



Branching Out

December 2023



Things Are Cooking: What's Hot with Gender Justice in the Maine Legislature

Our branch will meet by zoom on Wednesday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. We'll begin with a presentation by Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director of the Maine Women's Lobby (MWL), who will talk about successes in the past legislative session and priorities for advocacy in the upcoming session. Destie has been with MWL since 2020, following eleven years as Associate Director of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault. She is passionate about organizational infrastructure, policies, and practices which reflect anti-oppression and feminist values, and she is committed to ensuring that the Lobby and its Education Fund are part of creating a Maine free from misogyny and gender-based discrimination. Following Destie's presentation Lee Davis will facilitate a brief Q&A period. After a short break we'll continue with a business meeting. Triad for this meeting: Mary Cathcart, Lee Davis, Susan Landry. **Join the Zoom for a 7:00 meeting start; see Susan D'Angelo's Nov. 21 email [subject "save the date"] for the link.**

Membership

This report is dedicated to the memory of Brenna Thornton and Melba Wallace, two members we lost recently.

Brenna was extremely active especially in the education field and in her church. A 50-year Honorary Life member of AAUW, she was a 2nd Vice President of the branch at one time.

Melba, an active member of the community as well as the branch, enjoyed sports and travel. She was a member of AAUW for 46 years and served on the Leadership Team over many years in a variety of roles including most recently coordinating the Marge Erhardt High School graduate scholarship.

Current update: we stand at 21 members, including five honorary life and one paid life member.

~ Fran Haines

Non-Traditional Scholarships

The deadline for this year's applications is December 15. To date I have received one completed application and a few inquiries. If you know of anyone who could help get the word out, or a student who may want to apply, please let them know about it. The application can be found on our [Penobscot Valley AAUW website](#); alternately, interested folks can email me at wishkoskisusan@gmail.com and I will email an application to them. As always, thanks for your help in this matter.

~ Susan Wishkoski

Save the Date!

Mark your calendar for March 19, when we will piggyback on the UMaine [Fogler Library Salon Series](#) as our branch program. The presentation is entitled *From Surviving to Thriving: Ensuring that We Support the Whole International Student*. You'll be able to attend in person or on Zoom.

Pizza and Politics - 2023-24

In 2023 our political discussion group met monthly, sometimes over Zoom and sometimes in person. We covered a wide range of topics and found it helpful just to air our ideas and feelings about our current political landscape. I know that we face many challenges in this country, but to put it into perspective we have faced a great many in the past that were of consequence – the Vietnam War, the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, 9/11, and the Gulf Wars to name a few – and because of people like you who were informed and involved, we were able to maintain our democracy. Now is a time for being awake and for taking those small actions each of us can carry out to preserve our way of life.

After a brief break in December, in January we will resume our monthly meetings over Zoom. I would like to hear from you if you have any suggestion(s) about what time and day of the week we should meet. 7:00 p.m. seems good for most, but I am open to suggestions for changing the time. As for day of the week, Mondays and Fridays are out because many holidays start or end with them. That leaves Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I would love to hear your ideas.

I hope that you have a wonderful holiday season, and I am looking forward to seeing each of you in the new year.

~ Susan Wishkoski

AAUW of Maine Council

We have officially named officers and branch representatives to the new AAUW of Maine Council, which meets bi-monthly to conduct state business and stay connected with the branches and other women's organizations. Carolyn MacRae of Waterville is serving as Administrator for a year; other elected officers are Helene Maraghy, Finance Chair; Kristin Sweeney, Funds Chair; Beth Clark, Program and Public Policy Chair; Betty-Jane Meader, Membership Chair; and Martha Arterberry, Communications Chair. The committees have one member from each branch. I represent Penobscot Valley Branch on the Council and also serve on Program and Public Policy. Fran Haines serves on Membership, and Susan Landry is our representative on Communications.

The Council intends to collaborate with other organizations, including the Maine Women's Lobby, and Carolyn MacRae met with Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director, in September. Destie will speak to our branch on December 6 about their work and how AAUW can advocate for women in Augusta. Carolyn met also with the President of the one remaining AAUW New Hampshire branch, Liz McMillan, and discussed having them join us for our state convention in the spring.

The full Council met November 9 and heard reports from the committees. Penobscot Valley Branch has 21 members. Betty-Jane also reported that we have 7 institutions of higher education who have joined as College-University Partners. UMaine is one of the seven, and the others are Colby, NMCC, SMCC, Thomas College, UMA, and USM.

We also discussed the spring 2024 state convention. Program and Public Policy Chair Beth Clark will take the Council's suggestions back to the committee with a goal of identifying date, location, and theme by the next Council meeting on January 11, 2024.

~ Mary Cathcart

Something More to Watch For

Be on the lookout for information about presentation of the Maryann Hartman and Maine Women's Hall of Fame awards in the spring. A joint committee has been formed at UMaine to administer these programs; Mary Cathcart is a member of the committee and will keep us updated about its progress.

Community Events

The Page Farm and Home Museum hosts [Ye Olde Holiday Shoppe](#) on December 2 from 10 to 3. A huge variety of items from local crafters and artisans will be offered.

The 2nd annual [Bangor Authors' Book Fair & Literary Festival](#) will take place 10-3:30 on December 9 at Bangor Public Library. Enjoy readings, talks, and panels throughout the day, buy books and have them signed by the authors, and visit vendor booths. Celebrate local literary arts!

The [Wabanaki Winter Market](#) at the Collins Center for the Arts is New England's largest holiday gathering of Wabanaki artists. Demonstrations, storytelling, music and more will be featured along with beautiful art for sale from 9 to 3 on December 9.

[The Nutcracker](#) will be presented by Bangor Symphony Orchestra, Robinson Ballet, and Bangor Area Youth Choirs on December 16 and 17 at Collins Center for the Arts. Don't miss this holiday tradition! If you arrive early you can browse BSO's Nutcracker Store for holiday gifts including – yes! – nutcrackers, and have a snack at Miller's Café.

A Final Note

Sadly, we observe the passing November 18 of former branch member Sharon Barker. Sharon, who served as the first director of the UMaine Women's Resource Center from 1991 until her retirement in 2014, was a tireless advocate for women. A celebration of her life will be held in the spring. An [obituary](#) can be found in the Bangor Daily News.