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**Co-Presidents' Report**

We did it!! Our branch has received AAUW's, much sought after but rarely awarded, highest recognition – **the 5 Star Award!** In February after clarifying the achievements in the branch's accomplishments in the advancement category, National awarded the fifth and final star to the branch.

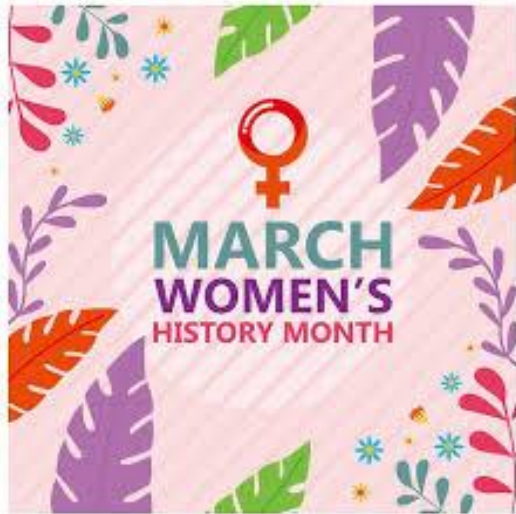
How many branches received this recognition? 15 out of 1300 branches nationwide. That's only 1.5% of branches nationwide!

This distinction recognizes the work of the branch in 5 key areas: Advancement, Public Policy, Governance and Sustainability, Programing and Communications and External Relations. As such, our branch will be highlighted on the National Website along with focus on the Branch's work. This achievement is thanks to the tremendous work of our board and our members who are committed to improving the lives of women and girls in our community, our state and in our nation. **THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!!**



2025-2026 Branch Officers

Leslie Sevier has graciously agreed to chair the nominating committee for the 2025-2026 officers. If you are interested in being a part of this important committee or if you are interested in holding a position on the board and using your talents to enhance the lives of women and girls in our community, please contact Leslie no later than 31 March.

**Women's History Month and Equal Pay Day**

March represents 2 significant and important milestones: Women's History Month and Equal Pay Day. This request has been approved and we have respectfully requested the City of Lompoc to recognize these milestones with the presentation of a single city proclamation at the **18 March City Council meeting at 6:30**, with a modest community reception starting at 6:00pm at City Hall. It would be amazing if we could have a full show of support of our members for this presentation. Please put this date on your calendar and plan to be at the March 18th City Council Meeting.

Thanks to Mary, Jenelle and Kay for their work on this proclamation!

We anticipate a similar proclamation to be presented to the branch from the SB County Board of Supervisors on **March 11 at 9:00** (to be confirmed) at the Government Administration Building, Board Hearing Room 511 East Lakeside Parkway in Santa Maria. Many thanks to Marell and Dianne who put the request into motion!



Lucy Thoms-Harrington: Co-President
Kay Duffy Taylor: Co-President



Programs

On Sunday February 16, 2025, Pam Buchanan, Brenda Villa, Janet Blevins, Lucy Thoms-Harrington, Kay Duffy, and Dinah Lockhart attended the Black History Month celebration at the Lompoc Library's Grossman Gallery. The theme of this year's event was African Americans and Labor. Speakers addressed the importance of remembering African American historical achievements and great Black leaders in our country's history, and how easily gains are eroded if we are not vigilant. Dr. Darren McDuffie, Superintendent of Santa Maria-Bonita School District gave an amazing oratorical presentation as he spoke in the voice of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and recited the Drum Major Instinct Speech. Attendees who visited the AAUW table were encouraged to play the "Name that Famous Black Woman" game. Winners were issued contest tickets, with a grand-prize winner selected at the end of the event. Supervisors Hartmann and Nelson both spoke, and Janet Blevins recounted how her mother's activism inspired her to fight for women's rights and other marginalized groups. Much appreciation to the dedication of Lawanda Lyons Pruitt, President of the Santa Maria/Lompoc Chapter of the NAACP. Ms. Lyons Pruitt is the former Chief Investigator for the County's Public Defender's Office before she retired in 2016.



Dinah Lockhart: Programs VP



Membership

Did you know that you can always pay for your membership **on line?**

Click this Link: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/why-join/>

By mail: By Check: As always, making a check payable to your AAUW branch and mailing it to: AAUW, Lompoc-Vandenberg, P.O. Box 2523, Lompoc, CA 93438.

Have questions? Please call or email Mischa Dalcerra, Membership VP at 805.588.0645 or mischadalcerra@gmail.com.



We very much value your membership in AAUW!!!

We have **82 Total Members** (including 5 from State).

Mischa Dalcerra: Membership VP



AAUW Funds

National is now sending each branch a monthly report of donations to AAUW Fund. This will make it easier to keep track of our donations as the year progresses. National sets a goal for each branch suggesting a 15% increase yearly. That means our branch should raise about \$2500 this year if we are to achieve our 'star' for fundraising. To put this in perspective, 15 years ago, when we sold churros, we would send in approx. \$5000 each year based on what we raised at the event plus individual members' donations.

Thank you to Kay Duffy who made a donation last month to get us started for 2025. Our branch number is #0130 and this needs to be on the form whenever you donate so the branch will get credit. If you have any questions, please contact me.



Marell Brooks: AAUW Funds V

Speech Trek 2025:

Speech Trek 2025 – Thursday, March 6 from 4:30 – 6:30 at the Lompoc Library Grossman Gallery. Speech Trek 2025 is here! Join AAUW members and perspective members, friends and neighbors as we support 5 courageous high school students who will deliver their original speeches on topic of climate change and its impact on women in the US and globally. A terrific of panel of judges will have the difficult task of selecting the first, second and third place speech who will receive a gift card from the branch: \$500, \$300 and \$200 respectively.

A community reception will follow where we can congratulate the contestants!

Thanks to previous Speech Trek fundraising and a grant from AAUW CA Speech Trek, funds are in place to support this wonderful contest, the prizes and the reception.

The video of the winning speech from our branch will compete against the first-place submissions from other branches across the state for judging by the AAUW CA 2025 Speech Trek Judging Panel. The top 3 speeches selected by the panel will be showcased at the AAUW CA annual meeting, Saturday April 27 where the winners will be announced live.

As a further incentive to attend, our branch directories will be available for pick up at the event (thanks Dianne!).

Many thanks to the Speech Trek 2025 committee: Pam Buchanan, Kay Duffy Taylor, Katie Brenna, Dulcie Sinn, Shay Allen, Jenelle Osborne, Robin Ghormley, and Dinah Lockhart for making the magic happen for these students.

Lucy Thoms-Harrington: Acting Speech Trek Coordinator

TECH TREK

AT UCSB IN 2025!

There will be 1 session with 100 campers. I will request at least 4 camper slots. The new requirement for sending campers in July 13th – 19th, 2025 will be that each branch has to send volunteers to work at camp. The good news is that the volunteers can include past campers. We usually have at least one member volunteer so I am

hoping that we can continue to count on member participation. The camper fee has gone up to \$1,200.00. We have two applicants who have submitted their application.

Wynn Clevenger, Tech Trek Chair



AAUW Interbranch Brunch

We enjoyed a delicious brunch and had a fantastic presentation from AAUW fellow and UCSB Assistant Professor, Dr. Mayra Puente, on her highly relevant research "**Rural Latinx Students' College Access & Choice Processes in California's Central Coast**".

Many long-time members from the branches who attended noted that Dr. Puente's presentation and work was the best that they have seen presented from an AAUW fellow. This illustrates the importance of the AAUW fund! See Marell's article in the newsletter on how to support the valuable work being supported by the AAUW fund!



Lucy, Kay, Dianne, Terry and Jan
(your representatives on the IBC council)

College/University Liaison

Very low turnout for the Bow Wow at Alan Hancock, however there was interest for those who stopped by the table. Our mission is to continue to educate our young women about AAUW. If you know of anyone who is currently enrolled in higher education, please reach out to them.



Barbara Bolton, Chair

Public Policy

Many members have asked for the AAUW CA webinar and presentation on Project 2025 and the impact on girls and women. We included it in the October newsletter but are including it again in case you missed it.

<https://www.aauw-ca.org/project-2025-and-how-it-would-impact-aauw-public-policy-priorities/>

We Didn't Start the Fire.

The LA Fires are a tragedy. DEI is the solution, not the problem.
by Missy Maceyko, Co-Director, CA State Public Policy Committee

It is January 2025. Populous, beloved, and well-known neighborhoods in Los Angeles, one of the biggest metropolitan areas in the world, are on fire. For days, residents have been evacuating, firefighters have been going without sleep, and homes and iconic landmarks have been burning. Even those that are not in immediate danger are breathing in toxic air that can create diseases for generations. It seems like everyone in the city is grieving something or someone.

And yet, as the disaster unfolds, people in LA are engaging in a massive outpouring of collective mutual aid and community support for the people and animals who are displaced and suffering.

On the other hand, as Angelinos are left to cope with displacement, property damage, and loss, leading figures in national politics have seized the moment, not to offer support, but to immediately go on the attack. They are placing blame on who they felt was the most likely culprit for these horrific fires and their aftermath: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

These accusations about DEI would be laughable were they not so problematic. Blaming DEI shows a lack of understanding of what DEI is and does while also simplifying a large and complex problem related to a multitude of factors such as weather, infrastructure, and climate change.

In sum, DEI experts say that diversity is valuable for many reasons—for addressing historical marginalization, yes, but also for increasing our problem-solving capacity and leading to innovation. Both inside and outside of the business world, diversity higher engagement, reduced turnover, and improved, and more objective, decision-making and problem-solving. **Diversity of thought in inclusive teams has been found to lead to more innovation and better, higher-impact ideas.** Indeed, as University of Michigan professor of Complexity, Social Science, and Management, Scott Brown notes, to solve complex problems in the 21st century, like climate change, we need diverse teams who can communicate across difference: “groups of experts, at least as we’re accustomed to thinking about them, are going to have a hard time competing with talented teams of people with relevant diverse perspectives.”

We need to truly understand this problem in order to prevent future loss. Rather than vilifying DEI, we need to acknowledge that DEI is one of the best tools that we have to solve such a problem. We need to come together to leverage a diversity of experiences and perspectives.

In the case of the LA fires, DEI has also been singled out as the primary culprit due to the assumption that “DEI hiring” impacts competent leadership. Certain leaders have been targeted for what was labeled as inadequate planning, resourcing, and response, **such as Mayor Karen Bass and Fire Chief Kristin Crowley. These leaders have not only been labeled as incompetent, but also as “DEI hires.”**

The labeling of these leaders as “DEI hires” is likely because they are a woman of color and a woman who is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, respectively. They are holding positions that have historically been held by, and associated with, cisgender and heterosexual (cis-het) white men. **Given the leadership positions that they hold, alongside their gender, sexuality, and race, any potential fallibility in their decision-making is not only labeled as incompetence, but is also tacitly attributed to their “DEI” status.**

As in this case, any association of DEI with hiring is assumed to be the antithesis of meritocracy. In other words, DEI considerations in hiring are assumed to unfairly divert jobs and benefits to “minority” candidates, who are positioned as an undeserving majority that get an opportunity because of who they are instead of being considered for their skill sets, experiences, and past accomplishments. This narrative about “DEI” and hiring clearly overlooks the fact that women like Mayor Karen Bass and Fire Chief Kristin Crowley *are* hired based on merit, regardless of their identity, even as they often have to overcome additional hurdles to enter into historically masculine fields and gain the qualifications and experiences to succeed.

Accusations about the harms of DEI proliferate in the current political environment, rife with threats of increased regulation and retribution. It is absolutely necessary to scrutinize the policy and planning of all leaders and decision-makers in LA in order to fully answer questions about fire mitigation and response. However, to pin the blame on DEI is to tacitly pin the blame on *only* those decision makers who are not cis-het white men and/or on those who are supportive of the kind of work that is needed to engage a range of perspectives.

Over the last few years, and accelerating after January 20, 2025, state and federal level policy changes and pronouncements in the United States have not only (seemingly) forced DEI from federally funded programs, but also created a chilling effect, leading some large corporations and public universities to (seemingly) pull back from DEI initiatives. However, given the well-known benefits of business-integrated DEI strategies in a globalized economy, DEI work will—and must—continue in order to solve big problems.

Mary Schaefer: Public Policy Chair



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

White Vulnerability: Why Feeling Uncomfortable Isn't the Same as Oppression

When we talk about race, privilege, and racism, it's common for some white individuals to feel uncomfortable. This feeling is often called **white vulnerability**—it's that defensiveness or discomfort that comes up when the conversation shifts to race. But why does it happen, and what does it mean for the fight for racial justice?

What is White Vulnerability?

White vulnerability happens when white people get emotional or defensive during conversations about race, especially when their own privilege is called out. It might look like:

- **Defensiveness** – “I’m not racist! I don’t see color!”
- **Victimization** – “Why am I being blamed for something I didn’t do?”
- **Avoidance** – Changing the subject or pretending race doesn’t matter.
- **Tone Policing** – Criticizing the way someone talks about racism because it feels “too harsh.”

This vulnerability can sometimes shut down conversations that are necessary for growth and understanding.

Why Does White Vulnerability Happen?

For many white people, race and privilege are things they’ve never had to think about. It can be jarring when confronted with the reality of systemic racism. The discomfort isn’t the issue—it’s what people do with that discomfort. Instead of leaning into it and learning, they often deflect or become defensive.

This happens because:

- **The “colorblind” approach** – Many people were taught that race shouldn’t matter, but that ignores real inequalities.
- **Privilege feels invisible** – If you’ve never had to think about race, it’s hard to understand the deep impact it has on others.
- **Guilt and shame** – Feeling bad about privilege can lead people to focus more on their own discomfort than on fixing the problem.

How White Vulnerability Hurts Progress

The goal of racial justice conversations isn’t to make anyone feel guilty—it’s to create real change. When white vulnerability takes over, it:

- Shifts the focus from the real issues (like racism) to the emotions of white people.
- Stops conversations about how to fix the system.

- Reinforces the systems that continue to cause harm.

How to Move Past White Vulnerability

It's okay to feel uncomfortable—growth happens when we step out of our comfort zones. Here's how to work through that discomfort:

1. **Listen Without Defensiveness** – Instead of reacting, really listen to what's being said.
2. **Separate Guilt from Responsibility** – You didn't create racism, but you can be part of fixing it.
3. **Educate Yourself** – Read, listen, and learn from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
4. **Sit With Discomfort** – It's uncomfortable for a reason. Lean into that.
5. **Take Action** – Support initiatives for racial justice and use your privilege to speak up.

Final Thoughts

White vulnerability can get in the way of progress, but it doesn't have to. This work is about understanding that feeling uncomfortable doesn't mean you're being attacked—it means there's an opportunity to do better. When white people push through the discomfort and engage in the work of fighting racism, that's when real change happens.

Because this isn't about comfort—it's about justice.

Brenda Villa: DEI Chair



Interest Groups

Mission Walkers Group (Weekdays)

Join the AAUW women who walk the La Purisima Mission every Monday through Friday at 8:15 am. Just show up to enjoy the walk and great company. If you need more information, contact Marell Brooks. If you are interested in walking on the weekends, please let the group know.



Dine-out, Food, Fun and Friends Group

Dine-out meets the **third Thursday** of every month at 12:30 p.m. The group met at the Lompoc Hilton Garden Inn this past month and each one enjoyed their meal. Leslie recommends the Cubano sandwich with homemade potato chips. Janet said the chili was good. It was restaurant week so the \$20.25 special was one of their pizzas with an order of chicken wings.

March 20, 2025: Enjoy Bagels and Sweets

270 East Hwy 246 in the shopping center on the right past Albertson's in Buellton. Turn in the driveway just past Jack in the Box and go towards the back. Hope to see you there!
<http://www.enjoycupcakes.com>



April 17, 2025: Dave's Place at The Village Inn
 3955 Apollo Way, Vandenberg Village
www.vanvinn.com

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call Billye Iverson or Leslie Sevier.

Billye Iverson and Leslie Sevier: Co-Chairs



Roaming Readers (1st Monday of the month)



March 3	Sicilian Inheritance (Jo Piazza)	Kathryn
April 7	The Bean Tree (Barbara Kingsolver)	Janet
May 5	The Women (Kristin Hannah)	Eileen
June 2	Forever Girl (Alexander McCall Smith)	Carol Ann
July 7	On Freedom (Timothy Snyder)	Gail
August 4	Camino Ghosts (John Grisham)	Judy
September 8	All the Queen's Men (S.J. Bennett)	Myra
October 6	The Late Show (Michael Connelly)	Cathy

Roaming Readers is open to all AAUW members; we welcome anyone interested to visit a meeting. We meet at 9:00 a.m. on the first Monday of each month (on the second Monday if the first is a holiday). We meet in rotating members' homes in person and via ZOOM. For general information or to arrange a visit to a specific meeting, please call Cathy Rudolph.

Carol Ann Johnson and Cathy Rudolph: Co-Chairs

Communications

Phone Tree

Thank you to Leslie who will chair our Phone Tree committee to call members about upcoming events!!



We still have an opening for a social media person to post relevant items associated with AAUW and issues impacting our mission. Please let Kay or Lucy know if you'd like to take on this role for our branch...the time commitment is a couple of minutes a month (yes, literally that's it!).

Lucy Thoms-Harrington: Co-President



Calendar of Events

- March 6 Speech Trek 2025 Contest: 4:30-6:30: Lompoc Library Grossman Gallery
- March 11 9:00 am - Women's History Month and Equal Pay Day Proclamation from SB County Board of Supervisors
- March 18 6:30 p.m. - Women's History Month and Equal Pay Day Proclamation at Lompoc City Council meeting
- April TBA Women/Girls in STEM*
- April TBA Scholarships Awarded
- May TBA Annual Meeting





Spotlight!

Leaves of Our Branch

Did you hear the great news? AAUW's own Dr. Clara Finneran was named as the Region 13 School Superintendent of the Year by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)!! Congratulations to Dr. Finneran for this well-deserved recognition. Read more about it here.



https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/education/lompoc-unifieds-clara-finneran-named-acsa-regional-superintendent-of-the-year/article_4bec689a-ed6d-11ef-bf2e-ff57445076c7.html



Sandy Healy March 14

Dinah Lockhart March 18



Recipe Corner

Irish Soda Bread

<https://youtu.be/diJtxSofYEM?t=13>

INGREDIENTS

4 cups (510 g) all-purpose flour
 2 teaspoons (12 g) kosher salt
 1 tablespoon (13 g) sugar
 1 teaspoon (5 g) baking soda
 1 cup dried currants, optional
 1 egg
 1¾ cups (410 g) buttermilk, see notes above
 2 tablespoons melted butter

FOR THE FINISHING:

room temperature butter
 flour



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Whisk together the flour, salt, sugar, baking soda, and currants (if using). In a medium bowl, beat the egg and buttermilk. Add the melted butter and stir to combine. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir with a rubber spatula until combined. Mixture will be sticky. Grease a 9- or 10-inch cast iron skillet (or I just use a cookie sheet) with softened butter. Set aside.

Lightly flour your hands and sprinkle a little flour over the sticky dough ball. Use your hands to scrape the dough from the sides of the bowl and to quickly shape the mass into a ball, kneading lightly if necessary. Transfer to prepared skillet. Sprinkle with a teensy bit more flour. Use a sharp knife to make

an X across the top of the dough ball. Place in oven and bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until lightly golden and bottom sounds hollow when tapped. Remove from oven, transfer to cooling rack, and let cool for 15 minutes before slicing.

To store Irish soda bread, tuck it into an airtight bag (such as a Ziplock) or an airtight vessel. You can store it at room temperature for about 3-4 days or freeze it for up to 2-3 months.



[Lompoc-Vandenberg AAUW Branch Information](#)

LV Branch Website: <http://lompocvandenberg-ca.aauw.net/>

LV Branch Mailing address: P.O. Box 2523. Lompoc, CA 93438

LV Branch e-mail address: lompocvandenberg-ca@aauw.net

Facebook: [Lompoc-Vandenberg AAUW](#)

Instagram: [@aauw_lompocvandenberg](#)

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There is no barrier to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

Scattered Seeds Editor: Kari Rosson

