

TWIG – JANUARY 2024

We Invite you to Our Annual AAUW Bi-Branch Luncheon

Presented by: AAUW Fremont and Hayward/Castro Valley Branches

Our guest speaker & 2023 AAUW Career
Development Grantee:



Danielle Senecharles

Nurse-Midwifery/Women's Health Nurse Practitioner

I am a first-generation Afro-Caribbean Black American. I am the first registered Nurse and medical professional in my family. I was fortunate to be surrounded by strong, resilient women who exemplified empowerment. These experiences created a desire to pursue my education and training in a field that would allow me to impact women's lives directly. As I navigated my education and career, this passion only grew strong, propelling me into the field of midwifery.

February 3rd, 2024

Time and Location TBD





President's Message

Every year, my family and I return to my home state, NJ, for the holidays. Our favorite tradition is visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. This year, I'm looking forward to attending the *Women Dressing Women* exhibition curated by the Costume Institute celebrating the creativity and artistic legacy of women fashion designers. I'm particularly excited about seeing Ann Lowe's 10-piece collection. Ms. Lowe was a little-known African American couturier who catapulted Jackie Kennedy into an instant global fashion icon when she created the fairy-tale bridal gown for the Kennedy-Bouvier wedding. Click [HERE](#) to read Vogue magazine's homage to Ms. Lowe.



Channeling the genius of The Met curators, our mission could also be distilled into just three words: *Women Educating Women*. AAUW was founded in 1881 by 18 female college graduates who wanted to encourage women to pursue higher education. Knowing that tuition cost was an obstacle for most families, founder Marion Talbot asked AAUW members to contribute \$1 per year to set up a scholarship fund to "enable gifted women to use their intellectual powers for the good of humanity." In 1888, AAUW awarded its first American Fellowship fund of \$350 to Ida Street, a pioneer in the study of early Native American history and a graduate of Vassar, one of the Seven Sisters all-women colleges, to pursue a graduate degree in education at the University of Michigan. This year will mark the 136th anniversary of the AAUW American Fellowships program, the oldest funding source in the US for women pursuing graduate degrees!

A pioneer in global education and exchange, AAUW set up a scholarship fund in 1891 for European women scholars to pursue full-time graduate or postdoctoral study in the US. This program was officially named the International Fellowships program in 1917 and expanded to include Latin American students. AAUW is now one of the world's leading funders of postgraduate education for women and has awarded over \$140 million to over 13,000 women scholars from 145 countries. You may view AAUW's seven scholarship and grant programs [HERE](#).

You will be a part of our 136-year tradition of *Women Educating Women* when you attend the Fremont-Hayward/Castro Valley Bi-Branch Fellowship Luncheon next month. Our 2024 Fellow is Danielle Senecharles, the recipient of an AAUW Career Development Grant to pursue her Master of Nursing degree in midwifery. Quoting Danielle, "I was fortunate to be surrounded by strong, resilient women who exemplified empowerment. These experiences created a desire to pursue my education and training in a field that would allow me to impact women's lives directly." Program details to follow.

Hope to see you at our Bi-Branch Fellowship Luncheon next month!

Phie K. Dai



STATE NEWS

Public Policy:*January! Time for New Year's Resolutions!*

By Jeanne Delp

Is that a groan I hear? Yes, New Year's Resolutions have a way or testing one's will power and commitment, but the fact that you have even addressed or dismissed the idea of a change in your life is a feather in your cap! Let's RECAP (pun intended) suggestions from last year's Public Policy articles that can still count as means to making a difference in your life and in Fremont AAUW.

1. **Lobby Days** are here again! Mark your calendar for the event on April 2-3. An interest survey including a registration form will arrive in your inbox mid-January. Please be sure to complete and return the form to be added to the communications list for the event. This is your chance to influence a legislator and the outcome of our priority bills in Sacramento without traveling to Sacramento.
2. **Words Matter.** Yes they do, especially when you are recruiting someone, asking for help, or just explaining your position on an AAUW issue. A *Wall Street Journal* article suggested using the word "recommend" will improve the acceptance of your suggestion, using "because" followed by your reasoning improves acceptance of your idea by 50%, and the easiest of all—rather than ask someone to help, change it to "a Helper, a Voter, a Leader."
3. Become a **Two Minute Activist** because it is an easy way to stay up-to-date on Public Policy priorities—explore the issues, empower yourself with the knowledge to share your ideas and take action if you desire. Sign up **HERE**.
4. **The School Board Project** will be a major focus of AAUWCA for 2024. The AAUW CA Public Policy Program establishes policy directives that will guide our members to become advocates for AAUW's values of achieving "fair and equitable opportunities for our diverse society." "Communities across the nation are being faced with well-coordinated attempts by conservative organizations to elect regressive school board members who support book banning and curricula censorship." Educate yourself about the candidates for your local school board. Become a listener, a speaker, or a candidate for an open position on the school board. Amanda Gorman's poem, *The Hill We Climb* included this timely thought: 'To compose a country committed/ To all cultures, colors, characters/ And conditions of man'.

Vol. 3 Issue No. 1

Curator: Alice Alfaro Manfredi**Editor:** Jennifer Foster**Deadlines:** 25th of the month before publicationSend items for The TWIG to Jennifer Foster at jejenfo@yahoo.com

5. Become a **Donor to AAUW** because it will help provide opportunities for the diverse society in which we live. You become a Gift-Giver and according to the *Wall Street Journal* (12/17/23), "It's a profoundly moral and meaningful part of our lives and an important part of what it means to be human."

Hmmm, I need to rethink my aversion to New Year's Resolutions!

AAUW-CA Happenings

Fund donations from California through October 31 were \$231,804. Donations to the AAUW'S greatest needs fund were accepted through December 31, and donations from our branch count towards the number of members we can honor for outstanding service. . . **Cultural humility**, the concept that other cultures exist and matter, is a core

tenet of AAUW-CA's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) outreach. Kathy Garfinkle is our branch DEI officer. . . **Email**. Are you receiving everything that's due you? AAUW-CA reminds you to check your spam/junk folder every so often before deciding that AAUW email didn't arrive. If you do find errant emails there, add the domain "@aauw-ca.org" to your email provider's "safe senders" list. Here's [how](#). If your email system's "safe" list requires a full email, add "siteadmin@aauw-ca.org". . . **Gov Trek**, our newest program, is for high school junior and senior girls interested in pursuing careers in public service and elected office. Signups are in full swing, with 40 girls having already applied. Our goal is to sign up a maximum of 140 girls before the registration deadline on January 20. Students can register online, on a first-come, first-served basis on the AAUW California [website](#). Adults can donate to the



Find out if YOU have what it takes to run the world.

7 SATURDAYS OF EMPOWERMENT

- Engage on issues that matter to YOU! Gun control? Climate change? Voting equality?
- Interact in two-hour virtual sessions.
- Hear from women changemakers in politics.
- Work in teams to create a campaign simulation. You could be a candidate, campaign manager, speechwriter or communications director, field and volunteer manager.

Virtual Join other high school junior and senior girls in a free virtual program to learn about careers in public service and elected office.

INFORMATION SESSION (OPTIONAL)
JAN. 8, 2024 7PM

Session Dates
We'll be gathering every Saturday from February 3rd to March 16th.
SAT
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
March 16th from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Register today! Space is limited
govtrek@aauw-ca.org
aauw-ca.org/gov-trek

Gov Trek AAUW California
LIVE
AAUW of California
QR code

program to help the next generation. . . The **Branch Activity of the Year** program is the recognition of a branch activity presented during the one-year period ending March 1. The program provides branches an opportunity to showcase and share an activity that is novel, inspirational, and reproducible; promotes AAUW's mission and image; and incorporates DEI. The program can be recurring or a one-off. Fremont was one of two winners in the 2021 competition. . . **Nominations and election information** for state offices are now on the website. Please click [here](#) to visit the page. The deadline to enter

is March 1, with your placement on the ballot dependent upon when you submitted your nomination. AAUW-CA is specifically looking for secretary and four directors, each for two-year terms, and one director for a one-year term.

BRANCH NEWS

Light Up the Holidays



Story by Kathy Garfinkle

Photos by Mary Lynn Pelican

Everyone sparkled and dazzled at our annual Holiday Party held at Artist Walk on Sunday, December 10, from 3 to 5 pm. Members and guests enjoyed the music of the Daily Beats Band with Gene Wang, talented son of Jo Szeto. A delicious array of savory and sweet treats was available for all to enjoy. Silver and white tablecloths graced the tables along with white poinsettias.



The Holiday Season is a magical time for children, and we were happy to welcome and include them in the celebration. Linda Pearson baked beautifully decorated cookies just for them. To their delight, Mary Lynn Pelican, dressed as an elf, presented the cookies to all the children attending.

Gene Wang pleased the crowd with a sweet and smooth crooning of *Moon River* and *Our Love Is Here To Stay* along with several joyful holiday songs. The crowd was also surprised by a visit from Rudolph and Santa's eight reindeer! The AAUW yoga group led by Jo Szeto and including Kathy Scrivani, Maura Jones, Kathy Garfinkle,



Caroline Harris, Judy Wolf, Phie Dai, and Leslie Wang presented a rendition of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* and a very spirited chorus of *Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer* and *We Wish You A Merry Christmas*. Gene Wang was our obliging Rudolph, complete with a shiny nose and reindeer antlers.

The mood was festive, but we also accomplished some important business by encouraging donations to our Foundation For Local Scholarships. Donations to the Foundation totaled \$1,933 that day. We were also surprised and delighted by a very generous donation of \$10,000 by Judy Wolf.

We gathered together to celebrate with friends old and new, enjoyed great music, and a large array of scrumptious food. What better way to share our holiday spirit!

Board of Directors



President - **Phie Dai**
Vice President - **Kathy Garfinkle**
Secretary - **Carolyn Hedgecock**
Branch Treasurer - **Kimmi Tang**
Program Chair - **Kathy Garfinkle**
Membership Chair - **Jo Szeto**
Membership Treasurers - **Kris Sandoe and Jennifer Foster**
Public Policy Chair - **Jeanne Delp**
AAUW Fund Chair - **Jennifer Foster**

Foundation for Local Scholarships

President - **Randy Fewel**
Secretary - **Avis Kresin**
Chief Financial Officer - **Ashlee Nelson**
Programs Officer - **Sowjanya Vutukur**
Development Officer - **Mary Lynn Pelican**

Special Interest Chairs

Afternoon Lit - Joyce Ruiz
Book Talk - Margery Leonard
Cultural Cuisine - Judy Wolf
Exploring the Arts - Karen McCready
One Book, One Community Read - Margery Leonard, Jeanne Delp, Jo Szeto, Kris Sandoe, Carolyn Hedgecock, Phie Dai, and Becky Denevan
Tuesday Chat - Jui-Lan Liu
Yoga for Body and Spirit - Jo Szeto

Know Your AAUW:

Funds Lunch Showcases Grant Award Winner

We call it the AAUW Funds luncheon, the fellowship luncheon, and the Bi-branch fellowship luncheon.

Whatever we call it, it means we, members of the AAUW Fremont Branch, are invited to lunch on February 3 with another Alameda County branch—Hayward-Castro Valley—that is designed to showcase the AAUW Education and Training Fund 2023 fellowship scholars and grant winners (See Page 1).


The National AAUW Education Fund awarded more than 320 Fellowships and Grants worth \$6 million to women and community projects for the academic year 2022-2023. Thirty-one of them are studying in California and 10 of those are in the Bay area.

The luncheon is a chance to see, in the form of an award winner, what the money that is donated to AAUW Funds is paying for. Our speaker next month is Danielle Senecharles, a career development grant winner and University of California San Francisco student who is going for her master of nursing degree.

Career Development Grants provide funding to women who hold a bachelor's degree and are preparing to advance or

change careers or re-enter the workforce in education; health and medical sciences;

science, technology, engineering, and math; or social sciences. Primary consideration is given to women of color and women pursuing their first advanced degree or credentials in nontraditional fields.

New Member: 

Sowjanya Vutukur

By Remy Parmar

I interviewed one of our new members, Sowjanya Vutukur, and learned some important facts about Sowjanya that I'd like to share.

Sowjanya grew up in the southern part of India and is multilingual. In addition to English, she speaks Kannada (her mother tongue), Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. She has a daughter named Harshini, a junior at James Logan High in Union City.

Sowjanya practiced dentistry in India before she married and moved to the United States. She practiced here for eight years, too, but the hectic pace made it difficult to balance work and family. So, she took a break and began volunteering at Harshini's school. A teacher there suggested

Sowjanya become a teacher – which is how she got into substitute teaching where she gets to have flexible hours and spend more time with Harshini. In the future, Sowjanya would like to explore teaching at a Dental School.

Interestingly, Sowjanya attended our signature Mother Daughter Discovery Day Event with Harshini (a third grader then); they had so much fun that they attended twice more! She met our Foundation Board when Harshini entered Speech Trek in ninth grade. Sowjanya says, "I loved what AAUW represented. I became a member then. My daughter loves being a part of AAUW. The fact that it's all women oriented and works towards enriching and empowering girls is very noteworthy and I am proud to be part of it."

Additionally, Sowjanya stepped up to become our Tech Trek Chair. She is doing impressive work, as she contacts the middle schools in the Tri-City area and asks them to nominate two girls who are interested in STEM to attend our weeklong tech camp. Sowjanya says, "It's a great exposure to STEM and the fact that AAUW and Tech Trek makes this happen is wonderful." When she's not working and volunteering, Sowjanya enjoys baking with Harshini. As vegetarians, it's challenging to come up with tasty baked goods, but they love desserts, so they experiment with egg-free cakes and pies.

Also, Sowjanya said, "Our family loves traveling. Our favorite destinations are Tokyo and Amsterdam. I would love to visit Peru and Greece. Hopefully soon."

Welcome to AAUW, Sowjanya Vutukur!! And, thank you for adding your ideas to our Tech Trek program for girls!



Sowjanya Vutukur and her daughter Harshini in Amsterdam. Harshini is the STEM intern for the Fremont branch.

Why I like Speech Trek

By Ameya Ravi, Speech Trek Ambassador and 2023 Speech Trek Branch Finalist and California State Contest Third-Place Winner

Speech Trek is an oratory contest in which participants address a prevalent societal issue within five to six minutes. The response to the topic is up to creative interpretation, but it must be original work and represent the speaker's beliefs. The speech is then judged under the criteria of content and delivery.

Last year, I participated in AAUW's speech trek, and it was truly a transformative experience for me. After participation in the program for a couple of months, I placed first in the Fremont Branch and third overall in the state. Even before I was introduced to the program by students from my school, I had experience in speaking. I was a member of the speech and debate team. More specifically, I competed in Oratorical Interpretation, so I had a lot of experience with the delivery portion of speaking.

From my prior experience in speech, I was familiar with some important delivery skills. These speech delivery skills helped me keep the audience engaged and present a message with more clarity.

While I had experience in delivering speeches, I struggled with where to start writing it and how to learn more about the topic and begin to understand it better. Luckily, I was immediately provided with mentorship from the AAUW Speech Trek program leaders. My understanding of the topic for the 2022-2023 year (*How can communities, organizations and citizens of all ages help protect and expand voting rights?*) was immediately facilitated by articles and literature provided by the Speech Trek mentors. My first step was to complete my research, from which I formulated a draft, edited, and began to memorize. Reaching out to the Speech Trek mentors for support is an integral part of getting the full learning experience from the program, so I reached out for assistance frequently. In doing this, I received multiple ideas and a lot of genuine feedback on how to improve the writing of my speech.

The biggest takeaways I gained from AAUW's Speech Trek were crucial life skills, such as learning to write a speech and learning the importance of asking for coaching help. This collaborative process showed me new and diverse ways to look at an important

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

AAUW Fremont Branch Presents: **Speech Trek 2024**

A Speech Competition

*Open to High School Students in the Tri City Area
in February 2024*

2024 Prompt:

If an educated population is essential to a nation's prosperity, then how can we ensure a robust public school curriculum that is accessible to all and teaches historically accurate information?

No Experience Necessary. Mentoring provided.

Gift Card Prizes:

1st Place \$500 and the opportunity to compete at the state level
2nd Place \$300; 3rd Place \$100



AAUW California
Speech Trek

AAUW advances gender equity through
research, education and advocacy

**Deadline to Return Application:
Friday, December 29, 2023**

Contact: Remy Parmar
for the application
and contest rules.

aauwfremontbranch@gmail.com



In principle and in practice there shall be no barriers to full participation in AAUW on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

issue in society, which ultimately helped me in critical thinking and determining my own views. Learning deeply about prevalent issues in society, developing creative solutions and presenting them clearly was a challenging and invaluable experience for me.

Overall, I highly recommend participating in the AAUW Speech Trek not only as a great opportunity to develop writing and public speaking skills, but also to learn about prevalent national issues, build critical thinking, interact with leaders, and sculpt your own pathways to new opportunities.

THIS 'N THAT

Important Dates

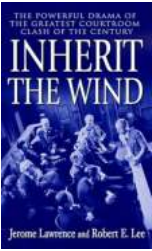
- All members are welcome to attend the next Branch board of directors meeting on January 12 from 10am to noon at Jo Szeto's home in Fremont. If you would like to attend but can't meet us at 10am on a Friday, please email us at aauwfremontbranch@gmail.com and let us know your availability.
- Save the date for the AAUW Funds luncheon on February 3. Join us to see what our donations to the AAUW Funds are being used for.

In the Community

- On January 6, the League of Women Voters of Fremont-Newark-Union City is sponsoring a panel discussion on "Defining Civic Engagement in the 2020s." Cheryl Cook-Kallio, from the Alameda County Board of Education, will be the guest speaker. The event will be held at Niles Discovery Church from 10am to noon.
- Also on January 6, the Berkeley and Oakland-Piedmont AAUW branches are sponsoring a talk about the life of Mary Church Terrell at the African American Museum and Library in Oakland. Biographer Alison Parker, author of *Unceasing Militant*, will speak from 2 to 4pm. Reservations should be made by January 2 to lenoregallin@gmail.com.

"building community is a requisite foundation for building a better world." — Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



Afternoon Lit

Afternoon Lit will meet January 16 at 2 pm at the home of Pauline Weaver. She will review *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. Please let her know if you plan to attend.

Book Talk



Note that **Evening Book Talk** has changed its name to **Book Talk**, which was the original name of the group 27 years ago.

Secrets. If your children ask you to tell them about your life, are there things you keep to yourself? On Monday, January 8, Marge Leonard will lead a discussion of *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett when Book Talk meets at her home, 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m.



Cultural Cuisine Visits Japan

The group will be going to Toro Sushi Stone Grill and Bar on Tuesday, January 23 at 6:30 pm. The choices are many: sushi, teriyaki, tempura, just to name a few. Please RSVP by Sunday, January 21, so we can book a private room. Email Judy at judyjudyjudy1940@gmail.com or call her. The restaurant address is 43785 Boscell Road, and its phone number is 510-683-8800.



Let's Go to The Movies

On Tuesday, January 2, join the group going to see "The Color Purple" at Cinemark at Pacific Commons. The showtime selected is at 12:40. RSVP to Judy Wolf at judyjudyjudy1940@gmail.com or call her by Monday evening, January 1.



Tuesday Chat With ESL Students

Tuesday Chat meets every Tuesday afternoon from 4pm to 5pm at the Fremont Main Library, 4200 Stevenson, Fukaya Room A, to chat with ESL speakers about everyday topics. For more information, call Jui-Lan Liu at the Fremont Main Library at 510-745-1400.



Yoga for Body and Spirit

This group meets every Thursday at 11:15 at Jo Szeto's house. Lunch is included. For more information, call Jo.

Exploring the Arts — will return in February

MEMBER COLUMNS

What's Happening in the Garden:

Fava Beans

By Kris Sandoe

Even though I have grown fava beans for several years now, I continue to be amazed at how well this bean plant grows in the winter, when it is cold and often wet here in Northern California.



I live in the Niles district of Fremont and there are several old-timers here who were originally from the Azores and Portugal. I first was given some fava bean seeds by an elderly neighbor. He advised me on how to plant them and when—and after that I was off and growing them every winter since.

One can plant the seeds in November or December. The first photo shows what a bed of fava beans looks like towards the end of March.



The second photo is a close-up of the flowers. It is interesting that bees land on these flowers after 1 pm, and the weight of the bee causes the lower petal to open up so the bees can reach the pollen inside.

Pods form after the flowers and around April or May we harvest the beans. We chop up the stems and leaves for compost, although the young leaves are very good in a salad. I just had fava bean leaves with feta in a salad at a restaurant we went to a couple of weeks ago.

It is time-consuming to process the beans. You remove them from the pods, parboil for a short time, then, when cool, peel the outer layer away. You boil up the inner beans and then can use them—either eating as is, adding to stir fries, or my favorite way—fava bean hummus where I add lots of garlic, a bit of salt, and olive oil and place that with the beans into my food processor.



I have heard that the pods are also wonderful grilled outside and then eaten whole. The photo (left) shows some harvested fava bean pods.

The chopped up leaves and stems are great to add to garden beds. The beans are often grown as a winter cover crop and worked into the soil before any beans are harvested. However, I prefer to harvest the beans and compost the greens.

Money, Money, Money: *Credit Card Debt*

By Judy Wolf

Now that the Holiday Season is over and supposedly one of the most expensive of the decade, it's time to look at your personal damage or expenses.

If you have high balances on your credit cards and are basically paying minimum balances with the high interest rates that the cards charge, it may seem that it will take forever to get these cards paid off. How to make a plan to make this happen. First off, put the cards away and do not add any more charges or debit to any of the accounts.

Second, while continuing to make basically the minimum payments, you are paying interest on every card. So consider making a bigger payment to the card with the lowest balance. Get that one paid off and stop the interest charge on that card. Then start making higher payments on the next lowest balance card.

Use this strategy to get all your cards paid off.

Then if you must, use only one card and pay off the balance every month and keep yourself out of monthly credit card debt for the rest of your life.

Support Our Members



Katryn Bury is the author of the teen detective series *Drew Leclair Gets a Clue* (nominated for 3 book awards), and *Drew Leclair Crushes the Case*. Click on the image to learn about Katryn's third title, debuting Fall 2024!



Enjoy new and bestselling titles for all ages personally curated by Amy and her staff at Banter Bookshop in downtown Fremont! **AAUW Fremont book club titles receive a 15% discount.** Click on the photo to browse Banter's in-store events.



Contact your friendly Farmers Agent Nkechi Comfort Uzoegwu : nkechi.prodriguez2@farmersagency.com



Alice's Photoland, your Twig Curator Alice Manfredi's professional portrait studio, covers all types of shoots such as: Family, Mother & Child, Maternity, Engagement, Graduations, and more. Click on the logo to see samples of her work.