

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



Corpus Christi (TX) Branch

American Association of University Women



Vision: Equity for all

December 2025 Edition

Editors: Diana Cardenas and Deanne Purcell



Kelly Gonzalez,
President

President's Message

It's hard to believe we are already approaching the holiday season. Every year I say I am going to start early and every year I am still behind! This year I am going to try very hard to not get caught up in the rush but to take time to enjoy the magic and joy - to appreciate the little things and not worry about trying to get everything perfect.

If I can do this during this hectic time, maybe it will carry over to the rest of the year. I was reminded about how important it is to appreciate what we have and the special people in our lives at the last book sale. I always love working the book sales as I never know which branch members I will be working with. It makes me happy to get to spend time with each of our Book Finders volunteers. I also enjoy meeting and talking to our customers and the library staff. Kris always thinks she's making me work, but it's my happy place!


It's during the sales, meetings, and branch events that I am constantly reminded why I joined AAUW and why I renew each year. Seeing people I don't see often, connecting with friends, hearing offers of help when someone is sick, that's the reason. It's more than the message and mission of AAUW; it's all of you. I am really looking forward to the December meeting where we can come together as friends, with no agenda other than enjoying each other's company!

So, during the holiday season, let's all share the joy with each other and those we come in contact with. Who knows, they may be as frazzled as we are, and a smile may be what they need to see. No matter what holiday you observe may it be full of peace, joy, love and kindness.

Kelly



AAUW December Luncheon



Join us for a warm and festive

December Luncheon with Silent Auction and Raffle

December 6

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

All Saints Episcopal Church
3026 S. Staples St.

Those planning to attend need
to mail a check payable to
AAUW-CC for \$28 to Vickie.

All checks will be deposited on
December 1.

November Branch Meeting Speaker Summary

By Dr. Jo Rios

The featured speaker for the November meeting was Dr. Kelly Bezio from Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi who presented a very engaging and salient review of climate change based on a book entitled *The Uninhabitable Earth* by David Wallace – Wells. Dr. Bezio received a very warm welcome from the 21 members attending the meeting, held at the YWCA.

Dr. Kelly L. Bezio is Professor English at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. Her interdisciplinary scholarship foregrounds how insights from the past help us understand how to combat inequity in our present moment. Her intellectual commitments privilege convergent collaborations across disciplines that address how knowledge making is related to the most pressing issues society faces—and how to solve them. Her book-length study, *In Contagion's Wake: Black Writers and the Development of Modern Outbreak Narratives* is forthcoming from University of Massachusetts Press in 2026. Her work on quarantine, inoculation, pandemic teaching, medical secularity, and pastoral racism has appeared in journals such as *American Literature*, *Pedagogy*, *Symbiosis*, *Digital Defoe*, *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, *Literature and Medicine*, and *Studies in Religion*. She has served as guest co-editor of special issues on the topic of religion and medicine in the latter two journals. She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a B.A. in English, History, and French, with a minor in German, from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

For this presentation, Dr. Bezio addresses the question: What is the best way to tell the story of climate change? David Wallace-Well's 2019 non-fiction book *The Uninhabitable Earth* explores the consequences of global warming, asking how we can narrate looming catastrophe in such a way as to encourage action. This presentation will examine how Wallace-Wells and others recount world-wide environmental change and what we can do about it.



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November Branch Meeting Speaker Summary

By Dr. Jo Rios

Her presentation examines some of the critical issues on climate change based on the journalistic accounting of the author Wallace-Wells using his research based on scientific findings. He issued a call to action to try to reduce some of the environmental damage caused by mankind, especially carbon dioxide (car tailpipes emissions, fossil fuel smokestack effluents). He asserts that we, as a community, can take steps to change the warming of the planet if we act as a community. He also offers some solutions that could help alleviate the greenhouse effect, such as regulatory and policy change as well as the use of technology for carbon capture.

Dr. Bezio engaged our members who eagerly answered some of the questions proposed during this interactive presentation. Some of the video clips such as *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Your Climate Story* brought these issues home. Her presentation was easy to follow and very well accepted. I received incredibly positive feedback on this presentation.



After Dr. Bezio's presentation, some members took a few candid photos by the beautiful balloon arch in the room.

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Del Mar College Endowment Scholarship Dinner

By Dr. Barb Craig-Schniepp

Judy Potts, Barb Craig-Schniepp, and Kelly Gonzalez represented AAUW at Del Mar College's Scholarship Dinner on October 30. There they had the pleasure of meeting one of our scholarship recipient, Arianna Rios.

Arianna Rios is a delightful 22-year-old DMC student. She was born in Germany, where her parents were serving in the military. But she has lived in Corpus Christi most of her life. She graduated early from Solomon Coles High School and enrolled in Del Mar as a Communications and Public Relations major.

Currently Arianna serves as the online editor of the Foghorn newspaper. In addition, she has created a small business selling second-hand clothing at an antique mall; she speaks passionately about recycling. She had a Small Business Development Center Internship that led to her being recommended for the 2024 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders in Maryland, and that was her introduction to AAUW. She hopes to continue on to either Texas State University in San Marcos or TAMU-CC for a 4-year Communications degree. Her hope after graduating is to give back to the community, perhaps by working for a non-profit organization.

In her rare free time, Arianna spends time with her rescue cat, goes to the beach, or walks around downtown. She constantly challenges herself to do things that scare her, and that approach to life has certainly paid off. She won two of our 3 scholarships!

The third scholarship recipient is Christina Little, a nursing major who participated in the AAUW student group last year. She was unable to attend the dinner.



Arianna Rios, AAUW scholarship recipient, joins AAUW members at the event.

Texas A&M University Corpus Christi

Endowment Scholarship Banquet

By Deanne Purcell

Kris Conlan, Debby Wilkins, Kelly Gonzalez, and Deanne Purcell represented AAUW at Texas A&M - Corpus Christi's Endowment Scholarship Banquet on November 4. They were joined at the table by Dr. Christopher Andrews, Chair of the English Department, and Austin Chait, a university student and worker. AAUW awarded two scholarships, one to Ella Wilkinson and the other to Melanie Garcia. Unfortunately, neither recipient was able to attend the event.

Ella Wilkinson, Class of 2027, focuses on Elementary Education to become a teacher, a dream she has had since she was a child. She attributes her dream to her elementary schools and supportive teachers who helped her cope with a challenging home life and led her to a love a learning. She wants to create a generative, supportive, and inclusive classroom that encourages her future students to have a desire to learn, develop confidence, and feel safe. She notes that receiving AAUW's scholarship helps allay her concern for the cost of her education.

Melanie Garcia, Class of 2026, is a Biomedical Science major. She thanks AAUW for the scholarship that lessens her worry about tuition to be able to focus on her science coursework. Earning a degree in Biomedical Science will be a step toward her attending Pharmacy school. Presently working as a nurse, she helps to improve the health of patients. Her specific expertise in pharmacy and nursing will be valuable in the community. Melanie hopes to set an example of hard work, determination, and achievement for the next generation of her siblings and nieces.



Dr. Christopher Andrews, Chair of the English Department at Texas A&M University joins Austin Chait, student, and AAUW members at the event.

STEM

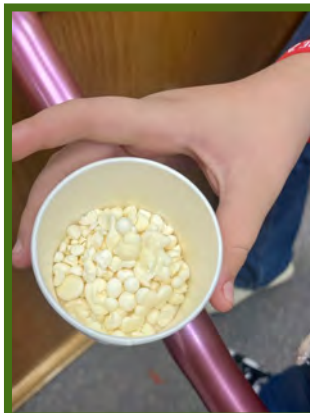
by Jennifer Gonzales



The Del Mar College Science Club, along with their advisor Kelsey Cloud, led a hands-on demonstration showing the girls how to make Dip N’ Dots–style ice cream using liquid nitrogen. After watching the demonstration and learning about the process, the students were able to make the ice cream themselves with guidance from the college science club members.

Following the activity, the Girls in STEM had the opportunity to ask questions about college life and the students’ educational journeys. The Del Mar College Science Club and AAUW Student Association did an excellent job sharing their experiences and discussing their academic goals.

Representing the AAUW STEM Committee were STEM Chair Jennifer Gonzales and Lisa Leal-Garcia. Members of the DMC AAUW Student Association in attendance were Miranda Castenada, Natalie Morales, and Jasmin Vasquez.



LWV Voter Registration Event

By Dr. Vickie Natale

On November 15, 2025, the AAUW Corpus Christi Branch partnered with the League of Women Voters to host a voter registration table at the Fall Festival of All Saints Episcopal Church. In addition to voter registration forms, AAUW membership forms were also available for interested attendees.

Volunteers at the event included Peggy Duran, Sylvia Whitworth, and Vickie Natale — all members of both AAUW and LWV — along with Kelly Gonzalez (AAUW) and LWV members Liz Riggle, Kathryn Oler, Nick Jimenez, and Maria Jimenez.

Fun fact: After participating in the event, Kathryn Oler decided to join AAUW — we're delighted to welcome her as one of our newest members!



Book Finders

By Kris Conlan

Book Finders directors, Kristin Conlan and Debby Wilkins, hosted a book sale at Neyland Library on November 13th, 14th, and 15th.

Customers perused the shelves for a variety of books and were happy with their findings. The book sale featured Texana, children's, holiday gifts, and coffee table books.

Children's books were the top sellers of the event.

The book sale was the most successful one of the year!

The directors send a special thank you to all the AAUW members who worked the book sale and those who work weekly for this important cause.

* Special Note: Volunteers are needed to help box up the books in the Book Nook because new shelving will be installed.



AAUW member and Book Finders customer, Peggy Duran, was excited to purchase some wonderful books for her grandchildren at the book sale.

Community Outreach

By Diana Reyes

YWTeen Holiday Shopping: Unwrap the Magic

Community Outreach Committee members, led by chair Diana Reyes, met on Thursday, November 20, to articulate the goals for the “YWTeen Holiday Shop: Unwrap the Magic” activity and to review with YWCA Director/CEO Esmeralda Herrera-Teran and Operations Manager, Mayra Zamora each step/phase involved. Also, Diana identified AAUW members who will oversee each phase. She also discussed the volunteers - from various community organizations - who will help the teen girls wrap gifts that they chose for their families and pets.

Diana noted that YWCA YWTeen school instructors, Ann and Angie, will direct the registration downstairs, address parents, and manage the number of teens who will move to the large upstairs areas to select gifts and wrap them with help from volunteers.

Further, Diana shared information about the number of teens expected and the types of gifts and wrapping materials needed for the tasks. She noted that at the final phase teens will enjoy refreshments, receive a personal gift, and complete a YWCA survey.



YWCA CEO Esmeralda Herrera Teran, YWCA Operations Manager Mayra Zamora and AAUW members

You Are Invited!

The Community Outreach Committee members invite you to join them at the YWTeen Holiday Shopping: Unwrap the Magic event.

The event will be held on Sunday, December 7th from 1:00 -3:00 pm at the YWCA.

We invite you to help us by volunteering at this wonderful event.

Volunteers are needed to help the girls with shopping, gift wrapping, the coloring activity, and serving refreshments.



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, December 16th at Niko's Steakhouse located at 5409 Saratoga. Please 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 December 17th, members will discuss *Persuasion* (1815-1816) by Jane Austen. 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. RSVP.

Poetry Appreciation: Leslie Peart, chair. This group meets on the second Wednesday of the month. RSVP. This month they will be discussing poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge..

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. This month they will meet on December 14th at Susan's house at 5 pm. Please RSVP to Susan.



Upcoming Events Calendar

December

2 Book Finders
 3 STEM Committee
 6 December Luncheon
 7 YTEENS Shopping
 9 Book Finders
 10 Poetry Appreciation
 12 Bridge
 14 Wine & Cheese
 16 Book Finders
 16 Out to Lunch Bunch
 17 Classics
 17 STEM @ West Oso
 23 Book Finders
 31 Bridge



January

6 Book Finders
 7 STEM Committee
 7 Poetry Appreciation
 9 Bridge
 11 Wine & Cheese
 13 Book Finders
 14 STEM @ West Oso
 20 Book Finders
 20 Out to Lunch Bunch
 27 Book Finders
 28 Classics
 30 Bridge



February

3 Book Finders
 4 STEM Committee
 7 Branch Meeting
 8 Wine & Cheese
 10 Book Finders
 11 Poetry Appreciation
 11 STEM @ West Oso
 13 Bridge
 17 Book Finders
 17 Out to Lunch Bunch
 24 Book Finders
 25 Classics
 26 Community Outreach
 27 Bridge



March

3 Book Finders
 4 STEM Committee
 7 Branch Meeting
 8 Wine and Cheese
 10 Book Finders
 11 Poetry Appreciation
 12-14 Book Sale
 13 Bridge
 17 Book Finders
 17 Out to Lunch Bunch
 18 STEM @ West Oso
 24 Book Finders
 25 Classics
 26 Community Outreach
 27 Bridge
 31 Book Finders



April

1 STEM Committee
 4 Branch Meeting
 7 Book Finders
 8 Poetry Appreciation
 10 Bridge
 12 Wine & Cheese
 14 Book Finders
 21 Book Finders
 21 Out to Lunch Bunch
 24 Bridge
 28 Book Finders
 29 Classics
 29 STEM @ West Oso
 30 Community Outreach



May

2 Branch Meeting
 5 Book Finders
 6 STEM Committee
 8 Bridge
 12 Book Finders
 13 Poetry Appreciation
 17 Wine & Cheese
 19 Book Finders
 19 Out to Lunch Bunch
 26 Book Finders
 27 Classics
 27 STEM @ West Oso
 28 Community Outreach
 29 Bridge





Happy Birthday Wishes

December

Dana Shuster.....December 2
Mary DunnamDecember 3
Annie HuckabeeDecember 3
Debby Wilkins.....December 5
Suzan King.....December 30

December Interesting Facts

Birthstones

Turquoise, Zircon,
Tanzanite, Blue Zircon

Birth Flower

Holly
Narcissus

Zodiac Signs

Sagittarius - November 22 – December 21
Capricorn - December 22 - January 19

