



Atlanta Branch News

May Meeting

Amira Saleh

On Saturday May 5th from 11am-1pm, the Atlanta Branch will meet at Cross Creek Cafe (1221 Cross Creek Pkwy NW # A, Atlanta, GA 30327) for our annual spring meeting.

We will hear from two special guests from some of our philanthropic partnerships at Dresden Elementary and Women's Global Empowerment Initiative. They will briefly share about their organizations and opportunities to become further involved.

In addition, we will welcome our new incoming executive board. Yetta McMillan, Cobb County branch and current co-president of AAUW of Georgia, will be the installing officer.

Lunch will be ordered individually from the menu.

Here is the slate of candidates for 2018-2019:

Co-presidents: Diana Witt, Huiping Du

Program vice-presidents: Betty Slater, Billie Collier

Membership vice-presidents: Phyllis Miller, Marjorie Anderson

Finance officer: Susan Diffenderfer

Nominating Committee: Betty Arden, Mary Lynn Merkle, Sharon Bevis-Hoover, Dana Gordon, and Bea Meyer

(The candidates for 2018-2020 office will be elected and then installed by Yetta McMillan, Cobb County branch and current co-president of AAUW of Georgia, at our May 5th Branch meeting.)

This slate was developed by the 2017-2018 Nominating Committee: Mary Hanson, Myra Carmon, Huiping Du, Cele Covatta, and Wendy Venet

2017-2018 Leadership

Co-Presidents

Blondie Chitunya-Wilson

Mary Lynn Merkle

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Program Vice Presidents

Betty Arden and Amira Saleh

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Membership Vice President

Kay Collins

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Board Secretary

Suzanne Mutic

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Branch Meeting Secretaries

Susan Diffenderfer and Marcy Nader

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Finance Officers

Alta Birdsong and Phyllis Miller

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College/University Relations

Betty Slater and Carol Allain

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Diversity

Susan Diffenderfer

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Historian

Wendy Venet

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Hospitality

Betty Arden

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Public Policy

Diana Witt

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Co-President's Article

WEALTH: BUILDING, ENJOYING, USING

Mary Lynn Merkle

We've been hearing a great deal about the one percenters—those people who are in the top 1% of the U.S. population, but own about 40% of our country's wealth. Some of these folks inherited a sizeable nest egg and grew it, some are entrepreneurs, some use money to build community (think Bill and Melinda Gates). Their "wealthy" lives are as varied as those who are not one percenters.

Surprise! I am not a one-per center! My best guess is that you are not either. However, I am "wealthy" because I am blessed with enough resources for a full life—with a wide variety of regularly and well, and—to afford membership each year in AAUW Atlanta Branch.

Why have I continued to pay those dues for so many years? In part it is because I believe there are different kinds of wealth such as:

1. **The wealth of information** -- from AAUW at National, State, and especially Branch levels. I am informed on issues of importance to women. Additionally, I am encouraged to speak out on these issues.

2. **The wealth of making a difference** -- Through my volunteer hours for Atlanta Branch and through sharing what I learn about issues with family and friends I like to think that I may be a change-agent to some small degree. Have you heard this story?-- A woman was walking slowly along a beach which was lined with clam shells that had washed up after a recent... storm. Every few steps the woman bends down, picks up a clam, and.. hurls it into the water. When a fellow beach walker asks her what she's doing. She replies that she is keeping the clams from being completely dried out and thus dying. Her companion on the beach reminds her that there are thousands that have been washed up and suggested that her efforts are pretty futile. He says, "What difference can it possibly make?" As she throws another one into the sea, she answers, "It makes a difference to that one!"

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Leadership, continued

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Travel Group

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Advisory Board Chair

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Philanthropy Chair

Cele Covatta

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Communications Chair

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Bylaws Chair

Pat Bevis

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(Co-President's Article, continued)

And then I am reminded of our scholarship program. Our stipends of up to several thousand dollars may not seem like a lot considering the costs attached to higher education in this day and age. But for those recipients, those stipends make a world of difference.

We may never know the difference that the books that are delivered to Dresden Elementary School may make in the lives of those students. Children loving books and reading them often can be a recipe for success.

3. **The wealth of relationships** --Our small groups (Contemporary Literature and Travel) have given me the opportunity to make new friends and enrich "old" friendships. In addition are those friendships formed during Bookfair activities, while helping plan programs, when attending conventions, or serving on committees.

My membership in AAUW Atlanta Branch is only \$77.00—and has been such a great investment. I'll be writing that check **very** soon. I hope you will, too.

Your Vote is Critical in the May 20 Primary Election

Sharon Bevis-Hoover

Don't be caught off guard by Georgia's earlier primary election date. There are many candidates for the important offices that will need to be filled soon! Critical non-partisan judicial elections will be decided on May 20, although none of them appear to be contested. However, the candidates in the partisan races are numerous and offer widely varied points of view. This is your opportunity to influence your final options when you vote this fall.

There are seven Republican and four Democratic contenders for the open U.S. Senate seat. For Governor of Georgia, we have one Democratic and three Republican candidates. The State School Superintendent office is highly contested, with six Republican and nine Democratic choices.

Many of the Georgia General Assembly offices - Senator and Representative – are in play this year. The Assembly is where many decisions that affect women and girls in Georgia are made and where AAUW Atlanta members focus much of their lobbying efforts.

In addition, if you vote a party ballot, there are number of questions where you can influence your party's priorities. The Democrats are soliciting input on ten questions, and the Republicans on three.

Please go to your polling place to vote, and go as an educated voter. I recommend that you print out your ballot in advance at the My Voter page: <http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov>. This is a resource that provides the information you need about your candidates and their positions on and questions of importance. Just be sure that your voice is heard on the issues that matter to you the most!

MARCH FOR CHANGE

Some of our members missed our March 24th meeting because they were joining others in downtown Atlanta who were marching to increase awareness of the need for keeping people safer. This movement was the outgrowth of the student responses to the loss of life and injuries sustained at Parkland High School (Florida) incurred on February 14th.

Pictured is our member Susan Diffenderfer and her granddaughter Lily. Susan's daughter, Lauren, also marched with the family. Also attending were our members Cecelia Cantrell and Gillian Horsley.

We thank you for representing so many of us!



Membership Renewal

Kay is accepting membership renewals! For most of you, MOB (Member of Branch) members, the dues are the same: \$77.00. For retired past-presidents, the amount is \$69.00; Life, \$18.00; Honorary, no dues required. Make check out to AAUW Atlanta Branch and bring to May 5 branch meeting; leave in Bookroom; bring to Cont. Lit., May 7 or travel group May 10 or mail to: Kay Collins.

Travel Group

Betty Arden

The AAUW Travel Group will meet at 10:00AM on May 10 at the Sandy Springs Welcome Center, 5920 Roswell Rd. The group will carpool to Sandy Springs' newest park, Lost Corner Preserve, located at the corner of Riverside Dr., Dalrymple and Brandon Mill Roads.

The self-guided tour of the 24 acre sight will include walking trails, a community garden with 60 beds and an on site cottage. The site began as a working farm that dates to the settlement of the area in the mid-1800s.

AAUW of Georgia Spring Convention

Mary Lynn Merkle

Nine members of Atlanta Branch attended our State Convention in Warner Robins on April 13 and 14. They were: Myra Carmon (State co-president), Ruth Yurchuck, Pat Bevis, Betty Slater, Billie Collier, Daisy Bourassa, Phyllis Miller, Kay Collins, and Mary Lynn Merkle.

Our speakers were both women who were part of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) although certainly in different directions. Pamela Mett started out in biomedical engineering and is currently a project manager at a telecommunications equipment vendor. Our own Daisy Bourassa is a STEM graduate with a PhD from Georgia Institute of Technology. She is currently employed by Agnes Scott College in their Student Services office. As part of her assignment she is advisor to a group of STEM majors who live on the same floor and support one another in reaching their potential. Daisy brought along two of these young women who shared with us what their career goals are and how the Agnes Scott program is helping them move forward.

A highlight of the morning was the announcement of AAUW Funds awards. Our hard work and many volunteer hours helped Atlanta Branch receive several top awards. They are:

- Total Highest Contribution for All Funds---First Place
- Per capita contributions for All Funds—Second Place
- Highest contribution for Legal Advocacy Fund—First Place
- Per capita contributions for Legal Advocacy Fund—First Place

A sad moment during the State membership report was that the Milledgeville Branch has been deemed inactive, and Macon has only one member. Good news is that Columbus Branch is still active and thriving.

Debbie Karvey (Cobb County branch) presented the Public Policy report. A discussion was held regarding Ratify ERA Georgia. The coalition of women's groups (including AAUW) approached a number of senators in hopes that one of them would be willing to introduce an ERA bill. Sadly, even though some expressed interest and support, none was willing to be the one to introduce it. The meeting ended with recognition of the fine work of Co-president Myra Carmon who is completing her two-year term and the introduction of the newly elected Co-president Beatriz Potter of Valdosta Branch.

Important National Bylaws Changes Are Being Considered

Mary Lynn Merkle

Sometime in late February you most likely received an email from the AAUW National Board of Directors. Because we all receive a number of "organizational" emails, you may not have read this particular one thoroughly.

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... Historically bylaws changes are only done at the National Conventions. However, the directors have decided that since there is no Convention until summer 2020, the membership vote would take place online.

There are three proposals for change. The first one is to create three-year staggered board terms. It certainly makes sense to continually have both experience and new ideas. The second one is a little more difficult. The directors propose that people may serve on the Board of Directors who are not AAUW members.

The third proposed change is to eliminate any degree requirement for AAUW membership. As evidenced at our March 10th board meeting on this issue, there are strong feelings on both sides. For more information on the rationale for each change, go to the AAUW website.

If anyone has strong feelings about any of these changes, it is essential that she go to the AAUW website to place a vote beginning April 25th and ending on June 9th.

Our March 24th Meeting

Mary Lynn Merkle

Our program centered on a population of great interest in today's news—refugees, particularly as they are served by Atlanta's International Rescue Committee.

Our presenter, Alison Spitz, is an experienced public health professional and currently works in the healthcare section of IRC by helping refugees get needed behavioral and physical health information and services.

Becoming a resettled refugee in the United States is not easy. The UN has currently designated 40 countries from which refugees may be accepted. People within those countries may then apply for refugee status. Of those who apply, less than 1% are actually resettled. For those who are in that 1% (about 3,000 in this area) IRC and four other agencies in Atlanta go into action. The refugees are subsidized for travel, housing, and other expenses. However, they are expected to work and pay those "loans" back.

IRC applies for and receives many grants, but there's never enough for all that is needed. That's why there are so many opportunities for people like us to volunteer:

We can donate things. A partial list consists of comforters, furniture, and household items. We can give our time and talent.



Atlanta Technical College Visit

Betty Slater

It was such a pleasure to meet with Dr. Jamar H. Jeffers, Director of Institutional Advancement, at Atlanta Technical College. Hopefully, Atlanta Technical College will join as a College/University partner. After meeting with Dr. Jeffers, I learned they have a way of helping students so that they can continue their education. They call this a Bridge Gap Scholarship in which they aide students who are experiencing financial hardships. The college helps these students by providing funds that helps each student to pay for their specific need. (Much like we do with our local scholarship program.) It is our hope to link with the college to share our information about local scholarships to students.

The programs at the Atlanta Technical College give so many people an opportunity to learn a variety of skills. When talking with Instructor Sheba Steps of Electrical Systems Technology, she stated that several women are taking this program. Mr. Jim Gale, Early Childhood Care and Education, shared that they have about 125 women in the program who secure jobs in the local area. When talking with Dr. Jeffers, I asked if any of the students wanted to continue on to college if that was possible. He said that each student who gets a degree from the technical college can transfer 50 credits to another college. It was such a pleasure to visit and tour Atlanta Technical College with Dr. Jeffers. I look forward to their membership as a college/university partner.

Lee Arrendale: Continued Philanthropy

Cele Covatta

As many of you are aware, we are always looking for productive ways to re-purpose the many worthy books that are not candidates for our annual sale. We have been donating to Heartbound, and the Lee Arrendale Women's prison but we have many, many more books to pass on.

Little Free Libraries have sprung up like mushrooms around the greater Atlanta area. We have been getting a not-too-heavy bag ready for delivery by anyone so kind as to deliver the books to a Little Free Library near them. Consult [Little Free Library.org/ourmap](http://LittleFreeLibrary.org/ourmap). There are bunches and bunches of these, which you probably pass every day!

Just email Cele Covatta at ceco66@aol.com and let me know that you want a bag...or bags and bags, and I will have them ready and waiting for you to pick up at the Bookroom at your convenience.....any Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday from 10:00 to 2:00. We put a bookmark advertising the Bookfair, and watch what happens.

What a win/win!

THE KOPILA VALLEY PROJECT IN NEPAL

Alta Birdsong

Has the mission of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) - advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research - made an impact on your life to serve others? Having been a member of the Atlanta Branch for over 45 years, I can count many ways in which I have become involved in helping women and children in my own community. However, I gave no thought that my AAUW background could provide a passion for women in developing countries until serving as Branch co-president with Dr. Lynn Fountain from 2001 to 2003. Lynn wanted the Atlanta Branch to be involved in helping the underserved women in these countries. There was discussion of what we could do and a relationship with CARE was initiated; the branch contributed \$10,000 to CARE but the relationship was not sustained. And as a Branch we did nothing further in terms of international outreach.

In 2011, I suddenly became "the adopted mother and grandmother" to a Nepalese woman and her daughter. Are you familiar with the location of Nepal? Look at a map of Asia and note the small "sliver of land" between India and China, and you will find a country overcoming a civil war of kingdoms. In 2015 I learned about the Kopila Valley Project, developed by an American young woman who was spending a gap year before college. She saw the need for children and women in this impoverished area, and her community of Mendham, NJ, developed the BlinkNow Foundation, the fundraising organization in our country for the Kopila Valley Project. Thus, I developed a passion for this 501(c)(3) organization, to which the Atlanta Branch has contributed \$4,000 of Bookfair funds since 2016.

Please take time to Google "Kopila Valley Project" and read about the activities your Bookfair dollars are providing half way around the world from our branch! Maggie Doyne, the founder, and Top Malla, an educator, are the directors. Our branch has direct email connections to Top, who has provided us with pictures of activities. Here is the mission of Kopila Valley: "If we all had the attitude that we can do anything, that we can be anything, if we follow our dreams and our hearts...we can change the world."

There are five components of the Project: (1) Kopila Valley Children's Home 2) Kopila Valley School 3) Health Clinic 4) Women's Center and 5) Sustainability. We have requested that our donations be given to the School and the Women's Center. The Kopila Valley School, serving 350 students, opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 6:00 p.m. The program is divided into four schools and offers a diverse curriculum – math, science, Nepali, English, social studies, computers - for nursery through 10th grade. A school building is being built on three acres of the property and will expand through the 12th grade. It is currently ranked as one of the top schools in the region, setting a precedent for the quality of education provided to children in rural Nepal.

The Women's Center mirrors the mission of AAUW: "The world will change when girls and our women are educated." Our branch provided \$1,000 of our \$4,000 for the purchase of a loom to further educational opportunities for women to become self-employed. Nepal has been a patriarchal society, and it is slowly fading as the country modernizes. But there is a clear gap in gender equality. When women are educated and empowered, only then can they make steps to alleviate poverty, find gender equality, and foster a thriving community. Women graduates are inspiring the next generation by showing them that an education is the best way to break down social and economic barriers. These women are becoming role models for their daughters.

Agnes Scott College representative and college students who attended the State Convention



Mark Your Calendars!

We have reserved the Science Atrium at Agnes Scott College on Sunday, September 16th for our September Meeting.

Bridge Builder Awards Dinner and ATC

Cele Covatta

Atlanta Technical College has been growing Atlanta's workforce since 1967. The mission is crystal clear; to train students with highly marketable technical credentials that are immediately career and market oriented. It is laudable that ATC has a 98% job placement rate. You have surely met graduates at your dentist, doctor's office or when you need HVAC services, behind the scenes when you have traveled or in a host of other ways.

On April 19, 2018, Betty Slater, College /University representative and Cele Covatta, Philanthropy chair, represented AAUW Atlanta branch at the Bridge Builder Awards dinner at the Delta Air museum. Lots of networking went on, and we hope to have established improved contact with some of our local educational institutes as a result. We work hard all year long to raise funds to further our mission, and our contribution to ATC is one of the ways which makes it all worthwhile.



An Update on Our Co-President, Blondie Wilson

Mary Lynn Merkle received emails from her co-president Blondie Chitunya-Wilson who is currently in her country of origin, Zimbabwe. While there to attend a nephew’s graduation and visit with other family members she was encouraged to declare her candidacy for their legislature. The election will take place on May 5th, and Blondie will be returning on May 11th.

Stay tuned!

Contemporary Literature

Kay Collins

The group will meet Monday, May 7 at the home of Mary Hanson. We'll discuss "The Women in the Castle: by Jessica Shattuck. All are welcome. Questions? Call Kay Collins.

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Calendar

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Contemporary Literature	5/7
Travel Group	5/10
Bookfair Steering Committee	5/15

