

AAUW CAPE MAY COUNTY BRANCH

Website <http://capemay-nj.aauw.net>

The purpose of this branch shall be to further AAUW's mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

OCTOBER 2022 Newsletter

President's Corner



Fall!!! What a lovely time of year.

Recently, Karen and Steve Weis were honored at a presentation on September 29 at the ACCC campus. They donated \$30,000 to create an endowed scholarship. It will support our Marion MacEwan Second Chance Scholarship.



I was contacted recently by the president of the Atlantic County AAUW, Jacalyn Shelley. She discussed our two clubs sharing news of our activities. So, we will be exchanging newsletters to find out what each club is doing for the month. As we already have many dual members, I thought this was an excellent idea.

Our next board meeting will be held on October 21. It will again be held at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Wildwood at 1:30pm. All members are welcome and any ideas for the coming year are also appreciated (especially fundraising ideas)!

Our "Welcome Back" Dinner will be held on October 2 at Alfe's at 4:30. Hope you can attend.

See you soon,
Chris Rohrman (609 420-7643)
President of Cape May County AAUW

OCTOBER BOOKS



The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post by
Allison Pataki

We will meet on **Tuesday, October 18** at 12 noon at Crest Pier Community Center, 5800 Ocean Avenue, Wildwood Crest (between Crocus & Heather). Please bring your lunch & beverage. Dessert will be provided.



Vinegar Girl by Anne Tyler (Part of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project based on *The Taming of the Shrew*)

We will meet on **Wednesday, October 26** at 6 pm at Mulligan's Shore Bar & Grill, 310 West Hildreth Avenue, Wildwood. We will discuss the book after ordering dinner.

Contact Mary Jane Slugg at 609 884 7041 or shoresluggs@aol.com to let her know you are coming.

WOW CELEBRATION

Women of Wonder Celebration on Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 11:30 am at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean City.

For more information and tickets, visit atlantic.edu.wow

BOOK NOOK

This month I'm writing about a current topic that has been bothering me since Covid had us all housebound and gave some of us more time alone to read and to think. News about book banning, removing books from libraries and classrooms, challenging books at PTA and school board meetings, and threatening school administrators over books that are available to children seems to have become a new national sport. My musings reflect my opinions as a result of my research on the topic. I am not trying to force my opinions on anyone else and I do not want to offend anyone. As a retired teacher and mother of two educators I hear a lot about this topic firsthand.

I'll start with a brief history of book banning. This practice dates back to 212 BC when Chinese emperor Shih Huang Ti burned all the books in his kingdom, keeping one copy of each book. By doing this he thought history

could be said to begin with him! In 1559 the Roman Catholic Church under Pope Paul IV established the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. For more than 400 years it was the definitive list that Roman Catholics were told not to read. Many other religious groups throughout history have restricted the reading of their members. Politics is another reason books have been banned. For example, in 1933 in Nazi Germany books written by Jews, communists, and others were burned in massive bonfires. Governments around the world have banned books for many different reasons.

Let's fast forward to book banning in the United States. Many historians agree that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe with its pro-abolitionist agenda and depiction of slavery was the first widely banned book in our country. A decade after the Civil War Congress passed the Comstock Law which prohibited the mailing of "pornographic" material. Their definition of pornography was murky and it was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1957 in *Roth vs US*. Obscenity was redefined. In the 1950s and 1960s most books that were banned were considered indecent because of sexual content.

In 1982 the ALA (American Library Association) initiated Banned Book Week during the month of September. The purpose is to celebrate the freedom to read. Lists

were published of books that had been banned, many of them classics. This year Banned Books Week was September 18-24; the motto was Censorship Divides Us. There is now a coalition, The Banned Books Week Coalition, which is an international alliance of diverse organizations joined by a commitment to increase the awareness of the annual celebration of the freedom to read through education, advocacy, and the creation of programming about the problem of book censorship.

Today there is a growing movement across the United States to ban books in schools. At least 50 groups across the US have been identified as operating at national, state, or local levels. Most of them have been formed since 2021. They are targeting school boards by attending and disrupting public meetings. They also attack individual teachers, librarians, and school administrators. The superintendent of my younger grandson's district in Pennsylvania resigned because his life and family were being threatened.

At least 40% of these bans are connected to either proposed or enacted legislation or political pressure from state officials or elected lawmakers to restrict the teaching of or the presence of certain books or concepts. The most common targeted themes, from most to least, are: LGBTQ+ characters; characters of color; issues of race

and racism; sexual content, especially teen sex, pregnancy, sexual assault, abortion, and informational books about puberty, sex, or relations; rights and activism; biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs; and religious minorities.

Although New Jersey hasn't been widely targeted yet, our neighbor Pennsylvania is the second most targeted state in the US, sandwiched between Texas and Florida. Our daughter is an elementary school librarian in a district in Bucks County, PA. This is her dream job. She thrives on being able to connect children from kindergarten to fifth grade with books that make their faces light up with joy. Children come up to her on the playground to tell her how much they like their books. Recently we were talking on the phone and she was in tears because of all the pressure she and other librarians are under because of contentious, volatile school board meetings challenging books and who selects the books.

A new selection committee is being formed that includes no librarians or teachers on it because the school board members concluded that they are too liberal!

I believe that as members of AAUW we need to be aware of what is happening. Our schools need books to fit the needs of all children and need to be available to those children. They need a safe and

neutral place to talk about these issues. Banning books won't make them go away. We need to keep THE FREEDOM TO READ in our schools for all children!

Happy Reading
Mary Jane

PS The most banned book of all is *1984* by George Orwell!!

If you like to read ahead, following are our fall selections:

November 15 - Daytime Group
The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Brontë

November 30 - Evening Group
The Lobotomist's Wife by Samantha Greene Woodruff

December 20 - Daytime Group
The Days of Afreketé by Asali Solomon

December 28 - Evening Group
Magpie Murders by Anthony Horowitz
This story will be on WHY TV as a series starting Sunday, October 16 at 9pm

AAUW Public Policy

tbasquez_86@hotmail.com

AAUW Public Policy, adopted May, 2021

“AAUW believes that high-quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society and the key to improving economic prosperity and gender equality.”

Public education is indeed foundational to the nation, and in these challenging times is under additional stress by challenges to school libraries to ban books. It is important to protect our freedoms by ensuring that contested material be evaluated in context – that is, the focus of the entire work and not a particular word or section. Much of the material being contested falls in LGBTQ or racial arenas - areas that can be difficult to discuss, although being very real elements in our society. Age-appropriateness is a valid concern, however, different voices cannot be stifled – both for readers and writers.

EVENT CALENDAR

Sunday, October 2 – Welcome Back Dinner

Tuesday, October 18 Daytime Book Club

Wednesday, October 26 Evening Book Club

Thursday, November 3 – Women of Wonder Celebration

Tuesday, November 15 Daytime Book Club

Wednesday, November 30 Evening Book Club

Tributes

Gifts to our Tribute Scholarship Fund are a thoughtful way to recognize an anniversary or remember a friend, member or relative while providing support to our scholarship recipients.

An acknowledgement is sent to you and to the individual recognized. Your name will be made known, but not the amount of the gift.

Please send your gift to Barbara Heinrichs, 503 Whildam Ave., North Cape May, NJ 08204.

Acknowledgements:

<http://capemay-nj.aauw.net>

KEEP OUR WEB ADDRESS HANDY

You can always find up-to-date information here.

Book lists and dates for both groups are posted. A complete membership list with contact information is available.

To access the information for Members Only call: Mary Jane Slugg (609) 884-7041 or Barbara Heinrichs (609) 889-1647 and we will give you the password!

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