



The Chico AAUW Grapvine

American Association of University Women - Chico Branch - Vol. 38 No. 4 DEC 2025

NEXT BRANCH EVENT...



Annual AAUW Chico Holiday Party

Saturday, December 13, 2025 – 2-4 pm
St. John's Episcopal Church Hall
2341 Floral Avenue in Chico

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.

Our annual holiday party will have some musical surprises, a trivia game, door prizes, food, and conversation with old friends and new. Spouses and friends are welcome too.

The branch special project in December is to support some families who are clients of Catalyst Domestic Violence Services. Our gifts of clothing, home goods, books and toys for the kids will all help these families who are trying to start new lives free from domestic abuse.



If you signed up to provide a gift for Catalyst, see the following Catalyst article for instructions on how to prepare them. The refreshments are provided by the members who attend. If your last name begins with the letter A through L, bring something savory. If your last name begins with the letter M through Z, bring something sweet to share. No need to prepare home-made goodies unless that is something you enjoy. Coffee, tea, and water will be provided and you can also purchase wine by the glass.



Chico (CA) branch

Message from the Co-presidents

2025-2026 Branch Leaders

Presidents –
Jana Lawton
Michelle Rasmussen
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
Toni Reid
Historian –
Michelle Rasmussen

Dear Members,

The physical beauty that is autumn in Chico is just one reminder of the things for which we are grateful at this time of year. We know that, for many of us, AAUW is just a small part of our lives but if we take the full measure of what AAUW has done, and is doing, for women and girls in Chico our gratitude grows. Individually and as a group, we care about education and opportunity. Through career days, science fairs, scholarships, voter education, lobbying legislators, Title IX monitoring, STEM camps, and much more, we advance our goal of gender equity. As your co-presidents this year, we are thankful for your efforts, large and small, that have served to build a legacy of action and a long list of accomplishments for our branch over the years.

The Mystery Book group deserves special appreciation for providing excellent refreshments at our October meeting at the library. The speakers from Catalyst reminded us how much it means to the clients who receive the gifts we purchase for their families. There is still time to sign up to purchase a gift if you haven't already done so (see following Catalyst article). This small kindness shows we care and support their journey to finding safe places free from violence and abuse.

A final note of appreciation to the members of our AAUW-Chico Board who are working diligently to keep our branch running smoothly and our projects going forward. There are so many important contributions that need to be made for membership, Tech Trek, finance, scholarships, programs, social media, and public policy and they're getting it done. If any of you would like to lend a hand, we can find a way for you to participate.

We are hoping that you want to come and enjoy the AAUW-Chico events. If you need transportation, please let Michelle Rasmussen know (see your directory for her contact information). There are members in your neighborhood who would be happy to provide a ride.

Jana Lawton and Michelle Rasmussen, Co-presidents

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.

HONORING OUR MEMBERS

A special feature of our October meeting was honoring members who had achieved membership milestones. Past president Jan Britton handed out certificates to



Denise Worth
15 years



Marilyn Myrick
10 years



Lauree Asarian
50 years



Linda MacMichael
10 years



Amy Hasle
5 years

Membership News

THE ART BOUTIQUE

December 6-7

10 to 4 on Saturday and noon to 4 on Sunday

The Art Boutique is a venue for handmade goods created by local women artists. An added benefit is that the artists donate a portion of their sales to AAUW's scholarship programs which benefit women and girls. Items are in all price ranges. You might pick up a unique hostess gift or a beautiful piece of art for your home. *Jana Lawton is still looking for two more people to assist at the Boutique. If you can volunteer on Saturday from 10 to 1 or Sunday from noon to 3, call or email her.*

Jana Lawton makes all things clay—pottery, sculpture, and mosaics.



Brenda Schlegel is a master goldsmith and jewelry maker. Each piece is like a tiny wearable sculpture.



Carla Resnick makes decorative and functional textiles: bags, pouches, and pillows are sewn from small-batch, plant-dyed linen and cotton. Quilts are a new more colorful direction for her.



Linda Lunsford creates mosaics from found objects and hand-made tiles to create whimsical items for home and garden.



Dia Kimm was willing to participate this year after Susan Fuller had a kiln accident which rendered her unable to create new work. Dia is a master at kiln-worked glass and has an elegant and spare style. The dichroic glass she uses makes each piece glow.



Caitlin Schwerin creates paintings that evoke happiness and love. She has a minimalist style, and because life is often so noisy and chaotic, looking at something soft and simple is calming.



Sheryl Cummings' creative tool is her sewing machine which she uses to create a variety of sewn and embroidered goods like baskets, coasters, clutches, and tea towels.



AND DON'T FORGET!

Paradise AAUW will sell colorful evergreen holiday swags, like the one pictured here, at \$25 each at the *Art Boutique* to raise money for Tech Trek scholarships for girls in Paradise.



Thank you for your support for our Tech Trek girls!

Membership News - cont'd

CATALYST ADOPT-A-FAMILY

The holidays are rapidly approaching and it's time for our annual gift giving to selected Catalyst families.

Our members have generously supported the families for many years to share the holiday spirit. For those willing to donate this year, please follow these instructions.

Help Us Recruit!

If you know people who might want to become a member of our branch, invite them to a meeting and/or pass on contact information to aauwchico@gmail.com and we will follow up.

Help us keep our member directory up to date. If you have had a change of address, change of email address, or change of telephone number, send your new information to aauwchico@gmail.com. We will also forward this information to members so their directories will be up to date too.

- [Click Here to Sign Up For Catalyst Holiday Gifts](#) link to the spreadsheet. Depending on your electronic device you may have to (1) click on the box you want to fill in, (2) double tap on the box or double click, or (3) click on a pencil.
- Review the list and choose the gift(s) you wish to purchase and TYPE your full name in the donor column. It will automatically save.
- Attach a **LABEL** to each gift that includes the FAMILY # and who the gift is for (mom, daughter, son, etc.) and the age of the child.
- **DO NOT WRAP** the gifts (the parents will wrap gifts for their children).
- Bring your gift(s) to our **Holiday Party on Dec 13** (see other holiday party announcement in this newsletter).

If you will not be attending the Holiday Party or you have any questions please call **Pam Bodnar at 530-521-7321** and we can arrange pick-up prior to the party date!

Call Pam Bodnar 530-521-7321 or Helen Gesick 530-570-5185 for help

Thank you once again for your generosity and support of Catalyst families.

Pam Bodnar and Helen Gesick



Membership News - cont'd

SAVE THE DATE!

January 10, 2026, 1-3 pm
Chico Baptist Church, 850 Palmetto Ave

The League of Women Voters Butte County Natural Resources Committee and
Chico AAUW will present

The Butte County Groundwater Puzzle

A panel of experts will explain the importance of conserving the aquifer from which Chico gets its water, what is being done to achieve sustainability, and the various interests involved.

Confirmed presenters (so far)

Prof. Todd Greene, CSU Chico
Barbara Vlamis, Aqualliance
Tovey Giezantanner, Tuscan Water District
Christina Buck, Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation
Becky Fairbanks, Vina GSA

(More details to follow)



DONATION REMINDER

If you would like to donate to the scholarship that helps support a student preparing for a teaching credential in one of the STEM fields, your donation must be received by **Dec 8**.

Please write a check to **CSU, Chico**. In the memo line write "AAUW Scholarship"

In order for your donation to be tax deductible, send the check to

Severance Dolan, AAUW, Treasurer
555 Vallombrosa, #87
Chico, CA 95926

Jan Britton

Membership News - cont'd

LENA ALLBOUANII OUR NEW CSUC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



Lena Allbounaii is in the graduate level credential program that we support through two \$1,000 awards each fall in Scholarship funds. She is an outstanding math major at Chico State and once she graduates, she is planning on becoming a high school math teacher here in Chico. This means that she might teach some of our Tech Trek students. But for now, Lena spends her time student teaching in Bidwell Junior High and loves to study our culture and language.

Lena wants to better understand our society as it is very different from Syria where she completed her civil engineering degree from Damascus University. Lena moved from Syria to the United States in 2016, and decided to attend Chico State because of its quiet atmosphere and its excellent teaching program. She is excited about math in general and enjoys teaching all her classes. Since Lena started her student teaching, she tries to find new and interesting ways to engage her students by using exciting approaches to math. She wants to make math fun and more easily understandable to her students.

Lena's husband, Lukeman, received an accounting degree from Chico State. They have two small children. Their daughter Jenna and their son Jude love to explore Chico, especially Bidwell Park, and they frequently check out books at our local library.

You can meet Lena at our holiday party on Saturday, December 13, from 2-4 pm. Stop by and introduce yourself to her and find out what projects she is doing with her students. She wants to meet our members and find out more about Tech Trek and what AAUW does. She hopes to become active in our branch. Let's welcome her and help her make lots of new friends.

Jan Britton and Michelle Rasmussen

Tech Trek

TECH TREK STEM CAMP FOR GIRLS CAMP JEMISON AT U.C. DAVIS

The search for Chico 2026 Tech Trekkers has begun! Two weeks ago, the four members of our Tech Trek team—Debbie Rosenow, Pam Bodnar, Katy Azevedo, and Carol Holzgrafe—divided up to speak about our STEM camp for girls to science and math teachers at the four middle schools with which we work.

It is important that these teachers who nominate their students for our consideration understand what sort of student benefits are derived from camp, why we have such a camp, and what the experience is for the young women lucky enough to attend. As an added treat, we invited girls from each school who attended in 2025 to relate their take on the week living on a college campus, eating in the dining hall, what they did, and how it may have changed their view of their future. It was a treat.

Nominations may come only from the schools (not parents or grandparents). The girls complete an application, write an essay on a specific prompt, and are interviewed in person by our TT committee (Marilyn Myrick often helps with this too). Camp Jemison will meet in mid-July.

January will be the time for Tech Trek alums, three or more years out of camp, to apply to be peer counselors. The application and interview processes are similar to becoming a camper. We have many highly eligible alums from Chico whom the committee will recommend to the directors.

As always, dorm monitors—adult counselors—are needed. If you might be interested, go to <https://www.aauw-ca.org/tech-trek/> and scroll to “Volunteers.” Or ask Debbie Rosenow, Katy Azevedo, or Carol Holzgrafe for their experiences. The number of volunteers we send is directly related to how many places we are allotted. At the moment we have six but there are so many wonderful girls. If we can provide several volunteers, we might be allotted more space.

Camp directors Rachel Kanowsky and Sally Ho are entering their third year directing Jemison-Davis and produce a remarkable variety of STEM (and not-STEM) experiences for our campers.

Why the name “Jemison”? AAUW Tech Trek in California is naming each camp for a woman who contributed to STEM in an impressive way. TT UCSB is named after Elizabeth Blackwell, first female doctor in the U.S.; TT Sonoma State after Roselyn Franklin who worked on the DNA discovery project with Watson and Crick; TT UC Santa Cruz after environmentalist Rachel Carson.

Tech Trek - cont'd

Mae Jemison is Davis camp's new namesake. According to Wikipedia,

“Mae Carol Jemison (born October 17, 1956) is an American engineer, physician, and former NASA astronaut. She became the first African-American woman to travel into space when she served as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle *Endeavour* in 1992. Jemison joined NASA's astronaut corps in 1987 and was selected to serve for the STS-47 mission, during which the *Endeavour* orbited the Earth for nearly eight days on September 12–20, 1992.

Born in Alabama and raised in Chicago, Jemison graduated from Stanford University with degrees in chemical engineering as well as African and African-American studies. She then earned her medical degree from Cornell University. Jemison was a doctor for the Peace Corps in Liberia and Sierra Leone from 1983 until 1985 and worked as a general practitioner. In pursuit of becoming an astronaut, she applied to NASA.

Jemison left NASA in 1993 and founded a technology research company. She later formed a non-profit educational foundation and through the foundation is the principal of the 100 Year Starship project funded by DARPA. Jemison also wrote several books for children and appeared on television several times, including in a 1993 episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. She holds several honorary doctorates and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame and the International Space Hall of Fame.”

Carol Holzgrafe, Tech Trek Team

Public Policy

How **NOT** TO GET SCAMMED

While hanging out recently with my third branch, Morgan Hill, I had a valuable lesson in email cybersecurity by Michelle Robleto, a new member who works in that area. While some of these things may be familiar to you (I hope so), it is always good to have a refresher, especially during the holidays, prime time for scamming.

- Always check the **entire** email address (at the top), not just the name. If the address shown does not agree with the one you are familiar with, **STOP**. Move it to your Trash/Spam folder and block if you can.
- If a message, even from a familiar name, sounds odd for **any** reason: **STOP**. Do **NOT** reply. Especially if it asks for anything, such as money or gift cards.
- Ask yourself: Am I expecting this message? Would they send such a message?
- **Never, ever** open an attachment in a suspected message. It could cause you unlimited trouble, like an immediate download of malware to your device.
- If you are unsure, send a separate message to the known sender (Do **NOT** respond to the original email), include the message (take a screenshot if you can or copy the text), and ask if the message is real. If not, they will be happy to know that they have been hacked. Well, not actually happy but, then they can notify friends not to open the suspected message and, if necessary, change their email address.
- Addresses and websites beginning with **https://** are more secure (that's what the "s" stands for). Addresses/websites beginning with **http://** are less secure.
- QR codes: Before scanning, make sure the code has not been tampered with, such as another code taped over it.
- Lastly, try **not** to scan QR codes that require you to enter payment information. Instead, go directly to the website if possible. Example: San Francisco has a parking website to go to or the option to scan a code. It's safer to use the website when offered than to use the QR code which is easier to modify for malicious purposes.

Carol Holzgrafe

Public Policy

Because many schools across the nation and across California have faced challenges that oppose AAUW's policies, AAUW California (AAUW-CA) has organized a School Board Project to observe and collect information on these challenges. Below is one report.

Supporting Public Education: Community-based Coalitions

Ogie Strogatz, AAUW Member
California Public Policy School Board Project

It began with one quietly determined advocate on a mission. Laurinda Ochoa, a Danville-based grandmother and retired attorney, was alarmed by the 2021 launch of Moms for Liberty chapters across California. In 2022 she began monitoring San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD) board meetings, where she observed a swelling stream of demands from Moms for Liberty and their allies favoring restrictive and/or anti-LGBTQ+ curricula. Laurinda's desire to organize with like-minded local public education champions led her to join the [AAUW} Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek (DAW) branch, where in 2023 she secured a strong commitment for branch representation at monthly meetings of the SRVUSD Board. Laurinda noted the organizations represented by other community attendees at the school board meetings. She nurtured relationships between our DAW branch and other groups who share AAUW's dedication to outstanding public education.

And she pressed on. Hearing DAW members' concerns about the challenges confronting school boards throughout the area, recognizing the synergistic political impact of multiple organizations speaking with a unified voice, and the potential for grassroots public education advocates across school districts to learn from one another through shared successes and challenges, Laurinda scaled up. She contacted the leaders of local pro-public education organizations to solicit their interest in forming a grassroots coalition that would serve as an additional source of support for public education across Contra Costa and Alameda counties. The response was widespread enthusiasm. After several leadership planning meetings, the Lift Up Public Schools coalition launched formally in April, 2024.

Lift Up Public Schools (LUPS) is an all-volunteer coalition of grassroots groups from Contra Costa and Alameda counties advocating for excellent public education delivered in settings that are safe and welcoming to all. LUPS has about 250 members including leaders from AAUW branches; PTA; Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG); the League of Women Voters; teachers unions; county and local partisan organizations; and current and former school district faculty and staff. The coalition is not funded by any political organization or entity. LUPS does not raise funds or make donations. The coalition's mission is to advocate for high-quality public education that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Its vision is a vibrant, democratic society of compassionate, well-informed, engaged community members.

Public Policy

LUPS initially focused on helping recruit, vet, and drive turnout to elect 2024 pro-public education school board candidates. The coalition supported 10 candidates running for seats in 8 Alameda County districts, 6 of whom won, and 6 candidates running for seats in 4 Contra Costa County districts, 4 of whom won. The coalition's support included social media promotion, assistance with the planning and conduct of candidate forums, and volunteering for candidate campaigns. In addition to electoral work, LUPS conducted community outreach to cultivate awareness, understanding, and action regarding the challenges facing public education; submitted public comments supporting diverse and inclusive ethnic studies curriculum; and endorsed a district parcel tax campaign. In the wake of the 2024 elections, the coalition has worked on capacity-building – evolving its organizational structure to stimulate the growth of LUPS local hubs in nearby school districts, expanding community outreach and education about the work of school boards, and developing as a trusted source of insight on the local impact of key public education-related issues at all levels of government.

As a LUPS organizer, I can attest to the value of our nascent coalition. We are growing compassionate grassroots power – holding a summit where presenters and the public exchange national, regional, and local perspectives on how best to respond to crucial challenges confronting public education; promoting outstanding school board candidates; publicizing local pro-public education initiatives; encouraging the development of local advocacy hubs; and leveraging the thousands of person-years of LUPS members' collective experience to help communities fulfill our highest aspirations for public education.

It can start with a single advocate—YOU.

Carol Holzgrafe

Interest Groups for Fun ... and Learning

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



LES FLÂNEURS

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, Dec 17 @ 5:30 pm at Wine Time, 26 Lost Dutchman Dr, off the Esplanade. Non-alcoholic drinks always available. Please **RSVP**; hosts and restaurants need numbers to prepare a proper welcome for you. Bring friends, visiting relatives, and new prospective members.

OUT TO BRUNCH

Mary Huntsinger (call/text for location and to make a reservation). Meets 2nd Thur, Dec 11 @ 10:30 am. Call or text Mary for the site. **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, Dec 14 @ 2 pm, hosted by Jana Lawton. **All writers welcome!**

FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSION

Jeannie Trizzino (text for more information). Meets Wed, Dec 10 @ 6:30 pm. Marcia Moore will host. Jan Britton will lead the discussion on America at a Global Crossroads. **New members welcome!**

EVENING BOOK DISCUSSION

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

ETHNIC WRITERS BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). We will not be meeting in December. We will resume our regular schedule in January—4th Wed @ 10 am. We will discuss *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón. **New members welcome!**

FRIDAY BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). — 3rd Fri, Dec 19 @ 10 am in the Woodoak condominium clubhouse. We will discuss a widow and her unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus in *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt. **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, Dec 17 @ 3 pm, at Lyn's home. Will discuss *Exiles* by Jane Harper, led by Satsie. We will be deciding on our 2026 books in January. **New members welcome!**

BRIDGE

Sylvia Hedlind (text/call if interested in joining). Meets 2nd Mon, Nov 10 @ 1 pm. Group plays for fun with the goal of improving members' games. **Substitutes always needed!**

IPHONE/IPAD

Helen Gesick (text for more information). We will not meet in December and will resume our regular schedule in February—3rd Tues, Feb 17 @ 2 pm. Bring your questions.

