

The Grapevine

June 2021

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Despite the COVID pandemic, Forum enrolled 550 students for our six online 2020/2021 Forum courses. Most of our students were local AAUW members and their family and friends from around the country and the world. Thanks to you, we were able to raise over \$21,000 for our AAUW programs.

Now, we look forward to next year's line-up:

In the fall, Professor **Heidi Saleh, Ph.D.** will teach us about the intriguing history of the women of ancient Egypt and **Terry Ebinger** will take us on a deep dive into the movies of Alfred Hitchcock.

Come winter **Chris O'Sullivan, Ph.D.** returns with a literary exploration of American History and **Dr. Charles Goldberg**, docent, SF MOMA will join forces with **Heidi Chretien, Ph.D.** to teach us how to interpret and enjoy important works of art.

Next spring Professor **Robert Rubin, Ph.D.** will educate and enlighten us about the ocean off of our California Coast, and the popular **Anastasia Edel** will be back with a class about powerful Russian leaders from Genghis Khan to Putin. Check out Anastasia's recently published article regarding Russian dissident, Alexei Navalny at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/25/navalny-protest-dissent-russia-putin/>

Information about all Forum classes will be posted on our web page at www.healdsburg-ca.aauw.net. Registration for our fall classes will start Sept. 1, 2021.

We are currently exploring how to record classes at the Raven Performing Arts Center, so that students who miss classes or who cannot attend the live version can watch the classes virtually. Stay tuned to hear more about this option in the future.

I would like to thank the many volunteers who make Forum possible, including my fellow Forum committee members **Angele Rice**, **Phil Wright** and **Barbara Zarakov** and former committee members **Liz Loebel**, **Judy Edmonds** and **Sharyn Sarquis**. Also thanks to **Carol Noack** (graphic design), **Mary Fitzgerald** (publicity), **Julie Hanamura** (finance), **Barbara Epstein** (oversight), **Donna Riley** (Grapevine editor) and, posthumously, **Bob Santos** for his guidance. And finally, thank you **Kate Van Ness** and our Board of Directors for encouraging us to experiment with the online format, so that we could keep the Forum going during the pandemic.

-Celeste Plaister, Forum Chair

President's Message



At the end of my first term as President, I am struck by the steady determination of your Board of Directors and of our membership. This has been a most difficult year for our area, our state, and our country. COVID-19, wildfires, and now the onset of a serious drought have set up barriers to our mission. Chelsea Ridgway's article in the May Grapevine and Mariele Ponti's story in this issue, illustrate how important that mission is for our scholarship recipients.

Selection and granting of scholarships is one of our primary tasks. Under the skilled leadership of Mickey Sarquis, our Scholarship Director, the scholarship committee has selected 28 girls and women as recipients of life-changing opportunities to further their education. Details will be provided in the September Grapevine. Thank you to the committee for your careful, thoughtful work.

Year end reports from the Board are being collected and will soon be posted on the website under the "About-History" tab. In spite of our limits on traditional activities, much was accomplished.

Thanks to all of you who attended our Branch meeting on Zoom, May 8. The new Board has been installed and we intend to restart many of our popular activities this Fall. I am hopeful that we will meet in person at our September kickoff. Until then, enjoy the summer and come back reinvigorated.

-Kate Van Ness



Mission-Based Programs



2021 AAUW Healdsburg Virtual Tech Trek Camp

I am pleased to announce that we will be sending 13 girls to this summer's virtual Tech Trek camp. There are 11 girls selected from this year and 2 girls from the 2020 selection year, since the camp was cancelled last year. We have 5 girls from Washington Junior High in Cloverdale; 1 from Geyserville, 5 from Healdsburg and 2 from Cali Calmecac in Windsor. Unfortunately, the Windsor Middle School girls all dropped out. It was a challenge for the teachers to nominate the girls this year due to distance learning.

Tech Trek is a science, technology, engineering and math camp for girls going into the eighth grade. Normally our Branch's girls attend a 1-week camp at Stanford University. But, due to COVID, the camp was cancelled last year and is going virtual this year. Click [here](#) for more information about the camp

Three virtual camps are scheduled this summer: June 21-25, July 12-16 and July 26-30. Each camp will serve approximately 300 campers from all over California. Usually these camps are held at various universities around the state. Karla Rosen will be a virtual camp build coach. She will help the girls in a breakout room make robotic hats. Mickey Sarquis will be an instructor. Several Healdsburg Tech Trek alumni will be social coaches.

Thank you to the Tech Trek selection committee – **Patty McHugh, Diane Meyers, Barbara Epstein, and Maureen McCalla**. The process was different this year, as the selection process was all online. It was a big adjustment for all of us, but it worked out very well.

We are proud of all the girls who were nominated. We will tell you more about the camp and the girls after the sessions.

-Liz Loebel, Chair, 2021 Tech Trek Selection Committee



Social Programs

Social Activities

This last year has kept us apart from all the social activities in which we love to participate. Our membership missed out on all of the fun events that have always given us a chance to get to know new members and see old friends.

The newly formed area Coffee Klatches have tried to fill that hole. The Coffee Klatches will continue, bringing members together in the areas where they live. As new members join, they will be introduced to their local group, making it easier for them to assimilate and meet the entire AAUW membership.

The regular post-COVID Social Activities events will begin in mid-September of this year, starting with Kick-Off.

I would like to thank all the amazing women who helped me these last four years in making our social activities a success. You made me look good! Many Social Activity chairs worked on multiple events and I appreciate their hard work, guidance, help and inspiration. Thank you, **Violet Nelson, Carol Hazlett, Neita Comings, Diane Burnley, Kim Alexander, Tanya Enders Beach, Hallie Beacham, Ann Mahoney, Cecile Peters, Connie Cservenyak, Laura Kramer, Susan Lentz, Holly Schatz, Johanna Lieblein, Laura Tyler** and the many others who helped on activities throughout the year and offered their homes for many of our activities.

And thank you, **Liz Loebel** and **Katherine Lacy**, for cleaning up my eblasts and Grapevine submissions!

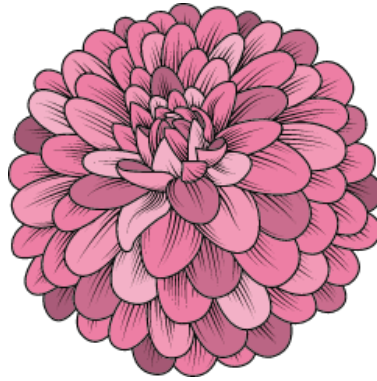
It was fun being the Social Activities Director. I will miss it.

-Kathryn Henderson



For the last several years, I have been the Social Activities Director and I have thoroughly enjoyed the job. Working with the Board, an efficient and energetic group of people, has been a delight, and the AAUW membership here in Healdsburg has been one of the nicest group of people I could have possibly known. My husband Dave even joined so that he could be part of Great Decisions groups. I guess all good things do come to an end: we will shortly be moving from Sonoma County to Portland. A very difficult decision, Dave and I have been in this county 30 plus years. I raised my children here, and both of us have been part of the Bay area for over 60 years. But we both agreed we could no longer endure the fire season. Moving north will be a new adventure for us both. Portland has an AAUW chapter, but it could never compare to this one in Healdsburg. I thank everyone for making our membership so meaningful.

-Kathryn and Dave Henderson



Volunteer Needed!

Are you social media savvy? An influencer? Committed to keeping AAUW accessible to all of our stakeholders? If so, we need you!

Scarlett Wood, our social media maven for many years, has decided to “retire” – at least from the rigors of Facebook and Instagram. The Communications team is looking for someone to take the reins of the branch’s online presence.

If you are interested in taking this on, and contributing to our mission in an important way, please drop me a line – lauramtyler@earthlink.net.

Thank you!

-Laura Tyler, Communications Director

A Message from Scarlett Wood

While I was the social media site manager, I expanded my computer skills, and I am indebted to **Linda Clark** as my techy mentor and to **Kate Van Ness** for supporting the creation of our Instagram account.

-Scarlett Wood



Scholarship Success Stories

Mariele Ponti's Story

2017 recipient of the AAUW Healdsburg Branch SRJC Scholarship



I write to you four years after receiving a scholarship from your branch. In 2017, when I received the scholarship, I was completing my third year at community college. Three years prior I had begun my college career at SRJC, a returning student at twenty-five. In 2017, I was also taking courses at Laney College as part of the Legal and Community Interpreting program.

After receiving the scholarship I transferred to Mills College in Oakland where I studied for two years and completed my BA in mathematics. Honestly, even with the scholarship, studying at a four-year university was difficult due to the financial burden. My plan had been to work as an interpreter to support myself, but I didn't quite pass the state exam, so I looked for alternative jobs. After transferring from SRJC I was not prepared for such limited class schedules that made finding a job more challenging and costly. I had to take the maximum scholarship amount in addition to part-time jobs every semester just to make ends meet. This emphasized the importance of the scholarship for me. It took a weight off my shoulders and helped me out in a singular way. I completed my math degree in spring of 2019. I had excellent professors and really enjoyed math, computer science, and a couple of cross-disciplinary English and History courses. It was such a valuable experience to me!

During my studies toward my math undergrad degree, I took some computer science courses. I always loved discrete mathematics, algorithms and enjoyed coding. Upon graduation I continued to expand my interpreting practice, as a self-employed interpreter. In March of 2020 the state interpreter exam was canceled, and a new position I had been offered was put on hold. The decision to pursue computer science was logical, as it was the other career path I had considered. I was lucky to find the program at Virginia State University. I moved there to pursue my MS in computer science in July, 2020. I am graduating at the end of this summer. I have a 4.0 GPA and am currently searching for a job as a junior software engineer to begin upon graduation. I may stay in Virginia or relocate for a new job. I currently volunteer with the Karishma Foundation, the local network that allows rural schools and communities without internet to connect to a local Wi-Fi network. Outside of school I do many algorithmic problems and work on a couple of web application projects. I enjoy building projects and look forward to a role in which I can continue solving problems (and in which I can pay my bills).

I have always wanted to work for gender justice that doesn't exclude anybody. My long-term goal is to use my skills to contribute to organizations that work to advance racial and gender justice in a way that centers on Black, Indigenous, and immigrant women and the LGBTQI community. I believe that my math background and engineering skills can be assets for the movement in this country toward a real democracy.



Membership

AAUW Member Spotlight

Rebecca La Londe



Rebecca La Londe currently serves on the AAUW Board as our Public Policy Director, reflecting her deep interest in legislation as a key to significant change. She has lived in Healdsburg since 1975, and remembers a time when there were only three wineries in town. Rebecca now resides in the Parkland Farms area with her husband, Steve. She loves gardening, cooking and knitting. Steve and Rebecca enjoy hiking and travel, particularly enjoy staying in small towns to get to know the local culture – favorites are Cortona, Italy and Gordes, France.

Rebecca, one of six children, lived all over the world as part of a military family. After her father's retirement, the family moved to the Bay Area. She started college as an art major, but dropped out and worked for a time on a communal apple farm in Colorado. While living in Colorado, she did volunteer work with a nurse practitioner, who encouraged her to return to school. She earned her AA degree in nursing, and after graduation landed a nursing job at Healdsburg Hospital. She was quickly promoted, becoming a nursing house supervisor. Her experience there helped Rebecca identify a community need for in-home care for patients after leaving the hospital. Rebecca was part of a group of health care professionals who founded one of the first home health care agencies in Sonoma County.

Rebecca later extended her healthcare education through training as a critical care nurse, and earned a BS in Nursing from Sonoma State University. She held positions running regional home care agencies, as the chief clinical nurse for Healdsburg Hospital and Sonoma Specialty Hospital, and as a regional hospice director. She spent the last 17 years of her career at Kaiser Hospital in Santa Rosa, where she served as an area leader and quality leader.

Rebecca's parents always encouraged volunteerism, and she has used her management, leadership and technical skills to serve with many other local nonprofit organizations, including the American Cancer Society and Redwood Empire Food Bank. The devastation of the 2017 Tubbs Fire inspired Rebecca to learn more about community emergency preparedness. She is currently part of the leadership group for COPE (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies) Northern Sonoma County. One of COPE's key initiatives is to help residents set up groups to communicate, prepare for, and respond to emergencies in their neighborhoods. Tying back to her interest in public policy, the COPE group works closely with legislators, public safety organizations, government agencies and other organizations to influence policy regarding emergency preparedness. To learn more about working on a COPE initiative for your neighborhood you can go to their website [Welcome to COPE Northern Sonoma County](https://www.cope-northern-sonoma.com) or email Rebecca at rlalonde@comcast.net.

-Julie Hanamura

Sharon Roper

I saw Sharon Roper's husband, Robert, last week, and learned that their house was the last one on Wallace Creek Road, (off of Mill Street,) that burned in the Walbridge Fire last fall. For those of you who remember, Sharon was an excellent, very active AAUW President 20 or more years ago. Sharon and Robert have moved a little earlier than planned to Varenna, a retirement home in Santa Rosa. If you'd like to call her, her phone number is (707) 484-4060.

-Heidi Blumenthal



If you are aware of any member who is ill, has had an operation or an accident, has passed away or had a close family member pass away, please notify Heidi Blumenthal so that a card can be sent to the person or family from AAUW. Email - heidiblu@aol.com. Phone - 707 433 7445.

The Grapevine is published online each month, except in July and August. Please submit articles and announcements in WORD or PAGES in Calibri font 12 pt, justified, and photographs in Jpeg by the 15th of the month prior to the issue in which you want them included. Remember that the Grapevine is available to the general public, so be cautious about including your personal information. Send to Donna Riley at dldrldh@gmail.com.