



*Founded in 1923, AAUW's Mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.*

*NOTE: If reading this in email or online, click on [view entire message](#) when you get to the end, as the OMV may be "clipped."*

*\*\*\*Also, remember that words [underlined in bright blue](#) are links to click on for additional information.\*\*\**

*Karen Dumont, Editor  
Judy McGuire, Photo Editor*

## General Meeting

Our speaker for April 12 is Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney. She started at NMSU in July 2020 in the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Extension Home Economics Unit.



Katherine Ortega Courtney is a leading voice in data-driven policy, community transformation, and childhood trauma prevention. With a PhD in Experimental Psychology from Texas Christian University's Institute of Behavioral Research, she brings deep expertise to every conversation. A former Juvenile Justice Epidemiologist and Bureau Chief for Child Protective Services Research in New Mexico, she has dedicated her career to championing data-informed solutions to systemic challenges. As co-founder of the New Mexico Data Leaders for Child Welfare program, she has empowered leaders to harness data for meaningful change.

Dr. Courtney's impact extends beyond policy—she has led groundbreaking community initiatives through the Santa Fe Community Foundation and the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership.

Dr. Courtney is the co-author of *Anna, Age Eight*, the book that sparked a movement and led to the creation of the Anna, Age Eight Institute, where she serves as co-director. Alongside Dominic Cappello, she also co-wrote *100% Community*, a blueprint for creating trauma-free, family-friendly communities. Whether engaging with policymakers, educators, or advocates, Dr. Ortega Courtney delivers compelling insights, data-driven strategies, and an undeniable passion for building a better future.

*RoseAnn Hernández & Tricia Brainard, Programs Chairs*

## From our Co-Presidents Donna Yargosz and Lynette Schurdevin



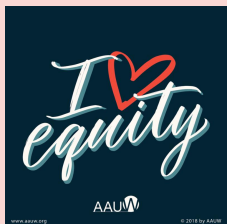
If the wind has not blown us all away by the time this is published, we are basking in the sun of a most successful Girls Can! for 2025. We served around 350 sixth grade girls and fulfilled a good part of our mission to encourage girls to stay in school and to go on for further training. It was fun, it was exhausting, and it was so well done! Kudos and thanks to all those who made it possible.

Now we turn our minds to the State Convention in Mesilla on April 26, to the giving of scholarships and awards to girls and women, and to the approval of our budget for 2025-2026.

Oh yes, and we still need a Co-President and now a Membership V.P due to illness. It takes a lot of us doing all kinds of things to make this organization run. Please consider giving your time and energy to our very worthy cause.

See you at the General Meeting on Saturday, April 12!

*Donna Yargosz and Lynette Schurdevin, Co-Presidents*



## PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

At the time I'm writing this, the 60-day New Mexico 2025 Legislative session is nearing an end, and several bills that accord with AAUW-NM's Public Policy priorities are moving through legislative committees. These include the *Paid Family and Medical Leave Act* and a bill that would increase taxes on alcohol purchases in order to reduce alcohol-related deaths.

Three major public safety bills have already passed the NM House and Senate on a bipartisan basis and were signed into law by Governor Lujan Grisham on February 27. *The Criminal Competency and Treatment Act* will help decrease the number of offenders who are both violent and mentally ill, and who are repeatedly released onto the streets, by requiring confined treatment programs. This bill also increases penalties for car thefts and fentanyl trafficking.

A second bill signed into law will establish a behavioral health trust fund to provide long-term financing for statewide behavioral health programs.

The third bill signed into law creates a behavioral health executive committee to coordinate regional behavioral health efforts.

For more information about these and other signed bills, go to the Office of the Governor's website at <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/about-the-governor/signed-legislation>.

*Kate Mangelsdorf*, Public Policy Chair



## [Diversity and Inclusion](#)

### **APRIL:**

**Deaf History Month**

**Arab American and Middle Eastern and North African American Heritage Month**

**Autism Acceptance Month**

**Scottish-American Heritage Month**

**National Volunteer Month**

**Earth Month**

Apr 1: **International Fun at Work Day**

Apr 2: **World Autism Awareness Day**

Apr 7: **World Health Day**

Apr 6: **Tartan Day**

Apr 11: **LGBTQIA+ Day of Silence**

Apr 22: **Earth Day**

Apr 12: Apr 20: **Passover (Judaism)**

Apr 23: 24: **Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom HaShoah)**

Apr 26: **Lesbian Visibility Day**

*Tricia Brainard*, Diversity Coordinator

## **Defending Equity: Strengthening Our Collective Impact**

AAUW is providing a webinar series - **Defending Equity: Strengthening Our Collective Impact Series**. The goal of the series is to help members cut through the confusion and learn more about actionable ways we can effect change in the current environment. Descriptions of each event, dates and registration links follow – please share freely.

### **Defending Equity: Strengthening Our Collective Impact Series**

Amid growing attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, AAUW is taking action. This series equips members with key policy updates, advocacy strategies, and tools to strengthen our impact. Join one or all sessions to stay informed and take action!

## **AAUW: Standing Strong Against Attacks on Equity in Education**

March 26 | 6:00 p.m. ET [Register Here](#)

Recent executive actions threaten diversity, equity, and inclusion nationwide. Join us to learn about these policy changes, how they impact women and marginalized communities, and how AAUW is taking action to defend equity. Stay informed and discover ways to support our mission in this critical moment.

### **Building A Stronger AAUW**

April 1 | 7:00 p.m. ET [Register Here](#)

Strong fundraising fuels AAUW's impact. This session, led by AAUW National's Advancement Committee, will provide strategies for successful branch fundraising. Learn about AAUW's budget, the Greatest Needs Fund, and hear directly from branches with proven fundraising success. Walk away with tools and resources to help your branch grow its financial support.

### **AAUW Advocacy Strategies for In-District Meetings**

April 8 | 7:00 p.m. ET [Register Here](#)

Face-to-face advocacy can drive real change. This session will guide members on how to set up in-district meetings with members of Congress, maximize town hall participation, and effectively use key talking points during the upcoming April congressional recess. Learn how to make your voice heard.

### **Funding Futures: Understanding Changes to Sex and Gender-Based Scholarship Programs**

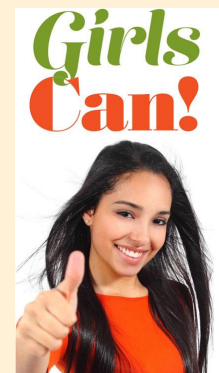
April 15 | 7:00 p.m. ET [Register Here](#)

Navigating legal changes to sex-based scholarships can be complex. This session will provide guidance for AAUW branches on how to administer scholarships in compliance with evolving regulations while staying true to our mission of advancing education for women and girls.



## Girls Can!

**Girls Can!** was a life changer for more than 350 6th grade Dona Ana County girls. Held on March 1, 2025, at the Dona Ana Community College (DACC) East Mesa Campus, the event saw a significant increase in participants compared to last year. This remarkable growth highlighted the growing interest and importance of such initiatives in empowering young girls.



The atmosphere at **GC!25** was charged with enthusiasm. As the girls arrived, they were greeted with a warm welcome and a sense of excitement that only grew as the day progressed. The event featured 25 diverse workshops, designed to engage participants in hands-on experiences as they learned about possible careers in their futures.

Evaluations conducted after the event revealed that each workshop was met with enthusiasm. The girls expressed their appreciation for the engaging and interactive sessions, which not only imparted knowledge but also sparked curiosity and creativity. The feedback highlighted the effectiveness of each workshop.

The success of **GC!25** can be attributed to the dedicated efforts of the organizers and volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure a seamless and enriching experience for the girls. Their commitment to fostering an environment of learning and growth was evident in every aspect of the event.

In conclusion, **GC!25** was a resounding triumph, leaving a lasting impression on more than 350 young minds. As we look forward to **GC!26**, the impact of this year's event will undoubtedly continue to resonate, encouraging more girls to embrace their futures with enthusiasm and confidence.

## Many Donors Make a Wonderful GIRLS CAN! Event

With the event over and while the information is still clear in my mind, I wanted to list the supporters of GIRLS CAN! This list includes monetary support, in-kind support, and lots of hours of volunteer time and preparation and materials.

We say, "Many Thanks!"

- Members of the Las Cruces branch of the American Association of University Women
- Presenters and their assistants
- NMSU women students
- Dona Ana Community College facility, faculty, staff and administration
- Santa Teresa Charitable Foundation
- Las Cruces Public Schools Foundation
- A Still Small Voice Foundation
- 3 Crosses Chapter of the Federally Employed Women
- Martin Small
- Peace Lutheran Church
- Century Bank
- Sisbarro Dealership
- American Documents
- Caliche's

We should not forget the many 6th grade girls and their school representatives who came to make our event complete! They, after all, are the reason for our work. We make a difference.

*Kay Brilliant*, Fundraising Coordinator

## Membership Matters

Please consider bringing a guest to general meetings and Interest Group meetings (with an OK from the host). Our branch is the largest in NM with over 100 members!

**Guests** will be offered the opportunity to join at any official AAUW general meeting or event to receive a one-time 50% discount on NATIONAL Dues through the AAUW National "Shape the Future" (STF) campaign. Since this **STF discounted \$75 total annual dues payment** must be received at the event/meeting, please suggest that your guests bring a CHECK or CASH with high hopes they will want to join!

**WELCOME NEW MEMBER: Maria Castillo**, PhD, NMSU Professor Biology (and longtime Girls Can! presenter) who was encouraged by her neighbor, Barbara McGuffey, to **JOIN** at the March 1, 2025 Girls Can event with the STF discount.

**Renewal Reminder! Annual Dues are now \$112 - effective April 1, 2025 with the recently announced \$2 National Dues increase ([details here](#)):** National (\$74) + State (\$18) + Las Cruces Branch (\$20). If you renew online, you must select New Mexico for State and Las Cruces for Branch to be a member of our Branch. If you prefer, you can renew by check for \$112 made payable to AAUW-LC in person at our

meetings or by mail to: P.O. Box 1081, Las Cruces, NM 88004

If there are any questions, feel free to contact:  
*Michele Rasch* , Membership Co-VP

Click here for a pdf of the [2025 Membership Brochure](#) that you can print or email and give to prospective members.

*Michele Rasch* , Membership Co-VP

## Spring has Sprung!

If you need help with your Spring cleaning and chores, our student member Neyda Moreno has an opportunity for you. She is a member of NMSU *Aggies Without Limits*. Read on for information about how we can help them and help ourselves in return.

### □□□NMSU AWL “Daisy Chains”

*Aggies Without Limits* is a NMSU organization committed to serving and improving communities and the environment through hard work and outreach. Each year, we extend our efforts beyond our local community by organizing international trips to assist countries in need. This year (Summer 2025) members of *AWL* will travel to Nicaragua to build a health center and renovate a bridge, whose absence has made it difficult for locals to travel to the next town.

All travel expenses are covered by the participating *AWL* members, who are responsible for funding their own trip. To help make this opportunity more affordable, we have established a system called "Daisy Chains". Through this initiative, community members can request assistance with various tasks such as yard work, landscaping, cleaning, etc.

This is how it works:

- The requestor sets a fair hourly wage and determines the number of helpers required. (Most people pay them \$12-\$20 per hour.)
- Tasks typically range from 1 to 4 hours per day, for as many days as needed but weekends are preferred by students.
- All money earned goes into the accounts of (only) the individuals who participated and helps them pay for their trip expenses.

We currently have about 50 active members eager to assist with chores while raising funds for their trip. If you are interested in hiring a student(s) through Daisy Chains, please contact Brandon Garcia at 505-347-6234, and he will be happy to answer any questions and make arrangements.

Thank you! -Neyda

*Londa Seiffert*, Academic Chair

On March 14, six AAUW-LC members (Jennifer Burk, Judy McGuire, Laura Bemis, Michele Rasch, Carol McDonell, and Kay Brilliant) visited the **War Eagles Air Museum** in Santa Teresa. We were treated to a guided tour led by Michael Chang focusing on women involved in early aviation. We all left feeling more knowledgeable about early military airplanes. The tour was followed by a delicious lunch at the State Line Restaurant in El Paso. Going Places is coordinated by **Michele Rasch**.



## **AAUW-LC PROGRAMS**

Meetings are held on the second Saturday at the DACC Workforce Center, 2345 Nevada Ave. The program begins at **10:00 am** preceded by a "social time" from 9:30 - 10:00 am.

*RoseAnn Hernández & Tricia Brainard, Program Chairs*

### **Interest Groups**

Please use your Yearbook for member addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.



**Anything Goes Book Group** will meet on April 14 at 1:30 pm to discuss *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters . Contact **Anne Chase**.

**Anything Goes Fiction Book Group** will meet on April 28 at 1:30 pm to discuss *Godplayer* by Robin Cook. Contact: **Judy McGuire**

**Bridge** Our bridge group will meet at 1:15 pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each



month. Contact: **Carol Ann Council**

**Great Decisions** Great Decisions 2025 Discussion Group began in March. New members are welcome. Email **Susan Hychka** saying that you are interested, and she'll order a \$35 briefing book for you from the Foreign Policy Association. You can pay when the books are delivered.

Monthly discussions topics for 2025 include 1) American Foreign Policy at a Crossroads, 2) US Changing Leadership of the World Economy, 3) US-China Relations, 4) China, the West, and the Global South, 5) International Cooperation on Climate Change, 6) The Future of NATO and European Security, 7) AI and American National Security, and 8) American Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead.

### **Going Places**

Contact: **Michele Rasch**

**Chinese Mahjong** Hong Kong Style, or Chinese Mahjong, meets on Wednesday afternoons at 1:00 pm at Rita Worrell's home. Instruction is available for beginners. Contact: **Rita Worrell**

**Playing and Singing for Fun** meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday mornings at 10 am. The group has chosen ukuleles as our main instrument but other instruments are welcome. Contact: **Reba McGear**.

### **Want to know more about an Interest Group?**

Contact the named "**contact**" for each Interest Group described above. Interest groups offer an opportunity to get to know other AAUW LC members in a more relaxed and informal environment. All are welcome.

### **Thinking of you.....**

When you learn of a member who has medical issues, personal loss, or a reason for celebration or recognition, please contact **Judy McGuire** so she can show our support with a personalized card.



### **All Above Board**

You can click here for your copy of the 2024-2026 elected and appointed leadership team.

#### **2025-2026 Board of Directors**

Your elected and appointed **Board of Directors** meets monthly on the 1st Monday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Once the Board approves meeting minutes, they are made available to you by clicking on the **link** in the following month's OMV.

Click here for the latest **Board-approved minutes**:

### **Communications**

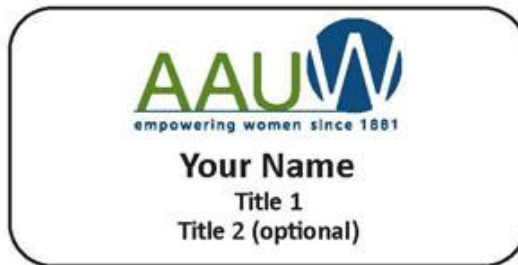
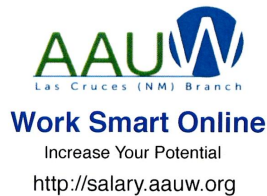
In addition to the *Organ Mountain Views* (OMV), we maintain a Website and Facebook page. All Branch emails will be sent by **Donna Yargosz** or **Lynette Schurdevin**, Co-Presidents, and/or **Kathy Cooke**, Email Coordinator.

[AAUW-LC Website](#) is maintained by **Sonia Walterbos**. Contact her with comments, additions, or questions.. (click on the link above: "AAUW-LC Website")

*NOTE: There are three **green tabs** at the end of this newsletter that will take you directly to our website, AAUW NM website, and/or National AAUW's website.*



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[dumontkm@gmail.com](mailto:dumontkm@gmail.com)

Thank you for reading



Las Cruces (NM) Branch

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