

**VOLUME LI No. 4 January 2026 PUBLISHED MONTHLY**

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, FLORIDA BRANCH**

**P.O. BOX 515, VENICE, FL 34284**

**PRESIDENT JOYCE MIKULSKI**

**Branch: [venice-fl.aauw.net](http://venice-fl.aauw.net) State: [aauw-fl.aauw.net](http://aauw-fl.aauw.net). National: [aauw.org](http://aauw.org)**

## **Message from the President**



Happy New Year 2026! I hope you all had peaceful holidays and are ready to charge into AAUW Venice activities. Thank you to Kathleen Pickering and her committee for an outstanding holiday party. The feedback I received was very, very positive.

We have two very important upcoming fundraisers that need your enthusiastic support. On January 29 the Patriotic Card Party will take place. This will be a great opportunity to meet new members and have fun! February 26 is the date of the Champagne Tea with B.A. Shapiro. This is our major fundraiser this year. Proceeds will help fund scholarships and Tech Trek. Please PARTICIPATE in any and every

way you can – sell tickets, secure a sponsor, donate a service/ item for the auction, etc. The Development Committee has been working so hard on this first-time event. Please help them in this endeavor. Look for details in this newsletter.

The January 8 program at Venice United Church of Christ, 620 Shamrock Blvd, Venice, should be an exciting one with Terry Connor, Superintendent of Sarasota Schools. With all that is happening in Florida right now in the educational system, I am sure that his presentation will be very informative. Remember that sign-up and social time is from 10 to 10:30am. Rosemary will begin the program promptly at 10:30.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in January as we work together to EMPOWER women and girls. As I will continue to say, let's ENGAGE!

Joyce Mikulski

### **Patriotic Card Party Update**



January 29<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching! Get ready to have some fun playing cards at our next AAUW fundraiser. We will be meeting at the Pinebrook South Clubhouse by Pinebrook Road. The correct address is 1343 Featherbed Lane, Venice. We start at 1 PM and plan to have lots of laughs and fun. There will be treats, drinks and prizes for the winners. Also, a 50/50 will be held. We still need a few more people to sign up. See Lydia Russo at the next meeting.

## Champagne Tea on February 26

Come one, come all to the January 8<sup>th</sup> branch meeting to purchase your tickets for the Champagne Tea fundraiser. Cost of the ticket is \$50.00, all of which is a tax-deductible contribution. Each member is encouraged to sell tickets (2 to 5 recommended or even a table of 8).

This is our **major fundraiser** for the year. The proceeds will be used to award our scholarships and send campers to Tech Trek this summer.

Speaking at the event will be NY Times best-selling author B.A. Shapiro. Her latest book, *The Lost Masterpiece* will be available for sale and autographs.

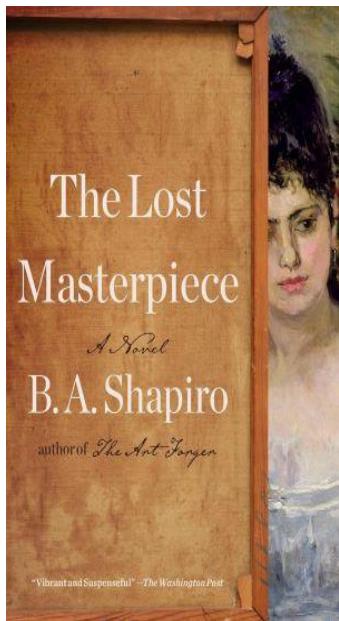
The event will take place at the Plantation Golf and Country Club at 500 Rockley Road. Start your experience with a complimentary glass of champagne while you browse the silent auction items to see what you might want to bid on. Menu for the event includes tea sandwiches, mini quiche, fruit, and pastries.

The following businesses are assisting us with the ticket sales:

*Venice Olive Oil Company -101 W. Venice Avenue*

*The Island Bookshop - 206 Miami Avenue W.*

*Naples Soap Company – Wellen Park -19790 Wellen Park Blvd.*



## SHHHH – A Silent Auction



As a part of the Champagne/Tea Fundraiser on February 26<sup>th</sup>, we will have a Silent Auction. We need donations of items from members and vendors. Think about items worth at least \$50 such as artwork, jewelry, tickets to events or a museum, adventures like dinners, plane rides, services, etc. Be creative, probably the more interesting, the higher the bidding.

If you have never participated in a silent auction bidding here is how it works: During the course of the event attendees record bids for the items up for auction, each outbidding the previous one. At the end of the event, the highest bidder gets the item. Of course, all the proceedings will go toward our AAUW Scholarships. Give the items and/or information to any members of the Development Committee by the February 12<sup>th</sup> branch meeting. Lynda Weston is chairing this part of the event.

Don't forget your checkbook!!

## Meet Rosemary Ames, our newest member!



Rosemary has lived in Venice since 2019, after moving from the Boston area and living there for 40 years. She taught music at levels K-12. However, she completed her working career at Sun Life Financial as a documentation specialist and trainer and worked in procedure improvement as well. She has lived and taught in Ohio, Kentucky, Hawaii, Iowa, Michigan, and Massachusetts. She lived in Ankara, Turkey when her husband served in the US Navy. Rosemary and her husband have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. They moved to Venice, FL to enjoy the weather. She has been an active member of Mu Phi Epsilon, a professional music fraternity, and served as the International President for 10 years. She is now enjoying retirement, catching up on reading and spending time with new friends.

### Kind Thoughts



A card expressing our sympathy was sent to Lynda Friedman, whose husband passed away.

Joan Cash

## **Aplos is A-Plus**

Aplos is an ideal tool for AAUW because of its ease of use and support services. Churches and small nonprofits are the primary users and often rely on volunteers to handle complex finances. Aplos is software that is specifically designed for this type of fund accounting.

The Aplos software generates Income Statements, Balance Sheets, and Transaction Lists for monthly reports. Banks separate accounts into checking and savings. Aplos includes separate reports for operating and restricted funds. There is an application to reconcile records with the bank at the end of the month.

Aplos allows us to set up an event to sell tickets online for a fundraiser. It tracks donations and number of tickets sold online. Donors may find this option convenient. Paula Dulski

### ***BE INFORMED! From Debbie Blackwell***

Coalitions are powerful when they're purposeful. Build coalitions because partners share the same stakes, care about similar issues, and need one another to win. They are not a shortcut to diversity – don't form a coalition hoping it will automatically make your effort more inclusive. Our aim is to organize with, not for, communities most impacted by inequity in education and economic security. Working in coalition brings diverse perspectives and skills, boosts credibility and visibility, and can unlock financial or in-kind support. Just as important, partnerships help all groups better serve their communities and create lasting change.

- We are in coalition with the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County. Attend a school board meeting and speak up for public education - everybody do your share!

Currently the most overwhelming issue is the Schools of Hope Law and takeover attempts with what seems to be profiteering at taxpayer expense. Read to get some local concerns on this link:

<https://suncoastsearchlight.org/oak-park-special-needs-schools-of-hope-mater-charter/>

## AAUW stands for Education

### Public Education:

- Investing in strong public education systems which provide equitable high quality public K-12 education

- Opposing the use of public funds for nonpublic elementary, secondary education, and charter schools that do not adhere to the same civil rights and accountability standards as required of public schools

- Closing the learning and opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students from low-income and underserved groups

- **Inclusive Curriculum:**

- Ensuring curriculum information is information based on scientific consensus, and is free from censorship and political, religious, or cultural bias

- **STEM Opportunities:**

- Closing the gender gap in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education
  - Expanding access for women in technical and vocational education and training that leads to lucrative employment

- **Strengthened Civil Rights Protections**

- Strengthening civil rights statutes impacting education including Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other applicable laws
  - Reinstating Title IX rules that strengthen and clarify protections for student survivors of sexual harassment and assault, ensure schools provide accommodations for pregnant and parenting students, and affirm Title IX's protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
  - Prohibiting harassment and bullying in schools, including support of enumerated anti-bullying and harassment laws and policies

- **Higher Education:**

- Supporting equitable access to higher education, which is affordable, inclusive and yields high-quality credentials or degrees through increasing investment in financial support for degree programs and addressing the debt burden which disproportionately impacts women and borrowers of color
- Expanding access for women in career and technical education and training that yields high quality credentials or degrees
- Reducing barriers to postsecondary success through policies that mitigate non-tuition challenges to completing a degree or high-quality certificate program, including supporting pregnant or parenting students, expanding access to affordable childcare, and ensuring access to contraception and reproductive rights.



## **November's Branch Meeting Minutes**

Meeting called to order by the president at 11:00 am  
45 members and 15 guests in attendance

**President's remarks:** Mayor of Venice issued a proclamation which was read and displayed. Wendy Seeley was thanked for the success of the Scholarship Reception and past achievements.

Secretary minutes and Treasurer's report available in Venice Views and on the web site.

**Education Director:** Tech Trek materials were sent to schools. Nominations of 7th grade girls in math and science classes due by December 15.

**Development Chair:** Patriotic card game is the first fundraiser on January 29, 1:00 pm at Pine Brook club house. cost is \$25. Expect to make \$1000 for scholarships. The chair explained the participation expected of members for all fund raisers. The goal is to raise \$10000. Lunch with an author (B.A. Shapiro) will be held at The Plantation on February 26. Needed: Auction team to find sponsors and individuals able to offer an experience, Promotion team to advertise the event.

**SIG Director:** SIG of the month: Euchre card game.

**Public Policy Director:** History of the AAUW given as well as an education about AAUW public policy. A collaboration with League of Women Voters in "Rise Up".

**Membership Chair:** Use of sign in sheets for meetings explained. A description of duties for mentors of new members will be in the Venice Views. Members encouraged to become a mentor.

**Program Director:** January guest speaker is Terry Connor, superintendent of Sarasota County Schools. February will feature a woman lawyer. AAUW Venice has an ad in Venice Mainstreet.

**Old Business:** Please read e-blasts, Venice Views, Web site, Facebook. Articles for the news letter must be in by the 15th of the month. Membership was asked to volunteer for committees. Debbie Blackwell handles zoom for meetings.

**New Business:** Softball team tournament at Wellen Park on 11/14 at 6:00 pm. We will ask for

a younger team for the winter – spring season. Younger teams play earlier in the evening, which will make it easier for members to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 12:17 pm.

Submitted by Susan Donovan

## **Study/ Interest Groups**



**The Coastal Cruising Group took a trip down the inland waterway with Paula Dulski on a beautiful December morning.**

## **Exploring with your Camera**



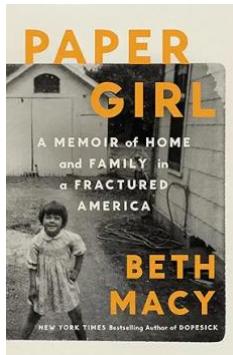
COME ONE, COME ALL on January 5. Invite your spouse, friends or just come with your camera or phone.

We are going to the newly built Mote Marine...a great place to capture good photos and spend time with friends.

Let's meet at the British Open Pub as usual at 9 a.m. Call Val Dwek or Lynda Friedman to RSVP. We need as many as possible for reduced rate, but it can be \$30-\$37 each depending on our numbers.

Alternate meeting spot is in front of Anthony's in the Laurel Road shopping for those of you north of Venice. Call Val for that meeting spot. Lunch afterward t.b.d.

## Hot Topics



Hot Topics will meet on Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 in the Jacaranda Library Activity Room. The main topic for January will be a discussion of Beth Macy's new book *Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America*. A review of the book says it blends personal history, family struggles and journalistic reporting examining the economic hardships, political division and social change that transformed the community of Urbana, Ohio. It contrasts the author's own experience growing up delivering the local paper and knowing the community with the more difficult lives of young people today, highlighting the loss of opportunity and the rise of anger and conspiracy theories.

Lynda Weston

## Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch will be meeting at its regular time, the 4th Wednesday of the month for January which is the 28th. We will be meeting at the Crow's Nest on the Water in Englewood at 11:30. Please contact Lydia Russo if you would like to attend.

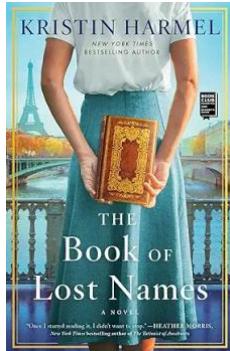
## Cook's Corner



**The Cooks Corner group enjoyed a Christmas cookie exchange  
at the home of Beth Gamel.**

Our new year Cooks Corner will be held at the home of Carol McGrain on January 21. Thank you, Carol! Her theme is "all natural" ...no additives, preservatives, plant based...a wonderful opportunity to learn more about healthful diets, and to share what we've learned. The new year promises lots of wonderful lunches. Newcomers are welcome... send your email to me. Joan Kiernan

## Book Group



The December selection of the book club was *Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon. Jean Norman led the meeting, and there was serious discussion, especially relating to the lives of women in the 18th century. *Frozen River* was uniformly well liked by the members which is not always true. Lydia Russo will lead the January discussion of *The Book of Lost Names* by Kristen Harmel. It is a heartwarming story about those who spirited Jewish children out of France to save them from the Nazis. Please join us on January 12 at the Jacaranda Library beginning at 1pm for a time to catch up with each other. The book discussion starts at 1:25.

Hilda Dillman

## AAUW VENICE BRANCH ACTIVITIES—JANUARY 2026 CALENDAR

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT	CONTACT	LOCATION/NOTES
Thurs	1	TBD	French Conversation	Jane Metcalf	Contact Jane for location and time
Fri	2	11:30	Euchre	Patti Warner	Hotel Venetia
Mon	5	9:00	Exploring with your Camera	Lynda Friedman and Val Dwek	See article in Sig News
Fri	9	11:30	Bridge for Fun	Bernadette McEnerney	Paradise Grill, Nokomis RSVP to Bernadette
Mon	12	1:30	Book Group	Hilda Dillman	The Book of Lost Names by Kristen Harmel/Jacaranda Library
Tues	13	4-6	Mix and Mingle	Jane Metcalf	Bella Vino
Thurs	15		<b>Deadline for February Venice Views</b>	Send Word formatted articles and/or jpg	formatted photos by email to <a href="mailto:aauwveniceviews@gmail.com">aauwveniceviews@gmail.com</a>
Fri	16	11:30	Euchre	Patti Warner	Hotel Venetia
Wed	21	12:00	Cook's Corner	Joan Kieran	Home of Carol McGrain/ theme is “all natural”
Wed	21	6:00	Evening out	Melanie Odom	Leone's in Venice, 1266 Jacaranda Blvd. contact Melanie by Jan. 19
Thurs	22	10:00	Coastal Cruising	Paula Dulski	Venice Marine Max
Fri	23	11:30	Bridge for Fun	Bernadette McEnerney	Paradise Grill, Nokomis RSVP to Bernadette
Mon	26	1:30	Hot Topics	Lynda Weston	Jacaranda Library Activity Room
Wed	28	11:30	Lunch Bunch	Lydia Russo	Farlow's on the Water

## Photos from the Holiday Party





**Venice Views Editor for February: Ann Saller**

**Venice Views Editor for March: Susan Hotzler**

**E-copy Circulation: Kathy Doucette**

**VENICE VIEWS: All submissions to our monthly Venice Views need to be sent**

**by the 15th of the previous month to [aauwveniceviews@gmail.com](mailto:aauwveniceviews@gmail.com)**

**Text in Word Formatted File**

**Pictures in JPG Format Only!**

**Deadline for the February issue of Venice Views is 2/15/2026**

**MAKING VENICE VIEWS BETTER FOR YOU**

The Venice Views Editorial team continually tries to make our newsletter more informative and easier to read and may be edited. In order to do so we came up with the following requests:

Everything that is emailed for inclusion in a monthly newsletter MUST BE SENT ONLY to: [aauwveniceviews@gmail.com](mailto:aauwveniceviews@gmail.com). Venice Views has its very own email address.

(1) We ask that each member who submits a notice to please keep the article down to a reasonable size. Too much information is often not read at all!! All submissions should be sent in WORD format, either as an attachment to the email (preferably) or may be written in the body of the email.

(2) We LOVE your photos! BUT please do not send them twice. [Often photos are sent to the SIG chair and by the individual straight to the Venice Views.

(3) Not everybody knows everybody! Please label your photos, as much as possible, with the event and the names of the people in the photos. (4) All photos are to be sent in JPG format ONLY