



AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY
WOMEN

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ATLANTA BRANCH NEWS

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January Meeting: Public Policy

Please join us for our next meeting on Saturday, January 23, at 11:00 a.m., at The Park at Buckhead located at 650 Phipps Blvd. NE, Atlanta. The phone number for the facility is 404/442-2700.

The program will be first on the agenda. Our speaker will be Stephanie Davis of Georgia Women for a Change, Inc. (formerly the Women's Policy Group). We will also hear from Community Action Grant recipient Circle of Friends/Living Water for Girls. Lunch will follow at about 12:15, and the business meeting will follow lunch.

The cost per person will be \$10.00. To reserve your place, please e-mail Frances Smith at francesjsmith1921@yahoo.com or call her at 404/231-0482.

The reservation deadline is Sunday, January 17.

Directions: From Lenox Square, go north on Lenox Road across Peachtree Road. Turn right at the first traffic light onto Phipps Boulevard, then turn left at the next light onto Alexander. The Park is the first drive on the left. ❖

The New Slavery

by Marie Bonheur-Gulotta

There are 200–300 girls in the state of Georgia who are prostituted each month on the streets, over the Internet, or through escort services. It's hard to imagine that on a busy night as many as 129 girls are being exploited across our state.

I'm pleased to see that on a public policy level there are active groups like the Juvenile Justice Fund, A Future Not a Past, and Georgia Women For a Change Inc., who are campaigning for legislative groups to stop the prostitution of girls in Georgia. Unfortunately, the state of Georgia lacks social programs that can effect change in the lives of these desperate girls.

HB582 is a bill that defines prostitution and related transactions as criminal activities only when committed by persons 18 years or age or older, thereby decriminalizing children who can currently be arrested for prostitution in Georgia (and tacitly shifting the liability of the crime onto the purveyors and clients who take advantage of these children). HB582 is coming up for approval for a second year in January. It's being discussed by the House Non-Civil Judiciary Committee. In January, when the legislative session begins, let us all come together and join in the effort to support HB582. If this bill does not pass, the horrific practice of trafficking children in the sex trade will continue as it is now—and in our own back yard. By not confronting this issue, we as a people are condoning a practice that has often been described as a form of human slavery.

On a global level, the sex trafficking of young women and children is out of control. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, a book by Sheryl WuDunn and Michael Kristoff, examines sex trafficking globally. The title of the book refers to a Chinese proverb that a woman holds up half the sky, that her responsibility for the greater good of the society is equal to that of her male counterpart. I believe that women hold up half the sky here in the state of Georgia.

Exactly what kind of society are we creating for our children? I'm reminded of the mission statement of AAUW: to empower women and girls to be self-sufficient in their community. We as women have a personal responsibility to assure the safekeeping of disenfranchised women and girls in our community. We have to be night watchpeople for our communities if we want a stable and thriving community.

Through education we can empower these girls. I'm grateful for programs like Angela's House, which was a recipient of an AAUW community action grant. AAUW members know that when we invest in the lives of young women, our communities will flourish. Unfortunately, there aren't enough Angela's House programs to go around. However, there are enough educated women who can join us in our efforts to rally the Georgia General Assembly in January to pass HB582. ❖

President's Column: The Power of One

by Mary Lynn Merkle

We often refer to Women Power and to the annual Powerful Women Conference held at Kennesaw State University each year. I firmly believe that Powerful Women emerge as a need is evident, and that their singular efforts move others to positive action—this is the pattern I see in the Atlanta Branch.

You have probably heard that some of our book drops were removed, which could have resulted in less profit and thus less money to distribute. Two of our book drops had been replaced by those of another (for-profit) used-book company. The hand wringing began. However, Alta Birdsong was prompted to immediate action, calling national

AAUW and doing research about our new competitor, Better World Books (BWB). She brought her findings to the Bookfair Steering Committee, and a small group of committee members met with decision-makers at BWB. The result? We have maintained a positive relationship with national AAUW and achieved a working relationship with BWB. The committee is working on strategies to improve donations to the remaining Atlanta branch book drops and is also seeking new donation sites.

Then there's Betty Slater. She is our ambassador of good will. She keeps AAUW and its mission front and center wherever she goes, and she goes a lot of places and sees a lot of people.

I think of Marie Bonheur-Gulotta, the networker supreme. As our Diversity co-chair and Public Policy co-chair for the State she has met and conversed and planned with representatives of several organizations that share our goals and missions.

The Power of One is very apparent in our branch. That's just the beginning, though.

Dot Ransom has kept our membership steady and even growing. This growth is largely due to her tireless follow-up with women who have potential interest in AAUW and our branch.

Susan Pavlin had an idea a few years ago. Since she worked at Refugee Family Services, she saw first-hand what a difference might

be made in the lives of the young women there. So she applied for (and received) a grant from AAUW national and also Atlanta branch for the Young Women Leaders project, which was completely funded for two years. It continues to receive support from Atlanta branch and its individual members.

These are just a few of the "powerful women" who are members of our branch. The Power

of One is very apparent in our branch. That's just the beginning, though. While the women cited are indeed powerful, not one of them did it alone. Alta kept the Steering Committee informed and involved every step of the way, and they were her support at the meetings and beyond. Betty keeps our name at the forefront, and Dot follows through on membership leads. However, we are the ones who must build a branch that interests women in becoming a part of it. Marie does the networking, but we need to think about partnerships with like groups. Susan had the idea, but it can't successfully continue without our interest and financial assistance.

One woman can be powerful. A group of women, like AAUW Atlanta branch, can make huge differences not only in our own lives but also at every level of society.

We ARE powerful women!! ♦

Travels with Atlanta Branch

On December 10, the branch Travel Group took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy a lively lunch together at the 1280. Then they went to the High Museum of Art, where they toured the "Leonardo DaVinci: Hand of the Genius" exhibit. This month, the Travel Group will receive a guided tour of the Wren's Nest House Museum. Don't miss out! Check page 4 for details. ♦



Clockwise from left: Betty Arden, Vallie Staten, Mary Lynn Merkle, Toni Larson, Connie Eshenour, Anne Habersetzer, Phyllis Miller, and Sally Byers enjoy lunch. Above: The group beneath the DaVinci horse at the High Museum of Art.

The Holiday Celebration: A Chance to Meet Our Scholarship, Fellowship, and Grant Recipients

by Mary Lynn Merkle

What a fantastic Holiday Celebration we had at Mary and Darwin Womack's home on December 13! The hors d'oeuvres were delicious, as usual. The company was great, as usual. The silent auction (see box) was fun and a great success, as usual.

The difference was the number of guests we had—thanks to Phyllis Miller's invitations to Atlanta branch scholarship recipients and community action grantees and to national fellowship recipients who attend local universities. We heard wonderful stories and shared dreams as each told us not only what she was doing but also where she hoped the scholarship/fellowship would take her.

One of our Community Action grantees, Georgia Women of Achievement (an online women's history museum), was represented by its executive director, Shelli Siebert. Shelli indicated how important our grant was to the continued growth of this Internet "hall of fame."

Ashley Johnson told us about her participation in the international women's conference "Innovate," which was possible only because of our grant to her.



Our gracious hostess, Mary Womack (right) with Nancy Devino



Rhonda Copenny addresses the group

And then Phyllis, our Educational Foundation chair, announced the 2009–2010 Name Grant recipients. Our most recent co-presidents Diana Witt and Connie Eshenour and loyal, long-serving bookroom worker Dorothy Tracy were honored. The five businesses (and their representatives) who allow us to use their property for our book drops were also honored. They are:

- Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, Buckhead Branch (Nancy Powers)
- Regency Centers, Dunwoody Village (Lori Ellis)
- Lenox Square Mall, Simon Property Group (Robin Suggs)
- RREEF Managements Company, Providence Square in Marietta (Catherine Tankersley)
- Whole Foods Market, Briarcliff (Michael Shively).

Yes, indeed! It was an amazing afternoon! ♦



Back row, from left: Shelli Siebert (community action grant recipient), Susan Felege, Anna-Marie Mansour, Marnessa Vital, Ashley Johnson (community action grant recipient). Front row, from left: Karen Mangum (our scholarship recipient) and Rhonda Copenny

We raised more than \$850 at the Silent Auction held during our Holiday Celebration. All proceeds will go to Refugee Family Services' Young Women Leaders Program.

Calendar

January

- 6 Book Group meets
- 10 Board meeting
- 14 Travel Group meets
- 23 Branch meeting
- 29 Newsletter deadline

February

- 3 Book Group meets
- 20 Branch meeting

March

- 3 Book Group meets
- 20 Branch meeting

April

- 7 Book Group meets
- 16 AAUW State Convention begins
- 24 Branch meeting

Book Group

The Book Group will meet Wednesday, January 6, at the home of Carol Fetters: 1271 Verdon Drive, Dunwoody, 30338; 770/399-5656. The discussion will be about *The Strangeness of Beauty* by Lydia Yuri Minatoya. We start gathering about 7:30 p.m. ♦

Travel Group

The AAUW Travel Group will meet on January 14 at 9:30 a.m. at the Ansley Mall Kroger store to carpool to the Wren's Nest House Museum, 1050 Ralph Abernathy Blvd., Atlanta, for a docent-guided tour. Lunch will follow. RSVP to Betty Arden at 770/955-6381. ♦

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Board Meeting

The Atlanta Branch 2009–2010 leadership team will meet on Sunday, January 10, 2010, at 3:00 p.m., at the home of Frances Smith.

**Atlanta Branch
thanks Mary and
Darwin Womack for
opening their home
year after year to
host our Holiday
Celebration! We
appreciate you both!**

ATLANTA NEWS

Atlanta Branch AAUW
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