

BRANCH SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS from Rachel Campbell

The Scholarship Committee—Co-Chairs Carol Wieg and Vivienne Bailey, Rachel Campbell, Mary Navin and Lydia Gillis—were impressed with the 12 applicants for the four \$1,000 scholarships our branch could offer this year. The young women selected to receive them follow.

The Betty Meaderis Scholarship: Taylor Headley will be a sophomore attending Carthage College in September. Her field of study is biology that will lead to a master's degree in environmental biology.

The Legacy Scholarship: Aileen Vilchez, an Elgin High School graduate, will attend Aurora University this fall. Her field of study is science that will lead her to medical school and a career as a cardiologist.

The Jeanne Hebeisen Scholarship: (1) Mary Sabo will be a junior at Augustana College this fall where she will work toward a Bachelor's Degree with a major in English and a minor in sociology and anthropology. She then plans to pursue a Master's Degree in Library Science.

The Jeanne Hebeisen Scholarship: (2) Samantha E. Gonzalez-Vargas has a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Benemérita Universidad de Aguascalientes in Mexico. She is currently taking classes at ECC to develop her English language skills so that she will be able to pass the Certified Nursing Assistant exam this summer. Her further goals include qualifying for the BSN program that will lead her to qualify for the Operating Room Nurse program.

BOOK GROUPS' UNSUNG HEROINE: Rachel Campbell



May is selection time for our Morning and Evening Book Groups, and thanks to Rachel, for many years we have had between 45 and 55 books from which to choose.

While some titles have been submitted by our members, most come from Rachel's year-long perusal of countless book reviews. But she does not just list titles; she also provides a detailed description for each. So invaluable is her annual list, in fact, that we often send it to friends outside our branch. What we would do without Rachel I shudder to imagine.

—from Barbara Evans,
Evening Book Group Chair

AAUW-IL 2023 CONVENTION REPORTS

from Linda Youngren, current Co-President:

A highlight of the convention was the address by Gloria Blackwell, our AAUW CEO, who spoke of the visibility of AAUW on the national stage as we advocate for gender equity. We have received media coverage from outlets such as *USA Today*, ABC, MSNBC, *Ms.*, *The Washington Post*, GMA and Yahoo Finance. And on July 1, Dr. Claudine Gray, an AAUW alumna, will become Harvard's first female Black president.

Blackwell herself has served as AAUW's representative to the United Nations and recently participated on a panel at the 67 NGO Committee on the Status of Women. And she was so involved in advocating for Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Jackson Brown on AAUW's behalf that she was invited to the White House reception honoring her swearing in.

"Without reproductive freedom, there can be no equity," she reminded us. She also announced that during 2022-2023, AAUW has awarded \$6.3 million in fellowships and grants.

from Brooke Transue, current Co-President:

Just after Senate Republicans blocked the measure that would have removed the 1982 deadline for the ratification of the ERA, Sen. Schumer announced that the Democrats were not giving up. Nor, I learned, are AAUW lobbyists, who advocate for us on issues at both the state and national levels.

At every opportunity, Linda and I sought out other branch presidents and discussed concerns we share: recruiting new members, getting current ones to assume leadership positions and identifying suitable fundraising opportunities. Exchanging ideas about how to improve these and other branch operations was an invaluable part of the convention for us.

from Marlene Daubert, Past Co-President:

This year I received the Agent of Change award for the work done during Covid to keep our branch active and innovative. For this I was grateful. But my ideas only came to fruition because of the women in our branch who willingly took on leadership roles and did them well, including my Co-President Rosemary (a wonderful partner). Thanks to all who take on leadership roles to keep our branch vibrant and working towards equity for all.

In attending the past three state conventions, I have found them to be inspirational and informative. This year's was no different. Friday's opening speaker was Sharmili Majmudar, Executive VP of Policy, Programs & Research at Women's Employed. For over 50 years, this organization has been working to improve the economic status and equity of women in the workplace and to remove barriers to economic equity, nationally as well as in Illinois.

Majmudar reviewed trends in pay legislation, such as prohibiting employers from asking job applicants for salary histories and from retaliating when co-workers discuss pay then ask for equal pay for similar work and skills. She also shared what we can do as everyday advocates.

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MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE
from Ruth Bradburn

from Rosemary Dyson, Past Co-President:

Inspired by the women who have worked in the educational system to help students attain excellence, I was especially inspired by Dr. Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat, who outlined her journey to become an educator and advocate.

Prior to her current role, she served in Peoria Public School District 150 as a middle-school teacher, assistant principal of a magnet school and principal of Whittier Primary and Manual High School. During her time at Whittier, it was named a national Blue Ribbon school, defying the odds of a high-poverty one.

In 2015 Dr. Kherat became superintendent of District 150, which has 27 schools and 13,000 students. Her vision for the district is reimagining schools to ignite students' passions and empower them to be responsible and successful.

from Jennifer Ford, Diversity Chair:

In spite of the concerns that Brooke mentioned, with 93 members, ours is a thriving branch, the third largest in the state, in fact. Sadly, three branches have disbanded, and of the remaining 32, 23 had a net loss in membership. Represented at my table, for example, was a branch with only 11 members and another with just 22. I credit our branch's success with inspiring leadership, stimulating interest groups, excellent member programs and networking with other local groups.

FOR OUR 2023-2024 YEARBOOK
from Marti Jernberg

As Yearbook Editor, **I would appreciate receiving all information** from study group leaders, board members, and members **by the end of July**. If anyone is unable to meet this deadline, please contact me beforehand and I will try to accommodate you.

To ensure accuracy, please don't phone in your information; instead, send it to me via email *with as little formatting as possible*. It can be placed in the body of the email or in an attachment or, if you send me the link, shared via Google Docs.

Board members: Look at the pages you are responsible for and send any changes. If you are new to the position and don't know what pages you have, I will be glad to let you know.

Interest Group leaders: Look at your entries. If there are no changes, please send me an email saying so. That way I won't have to spend time tracking you down.

Members: Check your personal information in our current yearbook. *Let both me and Membership's Ruth Bradburn know* if anything has changed or is incorrect.

We thank all who have renewed their memberships for the 2023–2024 year. Those who have not yet, please send your check for \$95—made out to Elgin Area AAUW—to Bonnie Hill or wait for the final notice from National and pay electronically. But do so sooner rather than later: we are looking forward to a great 2023–2024 year and do not want any to be omitted from the yearbook's membership contact pages.

And we welcome yet another new member, **Gail Cohen**, who received her B.A. from Vassar College and her J.D. from the University of Miami School of Law. Most of her career has been in the public sector, starting with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a public procurement and contracts attorney. In 1999 Gail and her family moved to Elgin, where she worked for the City, first as the Purchasing Director and then as the Human Resources Director. In 2022, Gail retired from the City. Currently she is on the board of several organizations, including YWCA Elgin, the Shared Harvest Food Cooperative and Elgin's Northeast Neighborhood Assoc. [NENA]. She enjoys reading, travel and hiking as well as word and card games. Gail has two adult sons, one of whom is a police officer in Highland Park and the other a data analyst in San Francisco.

The Membership Committee also joins in with all our branch members to congratulate **Nancy Gardner**, who is celebrating her 50th year as an active member of our branch.



DIVERSITY / WOMEN IN CULTURE
from Jennifer Ford

To broaden our awareness of a great segment of our area's population as well as to increase its awareness of AAUW, Diversity Committee members Rachel Campbell, Mary Navin and I are now members of the Elgin Hispanic Network.

Our June afternoon Women in Culture [WIC] meeting will feature short talks about various female scientists. But we're also looking forward to hearing from any who have read *The Exceptions: Nancy Hopkins, MIT, and the Fight for Women in Science* by Kate Zernike.

All branch members are welcome to attend the meeting at my home on June 5 at 1:00 p.m. to help plan future WIC programs.

WOMEN IN THE WORLD

from Barbara Evans

As a part of Ravina's Breaking Barriers Festival that features women in music, on July 21, **Venezuelan pianist/composer Gabriela Montero** will play her first full-length composition, *Piano Concerto No. 1*, the "Latin Concerto," accompanied by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

A featured performer at the 2008 inauguration of President Barak Obama, Montero has an impressive curriculum vitae. She is also a committed human rights' activist "whose voice regularly reaches beyond the concert hall. www.gabrielamontero.com/biography.

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Performing at the 2022 inauguration of another country's President—Colombia's Gustavo Petro—was **Colombian pianist Teresita Gómez**, who overcame daunting odds to reach the pinnacle of success she now enjoys worldwide.

Born to Black Colombians in 1943, she was adopted shortly after birth by a white couple who were custodians at an exclusive Colombian fine arts school. When she was three, a teacher allowed Gómez to watch as she gave lessons to her white pupils, provided that she stayed at a distance. Carefully observing where those students were placing their hands, Gómez then imitated them on many a classroom piano as she accompanied her father on his evening rounds, even though her mother worried that she would be caught and that they would lose their jobs.

Caught she eventually was but by a teacher who was so impressed with what she'd heard that she offered to give Gómez lessons in secret. Later she obtained a scholarship for her to the school. Then at age 12, Gómez made her debut at Colombia's equivalent of Carnegie Hall.

As a professional pianist, for a number of years Gómez's repertoire consisted of the works of the revered European classical composers. But in her late 30s, she began performing the works of Colombian ones. "She was amazingly brave," recalled a Colombian music professor, who explained that "people started criticizing her. Like 'oh man, she cannot play the big composers so she has to play Colombian music.'"

Said Gómez, "I thought it was important that we should not be embarrassed to play [our] music. I wanted to get rid of that shame." And that she did, for today "Colombian musicians can play [their country's composers] with pride."

As for whether Gómez can play the "big" ones— At this year's Cartagena Music Festival, "she completely stole the show" with her encore of a Chopin piece.

For more-detailed information about Gómez, see www.npr.org/2023/102/18/1151752433/teresita-gomez-colombia-cartagena-music-festival. An 11-minute video of her playing a suite by Colombian Pedro Morales Pino (1863-1926) is at the end.

NOTE: Because the website would not accommodate a newsletter that was the length of our summer one, not only did I have to put it in three parts; I also had to delete most of the photos in the copy our members received.
—Barbara Evans, Editor