

History of the Grand Junction Branch

1927: The Grand Junction Branch was founded in May with 27 charter members, including Mrs. J.F. Herr, Miss Anna Berg, Mrs. A.W. Kemper, Mrs. L.P. Morse, Miss Mary Rait, Miss Hazel Ela, Mrs. H.S. Russell, Mrs. Clyde Biggs, and Miss Emma Groom.

(historical records between 1927 and 1959 appear to be misplaced)

1959: At an October branch meeting, Mary Rait spoke about her recent trip to Africa

1961: In May, the AAUW Colorado State Convention was held in Grand Junction

1963: The Branch's "Puppeteers" performed their 1st show. The group continued with performances at various locations through 1973.

1970: Members of the branch promoted a "Mesa County Greenbelt" which would clean up the riverbanks

1971: In April, the AAUW Colorado State Convention was held in Grand Junction

1975: The branch received a \$750 grant from the AAUW Educational Foundation to complete a one-year study of an "Index of Resources" for the community.

1976: The branch was host to the AAUW Colorado State Convention. The Grand Junction AAUW Singers group performed at the event.

1977: In January, the branch celebrated their 50 Year Anniversary with a fete at Two Rivers Plaza

1979: Eleanor Hoefner of the Grand Junction Branch was elected as AAUW State President

1980: Mayor Jane Quimby proclaimed February 2-9, 1980 as "AAUW Week"

State President Eleanor Hoefner led the Colorado State Delegation to the National Convention

1981: The AAUW Educational Foundation chose Grand Junction as one of 6 communities to host African/American educators. In October, school principals from Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Kenya met with branch members and toured the area.

1993: The branch, led by members of the Book Group, held the "Women's Conference: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow" at the Holiday Inn which included two banquets with featured speakers and a luncheon, an art show, book fair, parade of ethnic costumes, and break-out learning sessions.

1995: The branch had an entry in the 4th of July parade

The branch held the first Readers Festival "A Salute to Women Authors" ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

1996: AAUW branch members, along with state and local representatives as well as Mesa State College President Dr. Raymond Kieft, celebrated the approval of the 1st Masters Program at Mesa State College, something the branch had worked toward for many years.

The branch held a Mother's Day Tea and Art Exhibit in conjunction with the Colorado Center for the Arts at the Atrium

1996: At the Annual Meeting of the branch in March, a parade of hats was used to illustrate women of different eras. The hats were provided from the collection of Mary Jewell Willsea.

The branch had an entry in the 4th of July parade

The branch won the 1995-1996 Outstanding Community Project Award at the AAUW State Convention for the Reader's Festival "A Salute to Women Authors"

1997: The branch was a co-host with the Girl Scouts of the "Celebrate Girls" conference held on the Mesa State College campus

The branch celebrated their 70th Anniversary with a party at Bookcliff Country Club. Members of the Senior Follies Group entertained.

The branch had an entry in the 4th of July Parade spotlighting "voting through the generations"

The branch held the 2nd biennial Readers Festival "A Salute to Authors in the West" ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

The branch developed UTEC classes specifically for women

1998: The branch received the Mary Jewell Willsea bequest of over \$80,000 which helped fund the Mary Rait/Mary Jewell Willsea Endowed Grants Fund which provides several scholarships to Colorado Mesa University women each year

In April, the branch hosted the Colorado State AAUW Convention in Grand Junction, with Branch President Lori Wood in charge. Beside the usual business meetings, there was a chuckwagon dinner and show at the Hanging W in Whitewater on Friday night; a "Have Fun with Your Inner Child" luncheon featuring balloons, a dinosaur place mat with crayons to color on, popcorn and a magician; Palisade wine tasting at "Hollywood & Vine"; an awards banquet where musicians from Mesa played and the branch's Readers Theater Group performed the Julius Caesar spoof "Rinse the Blood Off My Toga".

A student affiliate branch was formed at Mesa State College with 5 members. The affiliate group was active for 2 more years.

The branch had an entry in the 4th of July Parade – honoring the 150th Anniversary of Women's Rights – the AAUW Steppers Group performed

The new AAUW Reader's Theater Group had several performances during the year: Radio History Theater plays performed before the Mesa County Historical Society; "There's No Business like Show Business" for the DY Chapter of P.E.O.; "Information Please" at the First Congregational Church; "Straayer's Trek" for Chapter DY of P.E.O. and for the Mesa County Historical Society.

1999: The AAUW Readers Theater Group performed several times during the year continuing to do so through 2009

Planning begins to produce a cookbook featuring chocolate recipes...to raise money to endow a scholarship at UTEC

The branch had an entry in the 4th of July Parade – spotlighting women in history – in partnership with the League of Woman Voters

The branch held the 3rd biennial Readers Festival "Reading into the next Century" ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

The first year that Christmas greens were sold as a fundraiser

2000: The branch entered a team in the “Big Kids Spelling Bee”

Other Special Interest Groups continued to meet...Film Fans, Hikers, Bridge, and Lifelong Learners

2001: The branch held the 4th biennial Readers Festival “A Readers Odyssey” ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

The branch worked with the Kids Voting organization on the November elections....also in 2002

The chocolate cookbook The Anecdotal Chocolate and Other Juicy Morsels from Western Colorado was finally published, and went on sale

2003: The branch held the 5th biennial Readers Festival ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

2005: The branch held the 6th biennial Readers Festival ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

2006: In December, the branch celebrated the 125th Anniversary of the national AAUW with a brunch at Redlands Methodist Church. The Readers Theater Group performed

2007: The scholarship at UTEC (now known as Western Colorado Community College) was finally fully endowed through the sales of the chocolate cookbook The Anecdotal Chocolate and Other Juicy Morsels from Western Colorado as well as from donations from branch members

The branch held the 7th biennial Readers Festival ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation

The national organization restated the mission statement of AAUW and the branch updated their bylaws to reflect the new statement

2009: The branch held the 8th biennial Readers Festival ---in partnership with Mesa State College Foundation.

The branch co-sponsored a luncheon with the Women’s Foundation of Colorado

2010: In February, the branch held a luncheon to raise funds for the Military Families of America

2011: The branch received a bequest from the estate of longtime member Eugenia McClure in the amount of \$7,914.64. The Branch Board voted to place the monies in a money market account to be used for membership recruitment activities

2012: A “Jewelry Jamboree” sale of members’ no-longer-wanted jewelry was used to provide funds for the General Account

2013: The branch voted \$500 to support summer science camps at John McConnell Science Center: “Wild about Engineering: for Girls Only” and “Girls Only: Exciting Perimeters”

On March 20th, the first “Cocktails & Conversation” event was held at Springhill Suites, honoring Teresa Coons. Another “Cocktails & Conversation” event was held in September, and in 2014 and 2015

The AAUW Coffee & Chat Special Interest Group started as an outgrowth of the defunct Readers Theater Group

In September, members of the branch participated in a Regional Community Convention with the Women’s Foundation of Colorado

- 2015:** Members of the branch served as judges for Grand Valley Magazine's "Fairytale Writing Contest"
- In May, the branch celebrated their 88th Anniversary at the Fiesta Guadalajara Restaurant
- 2016:** Members of the branch held several meetings with women veterans to determine their needs in the community. In November a Memo-of-Understanding was signed with the Colorado Mesa University Foundation to provide an unendowed scholarship for a woman veteran
- 2017:** The 1st Woman Veteran's Scholarship was awarded
- In October, the branch co-sponsored a Ballot Issues Forum with the League of Women Voters at Whitman Educational Center
- 2018:** In April, the "AAUW at CMU" student affiliate group was launched
- In May, the branch held a celebration of their 90th Anniversary at the Egg & I Restaurant
- In October, the branch co-sponsored a Ballot Issues Forum with the League of Women Voters at Whitman Educational Center
- 2019:** In March, the branch awarded the 1st "Women Who Make History" award to Jane Quimby
- 2020:** In August, the branch awarded the 2nd "Women Who Make History" award to Michelle Shiao
- 2021:** In March, the branch awarded the 3rd "Women Who Make History" award to Sue Conry
- 2023:** In April, the branch awarded the 4th "Women Who Make History" award to Heidi Ragsdale