



Equity Now

APRIL 2025

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 for a link.

PENS: Telling Our Story

Monday, April 14 10 at 7 pm

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

You've been reading about our PENS writing group each month in this newsletter. Now it's your chance to meet our writers, learn our history and goals, and have an opportunity to "discover your muse" as you participate in a creative activity to spark your imagination. Who knows . . . it might take you outside your comfort zone and bring you the joy of inspiration to tell your story!



Becky Ward



Carolyn Smith



Marti Kreps

April is also National Poetry Month and one of our writers will be sharing a reading of his poetry. Come join an evening of light-hearted discussion and self-discovery. You will not be disappointed!

Dues Increase Slightly to \$95 Annually

The majority of our branch's memberships are renewable in June. National will still send three emails to each person as a reminder. Please look for these alerts and respond in a timely manner.

As of April 1, our dues are \$95. This covers national, state and local dues. You may pay this in one of two ways: you can pay by credit card online OR you can write a check to AAUW for \$95 and mail it to P.O. Box 118, Middletown, OH 45042.

Calendar of Events

AAUW PENS: Telling Our Story
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 Sat., April 26 10 am – 3 pm
► All Saints Lutheran Church, 6770 North High Street, Worthington, Ohio and Zoom

The theme of this year's meeting is "Partnerships: The Power of We." There will be a pre-meeting book discussion of Adam Grant's Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know on Friday evening, April 25, at 7 pm.

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 100th anniversary program year.

HOW TO FIND US ONLINE:

Branch website:
<https://middletown-oh.aauw.net>

Branch Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/AAUWMiddletown>

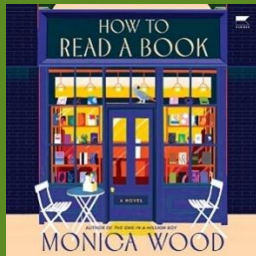
State website:
<https://aauw-oh.aauw.net>

Joy Luck Book Club

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

How To Read a Book – Monica Wood

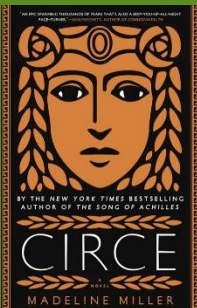
This best-seller is a touching and hopeful story about a retired English teacher who runs a book club at the local prison for a group of diverse women who support each other and grow through their enjoyment of books and each other.



Thurs., May 15 at 7 pm
Need host

Circe – Madeline Miller

A mythic fantasy novel by American writer Madeline Miller, *Circe* is an adaptation of the Odyssey and other myths set during the Greek Heroic Age, told from a feminist perspective.



Thurs., June 19 at 7 pm

Hello Beautiful – Ann Napolitano



Letter from Our Leader

Branch President Debbie Worbis
(dworbis@gmail.com)

It was a pleasure to hear from our mayor, Elizabeth Slamka, at our March meeting, and to learn more about local government plans and opportunities for citizens to become involved. It was also with pleasure that we received the news that the city is going to allow us to rent a large space at the Towne Mall so that we can move forward with our fundraising plans.

Another element of the city that needs our support is the Midpointe Library. When we met there for our October program, we received information on the library levy that was coming up on the November ballot. Unfortunately, the levy did not pass on that ballot, but there will be a .75 mill replacement levy on the May 6 ballot. The levy funds support many programs such as the administration of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Ohio, maker spaces for podcasts and recordings, vinyl printing, and laser engraving, home delivery of materials to home bound residents, and summertime free lunches for children.

Out of 251 libraries in Ohio, Midpointe ranked in the top thirty for total circulation and programs offered, computer and Wi-Fi use, and program attendance, including 11th in summer reading participation. Understanding that libraries are an important contributor to equity in education, we hope that our members will mark their calendars to support this levy on May 6.

Another way to support education was announced in a March 20 email from CEO Gloria Blackwell, informing members that AAUW is condemning the executive order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education. In the mailing she announced that "AAUW is launching The Defend Higher Education Fund ...Support to this fund ensures AAUW can effectively fight on behalf of women on campuses across the country and ensure that AAUW remains a trusted and powerful voice for equity." She referred members to the AAUW website to learn how to contribute to the fund.

Whether by contacting representatives, voting in support of our libraries, or contributing to funds that support education, we hope that AAUW members continue to take positions in defense of equity in education.

Mayor Slamka Spoke at March Meeting



Elizabeth Slamka

Last month's meeting featured Elizabeth Slamka, Middletown's first Latina mayor, sharing her thoughts on the challenges and opportunities here in Middletown. Originally from the city, Elizabeth has lived and traveled all over the world.

In our session, she was eager to hear thoughts and ideas on how to improve the quality of life in Middletown for all its citizens.

Sale Site Found!

After much hard work on the part of our various fundraising sale committees, a site has been found for our annual Book Sale, Rummage Sale and Holiday Bazaar. Kudos to Carole Schul in particular for her diligent efforts on our behalf.



This is the space formerly occupied by Dunham Sports at the Towne Mall. As you can see, it is a large space that can easily accommodate our needs. There is an exterior door to the outside that will make it easy for load-in and donation acceptance. Best of all, it will cost our branch less than we previously paid for our sale space.

We expect to take possession around May 1. Committees are still considering the optimal dates for our 2025 sales.

Sale chairwomen plan to meet on Wednesday, April 2 to discuss dates for our upcoming sales and how many we should have this year. The meeting will be at Chris Buchert's home at 4816 Ronald Drive in Middletown. The time will be announced later.

A Memorial Gathering for Tina Newlin will be held on Sunday, April 6 at 2:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church, 2910 Central Ave. in Middletown

In Memoriam

Tina Newlin



On Sunday, March 23, a dear friend and loyal member of AAUW Middletown passed away. Tina Newlin joined AAUW in 1968 when she read a newspaper article about our book sale. As an elementary school teacher, she was attracted by any project that encouraged reading. She later became involved in early childcare administration.

Tina held just about every office in our branch and served as president twice. Her first job was doing publicity for our group, which helped her learn about its programs. She recalled going in to see the Society Page editor of the *Middletown Journal*. Apparently members typically hadn't done that; they just dropped off press releases. The newspaper let her in to talk to the reporter, even without an appointment. The result of their chat was that AAUW got good publicity for its events.

Tina was proud that AAUW has produced a successful book sale for decades and the many scholarships that were granted as a result. "People look forward to the book sale every year. They talk to us about it all year long," she said.

We will greatly miss Tina's leadership, her energy and her friendship in the years to come.

PENS Writers' Group Reminds Us April is National Poetry Month

PENS Chair Becky Ward says, "Spring was short lived . . . it came and went in one day: March 20! Winter does not like being pushed out by Spring!" But come join us at MHS Community Room on April 14 to learn more about PENS. It will be a lovely spring evening . . . (we hope).

Our writers continue to meet the first and third Thursdays of the month, from 1:00 to 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 April 3 and April 17. Come share your story. Contact Becky if you have any questions: beckward@gmail.com or 513-424-8409.

Below are thoughts from one of our PENS writers, Richard Russeth. He is the brother-in-law of our members Carolyn Smith and Mary Millard. Richard will give a reading of one of his poems at our PENS program in April. The following is his piece about why he writes.

Why I Write By Richard Russeth



Richard and his wife, Charlotte Reams Russeth, are brother-in-law and sister to our members Carolyn Smith and Mary Reams.

"Why?" is an interesting question because it presupposes the necessity of purpose, a reason for something. "Why do I write?" is what I have been asked by Becky Ward, leader of the wonderful Middletown based PENS group under the aegis of the AAUW. The real answer is "I have no choice in the matter" or "because I do." I have always written. I wrote my first poem at age 7 comparing snow on fence posts to marshmallows, and 61 years later I am still writing though I have moved on from marshmallows – at least in poems. But I write about topics as diverse as pears to suicide to walking on a train track. Today I finished a poem entitled "Physics be Damned (Or Flying a Kite on a Sanibel Island Beach)."

I need to create. It is a palpable sensation at times. It is something in me that I cannot understand, control or quit. And I have tried to quit because sometimes the urge to create becomes overwhelming – a burden at times.

To be a poet is a condition, not a profession. – Robert Graves

But mostly I write from a place of thankfulness and gratitude. Thankful that I can access a creative muse, thankful that this muse gives me insight into me and the world around me. I like to think the muse is ever honest and brave, but I

(continued on next page)

AAUW Middletown Nominees for 2025-26 Program Year

The slate of officers for our upcoming program year is as follows. The slate will be voted on at our meeting on April 14.

President: Margie Homan

President-Elect:
Amanda Adkins-Ricci

Secretary Co-Chairs: Becky Hamner and Marcia Miller

Finance Co-Chairs: Jackie Webster and Katie DeVilling

Membership Co-Chairs:
Eleanor Yeager Stewart and Beth Miller

Communications Co-Chairs:
Carolyn Smith and Jackie Lankfer

Program Co-Chairs: Marti Kreps and Katie McNeil

The remaining members of the board are appointed rather than elected.

know that is not true. Poets lie as much as anyone, but sometimes truth is a lie and vice versa. James Cocteau claimed that “[t]he poet is a liar who always speaks the truth.” And I know this is true just as I know what Carl Sandburg meant when he said, “Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance.” What either of these quotes means isn’t exactly clear on a “rational in the light of day kind of way,” is it? Yet at another level, that of intuition, heart and spirit, found in the night without a full moon, when the sudden absence of a sound wakes you, I know exactly what Mr. Sandburg and Mr. Cocteau are each trying to say though I could never articulate it in a thousand words with such eloquence.

Sandburg’s quote is why poetry matters to me. Poetry expresses the inexpressible, it stretches language to allow deeper meanings to come through that often cannot otherwise be heard or said. There is a likely apocryphal story about David Bowie reading a poem on the BBC. When he finished, he was asked to explain what it meant. At which point, by way of an answer, Mr. Bowie reread the poem for the radio listeners.

I do think poetry has succumbed to hubris, has lost touch with ordinary people and become a specialized field in which academics, arcane semiotic theories, obscure words, and odd topics are prioritized. While I do not love Billy Collins (though I do love his poem “Shoveling Snow with the Buddha” – worth looking it up no matter what you think of his poetry), he is considered very accessible, and that is a crime, a felony, in the view of a certain dominant academic cognoscenti of modern poetry. Which is a pity because poetry used to be very accessible and much read across a broad spectrum of society. Poems would run in magazines from *Good Housekeeping* to newspapers to television. I recall seeing Rod McKuen perform a dramatic reading of one of his lengthy, maudlin, and perhaps more sentimental works on *The Mike Douglas Show*. (Fun to check out here: <https://youtu.be/MUvXHigDz9M?si=IH89sG-05v1MLltv>) The point is that he read for over five (5!) minutes on national television.

I am inspired by Pablo Neruda, Shunryū Suzuki Roshi (Zen master, not a poet, but definitely the soul of one), Maya Angelou, Bashō, and Charles Bukowski. I love poems of few but accessible words, which give their images plainly without ornamentation and yet contain insights and mysteries that seem impossible to fit within their simple lines. Sort of like all those clowns coming out of a tiny clown car at the circus. I don’t love haiku because of the haiku form, but because they are almost a direct mind to mind transmission of a poet’s meaning to the consciousness of their reader. A firework burst of insight from one to the other.

...genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood. – T.S. Elliot

Dani McClain to Talk About Film in Cinci in April

Author and journalist Dani McClain, who was our November branch meeting’s speaker, has collaborated with filmmaker Lydia Deal Pilcher on the film *Homing Instinct: Letting Go of the Shore*. The film is based on her short story, which covers issues related to family and the effects of climate change on coastal communities. A panel discussion titled “Writing Future Worlds” with McClain and author/educator Adrienne Maree Brown will be held on Saturday, April 26 at 2 pm at the Mercantile Library, 414 Walnut Street in Cincinnati.

Public Policy Update Connie Griffis

Two attorneys are holding law clinics for immigrants on the second Mondays each month at 5:00 pm at First United Methodist Church, 120 S. Broad Street in Middletown. If you know someone who would like to attend it is highly recommended that you call the church office in advance at 513- 423-4629.

NAACP is holding listening sessions on DEI rollback initiatives. Find out more about the local chapter at: 3194naacp.org

Senate Bill 1, the (anti - DEI) Ohio Higher Education Act, has passed in both chambers of the Ohio State Legislature. Now it could be vetoed by Governor DeWine. The legislature does not have the votes to override his veto. Gov. DeWine has recently attended Trump’s signing of an executive order to dismantle the Department of Education.

[100th Anniversary](#)

Do You Have Old Records?

We want to collect scrapbooks, program booklets, meeting agendas, any printed documentation you have from AAUW’s 100 years in the Middletown community. Midpointe Library has offered to help us get our archives in order. If you have any documents or photos on hand, we’d love to know what you have and which years it covers. Getting a list of materials is the first step in archiving.

Please email **Sharon Williamson** at sharon.p.williamson@gmail.com if you have anything you think would be helpful. Items can be photocopied and returned to you. We don’t mind getting duplicates. In fact, the library recommends having 2 copies of any archived materials.

This will help us do further research on the impact of our chapter on the city of Middletown for our branch’s 100th anniversary in October.