



Monday, February 12, 2024

PROGRAM: St. Mary's Community Connections Program by Amber Creek

Amber Creek is the Program Coordinator for the Community Connections Program, which is operated by St. Mary's/Intermountain Health. Prior to joining as the Program Coordinator 2 years ago, she sat on the this program's Advisory Council for 7 years when it was known as the Senior Companion Program.



Community Connections is a volunteer-based program where volunteers serve homebound older adults in the Grand Valley providing support and friendship to those who need assistance with grocery shopping, errands, medical appointments, and other everyday tasks necessary to maintaining independence. Without this help and friendship, many older adults would be forced to leave their homes for assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

LOCATION: Alpine Bank...Conference Room at 225 North 5th Street, GJ
(Free parking in their lot: ticket can be stamped at the Bank)

MEETING TIME: 11:30 AM

REFRESHMENTS: Bring your own brown bag lunch and a friend or two

RSVP's (Yes or No): by February 8

Remember this is a courtesy for those setting up the space.
Contact Jane at mjfitz2cats@gmail.com or 970-241-9684.

Branch President Jane Fitzgerald 970-241-9684
VP Programs Karen Pieper Hildebrand 432-312-4747
Secretary Loralee Kerr 970-523-5510

VP Membership Lori Wood 970-234-5674
Treasurer Carol Aioldi 530-949-4448
Newsletter Jane Fitzgerald 970-241-9684

WHAT YOU MISSED LAST MONTH

Our visit to Riverside Education Center's Main Office/Warehouse was such an eye-opening experience. REC began as a local mother, Mary Spiro, started working with her child's classmates to meet their food/educational needs. In 2006 REC became a non-profit organization and has since grown to serving over 1,100 students in 16 schools (9 elementary, 4 middle and 3 high) with 150 employees and volunteers. In 2023 they were able to purchase a large warehouse and office space, and will soon have additional space as the adjoining warehouse has been donated.

REC's mission is "provides Mesa County Students with high-quality academic and extracurricular experiences during out-of-school time to foster individual growth and to create community with a safe, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment." Their services are free to the students accepted into the program. REC works closely with teachers and councilors in the schools to identify students for the program. The criteria are if student is in reduced-fee lunch program; if student needs help with grades; and a teacher referral.

REC offers Transportation to sites, to students' home and on field trips for enrichment, such as to museum, skiing, or camping. They offer after school activities 4 days a week which may include tutoring, grade checks, social, life-skills (cooking, vehicle maintenance), art lessons, Lego building/robots. Before the activity begins, students are offered a healthy "snack" meal: leftovers go home with needy students.

REC also offers Community Building in a safe environment. High school has a Youth Council which might mentor younger students. Sometimes there are Family Enjoyment Nights with movies or games. There are some mixed High School Nights at the warehouse where students play video games.

REC works with students for college/career readiness, by helping with finances and scholarship assistance; finding internships; taking them on a CMU Tour; taking them to Career Fairs.

Thank you to Program Managers Jessica Prussa and Rebecca Thye, for the very informative meeting and the tour of the warehouse where we could observe how they put together an activity for a day and also how the "snacks" are prepared. CEO Joy Hudak stopped by and made a pitch for volunteers.

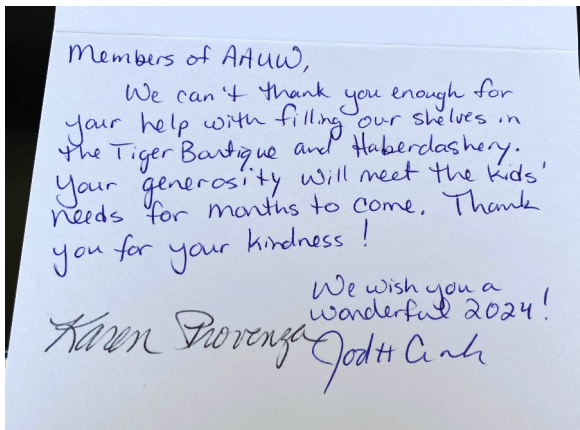
Coffee & Chat Special Interest Group



This fun and informative group will meet on **Saturday, February 24 at 9:30 am**. We will again be at **Four Winds Coffee and Tea**, 1235 Bookcliff Avenue, Grand Junction. (near corner of 12th Street and Bookcliff Avenue) We have reserved the **Library Meeting Room on the 2nd floor**. Parking is limited in the lot by the back doors; plan to park along Bookcliff. Come when you can; bring a friend. Call Jane at 970-241-9684 with any questions.

This month's **Discussion Topic** will be "Mesa County – Immigrant Issues".

Update on the donations to the Tiger Boutique & Haberdashery from our December meeting



from Branch President Jane Fitzgerald

Thanks to all of you who generously cleaned out your closets and also purchased new items for the Haberdashery. I am sure we made many students very, very happy...and the branch also received some notice on Facebook.thanks to Karen Hildebrand for organization and delivery.

The Board is still working on ways to best acknowledge International Women's Day on March 8. If nothing "live", we may plan for a General Program meeting on March 13. We will let you know.

If you have not yet visited our AAUW Facebook page please do so. Lori Wood has done an excellent job of keeping it up-to-date. See at <https://www.facebook.com/AAUWGrandJunction>.

Upcoming Webinar

As advocates for progress and change, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is proud to present a pivotal webinar aimed at addressing critical challenges in today's educational landscape. Join us for enriching discussions that empower you to become a catalyst for change in your community.

[School Boards: The Battleground for the Education Culture Wars](#)

Date: February 7, 7:00 pm ET

Across the country, we have seen school boards, and candidates for school boards, taking up controversial policies that have led to banning books from school libraries; the censorship of curriculum in school classrooms due to individuals finding content “objectionable”; and policies leading to a lack of a safe space for students with “objectionable” sexual identities.

Please join us **Wednesday, February 7 at 7:00 pm ET** for an AAUW National Public Policy Committee webinar to learn how one AAUW state board is fighting back and what you can do locally.

[Register Now](#)



Save the Date.

Take time out from your busy lives to go to Colorado Springs
for the
AAUW Annual Convention
May 3-4, 2024
at the Antlers Hotel.

What has AAUW National Done Lately

- December 13 marked the 100th anniversary of the Equal Rights Amendment's (ERA) first introduction in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a founding partner of the ERA Coalition's National Strategy Task Force, AAUW marched alongside the ERA Coalition and partners in Washington, DC, to call on Congress to affirm the ERA and for President Biden to [instruct the Archivist](#) to publish the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- January 28 marks the 15th anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. [Learn more](#) about Lilly's fight and our continued work on the Paycheck Fairness Act. Look for the 2024 Equal Pay Days (which highlight the impact of ongoing pay inequities) dates to be released in early January.
- Federal pay data collection is a critical tool for identifying pay discrimination and working to close pervasive gender and racial pay gaps in the United States. AAUW [joined](#) coalition partners in urging the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to swiftly reinstate EEO-1 pay data collection, which requires employers to report employees' pay information disaggregated by sex and race.
- When Congress temporarily expanded the Child Tax Credit (CTC) through December 2021 to include millions of families previously ineligible because the parents made *too little*, child poverty in the U.S. was reduced by almost half. Today, 19 million children are again excluded from the full benefit. AAUW [joined](#) over 350 organizations in urging Congress to prioritize expanding the CTC to strengthen families' economic security and assist with basic needs like housing, groceries, and care.
- Public Funds Public Schools—a national campaign founded by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Education Law Center, and Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP—has released an [interactive bill tracking tool](#) to monitor voucher and related legislation across 50 states and in Congress. Users are able to conduct searches by state, year, voucher type, eligibility criteria, and more. [Learn more](#) about AAUW's position on school vouchers.
- For decades, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has published crucial studies that provide comprehensive insights about how students pay for college, progress through college to degree completion, and how they experience employment and loan repayment after graduation. AAUW has previously used this data to illustrate the [disproportionate impact](#) of debt-financed higher education on women. In December, AAUW joined the Institute for Higher Education Policy and nearly 50 other organizations in a [letter to ED](#) urging the continuation of these vitally important post-secondary sample studies, including the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B). At a time when policymakers want more information about the return on investment for postsecondary education, we need to strengthen, not eliminate, critical questions about graduates' experiences.