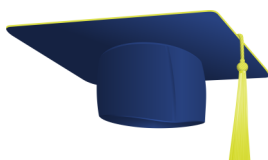


The Lob Tree AAUW Duluth



Diversity Matters: Linda LeGarde Grover



BRANCH SCHOLARSHIPS FUNDRAISER

At the end of December 2024, fundraising for the Branch Post-Baccalaureate Scholarships totaled \$1,630. But the fundraising campaign doesn't end until January 15, 2025. So if you would still like to contribute, contact Kate Baldwin at Kate.mary.baldwin@gmail.com

Each newsletter features a column by Branch Diversity Officer, Linda LeGarde Grover. In this issue, she profiles Duluth activists and trailblazers Marge Wilkins and Ruth Myers.

The Myers-Wilkins elementary school in Duluth's East Hillside is named in honor of two Duluth matriarchs whose lives were dedicated to the education, well-being and human dignity of all people.

Marge Wilkins and Ruth Myers grew up in Duluth during the 1930s and 1940s and were friends and activists for many years. Ruth became the first American Indian elected to public office in Duluth, Marge the first Black woman graduate of St. Mary's School of Nursing and, later, Duluth's first Black anesthetist. They served on boards and committees; they uplifted others to break barriers in employment and education; they volunteered for a thousand small tasks that improved lives, and loved, encouraged and empowered us all. When thanked they were quick to credit the contributions of their own elders, and told us the best way to say thank you would be to pass the favor on, do something to help when we could.

Marge and Ruth were known to many as "The Grandmothers." They considered themselves sisters, and addressed one another that way. I have a memory of the two of them walking arm-in-arm into a school board meeting, where they would be addressing some of our community concerns during public comment. Ruth once told me that she and Marge had dressed for those occasions in their good coats, hats and high heels. "Sometimes I thought I could hear our knees knocking," she said. I never suspected that, never imagined that they were anything but confident, capable, even formidable at times.

The Grandmothers donned their good coats, hats and high heels—and courage—then walked in arm-in-arm. What a picture, and what a legacy.

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SAVE THE DATE!

FIRESIDE CHAT: THE MOTHER/DAUGHTER SERIES

February 5, 2025. Zoom. Details TBA.

The Branch continues its popular annual Mother/Daughter Fireside Chats which showcase the daughters of Branch members. This year, arborist Louise Levy, daughter of longtime Branch member Geiger Yount, will talk about her work. Watch for further details on this presentation as well as information on other upcoming Branch events.



NEW MEMBERS

**Cynthia Pllrto, MA,
Management**

**Rebecca Ropers, PhD,
Educational Leadership**

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Spotlight on Member Jackie Falk's Work as a Prison Chaplain

JACKIE: "I served as chaplain at the St. Louis County Jail from May 2019 for a little over four years. I attended seminary as a late-career student and did not intend to serve. However, as jail chaplain I learned daily about a world unknown to most of us, even though as citizens we are responsible for prisoners' care and healing.

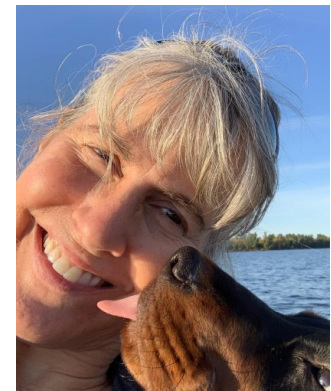
I learned three valuable lessons: 1) Men and women in jail are not necessarily guilty. They await trial because they are too poor to pay bail, 2) People are more than the worst thing they have ever done or suffered, and 3) Everyone I met was more like me than different.

One of my most tender stories is of a former teacher who became addicted to opioids after a failed surgery. Her life path was very similar to mine: middle-class home, college, marriage, teaching, and children. In my office, she told me that another woman had given her contraband drugs, that she sat and held the little bag of pills, looked at them, and then at last flushed them down the toilet. We celebrated her moment of claiming freedom and she promised to keep recreating it. That was the privilege of serving as a jail chaplain."

In Memoriam: Diana Brainard (1957-2024)

The Branch mourns the untimely loss of longtime Co-Program Chair and member, Diana Brainard. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Dance and a master's degree in Business and worked as a professional dancer, teacher, insurance underwriter, and business analyst. She moved to Duluth in 2016

after marrying Kent Carlson. Diana loved dancing, exercise, and spending time with her dogs. She was passionate about environmental conservation and protecting our natural resources for future generations. She is survived by her husband and her daughters, Celesta and Starr.



Focus Group Details, Fall 2024-Spring 2025

Focus Groups meet regularly and gather together people with similar interests in a social setting. Newcomers welcome! Join as many groups as you wish. Questions? Contact Raymone Kral, raymonekral@yahoo.com

The Lunch Bunch

Contact: Bonnie Edwards, bkedwards@gmail.com

1st Tuesday of the month usually at 1 pm.

Members and guests try new

restaurants and revisit old favorites.

Roundtable

Contact: Dawn Conlan, conlan518@gmail.com

3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm.

The group meets in the Lyric Kitchen's private room to informally discuss a timely topic or a random one submitted by members and drawn from a hat.

Zeitgeist Afternoons

Contact: Geiger Yount, geigman@aol.com

This group views an agreed-upon movie usually at the Zinema and talks about it afterwards at Zeitgeist Cafe.

Literature Discussion

Contact: Angela George, angela8744@msn.com

3rd Monday of the month at 7 pm. In person or on Zoom.

Members choose books to discuss for escape, entertainment, or edification. Contact Angela for the book list.

****NEW FOCUS GROUP****

Culture and Entertainment

Contact: Raymone Kral, raymonekral@yahoo.com

Individuals find a cultural or entertainment event they want to attend together and share the idea with the group. Dates, times, and tickets are then arranged.

Sonia Kovalesky Day 2024



For the past few years, our Branch has co-sponsored Sonia Kovalevsky Day (SK Day for short). In 1874, Russian-born Sonia Kovalevsky (1850-1891) was the first woman to earn a PhD in Mathematics.

SK Day is a national event held at various college campuses throughout the US and is designed to inspire and encourage young women to study mathematics. This year's regional event was held on November 7 at University of Wisconsin-Superior. About 120 high school girls and teachers participated in this fun-filled, inspiring day. Duluth Branch AAUW members Nancy Aldridge, Angela George (President) and Karen Moen (Treasurer) (in right-hand photo) assisted with registration at the event.



ERA Updates at the National and State Levels

NATIONAL: Listen to this *New York Times* podcast from 12/23/24 for an up-to-date overview of the ERA, "Could One Phone Call Lead to the 28th Amendment? How President Biden Could Transform Women's Rights and Rescue His Legacy with Just One Ring" [Could One Phone Call Lead to the 28th Amendment? - The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/podcasts/2024/12/23/could-one-phone-call-lead-to-the-28th-amendment/)

STATE: We still aren't sure what to expect about passage of the ERA in Minnesota. But ERA MN is organizing a rally for the first day of the legislative session on January 14, 2025. Here's a call to action: <https://eramn.org/posts/take-action/2024-11-12/take-action-for-era-now-two-actions-to-take-before-end-of-the-year/>



American Association of University Women Duluth

AAUW Duluth
The Lob Tree
Zabelle Stodola, Editor

kzstodola@ualr.edu

AAUW Duluth: Empowering diverse women through friendship, education, and advocacy

Website link:

[AAUW Duluth \(MN\) Branch](#)

See also <https://www.facebook.com/AAUWDuluth>

Photos from the 2024 Winter Social at Pickwick's. Members enjoyed lunch and seasonal entertainment from Kathy Heltzer.



Zabelle's Book Pick: *The Truths We Hold*, by Kamala Harris

Vice President Kamala Harris' 2019 memoir, *The Truths We Hold*, is subtitled *An American Journey*. If she were writing it now, in 2025, she would have plenty to add, especially regarding her run for President.

The publisher's blurb notes that Harris "reckons with the big challenges we face together. Drawing on the hard-won wisdom and insight from her own career and the work of

those who have most inspired her, she communicates a vision of shared struggle, shared purpose, and shared values."

Many of us would agree that Harris ran an exciting and compelling campaign as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee and that a host of factors beyond her control contributed to her loss. We should also take heart that her experience, energy,

competence, vision, and yes, ambition mean that her political career is far from over. She may be the Democratic nominee again in four years or she may run for Governor of California, for example. Or she may find another channel for her extraordinary talents.

The *Los Angeles Times* called this *New York Times* bestseller, "A life story that genuinely entrances."

