

The Lodestone

February 2026



It's Elementary Education Today – A Deeper Look at Nevada City and Grass Valley Schools

Saturday February 21, 2026

9:30 — 11:30, am, Peace Lutheran Church
828 West Main, Grass Valley



In this issue

[Public Policy](#)

[AAUW Fund](#)

[Tech Trek](#)

[Local Scholarship News &](#)

[Recipient Updates](#)

[March 21 Fundraiser Details](#)

[Interest Group Schedules](#)

[New Interest Book Group](#)

[Edi Silverman Input Request](#)

[New Members](#)

[January Program Recap](#)

[January Meeting Photos](#)

[Branch Support &](#)

[Leadership](#)

AAUW advances gender equity through education, economic security, and civil rights. See National's 2025 Strategic Plan: [2025 AAUW Strategic Plan – AAUW: Empowering Women Since 1881](#)

This month's program is designed to give you a grounded, first-hand understanding of how elementary education functions today. We'll hear directly from district leaders, principals, and classroom educators.

John Baggett, Nevada City School District Superintendent,



will give an overview of the local educational system. He will also detail trends in student achievement to

include the impact of the pandemic and other environmental factors.



Principals **Chrissy McKeown** (Deer Creek Elementary)



and **Susie Patterson** (Margaret Scotten Elementary) will discuss how districts have navigated the

past several years. They will highlight successes and ongoing challenges in the early grades to include the use of expanded behavioral and mental health supports such as the "360-degree services."

Two experienced, exemplary teachers,

Sarah White

(Scotten Elementary) and

Tiffany Rae (Deer Creek Elementary), will share difficult and rewarding classroom stories.



The panel will end by answering your questions and detailing ways community members can best support early education today.

Don't miss this unique program! Join us for an inside look at local early education. *Free & open to the public.*

Grateful thanks to our two program sponsors:

- **[Kimberly Pepe, Realtor](#)**
- **[Owens Estate & Wealth Strategies Group](#)**

Never Give Up



Melanie Heckel
Public Policy Co-Chair

There is so much bad news at the national level that it is very hard to keep a positive attitude.

In last month's *Lodestone*, Carolyn outlined the attack on education including the dismantling of the Department of Education. AAUW continues to fight this

effort in order to keep protections intact for students.

More recently, we have all been shocked by the heartless ICE activity across the country, including the shooting of Renee Good in Minneapolis. Every day something new happens that seems unbelievable in our country. But, please don't give up! We should all keep fighting to strengthen our democracy and promote women's rights.

HOW ABOUT SOME GOOD NEWS?

California continues to be a leader in accomplishing AAUW Public Policy Priorities. I would like to highlight one in particular:

Increased Representation of Women in Leadership Roles. Here are a few to celebrate (also pictured, bottom, right):

1. I reported this last year, but why not again? Women have achieved parity in the California Senate, with 20 in the 40 member chamber.
2. For the first time in history, both the President Pro Tem and the Majority Leader of the California Senate are women. **Monique Limon**, now President Pro Tem, served two terms as vice-chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus and is the first Latina and mother to lead the Senate. She has named **Angelique Ashby**, from Sacramento, as the Majority Leader.
3. Sacramento's new City Manager is **Marakeshia Smith**, the first Black woman

to ever hold the position. She will be overseeing nearly 6,000 employees managing an operating budget of \$2.6 billion.

4. Nevada City has just named their new City Manager, **Carrie J. Wright**. She has worked for a variety of public agencies and a consulting firm providing her with hands-on experience balancing economic vitality with community needs. She knows how to support local businesses, while maintaining strong public services.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Don't give up – keep on fighting and protesting!
- Support AAUW Public Policy Fund and the Defend Higher Education Fund.
- Visit the AAUW-CA website and click on Public Policy. You will see many things you can do to promote AAUW's Mission.
- Become a Two-Minute Activist to send letters to legislators when needed: <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>.
- Join the Public Policy Committee to get more involved. Contact me at: melanieheckel@gmail.com.



Monique Limon



Angelique Ashby



Marakeshia Smith



Carrie Wright

National & Local Endeavors

AAUW Fund

A brief note for AAUW Fund...

I hope that those of you who recently attended the January 31st AAUW Fund Luncheon enjoyed hearing from Fund recipients attending California universities. Their stories help to personalize why we support women in higher education.

Women who receive Fund grants and fellowships are at the cutting edge of graduate scholarship and research. They benefit not only their immediate communities, but also become trailblazers for women coming up behind them. Some of these younger women may be recipients of our high school scholarships or alumnae from our Tech Trek outreach.

A great way to support AAUW Fund is to shop at SPD and use your SPD eScrip card at the time of purchase. The store credits 3% of your purchase to AAUW Fund. If you don't already have an SPD eScrip card, it's easy to fill out an application to get one at the Nevada City SPD store - or contact me, and I can facilitate the process for you.



*Jo Ann Schilling
AAUW Fund Chair*

Thanks again for supporting AAUW Fund!!

—Jo Ann

Going full STEAM



*Martha Rees
Tech Trek Chair*

2026 is off to a fast start for the Nevada County Tech Trek Committee.

We received great news that we will be able to send our requested eight (8) girls to Camp Jemison Tech Trek at the UC Davis campus this summer. The selection process has begun.

On January 5th, committee members met and put in place our plans and schedule

for the year.

Seventh grade math, science, and/or technology teachers at western Nevada County public schools/public charters have received the online request for their 2026 Tech Trek nominees and will have submitted them by January 28th.

From there the nominees will receive an email to begin the AAUW CA Tech Trek online parent authorization and application/essay process, which must be completed by February 20th.

Committee members will review all the submissions and interview the applicants between February 26 to March 7th, with final selection and notification of all applicants by the end of March. Whew!!

We've got a busy, enjoyable, and enlightening couple of months ahead of us.

Volunteers Needed at Camp Jemison Tech Trek, July 12-18, 2026: Dorm Monitor, Camp Nurse, Camp Mental Health Counselor, Daily Volunteers to assist during morning core classes. You won't regret pitching in and getting a chance to work and explore STEM with the extraordinary campers and camp staff.

If you want to learn more about any of these roles and/or are interested in volunteering, please contact **Martha Rees** at mjkrees@yahoo.com or 530.274.8177.

Thanks!!

—Martha



Local Scholarship Team Gears Up!



Lisa Turlo
LSC Chair

The January Local Scholarship Committee Full Team meeting helped our reading teams gear up for the application process. The teams reviewed changes to our rubric as we evaluate applicants on GPA, community service, financial need as well as qualities such as resilience, commitment, and passion for

something beyond themselves. We are always inspired by the young women in our community!

Many organizations give scholarships, but our group does considerably more! We provide tutoring at local high schools to scholarship

applicants. After scholarship awards are announced: we host an Ice Cream Social, provide liaisons to offer mentoring and support as students navigate the college experience, and finally we touch base with our past recipients, bringing some into AAUW as members!

Our team is also preparing for a March fundraiser we're calling Quiz-ine, which promises to be both delicious and fun. Essentially we are asking for money. And while many of our members give and give of themselves to our community and our Branch as volunteers, we still must ask. In these difficult times, we realize that each of us has different capacities. But the need is great and so we ask, please give something to this worthy cause.

Lilly Werntz

by Jennifer Wilkerson

As a nursing student at Sac State, Lilly Werntz overcame emergency surgery and weeks of recovery. She returned to finish her first semester with top grades, and firsthand knowledge of her chosen hospital nursing career.

Lilly values the diversity and engagement of her

classmates and faculty in her on-campus education.

Although funding her education is a concern, she is confident that a career as an RN will help repay her student loans. Recent federal loan cuts for nursing master's programs (no longer a "profession") have altered her plans.



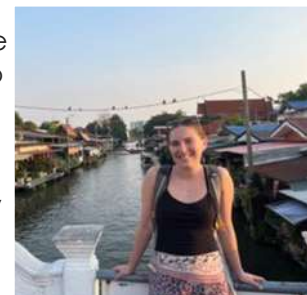
Amelia Glaz

by Ann Shulse

Amelia Glaz is our first High School to Community College (HStoCC) recipient who received \$5,000 from us over several years. HStoCC ladies opt to start college at the CC level to gain confidence and/or to

save money on college expenses.

Amelia has received \$1,000 each year at Sierra then Palomar CC, and will receive the balance of the \$5,000 when she transfers to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in Fall 2026. Starting as a Civil/Environmental Engineering student, Amelia has recently taken an Engineering Statics class and is now interested in becoming a Civil Engineer. She is looking for an internship in this field. She looks forward to transferring to a 4-year college and doing a deep dive into her major.



Aneka Torgrimson

by Ann Shulse

Grad School Here I Come!

It's been pure joy following Aneka the last 4 years. She will graduate from UC Davis in May. She's applied to several graduate and master's programs in Asian American Studies. Political Science is her minor; current classes include

racial politics in government and media in politics. Leadership work includes being an intern, a Lab Manager, and a Peer Advisor. Career goal: teach and do research at a research-focused institution. Fun fact: "I have already booked my graduation photographer and purchased my graduation dress!" About the photos, Aneka says, "The rain and oysters feel very "on brand" for this chapter of my life!"



TRIVIA QUESTION: *What is the English translation of the name of the Italian dessert Tiramisu?*

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, NEVADA COUNTY BRANCH, PRESENTS:

Trivia Night | Bake-Off Scholarship Fundraiser

Join us for an engaging evening featuring a silent auction, trivia quiz competition, and bake-off contest, promising a delightful combination of culinary treats, drinks, and stimulating challenges.

**Saturday, March 21, 2026
4:00 PM to 7:00 PM**

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 828 WEST MAIN STREET, GRASS VALLEY



Tickets: \$35



Grateful thanks to our
Event Sponsor: [YubaNet](#)

SEIZE THE MOMENT!

PURCHASE YOUR TICKET ONLINE: ([click here](#))

Or mail check (payable to AAUW-Nevada County Branch) to:

AAUW-Nevada County
PO Box 326
Nevada County, CA 95945

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU AT QUIZ-INE!

ANSWER: *Make me happy!*

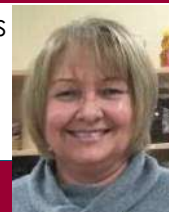
PS: We need volunteers for setup and breakdown: If you can assist, please contact Pamela Hertzler at 559-740-8943 (text or call) or email: pam.hertzler@yahoo.com.

Interest Groups

Interest Groups are a great way to connect and build relationships. To learn more about any group, **click the group name** to open the AAUW-Nevada County Branch website

page. You can also find the coordinator's contact information in the AAUW Membership Directory or contact:

Sue Van Son sue@vansoninc.com.



Group	Day & Time	Activity
<u>Arts & Crafts</u> - Teri McConnell	1 st Thurs, 10:00 am	Feb 5: Decorative Rock Wrapping March 5: Fun with Sponge
<u>Books: Evening</u> - Kit Lofgren	4 th Wed, 6:00-8:00 pm	<i>The Ministry of Time</i> by Kaliane Bradley
<u>Books: Mostly Fiction</u> - Robin Laverty-Reves	2 nd Thurs, 1:00 pm	<i>James</i> by Percival Everett
<u>Books: Non-Fiction</u> - Peg Flanders	3 rd Tues, 1:00 pm	<i>The Boys of Riverside...Quest for Glory</i> by Thomas Fuller
<u>Books: Mystery</u> Loretta Miller	1 st Thurs, 12:30-2:30	<i>Thursday Murder Club</i> by Richard Osman
<u>Gallivanter</u> s - Deb Cubberley	Stay tuned for plans next month	
<u>Gardening</u> - Brett McWilliams & Carol Raynsford	4 th Thurs, 10-Noon	Making Kokedama Teri McConnell, Master Gardener
<u>Great Decisions</u> - Susie Monary-Wilson	4 th Tues	Trump, Tariffs, and the Future of the World Economy"
<u>Hiking</u> - Mary Menconi	1 st Wed, 3 rd Mon	Ananda Trails Hidden Falls
<u>Writing</u> - Lisa Turlo	2 nd Mon, 10:00 am 3 rd Mon, 2:00 pm	Write-in Critique Writing

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Hiking	5 Arts & Crafts 10:00 am Mystery Book Group , 12:30	6	7
8	9 Writing Group 10 am	10	11	12 Mostly Fiction Book Group 1:00 pm	13	14
15	16 Writing Group 2 pm Hiking	17 Nonfiction Book Group 1:00-2:30 pm	18	19	20	21 General Mtg. 9:30-11:30 am
22	23	24 Great Decisions 10-Noon	25 Evening Book Group 6-8 pm	26 Gardening Group 10-Noon	27	28

New Book Group: Mysteries!

Grab your magnifying glass and your lunch break—mystery awaits!

Join us for The Thursday Murder Club, a playful and welcoming mystery book club that meets on the **first Thursday** of every month from 12:30–2:30 pm. We'll sip, snack, and sleuth our way through clever whodunits and twisty tales together. Our very first meeting is **February 5th**, and we're

kicking things off with *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman—naturally, the inspiration for our club's name! No experience required, just a love of stories, laughter, and a good mystery. Come crack the case with us!

Email:

stockmgmt@gmail.com

Phone: 510-913-3542



Loretta Miller

Edi Silverman Nomination Input



Edi Silverman, accepting the first award in her name, 2003.

The Nominating Committee for the Edi Silverman award is ready to take recommendations for nominees. Since 2003 our Branch has honored a member who has made a sustained, significant contribution to the community and AAUW mission through public service. Nominees are not only members in good standing, but also demonstrate

leadership qualities.

It's time to submit names of qualified individuals and their contributions to our Nominating Committee:

Bernadette Sylvester, Franny Erickson and Carolyn Feuille.

You can reach us at:

- Bernadette: kmom@nccn.net
- Franny: fw Erickson1@gmail.com
- Carolyn: cfeuille@gmail.com

Our contact info is in the Branch directory, too.

We'll aim to make a final selection of an outstanding contributor of community service by late March. So please submit nominees and their qualifications right away.

Thanks, everyone!—*Carolyn Feuille*

Three New Members!

We welcomed these new members at our January 17 Branch meeting.

Elizabeth Burchfield has a Bachelor of Music Education from Northwestern University and a Masters in Business Administration from Cal State University in Hayward. She spent 5 years as a CPA for the public and 30 years in industry. Her hobby is sculpture. She is interested in Arts and Crafts group and Great Decisions.

Joan Morton has an AA in Business from Harbor Junior College. She is retired. She enjoys gardening, quilting and reading.

Cathy Melior Benoit has a Bachelor of Psychology from San Jose State. She worked as an executive assistant for Sun Microsystems and Oracle Corp. She is now retired. She enjoys needlepoint and hiking. She is interested in Great Decisions group and Fundraising.



*Lani Howard
Membership Officer*

What the Judges Said

by Cece Royal, posted on the Branch website,
Jan. 18, 2026

Three judges presented their experiences, knowledge, and deep understanding of the various levels of local, state, and federal judiciary from their years preparing for and working within the court system.

Judge Babineau recounted her journey to the judiciary from a community close to San Diego, where she was awarded a college scholarship and thus began her academic path toward a legal degree and a career start as a public defender in Sacramento. Babineau described the levels of the judiciary, the divisions within those levels and finally how a judge is appointed or elected. She was appointed by CA Governor Gavin Newsom after submitting an application and passing rigorous background checks, concluding in a lengthy final, 3-hour interview. Elected judges are spared much of this process. Babineau, working in the family law court division, finds herself fulfilling her ambition of serving the public in a most effective, while still challenging, way.

Judge York, with 42 years in the court system, has seen it all in terms of cases and had numerous anecdotal illustrations of how a judge must apply the law. Some of the cases she described involved examples of how an effective jurist must always be conscious of how cultural biases and ethnic filters may affect the judge's view of a defendant. Those biases must be put aside, and an effective jurist consciously does so every day she is in court. She also spoke about how judges can be censured and even removed from the bench. Judge York has served on those review panels, and she has taught other judges in a judges' college, a weeks-long preparatory stint to ready them

for the challenges they will face in the courtroom.

Judge Kellegrew offered the audience a definition of what a Constitutional Crisis looks like by way of how/when it occurs, when the three branches of government cease to work together; in other words, our system of checks and balances no longer applies. Judge Kellegrew cited examples of near-crisis events in our history: 1832, Worcester v. Georgia, when Cherokees won their court case against the state of Georgia to retain land granted them, but the President (Andrew Jackson) ignored the court ruling and forcibly removed the tribe from the land anyway (to extract the rich gold it contained). History books describe this event as the Trail of Tears, for the many Indians who died on the brutal journey to Oklahoma. Judge Kellegrew's other examples, with differing outcomes, included Brown v. Board of Education, 1954 (forced integration of schools); Nixon's obstruction of justice (forcing him to resign the presidency in 1974); Griswold v. Connecticut, 1965, where the US Supreme Court protected the liberty of married couples to use contraceptives without government restriction; Roe v. Wade, 1973, abortion rights; and finally Dobbs v. Jackson, 2022, which overturned Roe v. Wade. Judge Kellegrew summed up in saying that our judicial and democratic system is not a system that is mechanical but is nuanced and sophisticated and in the end is only as honorable as the individuals who participate in it.

Q&A followed, and it can be noted that concern abounded around the US Supreme Court's current partisan/executive-leaning rulings. Judge Kellegrew's last expressed sentiment was implicitly affirmed.

Huge thanks to [Kim White, Attorney at Law](#); and [David Ball, Sierra Tech Guy](#), for sponsoring this outstanding program!



Judges Kellegrew, York, & Babineau field questions from the audience in a concluding Q&A session.



Program Sponsors

These businesses and individuals have generously donated toward the support of our Branch. We are happy to thank them and acknowledge their support!

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FEBRUARY PROGRAM SPONSOR

■ Kimberly “Pepper” Pepe, Realtor

FEBRUARY PROGRAM SPONSOR

■ Bodacious Blooms Flower Farm

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- Cassiopeia Skinspace
- KNCO News Talk 830
- Nevada Irrigation District
- Ponderosa Physical Therapy
- Allison Rapp
- Sierra Tech Guy
David Ball
- Westamerica Bank
Bernadette & Ed Sylvester
- Kim White, Attorney at Law
- Wolf Mountain Spa
Dan Wray

Ways & Means



Karin Quinn
Ways & Means

Here we are into 2026 and another series of top-notch community programs presented at our monthly general meeting.

These programs are made possible through the support of sponsors (listed above), individual donations, and funds raised by Ways and Means (W & M).

W & M generates revenue from the sale of our branded merchandise and the annual raffle. Please check out our table of goodies.

Since many are participating and anticipating our spectacular Quiz-in fundraiser this March, the Ways and Means raffle will happen next season. This provides some extra time to procure an exciting item or two!

Stay tuned.



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Martha Rees
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