



Monday, March 11, 2024

PROGRAM: A Visit to La Plaza with Nelly F. Garcia Olmos, Executive Director

La Plaza is a nonprofit organization that supports the health and wellbeing of migrant and immigrant communities in Mesa County.

Nelly Garcia was born in Mexico City, but came to the United States when she was 12 years old. High School is where she started to get involved in her community, specially working towards social justice issues and civic engagement. Nelly graduated from Mesa State College (Now Colorado Mesa University) with a Bachelor's degree in Arts with emphasis in Spanish Language and Literature. After graduating, Nelly became an interpreter/advocate, working towards immigrant rights justice and minority equity. She also volunteered as a Board member in different non profit organizations which allowed her to gain experience in areas like policy-making and community organizing. Nelly supported advocacy work that helped pass important pro-immigrant laws that has bettered the life and safety of the immigrant community. She has been a speaker for the Grand Junction Women's March and Latina LEAD Power Summit. Previous to La Plaza, Nelly worked for the Migrant Education Program for 8 years as their Lead Migrant Recruiter and worked as the West Slope Regional Organizer for the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition. Nelly is a longtime leader in the Hispanic Committee in Grand Junction and is now the Executive Director for La Plaza.



LOCATION: La Plaza at 721 Peach Avenue, Palisade

(from Hwy 6/West 8th Street turn north onto Peach Avenue)

MEETING TIME: 11:30 AM

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

RSVP's (Yes or No): by March 8 (or for Carpool information)

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

On February 12, at the conference room at the downtown Alpine Bank, we learned about one of SCL Health/St. Mary's Hospital outreach programs....Community Connections, which has evolved from Senior Companions. Our speaker was Amber Heard who has been the Volunteer Coordinator for the last 1-1/2 years.

Community Connections volunteers are active adults who have the desire, time, and willingness to help homebound older adults to continue living independently at home. To qualify for the program an adult must be over 60, homebound and unable to drive. They are then matched with a compatible volunteer who will then meet with them at least once a week for 2-3 hours driving them on errands as needed....grocery shopping, beauty appointments, medical appointments, etc. Giving the homebound friendship and conversation is highly prioritized.

The volunteers must undergo a background check to be included in the program. They are reimbursed for gas.

Community Connections is in need of many more volunteers as there are currently 80 homebound adults on a waiting list to receive a volunteer.

From Branch President Jane Fitzgerald

Update on the branch's efforts to celebrate **International Women's Day** on March 8. So far, we have a nice mention in the March Beacon newspaper under the Beacon Bits, and several of us will be attending the reading of a City Council Proclamation on March 6.

At our last program meeting, members present had a chance to review the points urging a "yes" vote on welcoming those without a degree and why it should allow us to better achieve our goals as we can help educate and advocate for all members. Voting opens on April 3, 2024 and online voting ends at 12:00 pm ET on May 15, 2024. Each AAUW member has the chance to vote and will receive an email with their unique Elector ID and Password to vote. Those with no email address will receive a paper ballot by mail. I urge you to submit your vote.

AAUW Colorado State Convention will be held at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs on May 3-4, 2024. The topic is Women in Leadership: Overcoming Barriers. More information will be forthcoming, but please mark your calendars and plan to attend. I do not think I will be available to represent the branch: This might be a fun trip if several of our branch members go together. Some funds are available in our budget to offset expenses.

UPCOMING WEBINAR:

BUSTING MYTHS & ENHANCING SUPPORT – ADVANCING WORKPLACE SUCCESS FOR WOMEN

What: A parallel event of the 68th NGO Committee on the Status of Women Forum, this webinar will feature a panel of outstanding AAUW fellowships & grants alumnae moderated by AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell to discuss the critical importance of policies that support advancing work and life, their impact on women in the workforce, and strategies to foster economic well-being for women.

Who: Open to public

When: [March 20](#), 2024 at 2:30 p.m. ET.

How: [Register here](#).

Questions? Please reach out to global@aauw.org.

FOR MOVIE BUFFS

March is Women's History Month – though it goes without saying that it is impossible to contain all of the contributions that women have made throughout human history to only 31 days. Still, it's as good a reason as any to add some movies by, for and about women to your watchlist.

At the link below, A.frame (The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences) presents 50 films fit for Women's History Month, culled from recommendations from female directors, writers, actors and more, as well as movies that made Oscars history, and some of our personal favorites. The list includes everything from historical biopics and documentaries to dramas, comedies, thrillers and rom-coms.

<https://aframe.oscars.org/what-to-watch/post/50-films-to-watch-during-womens-history-month>

ADVOCACY DAY AT THE CAPITOL!

MARCH 12, 2024

It's EQUAL PAY DAY and AAUW is teaming up with the Women's Foundation of Colorado and other groups at the Colorado State Capitol. Meet Legislators. Follow this link to sign up:

⇒ Let Public Policy Co-Director Su Ryden at Suryden25@gmail.com know if you are attending, so we can <https://www.wfco.org/connect/2024-advocacy-day?srctid=1&erid=5846383&trid=b1aa17d5-3261-4996-afce-c990e2c1da08> send you travel and parking recommendations. Carpooling is highly recommended.

What has AAUW National Done Lately

- **Mark your calendars:** March 12 is Equal Pay Day 2024. Each year, this symbolic day is used to raise awareness around and combat the impact of pay inequities. For Blacks, Equal Pay Day is July 27 and for Latinas it is October 5.
- A slate of anti-abortion bills were recently introduced in the House of Representatives, including the Pregnant Students' Rights Act. AAUW [joined](#) coalition partners in voicing strong opposition to the bill, which fails to address key barriers to pregnant students' educational attainment. The White House also [expressed opposition](#) to the bill in its current form. The bill (H.R. 6914) passed the House in January and it faces an uncertain outcome in the Senate.
- As a result of sustained advocacy, in January, Congress reached a bipartisan agreement on a tax package that will temporarily expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC). AAUW [joined](#) over 350 organizations in urging Congress to prioritize this expansion which would benefit about 80% of the 19 million children who are currently left out of the full CTC or don't receive it at all because their parents' earnings are too low.
- The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act ([H.R. 6585](#)) was advanced out of the House Education & Workforce Committee in December 2023. The bill would allow federal Pell Grants to be used for short-term education and job training programs. Higher education advocates have raised concerns over the inclusion of for-profit schools and how the bill is funded.
- AAUW joined a letter in opposition to the College Cost Reduction Act ([H.R. 6951](#)) due to our concerns that the bill would repeal current Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment regulations which AAUW has supported as a way of protecting students from unaffordable student loan debt.
- The U.S. Department of Education began [negotiated rulemaking sessions](#) in January to improve regulations that hold higher education institutions accountable for the quality and integrity of their programs, including reforms to give students timely access to financial aid disbursements. AAUW [joined](#) partners in recommending reforms to the accreditation process for higher education institutions to better protect students from predatory practices and ensure they receive a high-quality education.
- The U.S. Department of Education has extended the deadline to consolidate student loans for [Income-Driven Repayment \(IDR\) Account Adjustment](#) to April 30, 2024. This extension will give borrowers more time to consolidate and keep the maximum amount of credit toward cancellation programs on their loans.
- Last year, a bipartisan Paid Family Leave Working Group in Congress was established to explore federal paid family leave policies. In December 2023, the Working Group released a [legislative framework](#) that will serve as the basis for roundtable discussions later this year and is gathering input from stakeholders to inform their efforts to expand paid leave access in the United States.

- Good news about closing the gender and racial pay gaps was recently announced: the White House is banning the use of current or past pay when determining the salaries of new federal employees. This means:
 - ◆ The country's largest employer will halt a practice known to foster discriminatory pay and allow it to follow an individual throughout their career.
 - ◆ Federal contractors may soon follow a similar rule in the future and may be required to post salary ranges in job listings, as proposed by the White House.

Scholarship Committee News

Jean Yale, the Scholarship Committee Chair, reports that the CMU Foundation will have the scholarship applications available for the Committee to review in March. Jean needs one more member to join the Committee to review the applications and select the deserving recipients.

The Committee will need to meet either on a Monday, Tuesday afternoon, or a Saturday....whatever works best for the Committee members.

Contact Jean at 970-623-4578, if interested.

Coffee & Chat Special Interest Group



This fun and informative group will meet on **Saturday, March 23** starting at **9:30 am**. We are going back to **Be Sweet Cafe & Bakeshop**, 150 West Main Street, Grand Junction.

We have reserved the **Conference Room**.

Come when you can; bring a friend(s).

Call Jane at 970-241-9684 with any questions.

This month's **Discussion Topic** will be "Legislators: age vs. experience vs. fresh ideas".

A Note from Jill Smith, AAUW of Colorado Vice President of Membership

Membership is "everyone's job" in this amazing organization.

Numbers are important, are reviewed frequently, and reported annually to our membership. I recently saw some data that I would like to share with all of you. In 2004, there were 23 branches in Colorado and a total of 1,417 members. In 2012, there were 15 branches in the state with a total of 997 members. As of February, 2024, our state has a total of 780 members in 11 branches.

What this tells us is that AAUW is 'fading away.' And Colorado is not the only state experiencing this. We have an opportunity to "Open Up" our organization, make it more diverse, and hopefully increase our numbers. All branches have been discussing this and I hope you will eagerly vote to have your voice heard when National sends the email in April to change our membership qualifications.

*AAUW advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.
The Grand Junction Branch is a 501(c)(3) organization.*