

Co-President's Message

Welcome to a new year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays, wet as they were. I've enjoyed snuggling under a cozy blanket, drinking tea, reading or doing crossword puzzles while rain pitter-pattered (well, pelted and pounded, really) the windows. My solar panels sure have gotten a good washing, fitting for the fresh start that a new year signals. Fresh starts only happen with action, though, so read on for some ways you can take action yourself.

RSVP in the next week or two to attend our Interbranch Council luncheon on Saturday, January 24. Not only will we hear from a panel of legal experts discussing our First Amendment rights in the current political environment, but we can begin the year in sisterhood with each other and our fellow Ventura County AAUW branches.

Sadly, our current political climate calls for a multitude of actions to take, and AAUW offers a variety of options to fit your energy and intent. One easy one is AAUW Action Network's [Two-Minute Activist](#). You can take immediate, quick action or sign up to get notified on when and how to engage on pressing national issues. Closer to home is AAUW California's monthly [Public Policy News](#). Of special interest is an online symposium titled The School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy on January 31. You can register [here](#). You don't need to be a member of the Public Policy Committee to participate in the symposium but do read Kathy Long's Public Policy column for detailed reporting on the very real threats to K-12 education.

Please take a bit of time to read through the rest of the Beacon so you don't miss upcoming events and ongoing activities. Fittingly, our busiest month (at least for volunteering) always seems to be March, Women in History (WIH) Month. Planning and training for the WIH program are underway, thanks to the dedication of our small but mighty committee, but there's still time to get involved. There are also still volunteer spots open for another March branch program, Knowledge Bowl. See Mary Goldberg's article to find out how to get involved.

Getting the most out of your AAUW membership means getting involved in branch activities, including advocacy at the local, state, or national level. If you have questions about how you can get involved, throughout the Beacon are names and contact information for activities, volunteering, public policy, membership, and more. You can always email Gloria and me at aauw.camarillo.president@gmail.com.

See you in the new year,
Kay

IBC Luncheon – January 24, 2026

REGISTRATION DEADLINE JANUARY 12th



Ventura County Interbranch Council Annual Luncheon

The First Amendment

Saturday, January 24, 2026

11:30am-2:00pm

Lunch and program: \$40 per person

Los Robles Greens, Thousand Oaks

Across the nation, the boundaries of free speech are being tested. From challenges facing journalism, higher education, and peaceful protest to debates over academic freedom and viewpoint diversity, questions about the First Amendment are taking on new urgency. How can we make sense of these shifts and protect the core freedoms that sustain a democratic society?

This year's IBC luncheon will tackle these questions head on with a panel led by Brandy Price J.D., Dean & Chief Academic Officer at The Colleges of Law in Ventura and Santa Barbara. Panelists include College of Law Professors Eric Lane and Judge Brian Hill and College of Law Students Allison Wooten and Massimo Genovese.

Join us for an in-depth discussion with legal experts in our community.



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email aauw.camarillo.president@gmail.com to pay by check

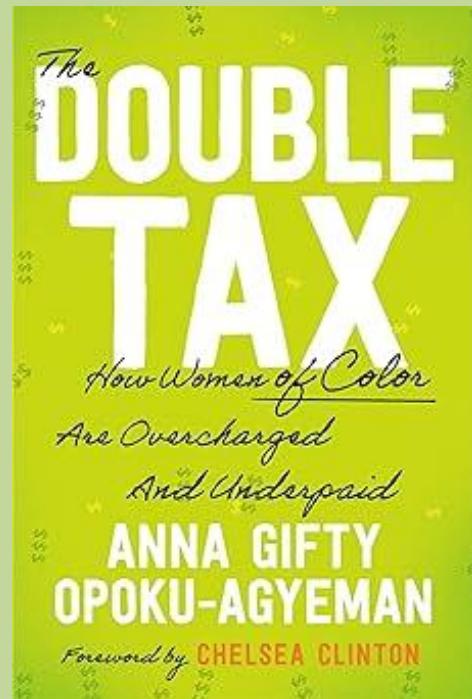
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Discussion

Tuesday, January 27, 7pm on Zoom

Join us for a conversation about *The Double Tax*, a groundbreaking analysis of the disparities women navigate that require extra money, time, and effort, as well as the unique barriers Black women face, compounding the costs of racism and sexism.

Meticulously researched with a combination of data and personal stories, Harvard PhD candidate in Economics, Anna Gifty Opoku-Agyeman highlights these gaps while offering solutions from a local to global scale. The audiobook is also excellent, and available on Libby app or Audible.

Link will be sent closer to the date. Contact Gloria at Gloria@strongerleader.com with questions.



2025 -2026 Calendar Highlights

- 1/13/26 10:30am Non-fiction Book Group - Panera Bread Oxnard at The Collection
- 1/14/26 5pm Board Meeting – All are welcome. [AAUW Camarillo Zoom Link](#)
- 1/24/26 11:30am-2:00pm IBC Luncheon, Los Robles Greens Thousand Oaks
- 1/26/26 4:00pm PM Book Review – Marie Callender's Camarillo
- 1/27/26 7:00pm – DEI Book Discussion – Link forthcoming
- 2/10/26 10:30am Non-fiction Book Group - Panera Bread Oxnard at The Collection
- 2/11/26 5pm Board Meeting – All are welcome. [AAUW Camarillo Zoom Link](#)
- 2/23/26 4:00pm PM Book Review – Marie Callender's Camarillo
- March 2026 - Women In History and Knowledge Bowl
- 3/15/26 12:30pm-1:30pm, Women in History Presentation, Camarillo Public Library
- 4/18/26 2-4pm Women in History Fashion Show Fundraiser

Branch Directory

You should have received an email on December 3 with a link to the current Camarillo Branch Directory. If you did NOT receive an email, your membership may need to be renewed. Please check with Membership Chair Glabe Siegfriedt at siegfriedtg@gmail.com to confirm your membership status. If you need the link to the directory again, contact Kay at kayzdaze@gmail.com

Women In History – Volunteers Still Needed!

Please consider volunteering! Your friends and family members who are not in AAUW are welcome to volunteer too! If schools cannot recruit volunteers, those students miss out on the program. We need YOU to make this program available to any school that wants it.

Volunteers are encouraged to share the same racial identity as the characters they portray.

For details including the 7 women chosen for WIH 2026, see the Women in History page (p.5) in the [December 2025 Beacon Newsletter](#)

Contact Cheryl Mastrovito for info: aauwcamarillowihistory@gmail.com

Here is the link to the volunteer form: [Women in History Volunteer Form](#)
Deadline to submit is January 8th

Tech Trek Update, Vanessa

With the new year, we start the cycle of Tech Trek anew. I have requested allotments at UCSB and at Whittier. Due to the generous Ackerman and Haas grants, we have enough money banked to send up to 8 girls to Tech Trek this summer, and do not need to dun you for financial contributions for this project (though your financial support of the Branch at large can have many delightful other uses).

There are other ways you can support this marvelous project, to wit:

- If you have contacts with 7th grade science and math teachers at local schools (especially Title 1 ones) please give me that info. There are a lot of schools in our catchment area, and some have never participated in Tech Trek before. The personal touch might help expand our outreach. This is done in January each year.
- If you have an interest and ability to participate directly in Tech Trek as a volunteer, there are two needs:
 - We need to surface two adult volunteers to serve as Dorm Monitors, which is a 24/7 commitment. Its demanding but very rewarding. The week is June 21 through 27 at both locations.
 - We also need to send a number of adult volunteers to assist with check-in and teardown on the first and last days of that week.

Let me know if you are interested in knowing more about these activities (there is an online application process and some training and clearance hurdles too.)

*** Staying engaged with our TT girls after camp is a recent and important enhancement to the Tech Trek program. If you know a woman who uses/used science or math in her employment, the Tech Trek Alumni Group would be interested to meet her and invite her to address the older girls at one of their monthly meetings. Can you arrange a tour of a lab or other sciencey workspace? Can you advise on college application and entry?

Contact Gladys Ochangco and Jennifer Baker to discuss these possibilities.

Gladys: ochangcogp@yahoo.com Jennifer: jennie@aotto.com

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Vanessa Otto
votto@ootto.com

Knowledge Bowl, Mary Goldberg

**Volunteers are needed for our
62nd annual
Knowledge Bowl competitions!!**

January is here and the countdown to a favorite and our longest running program has begun. Eleven high school teams from all over Ventura County are participating.

Volunteers are needed to serve as question readers, judges and timers. You can volunteer for one, two, or all three nights. If you are new to this program, you will be paired with our seasoned returning volunteers. A mini practice round will be held on March 11th to give students, coaches and volunteers a chance to review the process. Invite your friends to join us!

The dates and locations for Knowledge Bowl 2026 are:

March 11 Del Sol High School	Practice, rounds 1-4
March 18 Buena High School	Rounds 5-8
March 25 Adolfo Camarillo High School	Rounds 9-11, awards

To volunteer, go to the Sign-up Genius link [AAUW Knowledge Bowl 2026](#)

If you have any questions, contact Mary Goldberg at:
marymgoldberg@gmail.com or 805-248-4572

December 18th Happy Hour at Cantara Cellars

It was lovely to mix and mingle on December 18th, our last get together of 2025. Thank you to members and guests who attended. Be on the lookout for details on our February Mixer...info coming soon!



Thank you to the Gene Haas Foundation!



Thank you to the [GENE HAAS Foundation](#) for their generous, continued support with a 2025-2026 grant for \$11,000. These funds advance our efforts in sending 8th grade girls to Tech Trek Camp at UCSB and Whittier College, providing local scholarships for returning female students to CSUCI, and encouraging our Tech Trek Alumnae Group (TTAG).

Non-Fiction Book Group, Barbara Hilburn

The AAUW Nonfiction Book Club meets once a month on the second Tuesday at 10:30am in the Panera Bread Co. at The Collection, Oxnard. Please email me if you are interested. Thanks.

Barbara Hilburn

hilburndesigns@gmail.com

Next meeting is January 13 - *Apple in China: The Capture of the World's Greatest Company* by Patrick McGee.

Future Books:

- ***Finding My Way*** by Malala Yousafzai - February 10
- ***Breaking the Age Code: How Your Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long and Well You Live*** by Becca Levy - March 10
- ***Genesis: Artificial Intelligence, Hope, and the Human Spirit*** by Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Craig Mundie - April 14

P.M. BOOK REVIEW, Diana Dingler

Our next meeting will be on January 26, 2026 where we'll discuss the book ***The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*** by James McBride. We'll meet as usual at Marie Callender's at 4:00 p.m.

Those wishing to read ahead, our book for Feb. 23 is *Beirut Station* by Paul Vidich.

For any questions, please contact Diana Dingler, ddingler2028@gmail.com

AAUW Camarillo Bridge Group, Cyndy King- LeVander

Did you know that AAUW Camarillo has a Bridge group? We meet every second and fourth Friday of the month at 1:00 PM, at the hostess's homes. We have two tables and meet for about 3 hours of playing bridge plus enjoying a sumptuous dessert. We take off major holidays.

If you're interested in joining or have questions, please contact Cyndy via email at: cking5151@gmail.com

Tech Trek Alumnae Group (TTAG), Gladys Ochangco

For our December 2025 meeting, Esha B (Tech Trek 2023) took lead and organized our cookie exchange & crystal ornament activity. She taught us about supersaturated solutions while we munched on homemade cookies and fudge. Then we got creative with designing/ making ornaments before our TTAG co-lead Carla Davis heated up the solution that would crystallize each ornament design.

The Girls shared winter break plans with family and friends. There was also talk about upcoming chemistry exams at their different schools – and Carla Davis, chemistry teacher extraordinaire, answered their questions and printed out a study sheet to help them remember important chemistry formulas. A perfect way to end 2025 together. We are fortunate to have this group!



Your Donations Mean A Lot

Thank you to all our supporters and donors. We could not run our amazing programs without you.

Scan the QR code or [CLICK HERE](#) to donate.

Vanessa is always willing to take a check too!



Public Policy by Kathy Long

Combatting the Assault on K-12 Education: Two significant actions reviewed regarding the challenges to education. The first, via Project 2025 and the administration changes coming from Washington. The first noted in testimony provided to the Senate Democratic Caucus 12/16/2025, written by Denise Forte, President and CEO of EDTrust, a national nonprofit organization focused on closing opportunity gaps and advancing racial and economic justice in education. Her testimony notes “the unrelenting efforts to dismantle public education by selling it off for parts” with moving the department to the Department of Labor. Challenging their expertise, staffing levels, understanding of processes and laws that govern and protect our students. Additionally, all this done without congressional oversite. She notes the potential long-term damage to minority and disabled children with the lack of planning for transitional programming and support. The response and clear pathway to these raised issues are still out there in our education community.

As we start the new year 2026, and election year, AAUW will have many opportunities to engage with our mission to be advocates for education, to advance policy that enriches opportunities for women and girls. A [December 2025 report](#) released by PACE – Policy Analysis for California Education, a group of education faculty from five major California Universities, has put forth recommendations regarding restructuring the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, currently an elected position.

The Executive Summary includes: “The need to strengthen California’s education governance has never been more urgent,” PACE concludes. “Schools are grappling with deepening inequities, persistent opportunity gaps, and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and well-being. At the same time, the federal government’s retreat from its traditional role in civil rights enforcement, accountability, research and evaluation, and oversight places even greater responsibility on states to lead. California must take bold and strategic steps now to ensure that its governance systems are not only coherent and efficient but also equity centered, transparent, and responsive to student needs.”

Public Policy Cont'd (page 2 of 2)

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While the report advocates a wide rearrangement of responsibilities among the system's many players, its most fundamental reform would place the Governor at the top of the revised organizational chart while converting the elected state superintendent of public instruction into an ombudsman and independent critic, rather than the operational head of the state Department of Education.

The department would be managed by an appointee of the state Board of Education, whose members are named by the governor.

Reimagining the superintendent of public instruction as an independent evaluator and advocate for students "presents promising opportunities to strengthen systemwide accountability," PACE says, "but it also introduces important trade-offs." PACE questions if the office could still be influential if it lacks implementation authority.

We propose that these roles be structured around three core functions of governance: 1. Policy and funding, led by the governor; 2. Implementation and capacity development, overseen by the California Department of Education under a director appointed by the State Board of Education; and 3. Evaluation and system accountability, for which the state superintendent of public instruction would be responsible. A governance realignment of this nature would require legislative action but not a constitutional amendment. Such a shift would clarify lines of authority, reduce redundancy, and strengthen the overall effectiveness and coherence of California's education governance system."

You can find the [full report](#) as cited in [CalMatters.org](#)

2026 will be a year of opportunity for AAUW, to work our mission and purpose with your support. Join the public policy committee! January 31st/Symposium on School Board Project; March 27-April 17th Lobby Days.

If interested in Public Policy committee, contact Kathy at kathylong220@gmail.com

Membership News, Glabe Siegfriedt

Greetings AAUW members! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and that it was filled with joy, rest and good times. Just wanted to remind everyone that AAUW continues its mission to fight barriers and support ways to increase inclusivity and improve the lives of women and girls. This year was really hard and we need to get ready for the 2026 midterm elections to help bulwark extreme attacks on our rights. Your membership dues help us advocate for laws at all levels of government.

If you have any questions about when your membership expires or how to renew, please don't hesitate to contact me - your Membership Chairperson, Glabe Siegfriedt 805-415-9516, siegfriedtg@gmail.com

Member News - Opportunities to Help

Camarillo Branch member Stephanie Zierhut is working to get books into the hands of children.

Please contact Stephanie if you are interested in learning more about the initiative to launch Imagination Library of Ventura County which focuses on ages birth to 5 years old.

Stephanie Zierhut email: zierhutstephanie64@gmail.com



YOU CAN NEVER GET ENOUGH BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF ENOUGH CHILDREN

Dolly

HELP LAUNCH

Imagination Library of Ventura County
as the new local program partner for
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library!

— Dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books like these free of charge to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners.

NOW IN CALIFORNIA, an option to choose Bilingual English/Spanish or English-only!

WHY WE NEED YOU:

- PHASE I / FUNDING:** Help raise our target of \$200,000 to receive matching funds from the State of California and support from the Imagination Library.
- PHASE II / REGISTRATION:** Once we meet our goal, we can register Ventura County children ages birth to five, to receive books monthly free of charge to the family.

DONATE TODAY: The cost to provide one child with 12 monthly books for one full year is only \$15.50

Donate by check:

Make check to: **BURNON INC**
In the memo add: **Imagination Library of VC** or **ILVC**

Mail to: **Imagination Library of VC**
PO BOX 4982
THOUSAND OAKS CA 91359

Donate Online:

BURNON INC is our local financial partner, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for tax-deductible contributions (Federal Tax ID 77-0495901).

Thank you for your support and helping us to bring The Imagination Library to Ventura County.

LET'S GET BOOKS TO KIDS IN VENTURA!



Order Your Name Tag Today



The 1 ½ by 3" aluminum full color badge has a magnetic fastener. Follow these easy steps and the badge will be mailed directly to you from Aswell Trophy in Oxnard.

The cost of the badge is \$30: \$18.00 plus \$12.00 shipping.

Send an email to Aswell Trophy at aaaswell@aol.com.

1. Identify yourself as AAUW Camarillo branch member and you want to order a name badge.
2. Provide your name, home address, phone number and email contact information.
3. Aswell will send a photo of the badge in a few days via email for you to approve. They will also attach an invoice. Once approved, the badge goes into production.
4. When the badge is ready, Aswell will call you for credit/debit card payment and ship directly to you.

Camarillo Branch Board of Directors and Chairs

2025-2026

Kay Ito & Gloria Miele

Co-Presidents

Aauw.camarillo.president@gmail.com

Glabe Siegfriedt

VP, Membership

VP, Programs: **Open**

Colleen Robertson

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Tech Trek Alumnae Group (TTAG)

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Beacon Editor

Gladys Ochangco

Beacon Design and Layout

Membership

AAUW Camarillo Branch - Need to renew?

Annual dues are **\$130**
(\$74 National, \$30 CA, \$26 Branch).

1. Mail a check for **\$130** payable to "AAUW Camarillo Branch" to: AAUW Camarillo Branch, P.O. Box 862, Camarillo, CA 93011.

2. Online at AAUW National – my.aauw.org

Scroll down to "Don't have an account?" to reset your password and begin the online process using your email address, not your member number. Once logged in, you will join by selecting 3 membership types: National, California and Camarillo Branch Member (select CA-0132 Camarillo).

Tips and reminders for the online renewal:

- **Complete the password reset the very first time you login.**
- **If you don't receive the password reset email, be sure to check your spam folder!** The password reset email will come from: American Association of University Women info@aauw.org. Subject Line: AAUW Password Reset Requested.
- **Make sure to use your email address and not your member number when logging in.**
- **You can log in but my account says I'm not a member.** You have created a new account in error and a duplicate record new member number. National must fix this so please let me know if this happens to you!

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact, Glabe Siegfriedt Membership VP at siegfriedtg@gmail.com or 805-415-9516.



New Member Form: Please print

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone: (H) (____) _____

(C) (____) _____

E-Mail: _____

Dues Schedule: Circle one:

General Member **\$130**

Student Affiliate **\$0**

(Includes local, state & National Dues)

Check Payable: "AAUW Camarillo Branch" and mail to:

AAUW Camarillo Branch
P. O. Box 862
Camarillo, CA 93011
aauw.camarillo.president@gmail.com