on Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* at Switchgrass located on the second floor of the Omni Hotel at 6:00 pm. RSVP

 **Playgoers:** Michelle Balis, chair. If you have signed up for this group, Michelle will email you one week before a performance. RSVP. Upcoming events: Saturday April 12 at 7:30, Islander Voices present "Dido and Aeneas" at the HEB Performance Hall at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. Monday April 14 at 6:30, Sister Lou Ella Hickman will be reading her poetry at Neyland Library. Thursday April 24 at 7:30, *Our Lady of 121st Street* will be performed at the Warren Theatre/Center for the Arts at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi.

 **Poetry Appreciation:** Leslie Peart, chair. This group meets on the second Wednesday of the month. RSVP. The theme for the April 9th meeting is "In Your Dreams...". The meeting place is to be determined.

 **Wine and Cheese:** Susan Birchfield and Josefina Villarreal, co-chairs. The group meets on the second Sunday of the month, 5 pm—7 pm (October through September) at different homes. RSVP to Susan. On April 13, Catherine Cox and Judy Harral will host at a soon to be determined location.



May 2025 Luncheon and Installation of New Officers



What: Luncheon and Installation of New Officers

Date: May 3, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Place: The Blue Clove Seafood Bar & Grill

5884 Everhart Rd.

Please plan to attend our May Luncheon.

Each member will order individually

from the menu

and pay her own bill.

Special Announcement

Congratulations to Annie Huckabee who has written a new book entitled *Romancing the Grid* .

This wonderful read will be available for purchase on Amazon in the first week of April.

