



April Branch Meeting

The History of Norvelt

Sandy Schimizzi, author

April 11, 2024 10:00 AM

Murrysville Community Library
4130 Sardis Road, Murrysville, PA

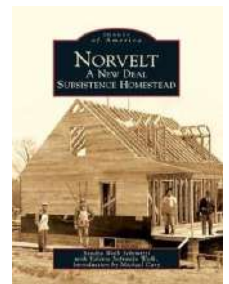
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In 1933, the town of Norvelt became the fourth of 99 planned Subsistence Homestead Communities subsidized by the Federal government as part of the National Industrial Recovery Act for dislocated miners and industrial workers. The Quaker's American Field Service Committee was recruited to implement and build the subsistence project and established a camp in the summer of 1934. More than 1850 people applied for 250 lots which made up the Westmoreland Homestead Plan and those chosen helped build their own homes on a lease-to-own agreement. Homes were equipped with a chicken coop, grape arbor, provided seeds, plants, fruit trees as well as establishing a co-op to help the homesteaders become self-sufficient with community garden plots, a chicken barn, incubator, a pig farm and a barn with cows to provide meat and dairy products. Eleanor Roosevelt had a special interest in the subsistence homestead project and helped to establish minimum standards taken for granted in middle class homes but absent in coal patch towns such as indoor plumbing. Westmoreland Homesteads was renamed Norvelt after a visit there by the First Lady.

Sandra Wolk Schimizzi will speak on the creation of the village of Norvelt, its struggles and transformation as part of one of the most ambitious and controversial federal endeavors in US history. Sandra, who grew up in Norvelt, along with her mother, Valeria Sofranko Wolk, co-authored the book, *Norvelt: A New Deal Subsistence Homestead*. Sandra has also contributed an article on Norvelt for the Westmoreland History Magazine. She is a retired rehabilitation counselor.



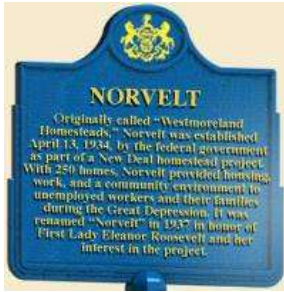
The public is invited to the Murrysville Community Library to learn about this interesting piece of Westmoreland history.



Like us at

[AAUW-Murrysville Branch](#)

President's Letter



Perhaps you are as guilty as I am of simply driving past historical markers displayed along the highway and thus missing fascinating bits of local history. This marker for Norvelt in Westmoreland County is

no exception. The marker text (as recorded online) reads, "Originally called Westmoreland Homesteads, Norvelt was established April 13, 1934, by the New Deal homestead project. With 250 homes, Norvelt provided housing, work, and a community environment to unemployed workers and their families during the Great Depression. It was renamed "Norvelt" in 1937 in honor of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her intense interest in the project."



This month's speaker, Sandy Schimizzi, grew up in Norvelt and has co-authored a book, *Norvelt, A New Deal Subsistence Homestead*, which describes the history and goals of this experiment in cooperative culture and commitment to community. Bituminous coal miners, impoverished by the decline of the coal industry during the Great Depression, were offered the opportunity to help build their own homes, grow their own crops, and share in the profits from a large cooperative farm on the property.

While today none of us are farmers, I believe that AAUW members would have been very much at home at Norvelt. The community sponsored regular educational programs, a Mother's Club, a theater group, study groups, and a community newsletter. Our Reading for Pleasure group, our newsletter, the Focus, and our annual Used Book Sales would no doubt have been welcomed contributions to the social, economic, and educational opportunities offered in Norvelt.

Thus, as we prepare for our next Used Book Sale, please remember what an important contribution this is to our community today! AAUW is perhaps best known locally for our outstanding monthly programs and for the autumn and spring Used Book Sales which are eagerly anticipated by avid readers, both young and old.

The spring book sale, April 25th through the 27th, is now upon us. Please donate books, help with sorting and culling, put a sign in your yard, invite your friends, come to visit, come to shop, and come to share in supporting our library. And then – stay to help with the clean-up. We thank Jane Kerr for the boundless energy she has devoted to organizing the spring book sale! Eleanor Roosevelt would be proud of our efforts.

In the future, let's all stop to read those highway markers!

I look forward to seeing everyone at the book sale!

Diane Kaufmann


In Loving Memory



It is with great sadness that we say farewell to Life Member Alice Miller, who died suddenly on March 16th at 95 years of age. She leaves as her legacy her keen sense of humor, her passion for Bridge, and her dedication to community service. Alice will be dearly missed.

Use Book Sale Update

The Murrysville Library is abuzz with activity in preparation for the Spring Used Book Sale (UBS)! Donated books and puzzles are being dropped off by box and bagfuls. Dedicated teams of cullers and sorters are organizing the donations into boxes by categories. Donations will be accepted until April 23. Then, these sorted boxes will be unpacked on Setup Day (Wednesday, April 24) by more dedicated volunteers.


Would you like to help on Set Up Day? If so, please contact me to volunteer! 

The UBS will take place on these dates:

Thu, April 25 9:30am-5:00pm


Fri, April 26 9:30am-5:00pm


Sat, April 27 9:30am-3:00pm

Would you like to help for a morning or afternoon shift on one or more days of the Sale? If so, please contact me to volunteer! 

When the Sale ends on April 27 at 3:00pm, we hope to have raised a honeypot of money for the library and our branch to support the fascinating programs offered to the public. But... when the Sale ends, the money flow does not! Yet another set of volunteers help pack up the unsold items into boxes. Volunteers take these boxes to a Half Price Book (HPB) location to exchange for money that is added to our total raised. The staff at the library loads the boxes into volunteers' vehicles, and the staff at HPB unload the boxes at their stores. No lifting on your part!



Would you like to help with pack up and/or HPB driving? If so, please contact me to volunteer! 

At our Fall UBS, we raised about \$4900. Let's keep busy  and work together for yet another successful harvest at the Spring Sale!

Thank you in advance for volunteering to help with this very important fundraiser.

Jane Kerr
UBS Chair
724-331-5458
jskerr4829@gmail.com



Info for Primary Election

Tuesday, April 23 Primary Election Day

Monday, April 8 Last day to register to vote or change party registration

Tuesday, April 16 Last day to request a mail-in or absentee ballot.

Tuesday, April 23 Last day to return a mail-in or absentee ballot

Offices up for election in 2024

State Attorney General (4 year term)

State Auditor (4 year term)

State Treasurer (4 year term)

State Senate, 39th district (4 year term)

State Representative, 55th district (2 year term)

U.S. Senate (6-year term)

U.S. House, 12th district (2 year term)

U.S. President (4 year term)

For more information, go to: www.vote.pa.gov

Westmoreland County Board of Elections:
www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/251/Elections

Westmoreland County Courthouse
2 N. Main Street
Ste. 109
Greensburg, PA 15601
Phone: 724-830-3150
Hours: Mon.- Fri 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Branch Officer Election

At the March Branch meeting, the Board, acting as the nominating committee, proposed the following slate of officers for a 2024-2026 term:

President, Diane Kaufmann

Secretary, Lisa Roudabush

The election will be held at the April Branch meeting and the newly elected officers will be installed at the May Branch meeting.

News from AAUW PA and Our National Organization



Voting for AAUW PA officers began on Feb 23 and continues until April 30. Instructions for voting are outlined on the AAUW-PA website,

<https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/nomination>.

Positions up for election are:

President,
Program Vice-President, and
Marketing and Communication Vice President.

The vote on Open Membership begins on April 3rd. Online voting is encouraged. Voting ends on May 15th. The path to more information is somewhat difficult. Either [click here](#) or follow the following instructions.

Go to www.aauw.org and log in to your account. This will take you to your Personal Snapshot.



From this screen, click on the search engine icon and type "open membership" in the search box.

This should take you to the Open Membership Toolkit which discusses this issue.



Although voting begins on April 3rd, there is no indication of how to vote at this time. I will send out the voting link to all members as soon as it becomes available



Reading for Pleasure

Because of the AAUW Used Book Sale, April 25-27, there will be no RFP meeting in April. The May FOCUS article will give more details on when we are meeting and what we are doing in this last meeting of the year when we plan our coming year's reading choices. I hope everyone will pitch in throughout the month of April and help in some way our Branch's efforts to raise funds for the Murrysville Community Library and our AAUW.

Somehow this month has gotten away from me and I had to look thru my "finished" audiobooks and stack of read books to even recall what I have been reading in the last thirty days or so. I hope everyone else hasn't been as distracted as I have been. Part of my problem can probably be blamed on my trying to "multi-task" by listening on my AirPods to audiobooks and doing a jigsaw puzzle at the same time. In mid-February, someone gave me a series of Vintage Puzzles and I really got into the "puzzling" mood. To block out the TV, I plugged in and "puzzled" away. From Anne Tyler's *Vinegar Girl* (a modern day *Taming of the Shrew*) to Natalie Haynes' *Divine Might* (goddesses in Greek myth); from Peter Mayle's *Caper* series (Sam Levitt mysteries set in the south of France) to Matt Goulding's *Grape, Olive, Pig* (deep travels through Spain's food culture), I listened and enjoyed. I threw in a few escapism books from my old favorite authors Terry Pratchett and Amanda Quick and my new favorite John Scalzi. There is nothing like humorous fantasies/sci-fi and hot romance to take away your troubles. ;)

Annie S. Rivers
RFP Chair



Dues Are Due for 2024-25

(Write that check now)



The time is now to send your \$85 check. It would be marvelous to have all checks by June 1, in order to process them in a timely fashion.

Our total payment will not increase this year although State AAUW has made a \$2 increase in Pennsylvania dues. The total will continue to be \$85 for members and \$25 for affiliates. That breaks down to \$72 for AAUW National dues, \$12 for the State Affiliation and \$1 for our branch operating budget.

\$72 of our National dues is tax deductible because AAUW is a 501(c)3.

Please mail your \$85 check, made out to AAUW, to Carol Gezon or give it to me at a branch meeting.



Carol Gezon
3309 Hermar Court
Murrysville, PA 15668

Please include any changes in address, phone number, or email for updating the directory.

Carol Gezon
cwgezon@windstream.net
724-989-9595

March Meeting Photos



April 2024			
4	Thurs.	9:45 AM	Board Meeting — in the Murrysville Library Meeting Room†. Board members please let Diane know if unable to attend.
11	Thurs.	10:00 AM	Branch Meeting — TechNook† in the Murrysville Community Library
15	Mon.		Deadline to email Focus articles to Donna Beard at djbeard2@gmail.com.
17	Wed.	1:00 PM	Duplicate Bridge at the home of Donna Beard, 3669 Blue Sage Court.
23	Tue.		Primary Election Day 
24	Weds.	1:00 PM	Book Sale setup
25	Thu.	9:30 AM to 5:00 PM	
26	Fri.	9:30 AM to 5:00 PM	
27	Sat.	9:30 AM to 3:00 PM	
27	Sat.	3:00 PM	

† The Murrysville Community Library (MCL) Meeting Room is located at the entrance to the Murrysville Community Library, 4130 Sardis Road. The TechNook is located in the main library room just before the main stacks.

The FOCUS is published monthly, except in July and August, by the Murrysville Area Branch of the American Association of University Women. President: Diane Kaufmann, 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.