

The Lob Tree AAUW Duluth



Diversity Matters by Branch Diversity Officer, Dr. Linda LeGarde Grover



Mary Bowker
1931-2025

We mourn the loss of Mary Bowker. Her obituary states that, "She was active in the Duluth branch of the AAUW for over 50 years. She particularly enjoyed working on the scholarship committee and was an educational fund honoree twice. She was a member of many AAUW focus groups."

Our branch has included funds for some outreach activities in our diversity communities, and this spring we supported two:

We purchased a 12-cup Mr. Coffee pot, coffee, filters, napkins, and several packs of cookies for the Family Freedom Center, in the Washington Center building. In conversation with FFC Executive Director Jacob Bell, I learned that the Council of Elders, which meets weekly for morning Coffee and Conversation, would be a good group to contact. The council is a group of local Elder leaders who encourage young people to participate in the community as good citizens (which includes their education). Mr. Bell told me that they needed a coffee pot for their fairly small group (they had been using a very old large urn that took "forever" to brew). The folks at FFC were so friendly! I also learned at our 2025 AAUW annual meeting that Naomi Yaeger has coffee with the Council of Elders!

In May, I brought a lunch of sub sandwiches, chips, and chocolates to the Lake Superior College diversity office and student room. The Executive Diversity Director, Sarah Lyons, was quite pleased: she planned the day as an end-of-year celebration for the students, and I spoke to the group for a few minutes. It was a cheery place, and the students thought it was wonderful of AAUW to think of them. I made photocopies of "Why You Should Join AAUW," our three-fold brochure, that I placed on the tables, and I observed that they were all read and taken as I spoke.

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I think our diversity fund was money well spent with lots of positive interactions. I appreciate being able to do similar outreach activities in this coming year.

Summer Social/Equinox Celebration, Thursday, Sept. 11

Where: BoomTown Woodfire Bar & Grill, 4483 Martin Road, Duluth
When: Thursday evening, September 11
Time, cost, & further details: TBA

Other events in the pipeline:

Fall: Speaker from Denfeld Robotics Program
Fall: Cosponsored event with LWV
Saturday or Sunday, December 6 or 7: Holiday Gathering



Congratulations to UMD Poli Sci major ELLEN OGUNTO, who attended NCCWSL 2025, the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders, in College Park, MD. The Branch sponsored her, MN AAUW gave financial help, and Linda LeGarde Grover and Susana Pelayo-Woodward coordinated her application.

Ellen will report on her experience in the October newsletter.

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Spotlight on New Member Dr. Rebecca Ropers



REBECCA:

I am the new Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost for the University of Minnesota Duluth. This means that I have the honor and privilege of helping to create environments in which our students, staff, and faculty can thrive as they learn, teach, partner, and serve. Previously, I was a faculty member/educational leader in Baton Rouge, LA, Madison, WI, and the Twin Cities as well as in several international locations, most notably Austria and New Zealand. After growing up in a small town in southwestern Wisconsin, I started my academic journey at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and earned my doctorate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have come to love Duluth's gorgeous natural surroundings, and especially the many hiking trails. I also enjoy reading, exercising,

attending theater, and spending time with my partner, Tom, and my two young adult children and other family members. It is important to me to help those around me find and enact their potential to create more inclusive, equitable, and respectful communities.

Photos from the 2025 Annual Meeting at the Kitch



L to R:

Members Zabelle Stodola, Leanne Ventrella, Bonnie Edwards, & Cathy Ameal

Program Co-Chairs Bonnie Niemi & Katie Joseph-Johnson

Keynote speaker, Dr. Abigail Clarke-Sather, Associate Professor of Engineering at UMD

Focus Group Details, Fall 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.

What's Happening with the MN ERA?

The best source for information on the complicated progress (or not) of the Minnesota ERA appears in this article by Peter Callaghan in *MinnPost*, dated March 12, 2025, <https://www.minnpost.com/state-government/2025/03/can-an-equal-rights-amendment-thats-not-your-grandmothers-era-pass-a-tied-minnesota-house/>

In a nutshell, the Senate passed one version in 2023 and the House another in 2024, but miscalculations and disagreements on both sides—especially over language supporting abortion rights—hindered final passage. Callaghan says, “The ERA had been pushed in the past by [ERA Minnesota](#) The effort has now focused on what is termed ‘expanded ERA’ which includes other protections and in 2024 included abortion language. It is being led by a new group called [Minnesotans for Equal Rights](#) under the umbrella of Gender Justice. It includes ERA MN as well as OutFront Minnesota, Jewish Community Action, TakeAction Minnesota, the AFL-CIO, Minnesota Council on Disability, Unrestrict Minnesota and the African America Leadership Forum among others.” **(Thanks to Jackie Falk for this update)**

Press Release from National AAUW on Trump's Budget Bill

Excerpts from national AAUW's press release on 7/2/25, titled “A Big Broken Promise to America's Students and Women”:

“From early learning through graduate school, this bill deals a devastating blow to educational opportunities in America. It slashes financial aid, eliminates vital student loan programs, and channels public dollars into private voucher schemes — all while doing nothing to ensure that participating schools uphold civil rights protections. Instead of expanding access, it erects new barriers that will shut out millions of students, especially women, low-income families, and communities of color. . . . For AAUW, this is personal. We are the nation's largest non-institutional funder of women's graduate education. For more than 140 years, we've fought to open the doors of higher education to all women — not just those who can afford it. And we know the truth: when women lose access to education, they lose access to opportunity, economic security, and equity.”



American Association
of University Women
Duluth

AAUW Duluth
The Lob Tree
Zabelle Stodola, Editor

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

Website link:

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

See also [https://
www.facebook.com/AAUWDuluth](https://www.facebook.com/AAUWDuluth)

Kudos to Branch Member Karen Keenan

A June 16, 2025, story on Minnesota Public Radio featured Branch member Karen Keenan. Here are some excerpts from Dan Gunderson's story about her:

"Karen Keenan is on a mission to revive the centuries-old art of making jewelry from human hair. But first she needs to overcome the ick factor. 'I have gotten anything from "Oh, that's disgusting," to "Oh, that's creepy," to "Yuck,"' Keenan said. . . . Her mother kept a brooch of hair as a family heirloom. Combing through her family history a decade ago, Keenan discovered she came from a long line of hairworkers from Vâmhus, a village in central Sweden. In 2018 she traveled to Sweden on an American Scandinavian Foundation fellowship to learn the old ways. Now she teaches them at the North House Folk School in Grand Marais. Keenan's taught more than 100 students, typically classes of five or six. Many come with a strong interest in folk art and a desire to connect to the past."



See [Minnesota artist weaves human hair into wearable art, reviving an ancient craft | MPR News](#)

Zabelle's Book Pick: *Boy: A Novel*, by Nicole Galland (2025)

Here's a spicy overview of *Boy* from the HarperCollins website: "From critically acclaimed author Nicole Galland comes a vibrant and thought-provoking historical tale of love, political intrigue, and gender-swapping set in the theatre world of Elizabethan London."

Boy follows two main characters: Alexander "Sander" Cooke, the celebrated "boy player" in Shakespeare's Theater Company, the Chamberlain's Men, and his best friend, Joan Buckler, an unschooled but naturally

smart young woman thirsty for knowledge.

Both characters work to go beyond the limitations of their gender. Sander's androgynous beauty has suited him for the young women's roles that boys traditionally played in Elizabethan drama (women, of course, were not allowed to act). But it's unclear what will happen when his voice drops, his beard grows, and his body becomes recognizably male even on stage. Joan, meanwhile, has to hide her female gender while she pursues semi-

formal education in the natural sciences with the famous thinker Francis Bacon yet also teaches him from her extensive experience in herbalism.

And yes, of course Sander and Joan end up together!

While Joan Buckler is an entirely fictional creation, Alexander Cooke really was a boy actor in the Chamberlain's Men. There's evidence that Shakespeare wrote some young women's roles for him and may even have created more complex female characters in his plays as Sander matured.

