



The Chico AAUW Grapevine

American Association of University Women - Chico Branch - Vol. 39 No. 4 JAN 2026

NEXT MEETING...

Groundwater Forum

Saturday, January 10, 2026, 1 to 3:30 pm

First Baptist Church - 850 Palmetto Avenue, Chico



BUTTE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER PUZZLE: HOW THE PIECES FIT

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,

The League of Women Voters of Butte County and Chico AAUW are hosting a forum on an issue of great significance to our region. The League supports measures that promote the development and management of water resources in ways that protect the environment, strengthen the local economy, and enhance quality of life—while recognizing that hydro-geologic boundaries do not follow political lines. Their Natural Resources Committee has been hard at work collaborating with several of our AAUW branch members to develop a program on the status and sustainability of Butte County groundwater resources.

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. Speakers include

Todd Greene, Ph.D., Geological and Environmental Sciences at CSU, Chico, and member of the Vina GSA Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Christina Buck, Ph.D., Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation

Becky Fairbanks, Grants Project Manager, Vina GSA

Jim Brobeck, Water Policy Analyst, AquAlliance

Tovey Giezentanner, General Manager, Tuscan Water District

This is your opportunity to better understand not only the science of aquifers and sub-basins but to learn what is being done in Butte County and how it is viewed by some important stakeholders. There will be time for questions and answers at the conclusion of the presentations. The meeting is free and open to the public. Please plan to attend and invite a friend or neighbor to come with you. When we are informed about the issues of the day, we can help influence better public policy, and a better future for all of us.



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 – (vacant)

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

The start of a new year is always exciting. We think of all we hope to accomplish and appreciate the dedication of our Board and committee members who implement our branch projects and programs. Our goal is to make our members proud of belonging to AAUW, to have each participate in some way to advance our mission of gender equity, and to give you a number of options to develop friendships and life-long learning opportunities.

Our monthly meetings are intended to be interesting and informative with the goal of having you want to attend. The Book in Common, our community read this year, is *California Against the Sea*, a deep exploration of how California is addressing sea-level rise and climate change. This motivated us to partner with the League of Women Voters to develop a program that addresses water issues in our area. If you attend this month's forum and the book discussion in March, you will have taken in a lot of information and food for thought—key ingredients to being engaged citizens and thoughtful voters. We also plan an update of Title IX in the Chico Unified School District, an Interbranch luncheon where one of our AAUW fellows will speak, and a meeting to introduce AAUW to other women-focused organizations in Chico. Rides are always available for those who don't drive or just want to attend with a friend.

Our Tech Trek Team has been very busy. They got the ball rolling to start a Tech Trek Alumni Group (TTAG), are gearing up for the Antique Appraisal Faire, and started contact with junior high teachers to ensure we get good candidates for the 2026 camp. There is also work to do for the high school scholarship team and for the scholarship we offer at Chico State. All of the teams have able leaders but always welcome new members who want to work on a branch project.

Probably the brightest spot on the horizon for us and for the Chico branch is we have a leadership plan in place. At the end of our term in June 2026, Vickie Bernhardt and Sylvia Hedlind have agreed to serve as co-presidents for the 2026-27 year. They both had amazing professional careers and are very capable of leading the Chico branch

We hope those who attended the holiday party enjoyed it as much as we did. Bill Bodnar played us into the mood with his soulful violin. Katie Azevedo recruited the Tech Trek girls who helped out immensely and were as enthusiastic and charming as always. Debbie Rosenow was prepared to show a Tech Trek video but technical glitches derailed that plan. The Chico Unified Victorian Choir sang a cappella carols and some other jazzy tunes. We met our young math teacher in training (the recipient of our CSU, Chico teaching credential scholarship). Brains were strained playing a holiday-themed trivia game. At the end, the stage was filled with the gifts you purchased for families at the Catalyst shelter. Thank you to Jan Britton for arranging to use the church hall and for the beautiful poinsettias, and to Dori Moura and her committee for planning the festivities. We appreciate all the members who brought such delicious snacks and opened their hearts to the needs of some families in transition at Catalyst. Thank you to Helen Gesick for getting our sign-up sheet on-line and to Pam Bodnar for coordinating the whole project with Catalyst and for being the Super Shopper.

Best wishes to all for a rewarding 2026

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.

2026 HOLIDAY PARTY

We enjoyed another successful holiday party with our members on December 13. The afternoon included live caroling by the Chico and Pleasant Valley high school choir, as well as violin by Bill Bodnar. We ate and drank delicious refreshments, then played holiday trivia (congratulations to Team Naughty!). We also had the pleasure of meeting our CSU Chico scholarship recipient, Lena Allbounaii, who plans to teach junior high school math in Chico. Finally, Nat from [Catalyst Domestic & Sexual Violence Services](#) accepted our members' generous gift donations to brighten the season for some deserving families. What a pleasure to spend time with our members and our Tech Trek girls.

Happy Holidays!
Dori Moura



Tech Trek girls



Nat from Catalyst



Jan Britton and Lena Allbounaii

CATALYST HOLIDAY ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROGRAM

Thank you to all of our generous and compassionate AAUW Chico members who have, once again, brought the spirit of Christmas to so many families. Your gift donations fulfilled the wishes of children and moms from 4 families this year. Another wonderful program that brightened the holidays for so many.

Pam Bodnar

Membership News - cont'd

CHICO UNIFIED VICTORIAN CHOIR

If you attended the holiday party, more than likely you enjoyed the performance of our young Victorian carolers from Pleasant Valley and Chico high schools. They were quite nervous before they started because a few of their members were ill and they weren't sure how well they would sound. But they persevered, to our



Chico and Pleasant Valley high school choir

great delight. Their choir director, Cristiana Franzetti, said the students had a great time and appreciated the welcoming environment and our delicious food. They performed without charge and wanted the experience of singing before an audience and sharing their music with the community.

The Chico Unified Choir is going to Southern California at the end of March to compete in the Heritage Festival and perform at Disneyland! You can support these young vocalists, if you wish, by making a donation to help defray the cost of their trip. Karen Acker, comptroller at Pleasant Valley High School, suggested that you click [here](#) to make an online donation—this will automatically go directly into the Choir's account:

Cash and checks (made out to PVHS Choir) can also be mailed or dropped off at

Pleasant Valley High School
1475 East Ave
Chico, CA 95926

Specify on the check that it is to go toward the choir Disney trip.

Membership News - cont'd

WOMEN'S MICROFINANCE COLLABORATIVE

The Women's Microfinance Collaborative (WMC) is having its annual meeting in January. The Collaborative started in 2006 with the support of members from many women-focused organizations in Chico (AAUW, Chico Women's Club, League of Women Voters, Soroptimists, and Business and Professional Women). AAUW has perpetuated the effort through the WMC interest group. Since that time, WMC has partnered with Friendship Bridge, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to empowering women and eliminating poverty in Guatemala. We have a giving circle supported by free-will donations from interested



members. Since our founding, members have contributed more than \$60,000 to set up small community trust banks. Through these banks, women receive resources to create their own solutions to poverty for themselves, their families, and their communities.

The annual meeting seeks to provide updates to donors on new developments and services and profiles on clients. If you are a past supporter, or are interested in learning how our microfinance efforts are working in Guatemala, please RSVP to Michelle Rasmussen (contact information in the AAUW branch directory) and join us at the annual meeting.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Wine Time located at 26 Lost Dutchman Drive, Chico

EMPOWER WOMEN. ELIMINATE POVERTY

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.

Membership News - cont'd

2025-2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AAUW Chico board meetings are the 1st Wednesday of the month at 3 pm
All members are welcome to attend
Woodoak Condominium Clubhouse
555 Vallombrosa

January 10 (Saturday) 1 to 3:30 pm: Branch meeting cosponsored by the League of Women Voters - Butte County's Groundwater Puzzle: How the Pieces Fit. First Baptist Church hall, 850 Palmetto Avenue in Chico

February 23 (Monday) (date/time/location TBA) 6 pm: Branch meeting with speaker Cindy Wolff discussing Title IX in the Chico Unified School District

March 7 (Saturday) 11:30 am: Interbranch luncheon in Marysville/Yuba City. All members welcome. Carpooling. Location and speaker to be determined.

March 15 (Sunday) 2 to 4 pm: Book in Common discussion. Small groups to encourage free flowing dialogue. To join in, read *California Against the Sea: Visions for our Vanishing Coastline* by Rosanna Xia. Located at the First Baptist Church hall, 850 Palmetto Avenue in Chico.

March 22 (Sunday) 11 am to 3 pm: Antique Appraisal Faire at the Chico Women's Club. 592 E. Third Street (fundraiser for Tech Trek).

April - Coalition Brunch (date, location, and time to be determined): All members welcome. Intended to introduce AAUW to and learn about other women-focused organizations in Chico.

May (Saturday) (date and location TBA): Strawberry Brunch, final branch meeting of the year and election of officers. Awards presented.

July 12 through 18: Tech Trek camp at UC Davis. Public visit day is Thursday, July 16.

Membership News - cont'd

Foreign Policy Discussion Group

What will happen in 2026 with tariffs and the world economy? How will US-China relations evolve? What is the future for Ukraine and European security? How will the United States engage with African countries? All of these issues and more will be discussed by the Foreign Policy Discussion Group in the coming year. The group meets in member's homes at 6:30 pm on the 4th Monday of the month to learn about what is happening in our world and to discuss how the United States is using its influence to affect the future of the planet and its inhabitants.

We dive into each issue with the assistance of a study guide prepared by the Foreign Policy Association. Each member takes on one topic a year to do a more in-depth investigation, look for up-to-date information, and lead the discussion. We often learn about the history of an issue and past actions by our government as a backdrop for understanding current options. If you want to have more than a cursory knowledge about foreign policy and really understand the issues, we welcome you to the group. Discussion topics will be selected at the January meeting for 2026. There are 8 topics and 12 months so we do take time off throughout the year. Time commitment is several hours each month to read the study guide prior to the meeting. You decide how much time to devote to the topic when you lead the discussion. Call Lyn Smith if you want to sit in on the discussion this month without making a commitment to join the group.



PRO-CHOICE EVENT — ARE YOU INTERESTED?

AAUW Silicon Valley Branch invites us to join their annual event, *Step Out for Pro Choice*, held every year on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. *No Rights, No Law - A discussion about the Supreme Court & attacks on reproductive rights & justice* will feature keynote speaker Leah Litman, a leader for women's issues and well-known podcaster.

Professor Litman is a co-host of [Strict Scrutiny](#), a podcast about the Supreme Court of the United States, alongside Melissa Murray and Kate A. Shaw. She is a professor of law at the University of Michigan Law School and writes on constitutional law, federal courts, and federal post-conviction review. She is also the author of a new book, [Lawless: How the Supreme Court Runs on Conservative Grievance, Fringe Theories, and Bad Vibes](#).

The event will be held via Zoom on Thursday, January 22, at 1 pm PT. Mark your calendars and register [HERE](#).

Membership News - cont'd

LEGACY CIRCLE



The old saying, “the arc of history bends toward justice,” serves as a reminder of the potential for progress. As AAUW members have known since our founding in 1881 this doesn’t happen without active participation in the pursuit of justice. We are also learning equality gained does not mean equality kept. Vigilance and the importance of persuasion and action in shaping a just society is required. This is where we can be proud that AAUW has been in the forefront of the pursuit of equity for women and girls for the long haul. Our organization and its individual members provide the leverage that keeps that arc bending toward justice. How long did we actively pursue the right to vote? The end of discrimination in employment and education? The ability to make our own health care and financial decisions? A seat at the table in corporations and in our state and national legislatures? Each gain required the courage of conviction and protracted activism.

If you understand that the justice we seek has not been easily won and is still an ongoing challenge, you might consider joining *AAUW's Legacy Circle*. You join with a gift bequest to AAUW via your will, trust, or estate. There is no minimum gift requirement to join the Legacy Circle, and the benefits are many. Planned gifts afford you flexibility to provide for your family and support AAUW. Certain planned gifts may reduce estate or capital gains taxes. Planned gifts need not affect your cash flow during your lifetime. Certain types of planned gifts allow you to support AAUW while also providing income for the rest of your life—or a fixed income for a loved one. The joy of knowing that your legacy gift will sustain AAUW’s programs for years to come is the ultimate benefit! Make it a resolution this year to take the first step to leave a lasting legacy. Visit [Planned Giving – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881](#).

Membership News - cont'd

MEMBERSHIP

Do you know someone who would love to join our merry AAUW band but doesn't quite meet the degree requirement? Never fear, there is a way!

An applicant must have an associate degree (2 years) or higher from an accredited institution. An R.N. degree also meets this requirement.

Many AAUW members would like this degree requirement to disappear, opening membership, instead, to anyone who wants to work for our mission of advancing equity through education and advocacy. Recent member-wide elections produced an almost, but not quite, majority wishing to overturn the requirement. We may have a chance to vote for it again so stay tuned for my (short and charming) essay on why this would be good for everyone. And fair.

However, right now there is a way to include those who don't quite have the appropriate degrees.

1. A request for an *equivalent membership* may be submitted—either by the prospective member or a member of the branch—to AAUW's CEO (executive@aauw.org or connect@aauw.org).
2. All prospective members should be committed to working to advance equity for women and girls.
3. Whether the eligibility is accepted or not depends on
 - a. Certificates, licenses, or professional certifications issued by accredited institutions of higher education (often found in "adult education" programs). Until recently these institutions had to be approved by the US Dept. of Education but, since the DoE is being eliminated, who knows?
 - b. At least two years of full-time, or 48 credit hours, equivalent education at an accredited institution.
4. A denial of equivalency may be appealed by the "original requester to the AAUW Board of Directors. Decisions of the Board are final.
5. There may be, also, a path to membership through significant work experience.

An equivalency will require documentation but, surely it is worth digging those out to be part of AAUW Chico.

Public Policy

DISMANTLING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recently the Trump administration took a major new step to dismantle the US Department of Education (DoE). After deep staff cuts, it announced six “partnerships” on November 18 that shift the day-to-day work of key education programs to other federal agencies, despite Congress creating DoE to centralize federal education expertise and protect students’ civil rights. AAUW released a statement underscoring what’s at stake and rejecting the idea that education should be reduced to workforce development alone. Here’s a quick summary of the announcement.

What AAUW has done

Pushed lawmakers to act. AAUW has joined in a multi-organization statement to Congress calling on lawmakers to reclaim their authority and block this unprecedented transfer of ED responsibilities.

Joined actions of disability rights coalitions. Joined shared disability rights principles affirming that DoE must remain an independent, fully staffed and funded agency to oversee the federal education rights of children and youth with disabilities. The **Individuals with Disabilities Act** (IDEA) and Section 504 guarantee students with disabilities a free, appropriate public education and protection from discrimination. Weakening DoE’s capacity to enforce these laws would put those rights—and the resources schools need to uphold them—at risk.

Why this matters

Ensuring civil rights protections in education. DoE was created by Congress to ensure equal educational opportunity and enforce civil-rights laws in education. Scattering expertise across agencies not centered on education makes those statutory responsibilities harder to meet and accountability harder to track.

Preserving the purpose of education. When federal leaders frame education as a “talent pipeline,” they focus on a kind of economic rationality that ignores its broader purpose of preparing people to lead, participate in democracy, and build economically secure lives. That broad purpose is especially vital for women and girls, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, Native students, immigrants, and others.

THINK ABOUT IT

Equal Pay Day is Wednesday, March 4, 2026.

Another day when not enough women get that.

While he gets 4 apples, you only get 3...



UPDATES

Nov 30 pizza and TTAG planning: An enthusiastic group of nine girls from grades 8-11, plus one Butte College student, attended this kickoff event. We socialized while eating pizza and decorating holiday cookies, then brainstormed a multitude of ideas for future events. We also set up a few dates for meetings, socials, community service, and STEM exploration. The girls were provided an online link to apply for leadership positions on the TTAG Advisory Board, which will be appointed by the first week of January. [Click here](#) for a description of the student leadership positions. View minutes and pictures [here](#) from the Nov 30 TTAG kickoff meeting.

Dec 19 Ice Skating TTAG social: To kick off the beginning of winter break, TTAG organized a downtown meet-up at Stoble 3-4 pm, followed by ice skating 4-6 pm. Thankfully, there was a break in the rain and the ice rink was able to open. We had a fabulous time!

Looking ahead: The general TTAG meeting is Jan 9, a *tentative* STEM event at Chico State on Feb 13, and volunteer work at Chico Community Food Locker on Apr 11.

Please send questions/comments/suggestions to TechTrekChico@gmail.com if you would like to become involved with TTAG. We can use volunteers to occasionally help carpool students to meetings and events on weekday afternoons. Recommendations for local women involved in STEM are also appreciated so we can start some local networking.

Debbie Rosenow



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, Jan 21 @ 5:30 pm at the Red Tavern, 1250 Esplanade (parking in the rear). 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, Jan 8 @ 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, Jan 11 @ 2 pm, hosted by Bev McMillan. **All writers welcome!**

FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSION

Jeannie Trizzino (text for more information). Meets Wed, Jan 26 @ 6:30 pm. Lyn Smith will host. Topic will be "Navigating US-China Relations in Tense Times," hosted by Lyn Smith. **New members welcome!**

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON BOOK DISCUSSION

Elaine Schlinger (text for more information). Meets 2nd Wed, Jan 14 @ 2 pm at Elaine's home. Will select books for 2026.

ETHNIC WRITERS BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). Meets in members' homes 4th Wed, Jan 28 @ 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). — Meets 4th Fri, Jan 23 @ 10 am in the Woodoak condominium clubhouse. We will discuss *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. **New members welcome!**

NONFICTION BOOK DISCUSSION

Carol Krok (email for more information). Meets 1st Fri, Jan 2 @ 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, Jan 21 @ 3 pm, at Vicky Breeden's home. Will select books for 2026. 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, Jan 12 @ 1 pm. Group plays for fun with the goal of improving members' games. **Substitutes always needed!**

IPHONE/IPAD

Helen Gesick (text for more information). Meets 3rd Tues, Jan 20 @ 2 pm. Bring your questions.

