

January Branch Meeting

The Current State of Education in PA

Ronald Cowell

Executive Director,
The Education Policy and Leadership Center

Thursday, January 9, 2020 9:30 AM

**Murrysville Community Library Meeting Room
4100 Sardis Road, Murrysville, PA**



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The Murrysville Area AAUW, in partnership with the Murrysville Community Library, invites you to meet Ron Cowell, former member of the PA House of Representatives and chair of its Committee on Education, to learn about the current system of public education in Pennsylvania. His extensive experience in the field of education includes his current role as president and executive director of The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization in Harrisburg, PA; 12 years as a member of the PA State Board of Education; 20 years on the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA); and several years as chair of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for early intervention.

Mr. Cowell is currently coordinator of the Pennsylvania Education Policy Fellowship Program, Pennsylvania's premier education policy leadership program for education, community, and policy leaders, and he is a Life Member of the PA PTA. At the national level, he has served on a number of commissions including the National Education Goals Panel, and held leadership positions with the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Nation Association of State Boards of Education.

Mr. Cowell is a graduate of Pittsburgh Central Catholic High School, the University of Pittsburgh, and Widener University Law School. He lives in Murrysville, PA.

Please join us for this inside look at our public education system in PA as told by an expert in the field--and a local community member. The meeting is open to the public, with no registration required.

Presidents' Letter

Italian singer Marco Fiorante was a big hit at our December meeting. With charm and wit, he described Italian Christmas traditions and food, and entertained us with his beautiful voice. At lunch, we learned he and his wife had become parents five days prior. He says their baby boy is already soothed by his father's crooning.

The cookie table was lovely and the Italian cookies were a big hit, especially with our Italian guests. Thank you, Carol Gezon, for organizing the food and drink, and to those who baked. Carol says we will make sure that Starbucks provides decaf as well as regular coffee next time, and we will aim to serve tea as well.

If you want to check future Branch programs and tours, refer to the back page of our Directory or look in the September 2019 FOCUS.

Our program for January, "The Current State of Public Education in Pennsylvania" with Ronald Cowell, promises to be very informative. We look forward to seeing you, and guests are always welcome.

January is a great time to come out and dine with friends at Applebee's AND support the Library, usually on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

Look in this issue for information about the 2020 Great Decisions topics. Do plan to attend one or all of these very informative and timely discussions.

Our website and Facebook addresses are printed on both the front pages of the FOCUS and the Directory. You may wish to check them out! Our email address is murryvilleaauw@gmail.com.

The holiday season is here and a new year is around the corner. Wishing each of you a happy and healthy 2020!

Susan and Janet
Co-Presidents

Milepost Plaques

Our communities are so fortunate to have a well maintained recreational rail trail. Many of us have had the pleasure of enjoying a delightful walk, bike ride or even cross country skiing on this trail. Last year our branch sponsored a trail marker on milepost 17½. With the recent installation of the milepost markers on the new section of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail into Export, we have requested our second trail sponsor milepost plaque to be on milepost 13½ across from Smartie Arties. The trail association has repriced the plaques and provided a 10-year option. The board has decided to use the 10-year option at \$200 for each of our plaques. Keep a watch out for our new plaque!

Hope to see you on this multi-purpose trail.

Donna Beard



Let's Wrap Up the Book Sale...

The books are gone, the tables folded and hopefully, we have all had a good rest. In order to finish up the last details, I need to know if anyone still has money from Half Price Books.

If you do, please call me right now.

Carol Gezon

Great Decisions 2020

We are happy to announce the dates for GREAT DECISIONS 2020 Discussion Group Meetings which will be in the Murrysville Community Library Meeting Room at 10:00 AM on Friday mornings starting on February 14 and ending on April 3. The DVD produced by the Foreign Policy Association on each topic will be shown from 9:30-10:00 AM just prior to the discussion meeting. Reading the booklet article and watching the DVD are optional, but highly recommended.



The Great Decisions briefing booklet will be sent out from the Foreign Policy Association in New York by January 12th. We will distribute them as soon as possible. The booklets are \$32 and any checks should be made out to "Murrysville Area AAUW". If you wish to purchase a book, please text or email Annie S. Rivers or Barb Glozik as soon as possible.

Discussion Leaders are needed for the following topics:

- India and Pakistan
- Red Sea Security
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- U.S. Relations with the Northern Triangle
- China's Road into Latin America
- The Philippines and the U.S.

Two topics — "Climate Change and the Global Order" and "Artificial Intelligence and Data" — already have Discussions Leaders. Please contact Annie S. Rivers or Barb Glozik to volunteer to lead a discussion of your choice.

Great Decisions discussion meetings are open to the public. One does not have to buy a booklet or register to attend any or all meetings.

Great Decisions Co-Coordinators
Annie S. Rivers Barb Glozik

Reading for Pleasure

On January 23, 2020 at 10:00 AM, Diane Eldridge will lead us discussing *The Enders Game* by Orson Scott Card. We will meet at the home of Laura Livingston. Please let Laura know if you can attend.



Laura Livingston

Holiday Branch Meeting

The holiday branch meeting featured Italian singer Marco Fiorante and delicious Italian cookies baked by a few members. Many people requested the recipes, so they have been included on the following two pages of the Focus. Enjoy baking!



Italian Chocolate Spice Cookies

2 cups flour
1¾ tsp baking powder
¼ cup cocoa
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg
¼ tsp cloves
½ cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg in measuring cup with milk to make ½ cup
1 cup chopped walnuts

Sift together flour, baking powder, cocoa, cinnamon, nutmeg, & cloves. Set aside.

Cream together butter, sugar, eggs, and milk.

Add dry ingredients, a cup at a time, along with nuts.

Chill one hour.

Roll into balls and place 1" apart on parchment-lined or greased cookie sheets.

Bake at 375°F. for 15 minutes.

Chocolate Icing

Melt 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate and 2 Tablespoons butter over low heat.

Remove from heat; blend in 3 Tablespoons water and about 2 cups confectioners' sugar.



Patti Vargo

Pizzelles

6 eggs
½ lb melted butter
¼ cup milk
2 tsp vanilla
2 tsp anise flavor
1 tsp almond flavor

4 cups flour
1¼ cups sugar
1 tsp salt

Mix wet and dry ingredients separately. Gradually add flour mix to egg mixture. Cook according to directions on the pizzelle iron.



Janet Sutton

Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti

¼ cup olive oil
¾ cup sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp almond extract
2 eggs
1¾ cups flour
¼ tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
½ cup dried cranberries
1½ cups shelled pistachios

Preheat oven to 300*.

In mixer bowl, mix oil and sugar until well blended. Mix in vanilla and almond extracts, then beat in eggs.

Combine flour, salt, and baking powder; gradually stir into egg mixture.

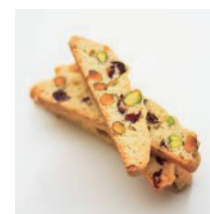
Mix in cranberries and pistachios by hand.

Divide dough in half. Form two logs (12" x 2") on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Dough may be sticky; wet hands with cool water to handle dough more easily.

Bake for 35 minutes or until logs are light brown. Remove from oven and set aside to cool for 10 minutes. Reduce oven heat to 275*.

Cut logs on diagonal into ¾ inch thick slices. Lay on sides on parchment covered cookie sheet. Bake 8-10 minutes or until dry. Cool.

Store in air tight container. Freezes well.



Carol Gezon

Rolled Ginger Cookies

This spicy gingerbread recipe has been in our family for four generations. I cherish it because not only are the cookies delicious, but because the actual recipe card is handwritten by my grandmother. We are always amused at the instruction to “add one-half wine glass of wine”. What does that mean, you may wonder? By trial and error, we have found that about a half-cup of Burgundy works well. But do explore a bit. Malbec? Merlot? Just be sure to fill your glass a bit above half-full, so that there will be some wine left over for you to drink. Cheers!

Diane Kaufmann

Mix the following ingredients well:

1 cup of dark molasses (green label Brer Rabbit works well)
¾ cup of firmly packed dark brown sugar
¾ cup of softened butter (the original recipe calls for pure lard)

Measure four cups of all purpose flour into a separate mixing bowl and add these dry ingredients:

2 tsp baking soda
½ tsp ground cloves
1 tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp salt
1 tsp mace
1 tsp all spice



Slowly begin to mix the dry ingredients with the sugar and molasses mixture. When the dough becomes somewhat stiff, slowly add ½ wine glass of wine. Continue to add flour until the dough is no longer sticky. (You can adjust the wine and flour amounts until the dough feels right.)

Chill well overnight. This dough will keep well in the refrigerator for several days.

When ready to bake, take out enough dough for one “rolling” keeping the rest refrigerated. Flour your pastry cloth liberally while rolling out the dough.

Roll the dough to about ⅛" thickness and cut with cookie cutters. Bake at 375° for about six minutes. You do not need to grease the cookie sheet. Check the first batch carefully to make sure that this timing works for your oven. The size of cookie cutters used will actually determine how long to bake the cookies. Allow the cookies to cool briefly on the baking sheet, but remove them before they are completely cool and become brittle. When the cookies are cool, ice and embellish them as you like.

Orange Fig Cookies

2 - 8 oz. packages almond paste
1 cup sugar, divided
1 cup confectioners sugar, divided
2 Tbsp apricot preserves
3 large egg whites
½ cup dried figs, finely chopped
1 Tbsp grated orange peel



Preheat oven to 325°. Place almond paste, ½ cup sugar and ½ cup confectioners sugar in a food processor; pulse until fine crumbs form. Add preserves and 1 egg white at a time, pulsing after each addition to combine. Transfer almond mixture to a large bowl; fold in figs and orange peel. It will be the consistency of thick batter.


Place remaining sugars in separate shallow bowls. Drop tablespoons of dough into sugar. Gently coat and shape into balls. Repeat in confectioners sugar. Place 1 inch apart on parchment lined baking sheets.

Bake 24-28 minutes or until tops are cracked and bottoms are golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

The cookies can be stored in plastic bags or in an air tight container for several weeks.

Carol Gezon

January 2020


1	Wed.		
2	Thurs.	9:30 AM	Board Meeting - MCL Meeting Room† Board members please let Susan and Janet know if unable to attend.
9	Thurs.	9:30 AM	Branch Meeting - MCL Meeting Room†.
13	Mon.		Deadline to email Focus articles to Donna Beard.
23	Thurs.	10:00 AM	Reading for Pleasure at the home of Laura Livingston. If you plan to attend, please let Laura know.
24	Fri.	9:30 AM	Duplicate Bridge at the home of Dodie Hagan. If you can not attend, please let Doddie know.
28	Tue.	11:00 AM to 9:00 PM	MCL Dining to Donate at Applebee's

† The Murrysville Community Library (MCL) Meeting Room is located at the entrance to the Murrysville Community Library, 4100 Sardis Road.

Snow Policy

If Franklin Regional Schools are cancelled,
AAUW meetings are cancelled.

If Franklin Regional Schools are delayed,
AAUW meetings will be held as scheduled.



The FOCUS is published monthly, except in July and August, by the Murrysville Area Branch of the American Association of University Women. Co-Presidents: Susan Petrie and Janet Sutton, Editor: Donna Beard, Email: MurrysvilleAAUW@gmail.com. The American Association of University Women, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate degree or equivalent, or baccalaureate or higher degree from a college or university or academically accredited institution. In principle and practice AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or class. Membership is not by invitation. AAUW advances equity for all women and girls through advocacy, education and research. The Murrysville Area AAUW has an affiliate membership available to anyone who does not hold an associate or baccalaureate degree.