

Branch Meeting
November 3, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Shrewsbury Historical Society
419 Sycamore Avenue, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702

Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt each fought for Women's Suffrage in her own way. Learn more about these women and others who worked tirelessly to pass the 19th Amendment.



Alice Paul
www.worldwar1centennial.org
accessed 24 October 2025



Carrie Chapman Catt
www.lockhaven.com
accessed 24 October 2025

Presidents' Message

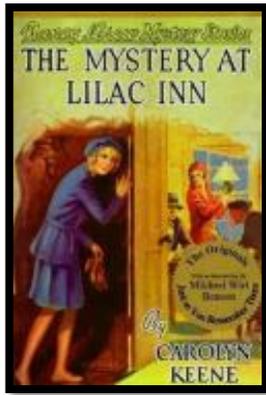
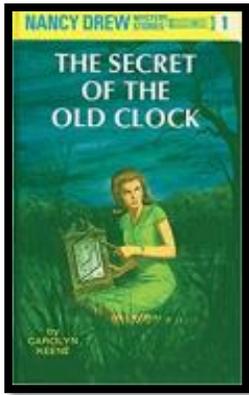
Dear Members and Friends,

Nights are slowly getting shorter and the sunset comes earlier and earlier each day. It's a good time to curl up in a cozy chair and read a book. This is a good time to read a mystery! Many of us read and loved Nancy Drew mysteries as children - stories about a smart and clever girl who solved mysteries and used her intellect to get out of sticky situations.

You probably know that the author of the Nancy Drew Mysteries, Carolyn Keene, is the pseudonym for a number of different ghost writers, but did you know the first of those authors was an amazing woman named Mildred Wirt Benson?



Let's celebrate our free right to vote!



Nancy's ability to think her way out of tough situations inspired kidnap victims to escape and women to enter law enforcement.

Mildred wrote 23 of the first 30 Nancy Drew novels. She also wrote many novels under her own name including a series you have probably read - the Penny Parker series about a high schooler who writes for her father's paper and is also an amateur sleuth. Maybe not as well-known as Nancy Drew, Penny Parker was Mildred's favorite and they are fun novels!

Born in Iowa in 1905, Benson was encouraged to pursue an education. She graduated from high school early and attended the University of Iowa. An excellent student, she earned her bachelor's in English in 1925. With a passion for writing, in 1927, Benson was the first student ever at Iowa to earn a Master's in Journalism.

Heading to NYC to start her writing career, Mildred met Edward Stratemeyer, a businessman who owned the Stratemeyer Syndicate, a publishing house that hired ghost writers to flesh out the outlines to its popular adventure series and detective series - *The Hardy Boys*, *Tom Swift*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, *Ruth Fielding* and more. Benson started work on *Ruth Fielding* but then helped Stratemeyer launch a brand-new series about the teenage girl detective *Nancy Drew*, who was modern, clever, and resourceful. Benson gave Nancy her strong personality, intelligence, and sense of adventure and, as a champion diver herself, her athleticism. The books came at a time when families were struggling in the Great Depression and then in WWII. Nancy Drew provided an escape and also provided a blueprint of strength in tough times.

Nancy Drew is independent, strong, and never gave up, even when stuck in a tough situation. She was respected by law enforcement and her doting father while still maintaining teenage relationships with her trusty best friend Bess and boyfriend George. Nancy Drew has been an inspiration to many including Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Sonia Sotomayor.

Mildred also pursued her dream of journalism, working for the *Toledo Times* and the *Toledo Blade* from age 24 to her death at age 96. She was tenacious and hard-working, often competing with her male colleagues, as after WWII female staffers were told they would have to leave their positions when the men returned. Fascinated by archeology, Mildred earned her pilot's license to fly to digs in Central America. Just like the character she helped to create, Mildred was kidnapped in Guatemala and used her wits to escape! Her love of flying is seen in many of her novels.

No one knew that Mildred Wirt Benson was the original author behind Nancy Drew until a court case in 1980 between the syndicate and the publisher. By 1993, she was finally credited with writing many of the original novels. Take a page from Nancy Drew and introduce her to a teenager in your life. Nancy's tenacity would have made her the perfect AAUW member, and, hopefully, reading her will inspire these teenagers to join AAUW as young adults.

To learn more about Mildred Benson, her writing career and her adventures see: <https://slate.com/culture/2015/07/nancy-drew-ghostwriter-and-journalist-mildred-wirt-benson-flew-airplanes-explored-jungles-and-wrote-hundreds-of-children-s-books.html>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/adventurous-writer-who-brought-Nancy-Drew-to-life-180969479/>

<https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/iwa/mildred/biography/>

Fans of Nancy Drew,
Co-Presidents Heather Balczarek & Peggy James

Our Annual Scholarships Honor Distinctive Students and Goals

by Connie Goddard

Brookdale Winners Cite Varied Career Ambitions

As reported in an earlier Networks, our Education Outreach Committee has worked with Brookdale Community College to revamp the way the school awards the three scholarships we fund for its students. The process is now handled by the college's development office, which has established a system whereby students apply via a written essay. Both the office and our committee are pleased with how the new system is working.

The \$2,000 grant can be used for a variety of education-related purposes, depending upon the students' needs.

This year's group of awardees include three young women of varied backgrounds and career expectations. One, Sabrina, has been given the Audrie LaTowsky award, which is intended for an older (25 plus) student. She's now working on an associate degree in business, after which she plans to pursue a four-year degree in marketing. Her ambition is to open a cafeteria in the Dominican Republic, the land from which her family has come.

In her essay, Sabrina compared her perseverance to that of her family's aged *greca* (coffee maker), which she described as worn,

tested, and still going strong.

Vanessa, winner of the Ruth Kennedy award, is a first-generation college student enrolled in Brookdale's nursing program. She wrote that she was inspired to do this after helping her Spanish-speaking mother navigate the health-care system. Vanessa aims to be a compassionate, reassuring, and culturally aware presence for others facing the same challenges her mother did.

The winner of the Louise Marsen award is an immigrant from China majoring in biology. Jingran intends to pursue a career in medical research, a goal shaped by observing her grandmother's battle with Alzheimer's disease. An outstanding student, Jingran has recently completed an internship at the University of Michigan; while there, she studied CRISPR technology. Her goal is to pursue a graduate degree that will enable her to contribute to "groundbreaking" research in neurodegenerative diseases.

Each of this year's awardees have sent welcome thank-you notes to Brookdale, letters that have been shared with the Education Outreach Committee.

Monmouth Awardees Aim for Careers in the Law

For the past few years, Monmouth University has been splitting the Esther Hymer \$2,000 scholarship between two students. This year's recipients seem embarked upon paths which that world traveler and women's rights advocate would approve. Further, one of them began her college work at Brookdale.

The two were highly recommended by the political science department as "dedicated students, engaged in service activities, and committed to global understanding." Shannon claims that she has wanted to be an attorney since childhood. Then experience starting a home-organizing service led her to consider majoring in business – until she took a business law course and returned to her earlier intention.

Shannon has also put her summers to good use – during one, she worked in the county sheriff’s office, experience which offered insights into the criminal justice system. During another, she worked in a firm that specializes in family law, an experience that encouraged her to focus on a similar specialty after law school.

Dorothee claims that she became interested in becoming a prosecutor during middle school, when she and her mother would watch crime shows on TV far into the night. The daughter of immigrants from Haiti, she speaks her parents’ native Creole fluently. She is also a musician with an interest in creative writing.

While at Monmouth, Dorothee has worked with the school’s model UN and participated in its debate club. Her coursework has included studying the politics of the Middle East, and she, too, has spent a summer interning at a law firm.

Both Shannon and Dorothee, we are pleased to say, have also sent us thank-you notes. Both acknowledged Esther Hymer’s dedication and accomplishments.

The Education Outreach Committee wishes all five of these students well – and are pleased that AAUW’s fundraising has been able to contribute to meeting their career goals.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership Is Everyone’s Responsibility

We will be publishing a yearbook this fall. If you have not paid your dues to date, please send them in to be sure you are listed in the yearbook.

We will be doing the Shape the Future membership campaign at the November 3 meeting. This is for new members only or those whose membership has lapsed 2 years. New members can join AAUW for

\$63.00 instead of the regular membership rate of \$100.00. This membership will extend to June 30, 2026.

Bring a friend(s) and encourage them to join and share in this great savings. Cash, check or pay online for a small additional fee.

New Member:

Amy DeSanctis
Alfred U.; U of VA Former Adj. Prof & Corp. Training

Changes of Address:

Annette Benanti

Marian Wattenbarger

Email and phone remain the same.

Co-Membership Directors:

Mary Lea Burden
Judy Kramer

SAVE THE DATE
Meet and Mingle for New
Members, Friends of AAUW,
Board Members

Sunday, January 11, 2026
3 p.m.
Shrewsbury Historical Society
(in the Shrewsbury Municipal
Complex)

October Branch Program Summary Stigma No More!

by Connie Goddard

Our October 6 branch meeting on CTE – or Career and Technical Education – provided refreshing insight into current trends in both high school and postsecondary education. Although the focus was on Monmouth County, the changes discussed are national in scope. The speakers were Joe Senerchia, director of school counseling at the Monmouth County Vocational School District (MCVSD), and Susan Pagano, who directs the Continuing and Professional Studies program at Brookdale Community College.

A theme for the evening might be “stigma no more,” which is a comment one of the speakers made during the engaging presentations and follow-up discussion. Whereas vocational education – a former term for CTE – often had a stigma among students, parents, and school staff, that is no longer the case. Enrollment in both programs – at MCVSD and in Brookdale’s certification courses – is growing markedly.

Though “college for all” had been regarded as a national goal since the 1990s, that’s no longer the case. Many students are now beginning to pursue career goals while still in high school. Senerchia mentioned a “pendulum swing,” between a past focus on academics to today’s interest in “shared time” programs, in which CTE students split their days between academic and vocational courses. Admission to all MCVSD programs has become increasingly competitive as demand has grown.

Senerchia also noted the county’s selective career academies; one of them is High Tech, located on the Brookdale campus. It has been considered the nation’s premier pre-engineering school, he said.

In her talk, Pagano noted that the students in the continuing ed – or certification – programs are there to “make better lives for themselves

and their families.” Prominent programs at Brookdale, and at all of NJ’s 18 community colleges, tend to focus on skills needed by local businesses and industries. In Monmouth County, one of these is health care. And over the past few years, enrollment in many programs has doubled.

Pagano mentioned New Jersey’s ambitious new workforce goal. It aims to ensure that, by 2040, three-fourths of the state’s adult workers will have degrees or credentials sufficient to qualify for wages or salaries that will exceed the national average for high school graduates. And community colleges will continue to play an increasingly substantial role in providing these credentials.

The discussion after the presentations was lively; some of it focused on one of Brookdale’s most popular CTE programs – teaching certification, which admits adults with bachelor’s degrees. Many enrollees have been working in technical fields but want to help meet the growing demand for CTE teachers – as well as teachers for regular K-12 classes.

Brookdale’s motto – “Here Will Get You There” – could apply to programs at both schools. We thank our speakers for insights into how.



Connie Goddard introduced the speakers and moderated the discussion.



Joe Senerchia



Tech Trekker Elizabeth with her proud Mom and Dad.



Susan Pagano

(Thanks to member **Susan Rosenberg** for these photos.)

Our evening program began with the presentation of the 2024 Member of the Year Award to **Irene Gibson** for her many years of volunteering in NMCB causes—including her great work with the Used Book Sale.

Our first speaker of the evening was one of the Tech Trek students we sent to camp this past summer. Elizabeth is now an 8th grader and she shared how much she enjoyed the experience of learning STEM skills with her peers from around the state.



Study Group News

Dear Friends,
Interested in joining an established Study Group? Check with the Chairs in the groups listed below. Those attending are required to be members in good standing. Guests may attend three meetings before being required to join AAUW. Here are your current possibilities.

Susan Gelber, Study Group Director

Art History

October outing at *Atlantic Highlands Art Council*

Members of the group enjoyed brunch at *Sissy's* at the Atlantic Highlands Marina. Others joined us at the gallery. While waiting for the gallery to open, the group enjoyed visiting the local farmers' market down the street. We returned to explore "Roots and Colors" images by local artists of Hispanic heritage. It was a beautiful fall day, and the outing was enjoyed by all.

Friday, November 14

Princeton Art Museum (New!!)

Meet at 10:30 am at the Museum. Admission is free.

A Highlights Tour is offered at 11:00 am. Pre-register at

<https://artmuseum.tickets.princeton.edu/event/public-highlights-tour-wdxa31>

Please RSVP to the co-chairs so we can plan carpools. [Note: driving time from Red Bank is 60 min. to 80 min. All are welcome!

December date TBD

Holiday Shopping in Asbury Park and Lunch

Watch your email for timely updates. All Branch members welcome.

If you have any questions, contact the co-chairs:
Joan Fructer

Barbara Withers

French Conversation

Our group enables women with a good knowledge of the French language to maintain their fluency through some language structure reviews and conversations with other members on different topics. Upon the recommendation of our members, we have now added a literary component to some of our meetings.

To keep up with the needs of our members, we will be meeting once a month (the second Thursday at 7:30 p.m.) through Zoom.

Members are encouraged to participate (orally or written) at the monthly meetings.

If anyone is interested in joining the group, please contact the chair for further information. Newcomers are always welcome.

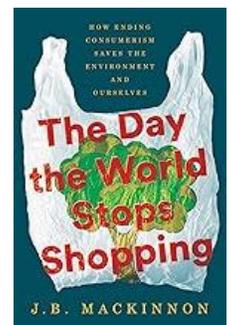
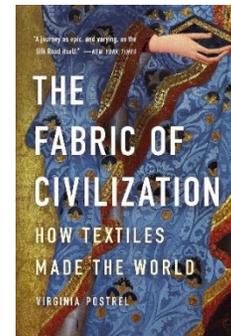
Chair: Jeannine Maloney

Insights Into Our Times

Insights into our Times, our non-fiction book group, will meet on Tuesday, November 11, at 2 p.m. at the home of Mary Lea Burden to discuss *The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World* by Virginia Postrel. Please RSVP to Mary Lea if you plan to attend.

Our December 9, 11 a.m. meeting will be held at the home of Pat Baroska to discuss *The Day the World Stops Shopping: How Ending Consumerism Saves the Environment and Ourselves* by J. B. MacKinnon.

Note that we are varying starting times to accommodate members with conflicts.



New members are always welcome. Contact chair, Kathy Olsen for details.

Russian Short Stories

We have scheduled future Zoom meetings for the third Thursdays of the month at 1 p.m.

Contact Study Group Chair:
Stephanie Rose

Writing Study Group

The Writing group is interested in a restart. We need a few more members in order to begin. Are you a writer . . . or want to be? Writing fiction, memoir, history, poetry? Need a sounding board? We'd love to get together. Please contact Karen Topham if you want to join us.

Do you play bridge?
The AAUW bridge group is looking for players in their bridge group. If you have a partner and want to play or if you need a partner, please let us know. This group supports our Branch scholarships each year as well as awarding prizes to winners.

Call/text Linda Plamondon for more information.

Book Sale Book Sale Book Sale

Old First Church
69 Kings Highway, Middletown
Lower Level, outside stairs
732-275-2237

Open: Saturdays: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Thursdays: 10 a.m. - Noon
(except for holiday weekends)
Donate: Saturdays: 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Thursdays: 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Thursdays

Our AAUW Used Book Sale needs more customers and more book donations. Please share information about the Book Sale with

your other organizations, friends, and neighbors. If you would like some colorful posters to share, Irene Gibson will be happy to send you as many as you need. The proceeds from our Book Sale helps provide scholarships for local women and girls!

To learn more about the AAUW and the book donation policy, visit aauw-nj-nmcb.org or call 732-275-2237.

Save the Date,

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Scholarship Luncheon

Beacon Hill Country Club

MEMBER MOMENTS

Barbara Withers has two photos in the Monmouth Museum Members' Showcase celebrating creativity. The exhibit can be seen until January 5, 2026, in the Nilson Gallery.

PUBLIC POLICY NEWS AND RESOURCES

Members Participate in October
No Kings Day
by Nancy Butler

Members were involved in No Kings Day on October 18, 2025 – a day of nonpartisan, nonviolent action grounded in AAUW's mission. They joined to show the power of people working together for education, economic opportunity, civil rights, and a healthy democracy.

Marian Wattenbarger, Annette Benanti, Pat Miller, Theresa Blackburn, Connie Goddard, and Nancy Butler are some of the members of

our branch who participated in this action in Red Bank.



Connie Goddard



Theresa Blackburn (r) made these signs



Nancy Butler created her sign

NetWorks is published by the Northern Monmouth County Branch of AAUW. Upcoming due date for copy: Friday, November 21 for the December/January issue. Please submit copy to Karen Topham, Editor.

Send address changes, names of prospective members, membership applications and checks, and questions about non-receipt of the newsletter to:

Judy Kramer and Mary Lea Burden, Membership, Co-directors
P.O. Box 398, Red Bank, NJ 07701 aauw.nmcb@gmail.com

Our electronic mailing list enables us to inform you about opportunities for AAUW members that arise too late for publication in *NetWorks*. You can be sure that we carefully evaluate each notice before we send it out.

Please note that the use of the branch email list is for branch activities only. Members wishing to share other information with branch members are invited to submit a notice to the "Networking" column in *NetWorks*.

Something to share? Please send the information to Karen Topham for the next *NetWorks*.

Shrewsbury Historical Society Presents:
Quilts Tell A Story
Vintage Quilts Exhibit

The more than 60 quilts in the exhibit tell of the maker's talent and stories of the 19th and 20th century quilt making. They are a unique showing of sewing techniques, pattern selection, chosen fabrics and stitches, all of their own personal expression. Quilt making, once a necessity has become a creative art form and today remains an integral part of our heritage past and present.

Grand Opening!
Sunday, November 2, 2025
11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
419 Sycamore Avenue

Exhibit Hours
November 2025 through April 2026
Sundays & Tuesdays 11AM - 2 PM
By appointment (732) 530-7974
Groups are welcome



American Association of University Women
Northern Monmouth County Branch
P.O. Box 398
Red Bank, NJ 07701

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.

Membership is open to any graduate holding an associate degree or equivalent, baccalaureate, or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.

AAUW-NMCB is designated as a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations to the branch, as well as to the national organization, are fully tax-deductible.

AAUW is a highly rated charity.

Stay Connected!

AAUW www.aauw.org
AAUW-NJ <https://aauwnj.org>

AAUW-NMCB www.aauw-nj-nmcb.org
Branch phone 732-275-2237

AAUW Action Network www.aauw.org/what-we-do/public-policy/two-minute-activist/



Join AAUW-NMCB on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/AAUW.NM>

CB/

AAUW Used Book Sale



The store is located at:

Old First Church
69 Kings Highway
Middletown

Open: Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
through June.

Thursdays from 10 a.m. to Noon through
June.

Donations: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Thursdays 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

(The sale is closed on holiday weekends.)

Have you been missing
AAUW's *Outlook* magazine that used to
arrive in the mail?

Go to www.aauw.org. At the bottom of
the home page, sign up for news and
updates with your email address and zip
code.