



Orlando *** Winter Park BRANCHLINE



Florida is truly a hot-spot for biodiversity, and our speaker today makes it even hotter as a pyromaniac with a purpose! Jennifer Elliott, Program Director for the Arboretum and Natural Resources Programs, is in charge of many things, including controlled burns that are used to manage and sustain the ecology of the Arboretum, the 800 acres of UCF natural lands and other urban forestry initiatives.

She oversees all Arboretum research and educational initiatives, including experiential-based learning programs for students **and** community members.... like us! Ms. Elliott's undergraduate and graduate work was with sea turtles, and she had thought about becoming a veterinarian.

Although she has switched her focus to plants, her broad concerns are still habitat conservation and sustainability both on sea and now on land.

Leslie Sue Lieberman, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita UCF

Literary Luncheon

March 21, 2026

Flyer, Reservation and Seating Request Forms can be found after the calendar.

Saturday, January 10, 2026

9:30-11:30

**First Congregational Church of Winter Park
225 S. Interlachen Ave., Winter Park**

COST: \$20

HOW TO PAY

1. **Cash or check at the door or**
2. **Zelle or**
3. **Send check to the following:**

AAUW
P.O. Box 884
Winter Park, FL 32790
(allow 5 days delivery time)

Make check payable to

AAUW-Orlando/Winter Park

RSVP BY WEDNESDAY, JAN. 7

USE THE RESERVATION EMAIL BELOW:

AAUWreserve@gmail.com

**You are responsible for payment in full
if you do not keep your reservation.**

From the President



With the start of the new year, we look forward to new beginnings, in our own personal lives and those of our family, friends, and neighbors. Quotes abound on the start of a new year: Edith Lovejoy Pierce notes: *We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.*

And Vern McLellan's short but pithy comment: *what the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year.*

And by Nido Qubein: *Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.*

Our AAUW branch was active this past year in advancing national AAUW programs, and with our local presentations of scholarships, grants, and access to programs such as TechTrek to students furthering their education and over 100 PACE students and families were served by our AAUW volunteers.

This coming year we have an excellent line-up of programs for our monthly breakfast meetings held at the First Congregational Church in Winter Park. This is also a good opportunity to socialize with fellow members.

(Continued on Page 5)

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Contact Judy McDonald if you
hear of any member who is ill,
having surgery, experienced a
loss, etc.
murran@bellsouth.net

At our General Meeting in December, our holiday program was NBT (Nothin' But Treble), an ensemble group that delighted our members with their unique harmonies and impressive clicking, snapping, and stomping.



So what are the odds? One of the members of NBT was the recipient of an AAUW scholarship in 1994! She attended Stetson where her fields of interest were sociology and theater. She went on to get an MFA and an M.A. in game design. She is a professor at Full Sail now in her 22nd year. She said that without the scholarship from AAUW, she wouldn't have been able to attend Stetson as she came from a poor family. I guess it proves that if you are able to click, snap, and stomp, you can easily master multiple life projects as well. (ed.)



Photos by Georgiana Havill. Sorry we couldn't use them all!. (ed.)

And in another instance of "What are the odds?"—New member Amy Gordon joined our branch after attending the November meeting.

Encouraged by her mother, then a member of AAUW, Amy applied for and received an AAUW scholarship in 1976! She went on to graduate from the University of Florida, where she majored in Interior Design and minored in Women's Studies. After college, she established her career as a commercial designer and now lives in Maitland. Several of our branch activities interest Amy, including the Scholarship Committee.

Amy's address, phone number, and email were not available at this time. Next month, we'll print more information about Amy.

PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS

On Monday, December 15, AAUW hosted a very special day for the girls at PACE. It started with a Pizza Party, moved on to the girls making cards for the holiday and ended with homemade cookies, presents, and generous gift cards. The girls were thrilled!

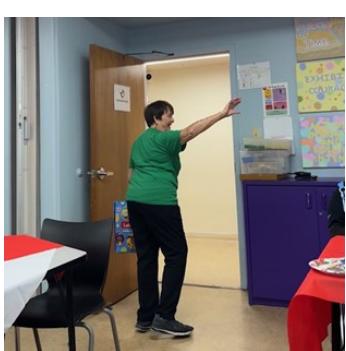
For more than 20 years, the women of AAUW have generously supported PACE Center for Girls Orange. Over the years, new students would be told by other girls about the wonderful events AAUW provided for them. All the girls looked forward to these occasions and enjoyed the festivities. And they appreciated the women who made them happen. This latest party was the same; several of the girls even made cards for us—their friends at AAUW.

Sadly the center is closing, but PACE is not totally leaving Orange County and AAUW is not abandoning the

girls. Our friend Amber Proctor, who has been Program Director at PACE for more than 13 years, will continue to be employed by PACE and work with Orange County Public Schools. Once she begins her new position, we will consult with her on the best way to help the girls. Those girls who are seniors this year have been encouraged to apply for AAUW Next Step Grants as they plan their future.

Many, many thanks to all for your generosity over the years. Through your presence, your food, the books you bought, the library you organized, and your financial support, you have brought enjoyment and a sense of being cared for into the lives of so many girls. Thank you.

Anne, Barbara, Karen B, Karen G, Pat, Roberta, Sue and Susan



Thanks to Betsy Swart for submitting all the photos.

From Our Members

CALENDARS CALENDARS CALENDARS

I delivered the calendars contributed by AAUW sisters to The Plymouth Apartments in Winter Park in early December. I fanned them out on a table in their computer room and went out to the lobby to advise the receptionist that I had made the drop. She was delighted and said she had had several inquiries. "Are we getting calendars this year" people asked? As I walked in I mentioned the calendars to several residents and word spread quickly.

Never doubt that we are doing a great thing by gathering these colorful, educational, useful gifts and distributing them to elderly, disabled individuals and families of little means. They use them to decorate their apartments, keep track of appointments and happenings in their lives, and the calendars also offer opportunities for residents to interact with one another in a social setting. Nice job, ladies! You have my heartfelt gratitude yet again this year. (Article and photos Submitted by Lynda Hinckley.)



The Foreign Affairs group held their holiday lunch at the Blue Heron Restaurant in the Westminster Tower Building. The members were seated in a private room.

Submitted by Mary Himes

From the President

(Continued from Page 2)

In addition, our group offers various activities that contribute to our knowledge and encourage fun and fellowship for our members—Booklovers, Exploring Central Florida, Foreign Affairs, Lunching Out and others which are noted in the BRANCHLINE – published monthly by our Editor, Linda Fessel.

Look forward to a good AAUW new year – and posing this little quiz: In what year did Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall in the same year?

In closing, I would like to offer best wishes to all for a new year that brings you all the good things you are hoping for.

*Diana Secor, President
AAUW Orlando/Winter Park Branch*


Elinor Parker
1937-2025

Originally from Massachusetts, Elinor Parker moved to Maitland via Miami in the early 2000s. She and her lifetime companion Gerson Sacks remodeled a house where she grew an enviable flower and herb garden attracting multiple birds.

A painter in oils, she favored the still life genre, especially vegetables. The Parker-Sacks home reflected her love of art, nature, books, film, music and deep comfort.

AAUW became an essential component of Elinor's life after Irene Pruzan introduced it to her in 2003. She immediately joined Booklovers II where she strongly influenced our choices of literary fiction for more than two

decades. A few years later she joined Linda Fessel's Bridge Group which eventually evolved into a Mahjong Group. Elinor loved serving Thanksgiving dinners at the PACE Center for many years.

She often described her "second" life as a divorced woman in her forties. Transformed by feminist consciousness raising, she taught herself financial independence and returned to college. She earned a B.A. and an MSW, the latter in mental health counseling.

Elinor and Gerson moved to the Westminster Baldwin Park in 2020. He passed away early this year. She died on December 23 because of an aggressive untreatable lung cancer. Elinor left two brilliant daughters, their spouses and multiple grandchildren. Her memory will definitely be a blessing.

Martha H. Williamson



For 20 years, Elinor shared birthday celebrations with a close group of AAUW friends.



And when the group got silly, Elinor went right along.



With Joyce Z. at a literary luncheon

With Martha W. at the Menello



That streak of white hair on her forehead, her most distinctive physical feature, never changed in over two decades. We will miss her elegance, her charm, her intellect, her final act of bravery, and that unique identifying shock of white hair. Rest in peace, Dear Elinor.

Interest Groups

Booklovers:

With gratitude for member generosity, I am happy to share that Booklovers donated \$400 to Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida last month. This month group leaders will again collect our annual \$10 dues from each Booklover—more support to share in the community.

Our active participation continues in January as Booklovers nominate titles for the upcoming 2026-27 book ballot. Then voting in February will determine our selections for the next reading season.

A promising new year unfolds.

Booklovers is open to all AAUW members. If you'd like a chance to attend a Booklovers discussion and wish more information, please contact me, Missy Baker, Booklovers Coordinator, bakerworks@gmail.com.

Booklovers Lite: Booklovers Lite meets monthly on the last Wednesday at 1 p.m. The reading list is independent from those of the other book groups. The book selected for January 28 is *The Reading List* by Sasha Nisha Adams. The books are usually page-turners, and the discussion is always lively. If interested in being part of this fun group, contact chair Karen Deo: Karen.deo@gmail.com.

Dining In: Dining-In normally meets at noon on the first Friday of the month. Contact Jane Rosen for more information: 321-295-7689 or mjcrosen@hotmail.com.

Exploring Central Florida (ECF): Plans are in the works to tour the Arts Center, Art House, Sculpture House, and Sculpture Garden in Casselberry on Wednesday, February 11 with lunch before the tour. Check your email for more details. Contact Linda at LFessel@Comcast.net to get on the contact list. There are currently no tours planned for January.

Foreign Affairs: Foreign Affairs Interest Group will be discussing chapter 8, "American Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead" in our Great Decisions book on Sunday, January 25, 2026, at 2 p.m. Judy McDonald will present this topic. Contact Mary Himes for more information. mwaltzhimes@gmail.com

Lunching Out:

Lunching Out will meet on Friday, January 16. Check your emails for time and place. Please contact me if you have any recommendations for restaurants. If you would like to join this group, contact me to get on the Lunching Out list. LFessel@comcast.net

MahJongg: meets on Thursdays at Club 24 in Winter Park from 1-4 p.m. Want to learn the game? We will teach you. For more information, contact Karen Deo: Karen.deo@gmail.com

This bulletin board is for you to announce non-AAUW events that you would like to publicize and/or promote.

Adrienne's Global Dining:

Contact Adrienne Katz Katz for information on this group.
321-695-4445
katzaid@yahoo.com

JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 New Year's Day	2	3
4	5	6 <u>1:30 p.m.</u> B-Lovers I	7 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> B-Lovers IX <u>10 a.m.</u> B-Lovers VIII <u>1 p.m.</u> B-Lovers II <u>1 p.m.</u> B-Lovers VII	8 <u>1-4</u> Mahjongg	9	10 <u>9:30-11:30</u> General Meeting
11	12	13 <u>2 p.m.</u> B-Lovers VI	14	15 <u>1 p.m.</u> B-Lovers X <u>1-4</u> Mahjongg	16 <u>11:30</u> Lunching Out	17
18	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	20 <u>1:30</u> B-Lovers V	21	22 <u>1-4</u> Mahjongg	23	24
25 <u>2 p.m.</u> Foreign Affairs	26	27	28 <u>10:30</u> BOD mtg. <u>1 p.m.</u> B-Lovers Lite	29 <u>1-4</u> Mahjongg	30	31

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Betty Wasicek	Jan. 1
Irene Pruzan	Jan. 3
Susan Levine	Jan. 10
Susan Rosoff	Jan. 10
Pat Stamm	Jan. 19
Diane Murray	Jan. 23

Collette Davis

Jocelyn Deprez

Jan. 26

Jan. 30

Although the U.S. State Department recently ordered a return to **Times New Roman** for official communication, the Staff of the Branchline resolved to continue using the Calibri font even though the Secretary of State condemned it as “wasteful,” “woke,” and a “cosmetic DEI initiative.” (We’re not sure what that last one even means! ed.)

THE 24th ANNUAL SPRING LITERARY LUNCHEON

Saturday, March 21, 2026

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Hilton Hotel (350 South Northlake Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701)

Cost: \$65

GUEST SPEAKER

Eliza Knight,

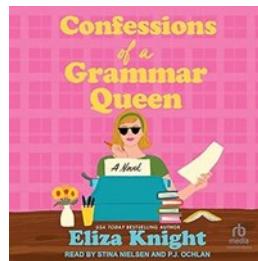


Eliza Knight is an award-winning, *USA Today* and International bestselling author. Her books have been translated into multiple languages and, most recently, her title *A Day of Fire* has been optioned for television. She is also the creator of the popular historical blog, *History Undressed*,

and hosts the *History, Books and Wine* Podcast. Eliza is an avid history buff, and her love of history began as a young girl when she traipsed the halls of Versailles. Her books take you through riveting historical journeys that cross landscapes around the world. In 2025, she will publish her first contemporary women's fiction novel under the pseudonym, Michelle Brandon.

Knight lives in the sunshine state with her husband, three daughters, a dog, a crab and a turtle.

At the 24th Annual Spring Literary Luncheon, Eliza Knight will speak on her latest novel, *Confessions of a Grammar Queen* as well as *The Queen's Faithful Companion*.



Eliza Knight's *Confessions of a Grammar Queen* is a quirky and heartwarming story of breaking glass ceilings. In the 1960s, there are no female publishing CEOs in New York City. Bernadette Swift, the book's spirited heroine, brings to life the struggles of

women in the 60's who live in a Mad Men-esque, male-dominated workplace and must fight decades of sexism. You will enjoy the author's incredible research and perfect prose.

The Queen's Faithful Companion is an endearing and vivid novel told from unique multi-narrative viewpoints of a young Queen Elizabeth; Hannah Penwych, the fictionalized Keeper of the Queen's dogs; and Susan, the Queen's Corgi, whose love and loyalty were boundless. Truly a heartwarming historical read with lots of humor, historical facts of a beloved Queen and her pet.



Please note a few changes:

The Literary Luncheon will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at the Hilton Hotel, Altamonte Springs. In the Calendar of Events for 2025-2026, the date for the luncheon was posted as March 14, 2026. Please make the change.

For your convenience, a copy of the Literary Luncheon Registration Form is included in this issue of the Branchline.

The Literary Luncheon Reservation Form has a few changes. This year open seating will be available as well as our usual reserved seating. **All reservations** must be paid in advance for the luncheon and be received by March 9, 2026.

RESERVATIONS

All guests wishing to sit together must list their names on the same Reservation Form.

Payment for all guests listed on the Reservation Form must be submitted with the Form. Payment can be made by individual checks or one check for the whole group on the form.

It is imperative that payment for all who wish to sit together be received by March 9. Table reservations will not be made until all information and checks are received.

Payment is to be made to: AAUW Orlando/Winter Park
Mailed to: AAUW, PO Box 884, Winter Park, FL 32790.

24th Annual Spring Literary Luncheon



Saturday, March 21, 2026

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Hilton Hotel

350 South Northlake Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701

Cost: \$65

Speaker: Eliza Knight

Eliza Knight is an award-winning, *USA Today* and International bestselling author. Her books have been translated into multiple languages and, most recently, her title *A Day of Fire* has been optioned for television. She is also the creator of the popular historical blog, *History Undressed*, and hosts the *History, Books and Wine* Podcast. Eliza is an avid history buff, and her love of history began as a young girl when she traipsed the halls of Versailles. Her books take you through riveting historical journeys that cross landscapes around the world.

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Reservation Form

Name (Clearly print first and last name)

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Please Reserve: _____ seats @ \$65 Total: \$ _____ Number of Vegetarian Entrees: _____

All reservations, including payment, MUST be received by March 9, 2026.

Please mail this form and checks payable to AAUW Orlando-Winter Park to:

AAUW P.O. Box 884 Winter Park, FL 32790

(Allow five days for mail to reach the P.O. Box)

Use the next page to list everyone you would like seated at your table.

Questions? Contact Pat Curenton at lilcreativetdragon@gmail.com or 407 719-1179 (text preferred)

Or Diana Secor at dianasecoraauw@gmail.com

I am unable to attend but would like to donate \$ _____ to AAUW

As a 501(c)(3), your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law (check with your financial advisor).

By supporting AAUW, you provide educational opportunities and legal advocacy for women and girls.

www.orlando-fl.aauw.net

AAUW Orlando/Winter Park

24th Annual Spring Literary Luncheon

Please **Clearly PRINT** the names of all individuals you wish to be seated at your table. Sorry, sometimes we cannot accommodate all requests, but we do our best!

RESERVATIONS

All guests wishing to sit together must list their names on the Reservation Form. Payment for all guests listed on the Reservation Form must be submitted with the Form. Payment can be made by individual checks or one check for those who wish to sit together (8 maximum). **It is imperative that all reservations, whether single open seating or requested seating be received by March 9 and include payment. Table reservations will not be made until all information and checks are received.**

Payment is to be made to: AAUW Orlando/Winter Park
Mailed to: AAUW, PO Box 884, Winter Park, FL 32790.

(Allow five days for mail to reach the P.O. Box)

Reservations and checks must be received by March 9, 2026.

NAMES and PHONE NUMBERS of persons (8 maximum) requesting to sit at the same table:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8