



*Equity Now*

**MARCH 2025**

## Calendar of Events

**Book Sale Planning Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 6 at 4:00 pm**  
▶ Wildwood Country Club,  
601 Aberdeen Drive, Middletown

**Meet Elizabeth Slamka,**  
**Middletown's 1st Latina Mayor**  
**Monday, March 10 at 7:00 pm**  
▶ Middletown High Community  
Room, 601 N. Breiel Blvd.

*Middletown's mayor, Elizabeth Slamka, will discuss the challenges of her job and plans for the city.*

**Meet AAUW's PENS Writers**  
**Monday, April 14 at 7:00 pm**  
▶ Middletown High Community  
Room, 601 N. Breiel Blvd.

*During National Poetry Month, learn the history of our branch's writing group. Hear from the members as they share their writing lives and a bit of the work they have accomplished.*

**AAUW State Spring Meeting**  
**Saturday, April 28**  
▶ Worthington, Ohio

**AAUW Scholarships/Awards  
Dinner & Officer Installation**  
**Monday, May 12 at 6:00 pm**  
▶ Mulligan's Garden, 218 South  
Main St., Middletown

*Join us at the historic home of member Kristen Mulligan to dine, meet our newest scholarship winner(s) and install officers for our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary program year.*

**Program Note:** Members will be sent a Zoom invite through email. Non-members who wish to participate should contact Mel Worbis at [worbismm@gmail.com](mailto:worbismm@gmail.com) for a link.

## Meet Elizabeth Slamka, Middletown's First Latina Mayor

**Monday, March 10 at 7 pm**

Middletown High School Community Room, 601 N. Breiel Blvd.

Our branch's March meeting will feature Middletown's mayor, Elizabeth Slamka, sharing her journey as a pioneering Latina in local government



Elizabeth Slamka

Mayor Slamka received her B.A. degree with honors from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, where she majored in Communication Sciences and Spanish. She has a varied professional background that includes teaching Spanish at Bishop Fenwick High School and teaching English in Spain, as well as running a family business. Born and raised in Middletown, she has been active in a number of community organizations before running for office.

## Book Sale Committee to Hold First Meeting

Anyone who would like to help with this year's book sale is welcome to attend the first planning, to be held on **Thursday, March 6 at 4:00 pm** at Wildwood Golf Club. Our committee consists of Marcia Miller, Stacey Finnessy and Marianne Zsiska, and they would welcome your support. Tina Newlin, Chris Buchert and Libby Abele will be there to share information about what we need to know and do. For more information, please contact Marcia Miller at 513-267-0065 or [marciamiller289@gmail.com](mailto:marciamiller289@gmail.com).

## State Spring Meeting Scheduled for April

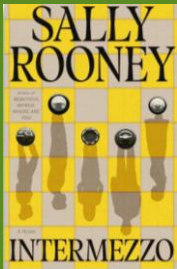
More information will be coming to you soon about the annual spring meeting of AAUW Ohio. Changes to National bylaws will be introduced at the gathering, which will focus on how we can grow membership and strength through partnerships with other organizations.

## Joy Luck Book Club

Thurs., March 20 at 7 pm  
Marianne Zsiska's home

### *Intermezzo* – Sally Rooney

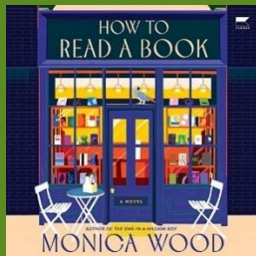
This global bestseller is a moving story about two brothers in Dublin who face grief, love and family entanglements.



Thurs., April 17 at 7 pm  
Mary Reams' home

### *How To Read a Book* – Monica Wood

It sounds like self-help, but it's actually a novel about a retired English teacher who runs a book club at the local prison.



## Letter from Our Leader

Branch President Debbie Worbis  
([dworbis@gmail.com](mailto:dworbis@gmail.com))

In addition to being the month when we welcome back spring colors and warmer temperatures, March is Women's History month, a time to recognize women's achievements and learn more about the women who have broken barriers in the fight for equity. You can find an interesting list of trailblazers in the About AAUW - Faces of AAUW section of [aauw.org](http://aauw.org).

This is also the month when we celebrate International Women's Day, falling on Saturday, March 8. This year's campaign theme is "Accelerate Action", which calls for women to take steps in solidarity to speed up the rate of progress worldwide. It's interesting to read about the role of the United Nations in human rights and specifically women's rights, as well as noting the positions women have reached in an international context. For example, in September of 1893, New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world in which women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections, whereas women in the U.S. did not win the right to vote until after World War I. We aim to keep moving forward, and a special day and month help to focus our sight on what remains to be done.

As I write this column, we still have some positions unfilled for our slate of officers for the 2025-2026 program year. Some of this work can be done by members who are only able to attend through Zoom. Please let us know if you might be willing to hold an office for this next year.

Our program this month highlights female empowerment and diversity in Middletown, as we welcome our first Latina mayor, Elizabeth Slamka, to speak to our group on Monday, March 10, at the Middletown High School Community Room. We hope to see you there!

## Where to Look for State News

Ohio AAUW has a website that's very accessible, with important, and mostly updated, news on the home page. There you'll find links to what other branches are doing. For example, the Bowling Green branch is hosting Great Decisions, and you can join their discussion online, or join book club discussions going on in other branches. There are links to National AAUW and to the Ohio AAUW Facebook account. Elaine Nishwitz of Piqua has filled these Facebook pages with connections to organizations, people, memes and events that support the mission of AAUW.

A few other things to be aware of in the state AAUW news:

1. Ohio still does not have a policy chair. If you are interested, contact president Janice McCloud.
2. Ohio has completed its update of bylaws (required by June, 2026) and created a series of three short help sessions for boards and bylaws committees. If you didn't attend these when they were offered online recently, you will find them posted on the Ohio website.
3. The Spring State Convention is April 26 in person and on Zoom. The working title is "The Power of We." Sessions will focus on how to work with others to achieve branch and AAUW goals. A review and discussion of the new bylaw requirements will give attendees a chance to ask questions and share ideas.

## Update from PENS Writers' Group

PENS Chair Becky Ward says, "Let's hope in March all the ice and snow are cleared and the temperatures are a little higher than we've had to brace against in winter!" Our writers continue to meet the first and third Thursdays of the month, from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. in Room #123 at the Gardner Harvey Library on the Middletown Campus of Miami University. Our next meeting dates will be March 6 and March 20. Bundle up and come share your story!

Contact Becky if you have any questions: [beckward@gmail.com](mailto:beckward@gmail.com) or 513-424-8409.

Below are thoughts from another of our PENS writers. Karen Jones is a retired nurse, and almost all of the pieces she has shared in our group have focused on her long and caring nursing career. But this time she is sharing why she is a writer . . .

### Why I Write by Karen Lee Jones

Although I didn't realize it at the time, I started my need to write when I was very young, back in the 50's. While watching TV shows, because I didn't like the endings, I would tell my father a different ending for the show, an ending that I thought made more sense. I'd tell my dad what the ending should have been.

My parents were both readers. Dad worked M-F, but we lived a long way from the library in Hamilton (Lane Library, it's still there). Our address was 6101 Princeton Glendale Road. That is now the address of the Princeton Road Church. Anyway, mom would load all seven of us in the car and to the Lane Library we would go! Later, we moved to Middletown and the Middletown Library was only a few blocks from where we lived. We could go anytime we wanted to. I still have a library card.

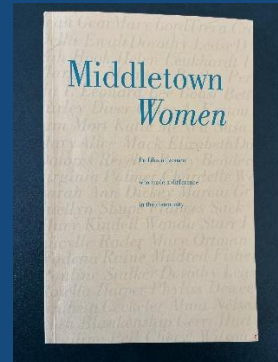
The AAUW book sale is a sale that I look forward to every year. Also, I exchange books with my sister. My sister Jan and brother William are readers, and three of my sons are readers. My son Chad has a Kindle and uses it frequently.

## Celebrating our 100th

Are you interested in helping various committees begin planning for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AAUW's Middletown branch? Contact Margie Homan at [homan.margie@gmail.com](mailto:homan.margie@gmail.com) for how you can contribute in a way that suits your talents and timeframes.

Celebrating 100 Years

## AAUW Middletown Published Book on Local Women in 2001



In March 2001, just in time for Women's History Month, our branch published a book honoring dozens of Middletown women. Brief biographies were included under the topic headings of Pioneer Families, Educators, Artists and Musicians, Health and Medicine, Leading the Way, Organizational Leaders and Community Builders. The booklet was edited by then-member Suellyn Shupe.

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**EDITORIAL**

### Honoring women who made a difference

**S**hirley Diver, Louise McBain, Lucille Rader, Dodee Saylor, Helen Ramsdell, Valda Wilkerson, Dr. Mabel Gardner, Gerri Hart, Chardelle Weber.

These are but a few of the women who are profiled in a new book, "Middletown Women," compiled by Suellyn Shupe from Journal news clippings and published by the Middletown branch of the American Association of University Women as a tribute to Women's History Month.

The book was "unveiled" at a program and tea Saturday at First Christian Church. Eighty-six women are profiled in the book, and the collection presents a bird's eye view into the lives of talented, dedicated and giving individuals. These women gave — many are still giving — to the communities they live in — through careers, volunteerism and by mentoring other women. Simply put, as the book cover states, these are "Profiles of women who made a difference in the community."

And make a difference they did. How many of us who grew up in this area have not been "touched" by these ladies? Through teaching, business, church, practicing medicine and law, broadcasting and newspapering, these women have come into contact with many persons, of all ages, throughout the community. Those of us who had these individuals in the classroom, as guardians of our health or as mentors and business contacts, are indeed fortunate.

We are blessed to have women like this in our neighborhoods, ladies who are willing to step up to the plate and give generously of their time in the hopes of making the world a better place. We salute these women, past and present, for their extensive contributions to the Middletown area.

From Diversity Chair Amanda Adkins-Ricci

## Is DEI Disappearing or Rebranding?

On his first day in office, President Trump revoked several executive orders related to racial equality, environmental justice and discrimination against the LGBTQ community. He also stated he will “end the government policy of trying to socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life.”

NPR held a fireside conversation with Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, a 30-year diplomat and former U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Malta, to discuss the impact of this rhetoric and policy changes. Abercrombie-Winstanley served as the first diversity, equity inclusion and accessibility officer at the U.S. State Department for two years, ending in 2023. So, what is her response to President Trump’s promise to eliminate diversity programs in order to forge a society that is, quote, “colorblind and merit-based?”

What does the “A” in DEIA mean? The “A” is for accessibility.

Abercrombie-Winstanley believes too many people misunderstood and worked from fear and responded with fear, thinking that DEIA was simply to put another group at the top of the pyramid. DEIA is designed to level the playing field to ensure that merit-based decisions and merit-based advancement is what happens in federal agencies. Study after study has shown that employees want to belong to an organization that does base its decisions on merit, that is an inclusive organization that gives them an opportunity and confidence that their abilities, not their race or their gender or their social background, is going to allow them to get ahead. However, by putting out this executive order, and all the things that have come up to this, strikes fear in people's hearts so that they may not choose to make the right decisions to help all employees as opposed to just ones that are within the in group, as it were, or look like them, or in this case, may be of European American background.

DEIA programs are still necessary, but need to be a program based in raising awareness that the issue is out there; programs which make clear when you have a percentage of positions in an agency – senior positions – that are over 80% for one group it’s not merit-based. Statistically, women and minorities are not less capable or intelligent than majority American men, and therefore something else has gone into that result. So the question remains, will DEI programs cycle through their existence with a change in administration?

Abercrombie-Winstanley doesn’t believe that to be the case, stating that everyone wants to belong to an organization that is inclusive. So even if the name changes, the work is going to continue. People will walk into rooms, and if they don't see a level of diversity, they will know the right people are not in the room.

For the full interview visit NPR and review these additional articles of interest:

<https://www.npr.org/2025/01/20/g-s1-43698/trump-inauguration-executive-orders-2025-day-1>

ACLU <https://www.aclu.org/trump-on-dei-and-anti-discrimination-law>