

Ballwin-Chesterfield Branch, 2010-2020
By Doris Nistler

Since the Ballwin-Chesterfield Branch was founded in 1981 as the Lafayette Area Branch with 41 members, we have grown over the years to 209 in June, 2020. Meetings are held the second Thursday from September through April, at the Trinity Lutheran Church, Chesterfield. The Branch year begins in September, when the Board hosts a welcoming brunch for members and their guests. December is our winter party to raise funds to support Branch activities, May is when we have a luncheon honoring our retiring officers, installing new officers and honoring outstanding branch members. July is our summer potluck picnic for members and their guests.

At Branch meetings the Program Committee presents speakers whose focus is directed towards our mission-based topics, social justice, economic security, human rights, gender and educational equity and diversity. The Membership Committee has a New Member Coffee every year, publishes new member biographies in the Branch Newsletter and introduces new members at a Branch meeting. They also encourage new members to become active in Branch operations and join our many activities and interest groups. Throughout the year members participate in a variety of Interest groups, including bridge groups, book groups, Play Readers, Movie Group, Expressions, Out-to-lunch, Genealogy, Golf, and recently, Munching Matters, focusing on AAUW topics and featuring Branch members' life experiences.

There have been changes in the Branch these past years in the areas of operation, mostly due to advanced technology which expands means of communicating our mission and the operational tools to achieve our goal of advancing women and girls in academia and the workplace. The Branch website has information and pictures from Branch meetings, and activities as well as State and National information. We are also on Facebook and other social media platforms, and recently, due to a nationwide pandemic, have held Board meetings via a web conferencing tool, as have interest groups. Our Branch newsletter, published 10 times a year, features Branch meetings and speakers, articles from the co-presidents and all major committees, and announcements of Branch, Interbranch Council, State and National events, as well as Dollars for Scholars events and interest group meetings.

Under the leadership of the Public Policy Committee there have been a number of events and activities promoting AAUW public policy priorities emphasizing awareness of social injustices to women and encouraging member participation. Webinars have been conducted to promote member advocacy activities, such as arranging in-district visits to their representatives for the purpose of presenting AAUW's position on women's issues. In April members are encouraged to participate with other organizations in the Equity Action Day Rally held in Jefferson City. In 2012, Missouri was one of 15 states awarded a grant to present Get out the Vote and the Branch registered 384 new and updated voters. Branch GOTV efforts and events continue during election years. In May 2015 the Branch was awarded a Community Action Grant of \$10,000 for two years to establish the St. Charles Coalition Against Human Trafficking nonprofit and a number of events and forums were held on this modern day slavery of human trafficking.

In 2016 the Committee informed members about the State Net MO service which advises about new bills filed in Missouri State Legislature. In 2017 a successful conference on Breaking Chains of Human Trafficking, a result of the Community Action Grant, exceeded the goals set for the final year of that Grant. Beginning in 2018 an initiative to train women in salary negotiations, the Work Smart online project began, and members were instructed by the Committee and encouraged to take the class to assist achieving a grant, which was successfully completed by March, 2019.

The Branch supports the Legal Advocacy Fund through education and fundraising. The LAF Committee educates the members on LAF supported cases by writing articles in the Branch newsletter and presentations at monthly meetings. Initially, the primary focus was on those cases that arose from workplace or academia, but in 2012 the focus included cases on sexual assault and harassment to women while serving in the U.S. Military. In that same year, LAF and Interbranch Council sponsored screening of "The Invisible War" a documentary about the sexual assault epidemic of soldiers within the U.S. Military, featuring several plaintiffs from LAF supported lawsuits. In September 2012, the LAF Committee and Dollars for Scholars sponsored a presentation, Human Trafficking in St. Louis, at the St. Joseph of Carondelet Motherhouse. The LAF Committee raised funds by designating February as LAF Individual Giving Month, and through fund raising events. In 2012, LAF sponsored Trivia Night raising \$2800, and two Trivia Nights raising over \$3000 in both March 2014, and October 2015. In June 2017, the committee sponsored an All Games Day, raising over \$1000.

Supporting the AAUW Educational Opportunities Fund and local scholarships for non-traditional women returning to college is part of Branch efforts. Our Dollars for Scholars program raises scholarship funds through member sponsored activities and the money raised is sent annually to EOF and local scholarships are awarded. The amount has varied over the years, and in 2019/2020 the Branch contributed \$4000 to National and awarded women \$6000 in local scholarships divided between UMSL and Maryville University. In January we invite recipients of local scholarships to attend a Branch meeting so we can hear their stories. In 2011 the EOF committee began a used book sale, which continues to date, all proceeds benefiting Dollars for Scholars. November is the annual Individual Giving Drive. In 2005 the Branch began the Silver Anniversary Research and Project Grant, with a \$75,000 goal, which was completed in March 2012, three years ahead of schedule. The Eleanor Roosevelt Walk is held every October and Branch members walk to raise funds in support of AAUW research. The National Conference for College Women Student Leaders, (NCCWSL) an annual event for female students, has been sponsored by the Branch since 2000 giving scholarships for women to attend the annual conference.

The Branch actively supports AAUW STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and careers for women and girls. The STEM Committee members mentor special projects, act as judges at the Greater St. Louis Science Fair, and awards cash prizes. Scholarships have been awarded for students to attend "Expanding Your Horizons"

science education program. In 2010 the STEM Committee prepared a video and kit explaining the findings of the AAUW publication, "Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics", which was requested by and sent to universities in Missouri. A few years later the Committee put together a "Traveling Tool Kit", to be used by grade school teachers. In 2012, 2013, the Branch partnered with Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri and its STEM program at Normandy Middle School. In April 2014, and every year since, a new project "STEM Girls of Promise" honors five high school girls from Valley Park High School for their excellence and promise in one or more of the STEM fields. In April 2015, Maplewood-Richmond Heights High School was added to the project and five juniors were honored at an awards program.

Together with other St. Louis area AAUW branches, and the Tuesday Women's Association of the Ethical Society, the Branch sponsors and participates in a series of four international relation lectures which are free and open to the public. Branch members have served as officers and members of the Interbranch Council, which sponsors an event "Spring Fling" each year at which time a special award, Barbara Lackritz Service Award, is given to a St. Louis area AAUW member in recognition of outstanding service to AAUW.

In October 2018, a major change brought the Branch into line with current AAUW practices. Instead of separate EOF and LAF funds, anything associated with raising money for AAUW is under one fund: the AAUW Fund, and all money raised is coordinated. This resulted in a reconstruction of the Board in order to update the Branch to be more consistent with Missouri State and National AAUW requirements. The Director positions of EOF and LAF were eliminated, replaced by AAUW Fund, and a new position, University Liaison, was created to emphasize the importance of our scholarship program. In a branch Newsletter Marcia Block, co-president 2017-2019, wrote, "The changes are primarily in title. We will still work for gender equity for women and girls as we always have."

At the National Conventions, the Branch received recognition as #3 highest branch in combined giving at the 2011 convention, #8 highest at 2013 convention, #13 highest at the 2015 convention, and #37 highest at the 2017 convention. The Branch has consistently been the highest branch contributor in Missouri, every year receiving awards for first in Total Giving, along with 10 Star and Galaxy Awards for projects and events. One of the highest awards given by AAUW Missouri, AAUW Missouri Woman of Distinction award, was won by members Julia Triplett in 2012 and Pat Shores in 2016. Since 2010, members who have won the AAUW Outstanding Missouri Member Award are, Sue Barley, Marsha Koch, Joyce Katz, Yvonne Morrison, Julia Triplett, Pat Shores and Karen Francis. Branch members receiving the IBC Barbara Lackritz Service Award are Pat Shores, 2010, Barbara Butchart, 2013, Debbie McWard, 2015, Kay Meyer, 2016, Karen Francis, 2018, Marsha Koch, 2019, and Mary Jermack, 2020.

Ballwin-Chesterfield has been well represented by enthusiastic and sizable delegations to all state, regional and national meetings. Many members have served as officers and board members of AAUW MO. Currently in 2019/2020, Branch members Kay Meyer, Sue Barley,

Marsha Koch, Debbie McWard, Nancy Hutchins, Pat Shores, Karen Francis, and Pam Kulp serve on the AAUW MO Board.

Branch members who have served at the National level are Yvonne Morrison, AAUW Fundraising Committee, Susan Barley, AAUW Director, Fundraising Committee, and Legacy Circle Team, Karen Francis, Public Policy Chair, Julia Triplett, Legal Advocacy Fund Committee and Leadership Corp., Mary Jermak, Membership Committee. Branch members who have received National recognition, AAUW Legacy Circle members, Sue Barley, Teresa Ciccolella, Erlaine Eltomi, Karen Francis, Veronica Harris, Nancy Hutchins, Jayne Kasten, Pam Kulp, Yvonne Morrison, Pat Shores and Julia Triplett. Members who have also received national recognition are Alice Crippen and Jayne Kasten, who became 50 year AAUW members in 2018 and 2019, and Susan Fenwick who is an AAUW Art Contest winner for three of the past ten years.

Ballwin/Chesterfield Presidents: 2010-2020

2010-2012	Marcia Block
2011-2013	Marian Bauer
2013-2015	Suzanne Couch
2012-2015	Karen Francis
2015-2017	Barbara McQuitty
2016-2018	Sandra Murdock
2017-2019	Marcia Block
2018-2020	Jean Elliott
2019-2021	Jan Horner

