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Lower Connecticut Valley Affiliate  
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**FEBRUARY 2026**

**Lower Connecticut Valley Newsletter**

**LCV FEBRUARY CALENDAR EVENTS**

(Details inside/on LCV Website Calendar)

**Tuesday, February 3**

**1:00pm-LCV and ESP Board Meetings**

**Wednesday, February 4**

**1:00pm – Afternoon Book Discussion**

**Foodies-TBD**

**Tuesday, February 10**

**12:30pm – Mah Jongg**

**Thursday, February 12**

**11:30am-Valentine's Luncheon**

**Film Group-Watch for Pop Ups**

**Wednesday, February 18**

**3:00pm – Great Decisions**

**Tuesday, February 24**

**10:00am-Walking Group**

**7:00pm – Evening Book**

**Discussion**

**Thursday, February 26**

**12:30pm – Hiking Group**

**NO Cultural Arts**

**NO Crafting**

**LCV Valentine's Luncheon**

**-and-**

**General Meeting**

**Thursday, February 12th**

**11:30am-2:30pm**

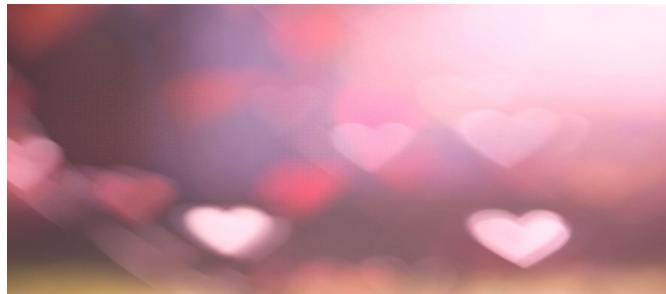
**Acton Public Library**

**Old Saybrook**

**11:30 am-Catered Lunch and soft drinks provided**

**Speaker: Member Orlene Gallops, Author, (*A Love Story*) *Hiding In Plain Sight***

**Wear Red!**



**AAUW LCV FACEBOOK PAGE**

Please check out and join our AAUW Lower Connecticut Valley Branch Facebook page for event photos and more! Press

Ctrl + Click on below LCV website

link:<https://www.facebook.com/groups/460005185436947/>



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Members:

This year, at the “**Tea and Trivia**” we were delighted to welcome six scholarship recipients. It was a pleasure meeting each of them. Participants had a wonderful time testing their knowledge and sharing laughs throughout the event.

Thanks to **Penny Hein** for running the event with such enthusiasm and organization. Special appreciation also goes out to **Deb DeHertogh and Cheryl Barnum** for their hard work in crafting all the trivia questions. Their creativity and dedication were essential to making this event a success. Thank you to everyone who contributed and took part in the fun.

Save the date, Saturday, April 11, 2026, for the Book Author Luncheon AAUW Lower CT Valley. It will be held at Saybrook Point Inn, 2 Bridge Street, Old Saybrook, CT 06475, from 11 am to 2:30 pm. **Author Gina Barecca** is our speaker.

Our **Valentine Luncheon** will be held on Thursday, February 12, 2026, 11:30 am to 3:00 pm at the Acton Public Library, 60 Old Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook, CT 06475. You do not need to bring anything except yourself; all food and drinks will be provided.

Our speaker **Orlene Gallops** is a member of AAUW LCV. Orlene is not only a valued member of our community but also a talented author. Her acclaimed work, *(A Love Story) Hiding in Plain Sight*, has touched the hearts of many readers and showcases her remarkable storytelling abilities. We look forward to seeing you, and hope you have a great time!

**Happy Valentine's Day.**

**Jeannette Santovasi, LCV President**



## MEMBERSHIP

If you have a qualified friend or family member who would like to join our LCV AAUW Branch, a reminder that our **Book Author Luncheon on April 11th is a “Shape the Future” event** qualifying new members to 50% off National Membership Dues. New members do not need to attend the luncheon to receive this discount. To receive this **50% discount** new members must pay by cash, check, or if at the luncheon by credit card. For more information contact [margierice@comcast.net](mailto:margierice@comcast.net) or [djherskowitz@gmail.com](mailto:djherskowitz@gmail.com). Applications can be found on our website, <https://lowerctvalley-ct.aauw.net/membership/>.

**Margie Rice and Deb Herskowitz,**  
Membership Co-chairs

## SCHOLARSHIP SELECTION

The committee invited the **grant recipients** to the January Tea, six out of the eight attended. Two recipients brought their mothers, one her father and one her husband. The students shared where they attended school, their major and their goals with the members in attendance. They then **received a check for the second half of their grant** for the spring semester. It was a wonderful event. Members enjoyed meeting the students as well as the students's guests.



*Scholarship Recipients and Committee Members at January Tea*

The committee is scheduled to meet on the 16th of February to discuss the **new application process**. We will also make some changes to our policies for grant consideration.

**Olga Saubermann**, Director of Scholarships

### **2026 BOOK AUTHOR LUNCHEON**



**We will no longer require each Interest Group to assemble a themed basket for the auction. This change addresses previous confusion and duplication of requests, especially for members belonging to multiple groups. Instead, we kindly request that all LCV branch members contribute \$20.00 toward the purchase of items to create 10 impressive baskets. These auction baskets will be inspired by the most popular selections from prior years. Members are encouraged to donate \$20.00, or any amount they are comfortable with, using one of three available methods:**

1. **Send money via Venmo to:** @Diane-Volz
2. **Mail a check** to Diane Volz, 12 Otis St, Old Saybrook, CT 06475
3. Give a check or cash in person to Diane Volz

We look forward to a fun filled profitable 2026 BAL

### ***\$\$\$ Updates***

***Sponsorships:*** McCabe & Associates - Ameriprise – Portland: StoneRide Senior Living – Mystic:WJ Advisors – Killingworth

***Auction Items:*** Season Tickets (2) - Robbie Collomore Concerts - Chester

### **AAUW LCV Education and Scholarship Program Inc. (ESP) A 501(c)(3)**

#### **A.Financial Report**

After awarding **\$40,000 in grants** to our eight student recipients, supporting **four (4) students' attendance at NCCWSL** (an annual student leadership conference at the University of Maryland in May), and providing **funding for the Trinity Prison Education Project (TPEP)** this year, our Liberty Bank Accounts currently hold **\$55,000**. The Education and Scholarship Program Board has decided to **set aside \$25,000** of those funds in reserve, ensuring we can continue providing scholarships even if the Book Author Luncheon is cancelled due to some unforeseen event in the future (i.e. pandemic, weather event etc.).

Our funding for education grants for college students, scholarships for the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) and the Trinity Prison Education Project come from two sources:

1. **The Book Author Luncheon** - which has generated \$20,000 annually over the past two years, with revenue coming from business sponsor donations, chance and silent auctions, and a very small profit from ticket sales.
2. **Member contributions**—primarily consisting of Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), amounting to \$20,000 in the previous year.

In addition, in 2024, **Gloria and Bob Gery transferred \$36,000 to ESP** from another organization where their endowment was not being used, enabling us to award additional grants and make a \$10,000 contribution to TPEP.

The **number and value of the scholarships** to be awarded in July 2026 will be determined in accordance with this year's **fundraising outcomes**.

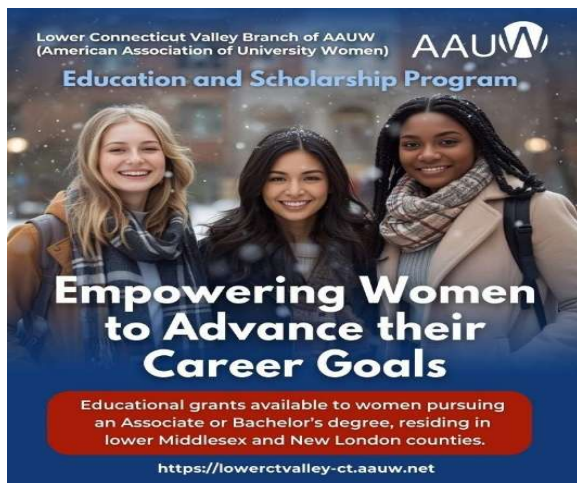
Additionally, TPEP will launch a "Philosophy and the Self" course at York Correctional Institute beginning in January. Anna Terwiel,



PhD, an assistant professor at Trinity, explained that after securing some grant funding, TPEP still required \$2,000, which ESP agreed to provide so the course could move forward as planned. Any further **TPEP funding** will only be considered if there are **surplus funds** remaining after scholarships have been awarded.

#### **B. Essex Bank's Community Investment Program**

This year, **Essex Bank** has once again invited the AAUW LCV Education and Scholarship Program to participate in its **Community Investment Program campaign**, which supports local 501(c)(3) organizations serving the community. The bank annually pledges to donate up to 10% of its after-tax net income to 501(c)(3) organizations and community development projects located in shoreline towns including Old Saybrook. We have elected to participate by submitting information about our organization and scholarship program. Last year, Essex Bank provided us with **a contribution of \$423**, an amount determined by the votes of their members in support of our scholarship initiative. Sue DelVecchio designed this flyer as part of our marketing efforts for the Essex Bank Community Investment Program. If you are a member of Essex Savings Bank, please consider participating in this year's voting in February.



**Linda Frigon**, Treasurer and Director AAUW LCV Education and Scholarship Program, Inc. and **Sue DelVecchio**, Scholarship Selection Committee

## **INTEREST GROUPS**

### **AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP**

Date: **Wednesday, February 5**

Time: **1:00pm**

Location: **via Zoom**

Book: ***Breaking Through: My Life in Science* by Katalin Kariko**

The Afternoon Book Group met on Wednesday, January 7th to discuss *Daughters of the Bamboo Grove* by Barbara Demick, a non-fiction book that explains the reunion of Chinese twins separated by the One Child policy, one remaining in rural China, and the other adopted by a Texas family. The author's reporting uncovered the abduction of many infants, and she was able to trace the twin to Texas through social media and later accompanied the American family to China to meet the birth parents.

Some topics we discussed:

--The author Barbara Demick has written three other books about Sarajevo, North Korea, and Tibet (the Afternoon Book Group read this one, *Eat the Buddha*, a few years ago. In each case, she has explored in detail life in these places to understand the people who live there and their place in the political and historical context. Thanks to Elaine Quayle for research about the author.

--Members of the Afternoon Book Group shared their knowledge and experiences with adoption. Many thanks for sharing personal and family experiences with our group.

--We were interested in the author's role in this book. As a journalist and historian, she became personally involved with the two families of the twins and was instrumental in their reunion. She was very open about her ethical issues in this process.

--It was difficult to learn more about China's One Child policy, an effort to reduce the population, favor male children, and improve the economy. Lasting from 1979 to 2015 and employing 83 million Chinese, the policy involved propaganda as well as enforcement of violators who had more than one child. The local agents carrying out the policy sometimes abducted children who were taken to orphanages, and ultimately adopted by unwitting

international parents. The details of how this was carried out were very difficult and disturbing to learn.

--The book provided an illuminating look at the difference in Chinese and American life. The twins shared genetics but were raised in very different cultures. Their personalities are both similar and different reflecting their cultures.

--This experience also reveals the power of today's social media to unite the world. It was not especially difficult for the twins to reach out to each other, and they now communicate often.

Thanks to all members of the Afternoon Book Group who shared a fascinating discussion of a memorable book!

Our next books are:

Wednesday, February 4th: *Twist*—Colum McCann—fiction--A novel about a journalist who is embedded on a ship tasked with repairing undersea fiber-optic cables as it moves from South Africa across the western Atlantic, revealing the fragility of the vital information links and the skilled engineers and divers who repair them. (We read *Apeirogon* by McCann two years ago.)

The book we will discuss on Wednesday, March 4th is *Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy, a novel about a woman who washes ashore on an island near Antarctica, site of the world's largest seed bank. She is rescued by the family caretakers of the island, and the novel reveals the intertwined history of the woman and the team of researchers who once worked on the island.

We look forward to seeing you at a book group meeting soon-- happy reading!

**Sue Aberbach and Elaine Quayle**  
Afternoon Book Group organizers

### **GREAT DECISIONS**

Date: **Wednesday, February 18**

Time: **3:00pm - 5:00pm**

Place: **Acton Library, Second Floor Meeting Room**

### **Topic: The End of an Era: Trump's Tariffs in Historical Perspective (chapter 2)**

Leader: **Deb Zurka**

For our first meeting of 2026, we'll get right into it with a discussion about tariffs and what this means for America's trade policy and indeed, overall foreign policy. All of our topics this year promise invigorating conversations about our country's global relationships. As well, we will delve into some areas we haven't concentrated on before (at least during my participation in the group): Africa, Ukraine, nuclear proliferation, and human rights.

I've had several inquiries about joining the group - it's never too late! As a group, we take orders for our topic book each October to take advantage of a discounted price offer. However, both the hard copy book and a downloadable ebook are always available for personal purchase on the Foreign Policy Association website. Please also feel welcome to drop by any meeting to get a feel for how we operate.

**Karen Christman**, Great Decisions Chair

### **CULTURAL ARTS**

***I'm Connecticut* at Ivoryton Playhouse**

Date: **Sunday, March 29, 2026**

Place: **Ivoryton Playhouse Theatre, 103 Main St., Essex**

Meet: **Lunch at noon, Scotch Plains Tavern 124 Westbrook Road, Essex**

ShowTime: **2pm**

Cost **\$48 + lunch**

You are invited to join us for a wacky, sweet, romantic comedy by CT native Mike Reiss who has been making us laugh for years as a writer with *The Simpsons*. Why does sweet, kind Marc struggle to find love? Because he comes from Connecticut-land of steady habits, sanity and politeness. A must see comedy for anybody from the Nutmeg State.

Lunch before the show at Scotch Plains Tavern at noon. Please let Debbie or Marcia know if you will NOT be attending lunch.

Contact Marcia Machuga at [marcialynnm@att.net](mailto:marcialynnm@att.net) or Debbie Kupfer at [kupofta@comcast.net](mailto:kupofta@comcast.net) if you are interested in attending. Payment can be a check to Debbie or Marcia or Venmo to Debbie (@Deborah-Kupfer-1). Payment must be received by Saturday March 14.  
Please note: No refunds on the tickets.

**Debbie Kupfer and Marcia Machuga, co-chairs**

### **HIKING GROUP**

Date: **Thursday, February 26**

Time: **10:30am**

Place: **TBD**

We had a nice hike through the Old Saybrook Town Park Trails in January. See picture below. It was nice and sunny and not too cold. Our next hike will be on Thursday, February 26 at 10:30am. More information will be emailed to everyone in the hiking group about a week before the hike. If you would like to be added to the hiking group email list email [margierice@comcast.net](mailto:margierice@comcast.net)



*January Hike at The Preserve in Old Saybrook*

Please email [margierice@comcast.net](mailto:margierice@comcast.net) to be added the Hiking Group list.  
**Margie Rice & Kathy Heebner, Co-Chairs**

***Walking Group meets Thursday January 29 at Old Saybrook Park & Rec indoor track, 10am. Tuesday walks resume in February.***

### **MAH JONGG**

Date: **Tuesday, February 10th**

Time: **12:30 p.m.**

Place: **Carole Otto's home, 116 Meadow Woods Rd. Deep River**

The Mah Jongg interest group meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 12:30 for several hours of friendly Mah Jongg games, all experience levels are welcome!  
For the February meeting, please RSVP to Pat Prendergast and Carole by Friday 2/6th, [otto.carole@gmail.com](mailto:otto.carole@gmail.com), [pprender7@gmail.com](mailto:pprender7@gmail.com). Let Pat know if you have any questions.

**Pat Prendergast, Mahjong Chair**

### **FILM GROUP**

HAMNET is a fabulous film. Jesse Buckley, the lead actress should win every award there is. If you didn't already see it, do yourself a favor and catch it. Will play soon at Madison and Mystic.  
It was the first of our Pop Up viewings of likely nominees for Best Picture. The others already on our list follow:

***Bugonia***

***Frankenstein [the Benecio del Toro version is getting rave reviews]***

***It Was Just An Accident***

***Marty Supreme***

***One Battle After Another***

***The Secret Agent***

***Sentimental Value***

***Sinners***

***Train Dreams***

If you notice one [or any other you want us to see together] at a local theater, please tell me and I will be sure to get a notice to all of us. I will be on the lookout as well, but I may not always be the first to notice.



Please remember Pop Ups are easy: we say where and when, you show up if you can and want to. No host needed.

Please contact Eileen Browne, [browne.eileen@gmail.com](mailto:browne.eileen@gmail.com), if you are interested in becoming a member of the Film Group.

**Eileen Browne**, Film Group Chair

### **EVENING BOOK GROUP**

Date: **Tuesday, February 24**

Time: **7:00pm**

Location: **Via Zoom**

Book: ***How to Age Disgracefully* by Clare Pooley**

The Evening Book Group will meet again on Tuesday, February 24, at 7 pm on Zoom. Marcia Machuga will lead us in a discussion of *How to Age Disgracefully* by Clare Pooley. Book group members will receive a Zoom invitation ahead of the scheduled meeting. Any LCV member who wishes to join in can email me at [mjposct@comcast.net](mailto:mjposct@comcast.net) for a Zoom invitation. Happy Reading!

**Mary Jane Peterson**, Evening Book Group Chair

### **FOODIES**

**February 2026 Event to be Determined.**

Our **first Foodies gathering of 2026** kicked off in delicious style at **Café Routier – Bistro & Lounge in Westbrook**. Great food, lively discussions, and plenty of smiles made for a truly special evening—proof that starting the year with great food and conversation is always a good idea.

As we look back on our inaugural Foodies year (2025), we're delighted to note that **48 different members** joined us for at least one event. That's 48 women who showed up hungry—for good food and great company!

Gail and Carole are thrilled that so many wonderful **AAUW women** continue to enjoy our carefully curated dining adventures.

**February Foodies has been simmering** and may or may not have been announced by the time you read this. Keep your appetites ready!

**Gail Briggs and Carole Otto**, Film Group Organizers

### **CRAFTING GROUP**

**No events planned for February.**

**Kathy Heebner**, Crafting Group Leader

### **BIRTHDAY DAY CLUB**

Please join us for our birthday gatherings! This is a much smaller group than our general meetings, so it's a nice way to get to know other AAUW members.

We have people who are coordinating plans for **March, June, July, August** and **November**. If you can help with another month, email Deb Herskowitz at [djherskowitz@gmail.com](mailto:djherskowitz@gmail.com) or Cathy Purcell at [cjpurcell01@frontier.com](mailto:cjpurcell01@frontier.com). You will receive the names and contact information for the people who signed up for your month. Send them an email and suggest a place and a time to meet.

**KEEP YOUR PLANS SIMPLE!** Meet for coffee and conversation at one of our local restaurants! If you can't plan a gathering but you would still like to be part of a celebration, send Deb or Cathy, your name, email, and the month of your birthday. We will plan something for you!

**Deb Herskowitz and Cathy Purcell**, co-chairs