



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

Vision: Equity for all.

May 2025 Edition

AAUW Monthly Meeting and Installation of Officers May 2025

Date: May 3, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

***Doors will not open until 11:00 am. If you arrive early, you will need to wait standing outside or in your car.**

Place: The Blue Clove Seafood Bar & Grill

[5884 Everhart Road](#)

Please plan to attend our May Luncheon.
Each member will order individually
from the menu and
pay her own bill.

President's Message



This month I would like to celebrate a remarkable person and a great fellow member, Nancy Wesson-Dodd. Nancy is stepping down as President/CEO of the YWCA in June after 29 years. It's hard to imagine the Y without Nancy, but so easy to think about all of the women, young and old, she has helped over those 29 years.

When I think of Nancy, there are so many thoughts that come to mind; leader, mentor, servant, and friend. Nancy is a person who is always there for others and is always willing to help however she can. Yet she still knows that "No" is a complete sentence. Nancy has the ability to offer kindness and compassion to the young women she serves, yet still shows the firmness and guidance they need to learn and grow. She is the definition of integrity, honesty, and dedication.

I recently attended the 2025 Y Women in Careers Gala, and I am proud that I was one of the initial contributors to the Nancy Wesson-Dodd Legacy Fund, created in her honor. There was a moving tribute to Nancy highlighting her accomplishments and the impact she has made. As I watched the video and heard the speeches, the term soft power came to mind. Nancy is the very epitome of soft power. Look at what she has achieved during her career by bringing people together and asking for help.

She has brought that same mindset to us at AAUW. Our shared missions just make us a natural team, and we have been fortunate for all Nancy has done for our branch. When I first took over as the Community Outreach committee chair, her help and encouragement helped me get my feet under me. Her advice and input have helped me in that role and in life. Thank you, Nancy, for being such a great member and friend. Enjoy retirement and allow yourself time to find a new passion.

Retirement of a Local Icon

by Dr. Vickie Natale



Nancy Wesson-Dodd has been an AAUW member since 2007 and a lifetime member since 2022. At the end of June, Nancy will retire as the president and CEO of YWCA Corpus Christi. Having served nearly 30 years in the leadership position representing the organization, Nancy has become the “face of the YWCA.” She has actively, prominently, and consistently promoted the mission of the YWCA – which is very similar to the mission of AAUW – throughout our community, representing the tenets of eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

These are not just fancy words for Nancy; they are words that describe the heart and soul of our cherished member. The community will dearly miss Nancy serving as leader of our local YWCA, and we wish her the very best in her well-deserved retirement.

The YWCA will hold a retirement celebration for the community in honor of Nancy on May 17 from noon to 3:00 pm. We invite all our sister AAUW members to join in the celebration and to let Nancy know how thankful we are for her dedication and service to our community and for her devotion to AAUW.

Celebrating Nancy's Legacy



New Honorary Lifetime Members

by Dr. Vickie Natale

The year was 1975. The Watergate scandal shocked the nation, while the Vietnam War finally ended with the fall of Saigon. Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft. NASA launched Viking 1 toward Mars. The radio played *Love will Keep Us Together* by The Captain and Tennille, and the top-rate TV show was *All in the Family*. That year, two young, forward-thinking women, Mary Helen Foster Dunnam and Kay West, joined AAUW. Both are being recognized this year as Honorary Lifetime Members of AAUW, having shown their support and alliance with AAUW for the past 50 years. We celebrate these outstanding members who have paved the way for future generations of women seeking gender equality in our society. Our organization and our branch are blessed to have such long-time dedicated members.

Cheers to Mary Helen and Kay!!



Mary Helen Foster Dunnam



Kay West

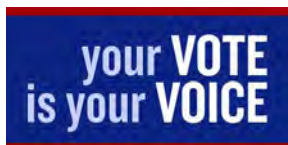
Becoming a Volunteer Voter Deputy Registrar

by Diana Cardenas

At our April 5, 2025, branch meeting, Peggy Duran, a member of AAUW since 1996, engaged 26 fellow members in an account of her involvement as a member of the League of Women Voters for over 40 years. Peggy joined the League of Women Voters in 1980 after she and her husband, Dr. Jose Miguel Duran, a gastroenterologist, moved to Corpus Christi from Illinois. She realized that she did not know half of the candidates running in that year's election. Also, she noted that, in contrast to Texas, judgeships are not elected positions in Illinois. As an active member of the League Peggy has served for many years as a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar, an important role to educate citizens about voting as an *essential* function of democracy and the necessity of their participation and their right to vote to protect their democracy. To our interested group Peggy explained the process for becoming a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar.

Peggy is a graduate of what-is-now Dominican University, where she received a BA degree in Spanish, and she is a graduate of Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, where she earned her master's in Bilingual Education. She taught for seven years in the Chicago Public School System. After moving to Corpus Christi, Peggy leaped into her second career as a medical office administrator in the office of her husband. She has assisted with patient histories and records for the past 35 years. When she spoke to patients, she asked them if they were registered to vote. Dismally, many reported not being registered, or never having voted, or having no interest or confidence in voting because it does not change anything. What Peggy heard convinced her of the need to interact with potential voters—in the role as volunteer deputy voter registrar—to inform them about important issues and help them register.

To the audience Peggy described the process of becoming a volunteer deputy voter registrar. It begins at the Office of the County Clerk, Nueces County Courthouse, where the County Voter Registrar appoints volunteer voter registrars. Interested persons fill out applications. Then they receive training, at times in person, but now training is offered online by ZOOM. Peggy is able to distribute registration forms, review the forms, and accept the completed voter registration applications. Peggy told us where she has distributed applications and what local populations—such as university classes—she has visited.



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Becoming a Volunteer Voter Deputy Registrar

by Diana Cardenas

Peggy's focus on the necessary participation of each voter was reinforced by the president of the National League of Voters, Ms. Dianna Wynn, seen in a video, "State of the League 2025". Ms. Wynn also noted that "voting rights are being challenged." Thus, voting by each person is necessary. Peggy noted that LWV and AAUW both embrace and promote similar platforms: to protect the rights of citizens. Several audience members shared accounts of their voting registration efforts at schools and churches. A suggestion was made: An AAUW member could pair up with a volunteer deputy voting registrar to visit other sites. A member asked if a list of volunteers could be created and made available to all members.

Peggy informed us of a city protest on this day, part of a national protest in Washington, D.C, and in all states and major areas. Also, she encouraged us to participate in a townhall meeting with our Congressman Michael McCloud on Thursday, April 17, 2025, by voicing opinions about important issues that affect us.

Peggy enthusiastically explained the role of volunteer deputy voter registrar—a central part of her identity as an engaged citizen whose goal is to preserve our democracy.



President Kelly Gonzalez gifted Peggy a \$100 certificate from Book Finders.

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2025-2026 AAUW Membership Renewal

by Dr. Vickie Natale

If you have been a member for more than three years, your renewal date for annual dues is the month of June each year. Membership dues can be paid by credit card online through the [AAUW website](#). Click on “log in” at the top righthand corner to enter the Community Hub. If you renew online, be sure that you check the radio buttons to pay state and local dues in addition to national dues. (Here is a helpful hint: when the pop-up screen for branches appears, you will find TX-Corpus Christi about three-fourths of the way down the long list that is alphabetized by state.)

For members who prefer to pay in cash or by check, I will be collecting dues at the May 3 luncheon. Make your check payable to AAUW-CC. If you prefer, you can mail your check to my home address before June 30. Remember that national dues have increased by \$2, so your check should be for \$99 (or more, if you wish to include a donation). Check your Yearbook for my address (Vickie Natale).

If you joined AAUW in the past three years, your renewal date for membership dues is the month of the year in which you first joined. The national office sends renewal notices to everyone about a month prior to your renewal date and the month of your renewal date.

Recruiting potential new members? Be sure to let them know that the national office is still offering half-price on national dues for first-time members, so a new member will pay only \$62 for the first year.

A [registration form](#) for new members can be found on our [website](#). Just let new members know they can cross out the \$99 on this form and fill in \$62 for the first year's dues.

~~ MEMBERSHIP MATTERS ~~



Celebrating Successful Women

AAUW State Event

by Dr. Vickie Natale

AAUW Texas hosted a seminar on April 24, 2025, via Zoom to celebrate highly recognized, successful women. These women of distinction provided highlights of their careers, their challenges, and those who influenced them. The speakers included the following.

Captain Lauran Canatella pursued an aviation career after college, flying seaplanes, cargo, a commuter airline, and citation jets. Captain Canatella described her biggest challenge as trying to keep up with her aviation career while still having a family. She taught with simulators while her children were small. With a desire to work for a commercial airline, it took multiple airline interviews before she was hired by American Airlines. Captain Canatella talked about how women are frequently evaluated more stringently than men. American Airlines hires more than 16,000 pilots, yet only 219 of them are female captains. In retirement, she mentors young people who are trying to become pilots, and she humbly stated that being an example for young women is her ultimate reward.



Laurie Bianco is the mayor of Dalworthington Gardens, a city whose name is a portmanteau of the three anchor cities in the Texas metroplex surrounding it: Dallas, Fort Worth, and Arlington. She always knew she wanted to be a teacher. After graduation, she went to Italy on an invitation from a friend and decided she wanted to work there. It took several application attempts, but she finally gained a teaching position in Italy where she lived for seven years and became fluent in the language. Ms. Bianco met her husband there, and they returned to the states for his job. She describes herself as a “people pleaser” who was not previously a political activist. However, other city officials convinced her to run for mayor, and she has been serving in that capacity for seven years. Mayor Bianco joked that no one gives you a book on how to be a mayor. She has found that the job is all about the relationships you form, which, as it turns out, she’s pretty good at doing.



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Celebrating Successful Women

AAUW State Event

by Dr. Vickie Natale

Dr. Pamela Wells is one of the most respected educators in Texas. She started as a classroom teacher in Spring Branch ISD. She rose through the ranks, becoming the Executive Director of Region 4 Education Service Center which represents 1.2 million students and 165,000 staff members. There are 20 Education Service Centers in Texas, and when she was hired for the position, she was one of only four female executive directors out of the 20 Centers. Dr. Wells noted that, sadly, there were only three female directors out of 20 when she retired. She maintains that women are good in leadership positions because they tend to be more collaborative and are better communicators.



It was such a treat to hear these women talk about their dynamic lives and the challenges they faced in their respective fields. Each woman has made an impact in her community and has opened doors for other young women to make further gains for women's equality. Attendees were honored to get to know a bit about these successful women.



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Branch Supports Students Attending NCCWSL

by Cheryl Sanders and Dr. Vickie Natale

The AAUW Corpus Christi Branch is providing support to students from Del Mar College who are attending the 2025 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders being held May 28 through May 30 at the University of Maryland campus. Our Branch has paid the registration fee for Rosalyn Cardenas, a Del Mar College student majoring in business with an interest in pursuing accounting. Rosalyn is a mother of three children, ages 14, 6, and 3. Her eldest child has special needs with autism. She is originally from San Antonio and moved to Corpus Christi about four years ago. Rosalyn has become involved with the Del Mar College AAUW student group, and she is looking forward to attending NCCWSL, as she has never traveled out of state.

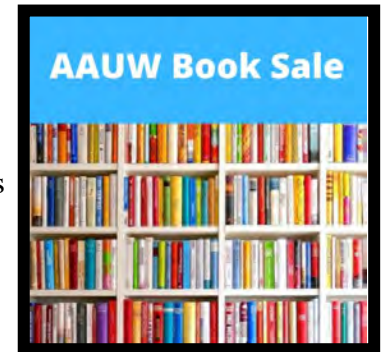
In all, four students from Del Mar College will be attending the conference. The other three students – Anai Austin, Kaila Cavazos-Guerra, and Linda Ibarra – received a grant from AAUW Texas to pay their registration fees. Our Branch is also collecting donations to help support all four students with extra travel costs for meals and essentials. We have received cash donations from several members, and we will continue to collect donations through May 3 at our luncheon. Please plan to bring a check or cash to the luncheon if you wish to contribute. In addition to the cash donations, several of our members also purchased specialty popcorn that the AAUW student group sold as a fundraiser. We thank all our members who have been so generous with their purchases and donations to assist with the cost of traveling for our local students. These women will be among our future leaders, and we are proud to support their educational journey toward a successful future.



Committee News

Book Finders

The AAUW Book Sale will be held on June 12—June 14 at the Neyland Library from 10:00-5:00 on Thursday and Friday and 10:00-1:30 on Saturday. Featured genres will be children's, Texana, summer reading and fine arts. To continue our mission, members are desperately needed to join Book Finders and help prepare for the sale. With such few members helping, the Book Finders are having to do a massive amount of work by pricing and sorting books to prepare for the book sales. The sales support scholarships, Corpus Christi public libraries, and community and outreach projects for women and girls.



Community Outreach

The Community Outreach 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 on May 7th at 10:00 am to honor the selected graduates, AAUW will provide each of these girls a \$200 gift card to the bookstore of the college they plan to attend.



STEM

There are three more STEM events scheduled for this academic year. Volunteers are needed for each event. Please contact Jennifer Gonzales if you are able to assist with any of the three events:

- April 30 at West Oso Middle School, 4:30 – 6:00 pm. Featured speaker: Dara Betz, Del Mar College Director of Workforce Programs
- May 2 at Del Mar College South Campus, time is TBA, expected to be sometime between 10:00 – 2:00. West Oso Middle School students will take a tour of the Biotechnology program. Dr. Daisy Zhang, Biotechnology professor at Del Mar College and an AAUW member, will be leading the tour.
- May 7 at West Oso Middle School, 4:30 – 6:00 pm. Program pending.



Interest Groups

Out-to-Lunch Bunch: Susan Birchfield, chair. Enjoy a delightful lunch on the third Tuesday of the month at local restaurants. This month they will meet at 12:30 pm on Tuesday, May 20th at Ramen Legend Café located at 4938 S Staples, across from La Palmera Mall. RSVP to Susan.

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 group meets on the last Wednesday of the month at local restaurants. On May 28, a discussion will be held on *The Fountainhead (1943)* by Ayn Rand. Location and time to be determined. RSVP

Playgoers: Michelle Balis, chair. If you have signed up for this group, Michelle will email you one week before a performance. Let her know if you want to see Nunsense at Aurora Arts Theater the weekend of June 6, 13, or 20. Also let her know if you want to see Wizard of Oz at the Harbor Playhouse the weekend of June 6 or 13 and Hairspray July 18-August 17. RSVP.

Poetry Appreciation: Leslie Peart, chair. This group meets on the second Wednesday of the month. RSVP. This month they will be attending Friends who Poet with Annie Huckabee and Joe Wilson at Neyland Library on May 12 at 6:30 pm.

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. There will be no meeting this month due to Mothers' Day.



AAUW - CC Upcoming Events

***April 30, 2025** - STEM event at West Oso High School, 4:30 – 6:00 pm

***May 2, 2025** - STEM event at Del Mar College South Campus, time is TBA

***May 3, 2025** - Member Meeting at Blue Clove, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

***May 7, 2025** - Miller High School event celebrating book scholarship recipients, 10:00 am

***May 7, 2025** - STEM event at West Oso High School, 4:30 – 6:00 pm

***May 17, 2025** - YWCA celebration in honor of Nancy Wesson-Dodd, 12 :00 – 3:00 pm

***May 28-30, 2025** - NCCWSL Conference, University of Maryland

***June 12-14, 2025** - BOOK SALE, Neyland Library, see flyer for times

***June 28, 2025** - Board meeting, HEB house, 1:30 – 5:00 pm



Happy Birthday Wishes

May

Alka KhanolkarMay 12

Lisa Leal-GarciaMay 28

May Interesting Facts

Birthstone

Emerald

Birth Flower

Lily of the Valley

Zodiac Signs

Taurus - April 20 - May 20

Gemini - May 21 - June 20

