



The Chico AAUW Grapvine

American Association of University Women - Chico Branch - Vol. 38 No. 1 SEPT 2025

NEXT BRANCH MEETING...

Welcome Back Brunch

Saturday, September 6, 2025 10 to noon

Jana Lawton's farm at 12555 Meridian Road, Chico

Most of us aren't thinking about "back to school" anymore but the excitement of new beginnings is in the air for AAUW Chico. We're in a celebratory mood and our September meeting will afford us the opportunity to reflect on some of the good things the branch has done this past year. Our guests of honor will be the young women (along with their families) who attended Tech Trek camp this summer. Nothing warms the heart more than hearing how this experience has influenced the trajectory of their lives and infused them with new confidence and purpose.

AAUW advances gender equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

By joining AAUW, we belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

AAUW membership is open to all graduates holding a recognized associate (or equivalent), baccalaureate or higher degree from a qualified education institution.

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks diverse membership; there shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.

The business meeting will include a review and passage of the branch budget for the coming year, an overview of some of the programs we have planned, and an opportunity to learn about interest sections if you are looking to join a small group. We are especially pleased to honor some of the members who have hit milestone dates in belonging to AAUW. We have a few 50-year members, and many more who are working their way up.

The gathering will start with a brunch and time for socializing. We host our own brunch so please bring something to contribute to the fare: fruit, muffins, egg dishes, anything you would enjoy yourself. It need not be homemade. Beverages and tableware will be provided.

This is an outdoor venue so dress comfortably. If you've never been to the farm, it is just off Highway 32 (the road to Orland). There is a brand new stoplight at the junction of Hwy 32 and Meridian Road so, easy to find. Turn (heading north) right and then take driveway of the first farm on the left.)



Chico (CA) branch

Message from the Co-presidents

2024-2025 Branch Leaders

Presidents –

Jana Lawton
Michelle Rasmussen
Lyn Smith
(president-elect)

Membership –

Diane Bird
Susan Critchfield
Lyn Smith

Finance –

Severance Dolan

Secretary –

Beverly McMillan

Program –

Dori Moura
Jan Britton

Newsletter Editor –

Anne Russell

Public Policy –

Carol Holzgrafe

Tech Trek Team –

Katy Azevedo
Pam Bodnar
Debbie Rosenow
Carol Holzgrafe

Diversity Team –

Margaret Swick
Jan Britton

High School Scholarships –

Marilyn Myrick
Susan Critchfield

College Scholarships –

Jan Britton

Website – Helen Gesick

Dear Members,

Our second year as co-presidents is just beginning and our AAUW-Chico board members and committee chairs have already been hard at work preparing for our 2025-26 year. For those of you who may have missed our May meeting, let us introduce the new officers who were elected and the board members who are now serving the branch.

The membership committee this year is headed up by *Diane Bird* and *Susan Critchfield* with assistance from several members who have already “been there.” We appreciate the fact that so many of you renewed your membership. If you are one who may have misplaced the reminder email about paying your dues, we still want you to belong to the Chico branch so hope you will renew online at AAUW.org or mail a check to our branch treasurer, *Severance Dolan*.

Assiduous is one word that really describes *Severance*. Since her election in May, she has found a better software to keep our branch financial records, has dug into learning the program, and has a good grasp of all the lingo that goes along with deciphering AAUW spreadsheets. The financial reports are ready to go for our first meeting in September when we vote on the budget.

The program committee has planned many varied and interesting programs for the year and *Dori Moura*, our program chair, has been busy locking in the details. We strive to make each branch meeting worth your while. Add the meeting dates to your calendars and plan to attend. Family and friends are always welcome at meetings so don’t hesitate to invite a companion or someone you think might be interested in joining AAUW. If you would like to help with any of the programs, please let *Dori* know.

Bev McMillan was elected to serve as our secretary; the person who takes the minutes at the Board meetings. She already has one meeting under her belt and we appreciate her thoroughness and her mighty typing skills. *Helen Gesick* is working on updating and preparing to print our 2025/2026 branch directory. If you moved, changed email address, or have a new phone number, let her know.

Anne Russell has put out a year’s worth of issues of the *Grapevine* and was willing to continue as newsletter editor. We are grateful she is using her prodigious computer skills in service to the branch. Even if you don’t write a regular article in the newsletter, be sure to pass on photos or items of interest. We want to celebrate the accomplishments of our members and we all love “good news.”

The scholarship committees are gearing up for another great year of supporting women in their pursuit of education, from our youngest Tech Trekkers, to new high school graduates, teachers in training at Chico State, and those women pursuing graduate degrees with support from AAUW Funds.

Last but not least, *Lyn Smith* is our president elect. Having already served in several other positions in the branch, she feels she is ready to shadow us for the year and take on the top leadership role in 2026-27.

In AAUW, Diversity Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are not taboo—it’s what we do. We look forward to working with you this year to advance the AAUW cause—**equity for all women and girls**. We hope to see you at our **Welcome Back Brunch** on Saturday, September 6.

Jana Lawton and Michelle Rasmussen
Co-presidents, AAUW Chico

Membership News

AAUW Social Media

If you are on social media, be sure to like and share our posts on

Facebook – [AAUW Chico](#)

Instagram – [@aauw_chico](#)

Our email
aauwchico@gmail.com

Our website –
chico-ca.aauw.net

Or
Scan this code with your phone
for more information



The more you share our content, the more likely potential new members will see it on their feeds.

MEMBERSHIP

This year Chico AAUW Membership will be handled by a committee of three: Diane Bird, Susan Critchfield, and Lyn Smith. As the months roll along, our newest members (within the last three years) should be aware of their anniversary month end (the month that they joined Chico AAUW) when their dues will be due. Dues are now **\$122.00** (\$74 = National; \$30 = California; \$18 = Chico).

Dues can be paid on-line through National AAUW at aauw.org, then signing into your own account. You may pay with a credit card that you have on file or or you may mail a check made out to *Chico AAUW* for \$122 and mail to our new Finance Officer, Severance Dolan (address in our directory).

With the new year, we are asking you for ideas on how to invite new members to check our organization out. Don't forget that you can invite your friends or family to any AAUW activity, and don't forget our general meetings. Many new topics will be presented so don't miss out.

We hope to see you at our **Welcome Back Brunch** at Jana Lawton's Farm (see front page).

Diane, Susan, Carol, and Lyn



YOUR AAUW DIRECTORY

Please check your information in the current AAUW directory and let me know if any changes or additions are necessary **before** the new one is distributed this October.

Helen Gesick

Membership News - cont'd

SOME INTEREST GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

(See last page for all interest groups except the new one below;
contact information is in your AAUW directory)

Ethnic Writers book group meets at 10 am the 4th Wednesday of every month; the venue rotates among members' homes. *We are looking for new members.* Some of the books we've recently read include *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich and *I Should Have Honor*, by Khalida Brohi. In September, we will not discuss a book and members will make new book suggestions, which will be narrowed down to 11 books for the coming months. September is a good month to join, so you, too, can offer book suggestions.

—Severance Dolan

Friday Book group meets the 4th Friday of every month at 10 am in the Woodoak Condominium Clubhouse. *We are looking for new members.* Some of the books that we've read recently include *Annie John* by Jamaica Kincaid, *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride, and *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane. In September, we will not discuss a book and members will make new book suggestions, which will be narrowed down to 11 books for the coming months. September is a good month to join, so you, too, can offer book suggestions.

—Severance Dolan

Mystery Book Club

This book group reads mysteries and meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 3 p.m. at different members' homes with a different member leading the book discussion. We have already chosen the books to be read for the rest of this year, but if anyone is interested in joining, please call either Lyn Smith or Mary Waste (phone numbers are in your Chico AAUW directory). We will provide you with information on the book to be read for the upcoming month. New book group members are encouraged to call. Hope to hear from new book buddies!

—Lyn and Mary W.

Foreign Policy Discussions

We meet on the 4th Mon @6:30 pm in rotating members' homes. The group reviews and discusses eight topics from the Foreign Policy Association's *Great Decisions Briefing Book*. As a group, we learn about US foreign policy and critical global issues facing the world, such as China, global trade policy, the Middle East, and climate change. If you are into history, political science, or international travel, you'll find the topics and discussion challenging and engaging. Afterwards we have snacks to recover! New members welcome!

Jeannie Trizzino

Second New Non-fiction Book Club

The original non-fiction book club is very popular but has been at capacity for over a year. I am offering to lead a **second** non-fiction group, initially at my house. If you are interested in joining this new club, please give me a call!

Jo Ann Palmer

Membership News - cont'd

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Members of our High School Scholarship Committee interviewed a group of wonderful young women for our 2025 scholarship awards. In conjunction with CCSA, we chose four outstanding students from three local high schools. Marilyn Myrick and Susan Critchfield attended the award ceremonies for each school to present the scholarships on behalf of AAUW Chico. Congratulations to the winners!

Shannon Fong from Pleasant Valley High School, attending UC Los Angeles
Callie Frazier from Pleasant Valley High School, attending UC Santa Barbara
Alicia Hunt from Chico High School attending USC, Los Angeles
MK Kidd from Inspire School of Arts and Sciences, attending University of Portland

We look forward to next spring's awards, thanks to the contributions of our generous branch members.

Membership News - cont'd

NEW MEMBER - MICHELE DESMOND

Joining us in May, Michele attended the Chico Women of Distinction event, contributing a delicious homemade treat. I am glad to introduce you to her as our newest AAUW member and already an active contributor.

Michele brings a vibrant blend of creativity, dedication, and community spirit to her role as Operational Coordinator and OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) host. Born in Denver, Colorado, Michele made her way to Chico 13 years ago to be closer to family—and she's been enriching the local community ever since.

An alumna of San Jose State University (CSUSJ), Michele's career journey has been as dynamic as her personality. She's worn many hats over the years: nurturing young minds as a preschool teacher, inspiring movement as a dance instructor, and crunching numbers as a cost accountant. Her diverse background reflects her adaptability and passion for lifelong learning.

Michele's interests span a wide spectrum. A self-proclaimed sports enthusiast, she enjoys watching and participating in all kinds of athletic activities. When she's not cheering on a game, you'll likely find her immersed in needlework or quilting—two hobbies that showcase her artistic flair. While she describes herself as “artsy but not technical,” her creativity shines through in everything she does.

Family is at the heart of Michele's life. She often hosts holiday gatherings, creating warm and welcoming spaces for loved ones to come together. She's a proud grandmother of five, and her love for her grandchildren is evident in everything she shares.

Michele is excited to join our group, eager to socialize, make new connections, and continue expanding her horizons.

Michele Desmond and Carol Krok

Membership News - cont'd

AAUW CHICO PROPOSED 2025-26 BUDGET

Category	\$ Amount
Dues	1890
Donations	100
Marketing sales	--
TOTAL INCOME	1990
Liability insurance	524
Postage	50
Funds assessment	65
Wed domain/Go Daddy	25
Awards/Pins/Gifts	150
Program expenses	1200
Science Fair	50
Directory printing/mailing	250
Administration (supplies, checks, etc.)	100
CA Dept. of Justice	25
Newsletter	160
TOTAL EXPENSES	2599
Cash increase/decrease	(609)
General Fund cash balance as of 7/1/2025	2621
Estimated Cash Balance as of 6/30/2026	2012

Membership News - cont'd

AAUW CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025-2026

Branch board meetings — 1st Thursday of every month from September through May, 3 pm, Woodoak condominium clubhouse, 555 Vallombrosa (directly across from post office)

September 6 (Saturday) — **Welcome Back Brunch** - 12555 Meridian Road, historic home place of Butte County farming pioneers, the Bell family

October 6 (Monday) 6 - 8 — **Souper Supper** and **Giving Day** for AAUW Funds, Butte Co. Chico Library, 1108 Sherman Avenue. Fascinating Chico history on Annie Bidwell and the women's suffrage movement by Sondra Murphy

November - date/time TBA

December 6 (Saturday) 10 - 4 and **December 7** (Sunday) 12 - 4 — **Art Boutique** featuring women artists who create a wide array of art and handmade goods. Proceeds benefit all AAUW's scholarship programs, 12555 Meridian Road

December 14 (Sunday, time TBA) - **holiday party** and service project for the season. Program will include "meet the members"

January (date/time TBA) — **coalition brunch** with other Chico women's organizations

February (date/time TBA)

March 7 (Saturday) 11:30 - 1 — **Interbranch luncheon**, hosted by the Marysville/Yuba City branch, carpools to be arranged

March 22 (time TBA) — **Antique Appraisal Faire** - fundraiser for Tech Trek, Chico Women's Club, 592 E. 3rd St.

March (Sunday afternoon, date/time TBA) — **program on local water issues** in collaboration with the League of Women Voters of Butte County. Featured speakers will be women involved in groundwater sustainability

March (TBA) — branch discussion of **Chico Book in Common** *California Against the Sea* by Rosanna Xia

April 2 (date/time TBA) — **Book in Common author speaking**, Laxson Auditorium, CSUC campus (group outing for pre- or post-talk TBA)

April (date/time TBA) - celebrating **youth of distinction**

May (date/time TBA) — **Strawberry Brunch** - election of officers, presentation of awards

Other AAUW News

AAUW OROVILLE

Alice Kubecki is a teacher in Palermo, who was awarded *Outstanding Teacher of the Year* a year ago.

She was inspired by a Human Rights weekend lecture she attended. She will speak about “Human Rights and the Courage to be Genuine” at the Oroville AAUW meeting on September 13.

Location: First Congregational Church, 1715 Bird Street

Time: 1 pm

Donation to Tech Trek — \$20.

Please RSVP to aauw.oroille@gmail.com and let me know if you would like to carpool. You will find my email in your AAUW directory.

Michelle Rasmussen

Tech Trek

It was another successful summer of Tech Trek STEM camps! AAUW Chico sent six girls to UC Davis (UCD) Camp Jemison and two girls to UC Santa Cruz Camp Carson. Katy Azevedo and Debbie Rosenow volunteered as dorm monitors/mentors/assistants at Camp Jemison. The week was well-organized, long-lasting friendships were made, and girls left camp with more confidence and purpose. It was very inspiring for all involved.

Core classes offered this year at Davis were engineering, computers, genetics, plant biology, and anatomy. Field trips included the UCD Vet Training Center (hands-on activities), Mondavi Performing Arts Center (stage/lighting/musical engineering), and Bohart Museum of Entomology (involving live stick bugs and hissing roaches...).

Campers spent an afternoon learning about forensic science. A team of CSI officers set up two mock crime scenes in the morning, then lunched with our dorm groups in the dining hall while answering questions about their careers and education (quite a treat!). Afterward, the officers helped guide small teams of students as they conducted an investigation of the crime scene using forensic reports, evidence logs, and witness accounts.

As usual, Budget Night was a hit, along with Professional Women's Evening. Engineering Night focused on building boats with cardboard and duct tape and then a competition at the end of the week at the Davis pool. The challenge: each boat had to hold two girls and float, and then they were given paddles to race across the pool. Such a fun event! Lots of cheering and laughter at the cardboard boat competition.

Click [here](#) to view Thank You letters from our Chico girls.



UCD, Camp Jemison



UCSC, Camp Carson



Public Policy

PUBLIC POLICY – WHO ARE WE?

There is more to AAUW than your local branch. (You know this, right?) We are part of a much larger organization, starting with the [AAUW national](#). This group, based in Washington, D.C., handles all our member databases, collects dues, lobbies extensively with Congress, sets policy, and handles millions of dollars in fellowships and grants to graduate students studying a wide variety of scientific and social topics.

We are also part of AAUW California, a highly organized entity that lives to help branch board members deal with their jobs and to help all members make the most of their impact on the community (such as Tech Trek, local scholarships, the School Board Project)—and to have fun while doing it (with interest groups such as books, bridge, tech help, hiking, foreign policy, wordsmith).

However, we must keep in mind the reasons we exist—*We work to better the lives of ALL women and girls*. And, yes, in California, DEI (diversity, equality, and inclusion) is still a highly important goal. (We take no federal funding so aren't liable to be threatened for that.) AAUW is closely watching rumblings from Washington about making it more difficult for women to vote and even eliminating that right altogether. Be assured that AAUW will **not** take this quietly.



2025-2027 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

- Economic Security for All Women
- Equal Access to Quality Public Education for All Students
- Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society
- Increased Representation of Women in Leadership Roles

Are you still keeping up with the news?

For those of us still able to stand it, there is a way to react in a positive and possible helpful manner: click on AAUW's ["Two Minute Activist,"](#) then scroll down. You can choose at least one way to help. I've done this—you can too.

Still interested? There's lots more insight and action with a few clicks.

1. Go to [AAUW California](#)
2. Click Branch Tools on the top menu
3. Scroll down until you see the "Public Policy" box. You'll find an easy tracking tool for 2025 bills (including some proposed and/or supported by AAUW California), or click on "Take Action Now." This last is a spreadsheet called "Take Action to Fight Project 2025!" Lots of details, explanation, and suggestions on the many areas covered by the Project.

We are AAUW members. *We will NOT be silent.*

Carol Holzgrafe

Interest Groups for Fun ... and Learning

NOTE: Use the AAUW directory for contact information or email aauwchico@gmail.com



LES FLANEURES

Carol Holzgrafe (email/call for schedule and more information). A walking/talking tour of Chico and Paradise. Usually meets Tues, Thur, and/or Sat @ 8:30 or 9:30 am, depending on the season.

WINE AND WHINE

Carol Holzgrafe (text/email for more information). Meets 3rd Wed @ 5:30 pm at the Sicilian Cafe. Non-alcoholic drinks always available. Please RSVP, bring friends, visiting relatives, and new prospective members.

OUT TO LUNCH

Mary Huntsinger (call/text for location and to make a reservation). Meets 2nd Thur @ 11:30 am, at . **Paradise and Chico branch members welcome!**

WOMEN'S MICROFINANCE

Jana Lawton (call for more information). Semi-annual meetings.

WORDSMITHS

Jana Lawton (call for more information). Meets Sun, Sept 14 @ 2 pm, hosted by Jana. **All writers welcome!**

FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSION

Jeannie Trizzino (text for more information). Meets Sep 22, 4th Mon @ 6:30 pm. Will discuss *America at a Global Crossroads*, hosted by Jan Britton. **New members welcome!**

EVENING BOOK DISCUSSION

Elaine Schlenger (text for more information). Meets 2nd Tues @ 7 pm in a member's home.

ETHNIC WRITERS BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). Meets 4th Wed @ 10 am. Will select books for next 11 months. **New members welcome!**

FRIDAY BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). Meets 4th Fri @ 10 am in Woodoak condominium clubhouse. Will select books for next 11 months. **New members welcome!**

NONFICTION BOOK DISCUSSION

Carol Krok (email for more information). Meets 1st Fri, @ 9.30 am in a member's home for socializing; discussion starts promptly @ 10. **Currently at capacity.**

MYSTERY BOOK DISCUSSION

Lyn Smith (call for more information). Meets 3rd Wed @ 3 pm at home. Will discuss *The Judge's List* by John Grisham. **New members welcome!**

BRIDGE

Sylvia Hedlind (text/call if interested in joining). Meets 2nd Mon @ 1 pm. Group plays for fun with the goal of improving members' games. **Substitutes always needed! The group will meet in the summer.**

IPHONE/IPAD

Helen Gesick (text for more information). Meets 3rd Tues @ 2 pm. Bring your questions.

