



## 2010–2011 Leadership

Replace \* with "aauwatlanta.org" in all email addresses

### Co-Presidents

Mary Lynn Merkle  
Ruth Yurchuck      president@\*

### Program Vice President

Diana Witt      program@\*

### Membership Vice President

Dot Ransom      membership@\*

### Recording Secretary

Blondie Chitunya Wilson      secretary-meeting@\*

### Treasurer

Alta Birdsong      treasurer@\*

### College/University Relations

Betty Slater      universityrelations@\*

### Community Action

Tami Anderson      communityaction@\*

### Diversity

Bea Meyer      diversity@\*

### Historian

Sarah Rondeau      historian@\*

### Hospitality

Anne Habersetzer  
Frances Smith      hospitality@\*

### Public Policy

Diana Witt      publicpolicy@\*

### Public Relations

Betty Slater      publicrelations@\*

### Scholarship Co-Chairs

May Ruth Bradberry  
Barbara Buchanan      scholarship@\*

### Web Information

Terry Eshenour      webmaster@\*

### Finance Committee Co-Chairs

Huiping Du  
Lynn Fountain      finance@\*

### Contemporary Literature

Kay Collins      advisory@\*

### Travel, Day

Betty Arden      travel@\*

### Gourmet, Evening

Sally Byers      gourmet@\*

### Advisory Committee Chair

Kay Collins      advisory@\*

### Publications Editor

Stephanie Babbitt      publications@\*

## March Meeting

Date: March 5  
Time: 10:30 a.m.  
Place: The Hudson Grille  
4040 Peachtree Road, Atlanta

Please plan to attend our Branch program on March 5. We will have a brief branch meeting, followed at 11:00 a.m. by presentations regarding our remaining two signature projects that we are considering this year. Barbara Buchanan will talk to us about the possibility of partnering with Habitat for Humanity, and Lynn Fountain will give us a progress report on our possible partnership with CARE. We hope to reach decisions about these projects by our May meeting, so this is an important informational opportunity for all branch members. Please plan to attend. Lunch will follow the program, and members will select their choices from the Hudson Grille menu. The cost is \$16.00. Please remember to **RSVP by February 28** to Frances Smith: [hospitality@aauwatlanta.org](mailto:hospitality@aauwatlanta.org) or xxx/xxx-xxxx.

**DON'T FORGET** the GEORGIA AAUW STATE CONFERENCE, April 1–2, 2011, in Warner Robins. Check the website for the latest details. No branch meeting is currently planned for April.

Diana Witt  
[program@aauwatlanta.org](mailto:program@aauwatlanta.org) • xxx/xxx-xxxx

## Update on Potential Signature Project: CARE

by Lynn Fountain

Since the October branch meeting at CARE headquarters in Atlanta, the CARE subcommittee has had one additional meeting with CARE representatives in person and exchanged multiple phone calls and emails. The subcommittee agrees with CARE that the branch can have the largest impact by contributing to a program already in progress.

CARE suggests that the Atlanta Branch participate in the Join My Village program, a relatively new partnership with General Mills and Merck, to work with villages in Malawi: to introduce village women to Village Savings and Loan programs, to pay for scholarships to secondary school for girls, and to build homes for teachers. General Mills and Merck have donated a combined \$900,000 for this project; however, the dollars have to be “unlocked” for donation. Unlocking can occur by individual donations which are then matched by General Mills/Merck or by individuals joining the program and watching online videos about Malawi. A branch donation of \$10,000–\$15,000 could provide for one of the following:

- 4-year secondary-school scholarships for 7–11 girls (cost is \$341/year or \$1364 per 4-year scholarship);

- 143–214 new women trained and supported in Village Savings and Loan Associations to gain new business skills;
- 56–85 mentoring visits for girls in secondary school (who received a JMV scholarship in year 1) to go back to their villages and support girls in primary school in working hard to earn a scholarship when they graduate.

While AAUW would not “own” this project, our branch contributions will be doubled, and this program specifically addresses issues of concern to AAUW and to our branch. Please check out [www.joinmyvillage.com](http://www.joinmyvillage.com) to learn more.

In addition, four Atlanta Branch members will attend the CARE national conference in Washington D.C. to be held March 8–10, 2011. They will give a brief report at the May meeting and a longer presentation in the fall. Branch members are busy reading literature related to helping/supporting women and girls. Look for upcoming blog posts on the branch website as the committee begins an online discussion of these books. ❖

## Presidents' Column: From Many, One (or Two)

by Mary Lynn Merkle and Ruth Yurchuck

As a Branch, we are a diverse group of women. We:

- are young, old, and in-between
- come from many places around the country and from other countries
- are students, employed full or part-time, volunteers, or retired
- have traveled many places
- have collections and hobbies
- like to read and like to write.

However, as diverse as we are, we also have some commonalities: We

- are all life-long learners
- want all want women and girls to experience fairness and equity as they (and we) pursue goals and dreams
- are committed to the goals and values of AAUW.

The next few weeks are important ones for Atlanta Branch. We have been on a quest for almost a year to select a signature project that will help us develop and define us as a Branch and as individuals committed to community improvement through our efforts. We want these efforts to bring visibility to our Branch and increase our membership. The three areas in which members expressed most interest were also diverse: CARE, sex trafficking, and Habitat for Humanity.

In November we visited CARE's international headquarters located in downtown Atlanta and learned about CARE's worldwide reach. In February we heard about several local programs directed toward the young girls who are victims of sex trafficking or offering activities that may prevent young women from becoming involved in the sex trafficking business, and ways in which our Branch could make contributions to support the work of both programs. At our March 5 meeting we will learn how we might work with Habitat for Humanity. All three of these areas hold great possibility for being signature projects.

The Board will meet on March 6, with the main objectives being to review what we have learned from the work of task forces established to research these areas, and to see if we are ready to make recommendations to our membership about next steps.

As we discuss the direction(s) that we want to go, there will be differing interests and opinions. The information-sharing and ensuing discussion will be lively. Even as we select our signature project(s), we will be continuing our thought processes on how to implement our ideas and reach our goals. No matter what our final decision is, we can be assured that it will help us work toward equity, justice, and opportunity for women and girls. And we need your support as we chart uncharted territory for our Branch. Please resolve to be part of this important process. ❖

## Profiles of 2010 Scholarship Recipients

by Barbara Buchanan

*In this newsletter and in future issues, we will profile one of our seven 2010/2011 Scholarship Recipients. The recipients will be presented in alphabetical order.*



### Amy Rocamora

Amy Rocamora returned to college after 25 years spent raising her two children and helping her husband start a family business while she sometimes

worked a second job. As a volunteer, she mentored high school students for more than thirteen years. She formed a plan for herself to return to college while her children were still in high school. Now she is a senior at Georgia State University, majoring in history,

her youngest child is also in college, and she continues to run her landscaping business.

The Scholarship Committee got glimpses of Amy's outstanding college career from letters of recommendation and her essay accompanying her application. We knew that she was an excellent student when we saw that she had a 3.97 grade-point average, but a letter from a professor told us more, saying that "Ms. Rocamora has demonstrated that she is among the very best historians, historiographers, and critical and analytical thinkers that I have had the privilege of having as an undergraduate over the past decade. I have no doubt that she will earn all the honors available at GSU and that she will secure admission with full funding to the graduate program of her choice."

Amy told us that her initial plan to teach high-school students has evolved to teaching

at the college level after completing a PhD in history. She also aspires to write popular history books that will spark academic interests in young people. She told the Committee that "I am specifically interested in identity formation of immigrants and the role different political and religious systems play in that formation. I have much faith in young people and believe they have the ability to create a better future. I look forward to being a part of that process." Amy was characterized by a professor as "one of the History Department's most valued majors, sought after for the dedication and passion, as well as abilities at analysis and criticism, she brings to her studies."

The Scholarship Committee was proud to recognize Amy Rocamora as an outstanding student by awarding her one of our 2010 AAUW Atlanta Branch local scholarships. ❖

## Board Meeting Notes

by Mary Lynn Merkle

### Highlights From January 23 Board Meeting

- Betty Slater, on behalf of Atlanta Branch, will solicit student affiliates, particularly from Agnes Scott College and from Oglethorpe University.
- Atlanta Branch will be an official sponsor of the Human Trafficking bill to be presented at the Georgia Legislature.
- The Branch will fully underwrite the cost for one member to attend the national AAUW Conference in June. Hopefully this will be (by that time) our newly elected president-elect.
- The Branch has allocated \$2,000 from the Community Fund budget to support the attendance of CARE task force members at the CARE planning and lobbying meeting in Washington, D.C., in March.

### Highlights From February 5 Board Meeting

- Discussion centered on the feasibility of hiring an intern (instead of offering a scholarship) who might help with a signature project, with treasury work, or with the Bookfair. Research on this will continue.

### Next Board Meeting Scheduled

The Atlanta Branch Board will meet on Sunday, March 6, at 3:00 p.m., at the home of Frances Smith. On the agenda, among other items, are:

- a discussion of possible signature projects
- the possibility of a continued suspension of our bylaws for another year
- a report from the nominating committee.

As we continue to plan for the future of our Branch, how we will organize, and how we will meet our goal of seeking equity and justice for women and girls, it is very important that all voices be heard. This is a time when all viewpoints will be considered. ❖

## Volunteer Opportunity

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) has announced their 40th annual Decorators' Show House event, which will take place from April 16–May 8, with an opening night premiere party on April 15. The feature home this year is Lotus House, a new estate designed by Bill Baker. The home is located at 1945 West Wesley Road N.W., Atlanta 30327. Event publicity states, "Lotus House reflects the multi-cultural traditions of its owners and of Atlanta itself as a progressive, vibrant, and cosmopolitan regional capital. With about 20,000 square feet and 30 designers, this estate brings an alluring new dimension to the Showhouse and Gardens."

Betty Arden, a member of Atlanta Symphony Associates, has arranged an opportunity for AAUW Atlanta Branch members and their friends to serve as docents for the event. Shifts run Monday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m. and 1:00–4:30 p.m.; Thursday, 4:00–8:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 11:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. (This long shift counts as two shifts worked.) There is a brief orientation before each shift, and docents are provided with stools and refreshments. Volunteers who work four or more shifts earn two free tickets to the ASO. All proceeds benefit the ASO learning community. For more information, contact Betty at xxx/xxx-xxxx. ❖

## AAUW Of Georgia Annual Convention

Our state convention will be held on April 1 (evening) and April 2 at the Fairfield Inn in Warner Robins. The newly named Houston Peach Branch (formerly Warner Robins) is hosting the meeting. Hopefully, we will have a group of Atlanta Branch members attending in addition to those who are a part of the AAUW of Georgia Board. Co-presidents Debbie Karvey and Marcia Capriotti are planning programs and workshops that should prove very helpful to us. In addition, Patricia Ho from the AAUW National Board of Directors will be attending.

The Fairfield Inn is offering a special rate of \$94.00 for AAUW attendees. This offer is good only until March 1, and then the regular rate of \$139.00 will apply. So register now!

Atlanta Branch co-presidents Mary Lynn Merkle and Ruth Yurchuck have a suite, which has an extra sofa bed and the possibility of a rollaway. We would love to share our space!

## Habitat for Humanity Signature Project Update

by Barbara Buchanan

As a result of our workshops last summer to explore new directions for the Atlanta Branch, several not-for-profit programs were identified to be of interest as possible recipients of our financial support. One of them was Habitat for Humanity. In November, Mary Lynn Merkle, Diana Witt, and Barbara Buchanan met at the Habitat for Humanity headquarters to discuss opportunities to support that organization. After exploring several proposals, the Atlanta Branch is considering making an in-kind donation of books to Habitat for Humanity new homeowners as a possible "signature project."

Barbara Buchanan and Susan Diffenderfer will present more details at the Branch meeting on March 5. ❖

## Light in the Darkness

by Ruth Yurchuck

The rain had passed. AAUW Atlanta Branch members were coming in the door of North Avenue Presbyterian Church just before the 9:30 a.m. Board meeting on February 5th. Some of us had gathered in a large conference room and found coffee, tea, and cookies waiting for us.

But within a few minutes of our gathering, the lights began to go on and off. We were sitting in semi-darkness, wondering if this was some kind of omen. We went ahead with the Board meeting as planned, and other members began to arrive. Shortly after 10:00 a.m., Diana Witt, our Program Chairman, introduced Catherine Slocum, the Church Mobilization intern working with Street GRACE.



*(from left) Atlanta Branch members Frances Smith, Jean Melvin, Eleanor Smith, Sharon Bevis Hoover, and Pat Bevis*

Catherine had prepared a PowerPoint presentation, but there was no power! However, she was able to provide members with an overview of the Street GRACE program, a non-profit, non-denominational program involving churches, schools, and community organizational partners. Street GRACE does not provide direct services but serves as a middle group between those who are being sexually trafficked and organizations that provide services to this population. It is estimated that from 300 to 500 women are being exploited every month, but

there are only 60 beds available to place those who are rescued from trafficking. The Georgia Care Connection is the group that actually assigns girls who



*(from left) Atlanta Branch members Blondie Chitunya Wilson and Adria Griffin*

are picked up to a community partner group. Catherine devoted the rest of her presentation time to answering members' questions. She also distributed some information about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and about some Street GRACE activities.



*Catherine Slocum addresses the group*

Priscilla Heffelfinger, the Resource Development Senior Manager for Cool Girls, Inc., spoke next. Cool Girls, one of the Street GRACE community partners, was started in 1989 and is dedicated to the self-empowerment of girls in low-income communities. Cool Girls offers nine programs and serves approximately 500 girls in Fulton and DeKalb schools. Volunteers serve in various capacities such as being mentors to these young women (from 3rd grade through high school), running after-school programs in designated schools, and working in special weekend programs. One of the programs is called "Beautiful Me" and uses professionals to help girls develop healthy relationships; in this program the topic of sexual exploitation is addressed. Priscilla also answered member questions.

The 25 members who attended this program were actively involved in finding out more about each of the organizations and what role AAUW Atlanta Branch members might play in preventing exploitation of young women and helping those who have been exploited. While there is much more to learn and explore, both Catherine and Priscilla provided some needed light on the topic. We look forward to more discussion among members as to ways we can become part of the solution. And, yes, before we departed the lights were restored! (Somewhere something disrupted the power transmission to the church and surrounding area). I think this was symbolic of how information and involvement can bring light to a major community problem, one in which our Branch can make a positive contribution. ❖

*Adria Griffin and Membership Vice-President Dot Ransom review program materials*



## Modern Day Slavery

by Tami Anderson

Continuing the effort to learn about CSEC (Commercial Sex Exploitation of Children), I attended the recent symposium “Modern Day Slavery & Sex Trafficking,” sponsored by John Marshall Law School. A variety of presenters gave a wide picture of this billion-dollar business that exploits mostly women and girls.

Kirsten Widner, Director of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center associated with Emory University, explained the laws in place that cover this issue. There are three International Treaties to which the U. S. is a party that actually obligate us to prosecute traffickers and give help to the victims.

U. S. federal law works on three levels: **Prosecution** of the traffickers (penalties are harsh), **protection** for the victims (providing social services), and **prevention**. The latter focuses on public education, but, she said, it is no longer funded, so the work must depend on volunteers.

Prosecution of international trafficking has been good, but prosecution of domestic trafficking has to depend on state and local laws/enforcement. This has not been so good. She pointed out that Congress did not provide funds for protection of domestic victims, assuming they would have access to state social services. Unfortunately this is mostly not the case.

She described the state of Georgia as having been very confused about what kind of law to enact. The 2006 law was so hastily and poorly written that prosecutors did not want to use it, fearing positive verdicts would be overturned. Last year’s attempt did not pass the legislature. This year HB 200 is more comprehensive.

*A study done in 2007 found 200–300 girls are sold in Georgia every month. It is thought to be more now.*

Although the focus is on criminal justice, there are some provisions for the victims.

Ms. Widner said that the average age of girls seen in Georgia courts is 15. A study done in 2007 found 200–300 girls are sold in Georgia every month. It is thought to be more now.

A project that may be of special interest to our branch was described by Erin Harper, a doctoral candidate at Georgia State University. Working from a prevention point of view, she is designing a program she hopes will be used in schools. It targets the most at-risk girls and, though various methods, would empower them to avoid entrapment. Right now she is testing and refining the program by working with after-school groups. The targeted girls are African-American and in the 6th–8th grade.

Studies have shown girls age 12–14 are likely candidates for trafficking, which correlates with the 15-year-olds turning up in court, as they have often been involved 1–2 years.

Others participating brought information on work done by Tapestry, a national agency that provides rescue services and outreach to internationals who have been trafficked. A representative from Not For Sale described their work. This is a group that tries to raise awareness here and in other countries, not only about sexual exploitation, but also other types of slave labor .

One of the panelists reminded the audience that while in the office as mayor, Shirley Franklin established fire stations in Atlanta as safe havens for children trying to escape. Personnel at these locations have been instructed how to handle such situations. ❖

Wednesday, February 23

Hello Everyone,

The good news keeps coming! HB 200 passed out of the Judiciary Non-Civil committee earlier this afternoon with only one nay vote (Bobby Franklin, so no comment on that). It will now go to Rules where Rep. Lindsey conveniently sits, and we assume it will go the floor of the House for a vote very soon. Meanwhile, the Attorney General spoke at our Women’s Capitol Briefing this morning, and then 30 advocates stormed the Capitol to lobby for the bill, where they heard nothing but positive comments from legislators. I had an opportunity to speak at the Women’s Legislative Caucus at noon today and, again, it was very well received. For those of us who have been in the trenches for a long time on this issue, it is indeed heartening to see this kind of momentum. Indeed, it feels very strange to experience this forward movement at this speed. The HB 200 Sub should be available on-line very soon if you would like to see the changes. Again, it is not the most progressive bill in the country, but it will give this state new tools and compensation for victims we haven’t had before. Not counting chickens, but all in all a very good day for HB 200.

I will keep you posted.

Stephanie Davis, Executive Director  
Georgia Women for a Change, Inc.

## Sex-Trafficking Project Update

by Diana Witt

I have received word from Stephanie Davis of Georgia Women for Change that HB 200, the anti-human trafficking bill, will get a hearing this week in the Judiciary Non-Civil Committee (see letter from her at left). She also reported that Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens has put his support behind the bill. Stephanie also sent me a list of organizations sponsoring the bill. AAUW-Atlanta is the first organization on the list! Great visibility for us. We will keep you posted throughout the session about progress on this legislation. ❖

## CSEC Follow-up

Thank you so much for having us come speak to your organization. I hope that my presentation was helpful. I know that you all want to be more involved in the lives of girls and women that have been affected by trafficking and I may have an opportunity that will fit very well.

The Georgia Care Connection, the organization that works directly with these girls and women, is looking for tutors, mentors, and women that these girls can shadow. They really want to give these girls positive role models. Please let me know if you and the other women would be interested. Thanks!

Catherine Slocum  
Church Mobilization Intern  
Street GRACE

## Book Group

The Book Group will meet on March 2 to discuss *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford. On April 6, we will discuss *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. Some locations have been changed this year, so contact Kay Collins at advisory@aauwatlanta.org or xxx/xxx-xxxx for the latest information. ❖

## Calendar

### March

- 2 Book Group
- 5 Branch meeting
- 6 Board meeting
- 10 Travel Group

### April

- 1–2 AAUW of Georgia Conference
  - 6 Book Group
  - 10 Newsletter deadline
  - 14 Travel Group
- .....

## Travel Group

The postponed February 10 Travel Group meeting has been rescheduled for March 10 at 10:30 a.m. There will be a guided tour of the Shepherd Center, 2020 Peachtree Road, with lunch to follow.

On April 14, there are 15 seats available to AAUW members for the three-hour bus tour of the scenic Atlanta Beltline. The group will meet at 9:15 a.m. at the Inman Park MARTA station. To reserve a seat, call Betty Arden at xxx/xxx-xxxx. ❖

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## Board Meeting

The Atlanta Branch 2010–2011 leadership team will meet Sunday, March 6, at 3:00 p.m., at the home of Frances Smith. ❖

### ATLANTA NEWS

Atlanta Branch AAUW  
1651 Executive Park Lane  
Atlanta, GA 30329