

Our Branch Honors Judith Johnson as 2024 Named Gift Honoree



On May 9th, Branch president, Diane Kaufmann, presented Judith Johnson with the 2024 Named Gift Honoree Award. Judy, a member of our Branch for over 50 years, shares her bio and reflections of Branch life in the article below.

“I grew up in Reedsville, a small town in central PA, about 30 minutes from Penn State, which was named for my Reed ancestors in 1777. My mother was widowed when I was one. I lived in my true hometown where everyone seemed to know everyone else! My mother was a teacher and I vowed that I absolutely didn’t want to be a teacher - so of course I ended being a teacher, and found it not to be a bad choice after all!

My first job was teaching 5th grade in Mt. Lebanon. Bob and I were married in 1963. Wouldn’t you know, he was a “local” from home! We moved to Murrysville in 1965 with our two daughters, Ann and Elizabeth and it became my new hometown.

I quickly discovered that volunteering was the way to meet people, so I was involved in scouts, church activities, and neighbor get togethers. In those days, they were my first friends.

Then, in 1972, AAUW was formed. I found it to be a place to meet and interact with others like myself who needed to engage with one another while taking on things that would be community oriented!

Our branch literally “exploded”! From 1973 to 1978 we grew from 67 members to 354 members. Every member seemed to be involved in some way. Several of the early members are still active today. They were most certainly key to our success.

An extra note: Did you know that in 1973 our original name was Franklin Township Area branch of AAUW? In 1977 it was changed to Murrysville Area because our membership covered such a wide area.

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Bloom Where You Are Planted

How fortunate we are that over 50 years ago a group of visionary women founded our local AAUW Branch. As Judy mentions in her article, the group was initially known as the Franklin Township Area AAUW. The name changed to Murrysville Area AAUW in 1977 to reflect the wider area served by the Branch.

Our Branch did indeed “bloom where it was planted”. As is evident from the excerpt from a 1977 Focus provided by Judy Johnson, and reproduced beside this letter, the group blossomed with activities ranging from bridge, to financial planning, to Shakespeare studies, and Reading for Pleasure. I read the “Study and Special Interest Groups” list and want to join each one!



I believe our founders would be very proud of us today for continuing their wonderful tradition of service and intellectual curiosity. This year’s Branch programs featuring topics from Steel Strikes, the Youngstown Mob, Vladimir Putin’s Post-Soviet Russia, STREAM Learning, Migratory Birds, Norvelt, and Book Banning reflect the wide intellectual interests of our Branch. Please thank Janet Sutton, Andrea Cole, and Diane Conway for their hard work in providing such excellent programming!

The Reading for Pleasure and Bridge groups continue to flourish under the leadership of Annie Rivers, Carol Gezon, and Dodie Hagan. While reading has always been a focus of AAUW members, the Branch has expanded its service to the community by supporting the Murrysville Community Library with two Used Book Sales each year. Thanks to Jane Kerr for focusing her organizational genius in chairing this year’s sales!

As the 2023-2024 AAUW year comes to an end, please reflect on how we have grown, how we have changed, and what a beautiful garden of ideas, service, and friendship we provide to our community and to each other. To quote a popular adage, “If friends were flowers, I’d pick YOU!”

Wishing everyone a restorative and enjoyable summer,

Diane Kaufmann



Photos courtesy of
Judy Johnson

STUDY AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS	
BRIDGE:	Couples, 1st Fri, 8:00, Jane Vosburgh Duplicate, 1st Wed, 12:00 Jane Grundy Morning, 2nd Wed, 9:00, Eileen Tome
CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR:	see Focus, Anita Smolenski
EXCHANGE-A-BOOK GROUP:	Exchange at branch meetings, Enid Hall
FINANCIAL PLANNING:	Fri, March and April, Betty Hubble
FRENCH CONVERSATION:	1st and 3rd Tues, 9:30, Betty Hollingsworth
GREAT DECISIONS:	February through April Mary Ross
GOURMET LUNCHEONS:	See Focus, Marty Johnson
INTERNATIONAL FOODS:	3rd and 4th Sat, Marjorie Boehn
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS-RUSSIA,	4th Mon, Mary Ross
MONDAY MINI-SERIES:	"American Indians: Past and Present", September and October, Carolyn Hott and Kathy Guthrie, "America", film series at Murrysville Library, Mon. mornings, Oct. and Nov.
PRACTICAL PUTTERING:	3rd Wed, 9:30 Peg Kushner
READING FOR PLEASURE:	4th Weds, 9:30 Carol Schwerer
SHAKESPEARE:	2nd Tues, 9:30 Marilyn Hoellen
TOURS:	Landmark Tours, as scheduled, Susan Petri Tot Tours, as scheduled, Marcia Paulson
SYMPHONY TICKETS:	Anita Smolenski

A page from a 1977 Focus provided by Judy Johnson

Judy Johnson (continued)

During the early years, Marge Hanes, Bjöerg Granger, Susan Petrie, Nancy Veyo, Betty Hollingsworth, Carol Gezon, Susan Greenberg, and Diane Eldridge added their skills and enthusiasm to contribute to our initial success! Many, many others came along to join and contribute until we were quite firmly established in the community.

AAUW was the springboard that propelled many of our members into careers as they made connections and learned how to make positive changes in the world. I accepted a position with FRSD as Director of School-Community Relations which I loved. The job allowed me to be involved with AAUW doing projects as time allowed. Among them were working on the pamphlet, *Pathways to the Past*, a guide to local landmarks in the Murrysville Area. I was also able to coordinate the library community project, *Books for the Homebound*. That led to working on the Adult School Committee.

In later years, I particularly enjoyed visiting with senior citizens, in nursing homes and in their homes to provide a listening ear. In retirement, I am enjoying photography, writing, reading and armchair traveling! Now, I’m back to enjoying one of my first loves. AAUW.

Thank you all for making my life fulfilling and fulfilled!



Murrysville AAUW Needs You

Each time you see an AAUW program, a program coordinator made it happen. Please help your AAUW by offering to coordinate a program.

Here is what to expect:

1. You are assigned a speaker.
2. You contact the speaker to provide details and to be the contact person.
3. You ask the speaker for a photo and biography information then write the article for the Focus.
4. You coordinate gratuity arrangements with the Finance Officer.
5. You introduce the speaker at the Branch meeting.
6. And finally, you send the speaker a thank you note.

We need you!

Janet Sutton
janetsquilter@aol.com

Andrea Cole
acole0802@yahoo.com

In Memoriam

Marilyn Louise Wilks Hoellen



It is with great sadness that we note the passing of Marilyn Louise Wilks Hoellen, the third president of our local Branch, community activist, and Franklin Regional School

Board member, on May 18, 2024 at the age of 94. Marilyn lived in Cockeysville, Maryland with her daughter during the final years of her life. Many of our early members will remember her fondly.

Spring UBS a Blooming Success

A huge bouquet of appreciation to each and every one of you for your help in making our 2024 Spring Used Book Sale such a success! We culled and sorted over 350 boxes of books and over 500 puzzles that we collected thanks to the amazing generosity of our community. Our volunteers included over a dozen of our dedicated AAUW branch members, the indefatigable library staff, and even a few eager volunteers not associated with our branch or the library! This was truly a community team effort.

We raised a total of \$6951.05 during the 3-day UBS and over 20 trips to Half Price Books. It is with great pleasure that I look forward to working with you again for our Fall UBS. You are an extraordinary team!!

Thank you,
Jane Kerr
UBS Chair



The Vote Is In! AAUW Member Election 2024 The votes have been tallied:

- Melissa LaDuke, Dianne Owens, Sona Pancholy and Christine Schmitz have been elected to serve on the AAUW National Board of Directors.
- The open membership initiative did not pass. Changes to AAUW's bylaws require 2/3 majority (66.6%) to pass. AAUW members voted 65.1% to approve the measure, just shy of passing.



Reading for Pleasure

A wonderful ending and a great new beginning is how the RFP Special Interest Group wrapped up our 2023-2024 AAUW year. Donna Beard generously hosted in her home our last meeting of the year which is our planning meeting as well as our member luncheon. It was a lovely get-together with old members and new: Judy Johnson, Marge Hanes, Bjoerg Granger, Susan Petrie, Lane Neff, Diane Eldridge, Diane Kaufmann, Betty Hollingsworth, Debbi Ulusoy, Janet Sutton, Donna Beard, Andrea Cole, Carol Gezon, and Annie Rivers were present to discuss the future books to read and to enjoy the lovely food and camaraderie.

In an additional FOCUS article, Carol Gezon lists our summer reading suggestions and you can see that our RFP participants have many recommendations to share. After culling the many suggestions and narrowing the choices to eleven possible options for next year's discussions, all members were asked to vote their three to seven top choices. Carol Gezon reported on the titles that received the top votes. Six books in all were chosen and are listed on the following page.

Brought up for discussion at the meeting was the possibility of incorporating The Pittsburgh Arts and Lectures Ten Evenings as bonus reading and discussion events by setting up pop-up viewings of the lectures.

Some of the authors in the 2024-2025 series are ones whose books we have previously read and discussed. Several of the members attending the luncheon meeting commented on their having already read some of the books featured and highly recommended them. More details on this endeavor will be worked out by the time we return in September. The Speaker Series' authors and books for 2024-2025 are as listed on the next page.

After the meeting everyone enjoyed a delicious luncheon provided by Donna Beard, Andrea Cole, Carol Gezon, Diane Kaufmann, Betty Hollingsworth, Susan Petrie, Annie Rivers, Janet Sutton, Bjoerg Granger, and in absentia Bethia's

husband Terry's famous ice creams. What a lovely way to finish our year! Check out the photos on the next page!

Well, on a final note, I've been mixing fiction and non-fiction in my listening and reading pleasure. Three non-fiction books that I listened to were Matt Goulding's third travelogue/food book, *Pasta Pane Vino: Deep Travels through Italy's Food Culture*; the fore-mentioned *Eve* by Cat Bohannon (fascinating); and *I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes within Us and a Grander View of Life* by Ed Yong (I look forward to his second of three books he spoke of in this year's Ten Evenings series—*An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden World around Us*). On the fiction side, I indulged in the science fiction *Cascade Failure* by L.M. Sagas. I'm looking forward to #2 when it is published. One of my long time favorite authors, Jayne Ann Krentz writing under her nom de plume Jayne Castle just published her sixteenth book in her sci-fi fantasy Harmony series, *People in Glass Houses* (I love the dust bunnies). I buy her books the day they come out (whether published under her own name, Amanda Quick, or Jayne Castle). In mysteries, I tried a local author—Carol Silvis who just started a new series under the pen name of Bethany Barker: *A Book Club's Guide to Murder & Mayhem: A Susie Tuft Mystery - Book 1*. It's set locally and refers to the Pittsburgh International Airport and to Punxsutawney, PA. I delved back into a reprint of an old series written in 1940—*The North's Meet Murder* by Frances and Richard Lockridge. I don't know if anyone remembers the early 1950's TV series *Mr. And Mrs. North* with Richard Denning and Barbara Britton but I do and I had to see how the origins of the series came about. I just finished a more recent mystery *The Maid (Molly the Maid #1)* by Nita Prose and have #2 *The Mystery Guest* on my nightstand to start next.

Have a great summer and happy reading!

Annie S. Rivers
Reading For Pleasure Chair

2024-2025 RFP Books

September: ***Trust*** by Hernan Diaz

October: ***Lady Tan's Circle of Women*** by Lisa See

November: ***The Paris Bookseller*** by Kerri Maher

January: ***American Sirens*** by Kevin Hazzard

February: ***Master Slave Husband Wife*** by Ilyon Woo

March: ***Horse*** by Geraldine Brooks



Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures

The Ten Evenings Lecture Series' authors and books for 2024-2025 are as follows:

Long Island by Colm Toibin

The Half Known Life by Pico Iyer

Democracy Awakening by

Heather Cox Richardson

Water, Water by Billy Collins

I Cheerfully Refuse by Leif Enger

Madness by Antonia Hylton

Eve by Cat Bohannon

James by Percival Everett

Yellowface by R. F. Kuang

H Is for Hope by Elizabeth Kolbert with
Terry Tempest Williams

Photos from RFP Luncheon

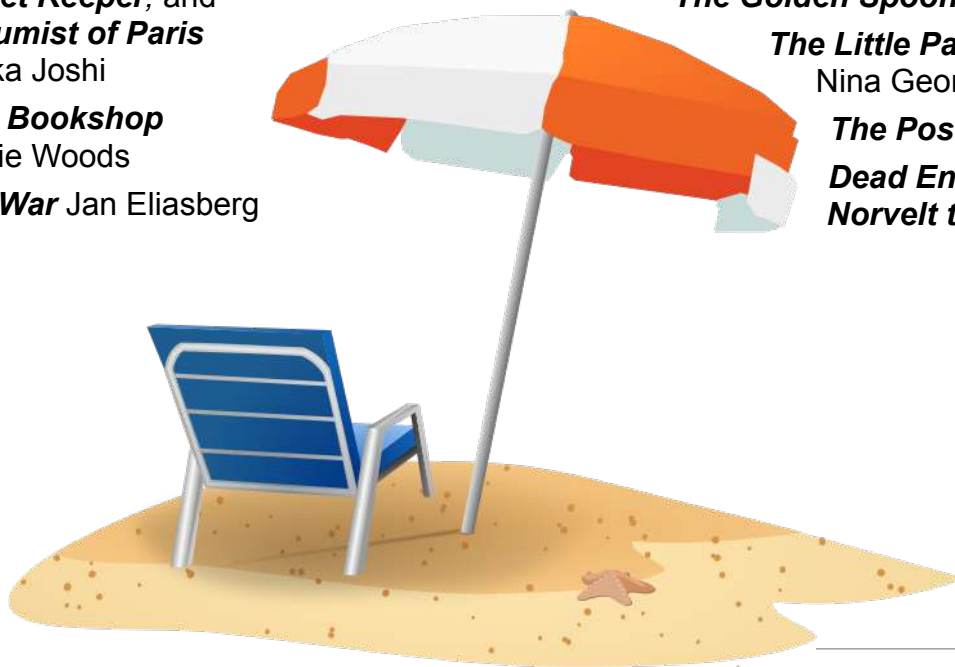


Reading for Pleasure Suggestions for Summer Reading



Demon Copperhead Barbara Kingsolver
Out of This Furnace Thomas Bell
The Covenant of Water Abraham Verghese
Assistant to the Villain Hannah Nicole Maehrer
Starter Villain John Scalzi
The Little Village of Book Lovers Nina George
The Lost Apothecary Sarah Penner
Search Michelle Huneven
The Collector Danial Silva
Saturday Night at the Lakeside Supper Club
J. Ryan Strada
Water Dancer Ta-Nehisi Coates
Tom Lake Ann Patchett
The Lost and Found Bookshop Susan Wiggs
Ordinary Grace William Kent Krueger
The Trackers Daniel Frazier
Meet Me at the Museum Anne Youngstown
The Last Book of Eleanor Dare Kimberly Brock
The Professor and the Madman*
Simon Winchester
The Dictionary of Lost Words* Pip Williams
*Read these two in order
Sea Change Gina Chung
The Henna Artist,
The Secret Keeper, and
The Perfumist of Paris
Alka Joshi
The Lost Bookshop
Evie Woods
Hanna's War Jan Eliasberg

The Last Bookshop Madeline Martin
Gilead, Home, Lila, Jack (Four books total)
Marilynne Robinson
A Stroke of the Pen Terry Pratchett
Terry Pratchett: A Life With Footnotes:
The Official Biography Bob Wilkins
The Soul of an Octopus Sy Montgomery
Weyward Amelia Hart
Tesla Margaret Cheney
Piranesi Susanna Clark
The Unseen World Liz Moore
The Berry Pickers Amanda Peters
Bellman & Black Diane Setterfield
The Thirteenth Tale Diane Setterfield
Vinegar Girl Anne Tyler
Red Shirts John Scalzi
Be Free or Die Kate Lineberry
The Little Wartime Library Kate Thompson
The Road from Belhaven Margot Livesey
Killers of the Flower Moon David Grann
The Wager David Grann
Divine Might: Goddesses in Greek Myth
Natalie Haynes
Door-to-Door Book Store Carsten Henn
The Golden Spoon Jess Maxwell
The Little Paris Bookshop
Nina George
The Postcard Ann Berest
Dead End in Norvelt, From
Norvelt to Nowhere Jack Gatos



Tour of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Vice-president for Programming, Janet Sutton, organized a “pop up” tour of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh for Branch members on May 16th. In the following article, Janet shares the highlights of the visit.

During our recent tour of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in Oakland, led by two knowledgeable librarians, we learned that the 129-year-old library is up to date for today’s library users, with a variety of departments of specialized librarians and staff. These include a children’s library, a teen library, a browsing room with books published during the last three years, an audio-visual library with staff and equipment to help users transfer outdated materials into new formats, a spacious genealogy library and a rare book library with over 16,000 volumes. We walked through the original open stacks of fiction and nonfiction, constructed with Carnegie Steel and glass walkways that enhanced natural light before more modern lighting was installed. A new attractive bamboo garden/reading/sun room constructed in the large air shaft of the old building invites readers to relax. How fortunate we are to have this wonderful resource available free for all of us.



Community Service Award



Betsy Aiken, Executive Director of the Westmoreland Land Trust, accepted our Community Service Award at May's Branch meeting on behalf of the organization. Diane Kaufmann stated the work of the WLT in conserving land of ecological, cultural, and recreational value in Westmoreland County offers countless benefits to residents, making life richer now and preserving local treasures for generations to come. It is in recognition of the groups efforts at conservation, restoration, research, and education that AAUW selected the WLT for our Community Service Award.

Betsy Aiken, Executive Director of the Westmoreland Land Trust, wrote to thank our Branch for recognizing the WLT with this year's Community Service Award and the check for \$400. She wrote,

We are deeply appreciative of this recognition and the Branch's generous donation. The contribution will directly support our work to conserve land of special ecological, cultural, or recreational value in Westmoreland County.

We are also very appreciative of all that Murrysville AAUW does for the community! It is wonderful to see the organization thrive, with so many engaging talks, activities, opportunities for friendship, and intelligent discussions of books and current issues.

It seems fitting that the WLT's two most recent projects have historical roots in women's efforts, with Roberta N. Schwartz establishing a foundation in 1997 to provide for conservation of the Schwartz Nature and Art Park near Greensburg, and Catherine McAuley founding the secular organization in Dublin, Ireland in 1831 that would become the Sisters of Mercy and go on to establish St. Xavier Academy and Convent on the land near Latrobe that has become the St. Xavier Nature Preserve – as well as many other schools, universities, and hospitals throughout Great Britain, the Americas, the Pacific, and Caribbean.

At the WLT we are fortunate to have been entrusted with conservation of these lands, and we are honored by your recognition.

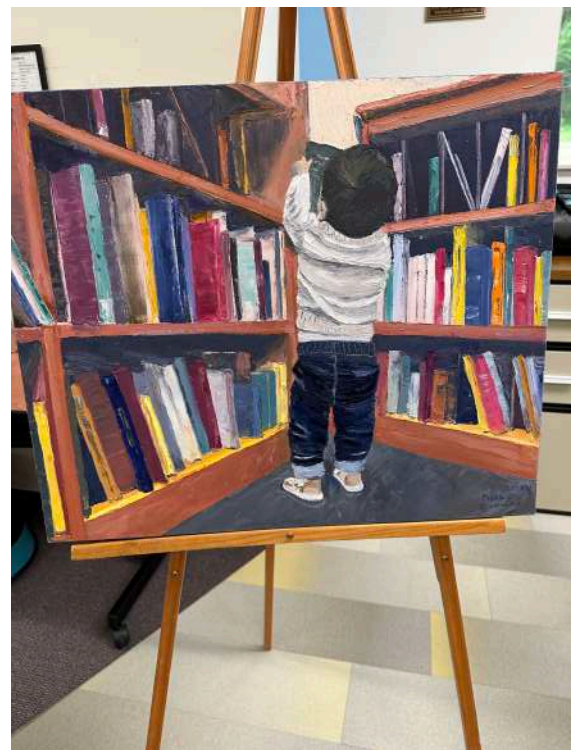
With our gratitude,

Betsy Aiken



Paintings by Diane Conway Highlight this Spring's Celebration of Books

As a backdrop to Fran Bogus' May presentation on book banning, artwork by Diane Conway highlighted the importance of books in everyday life. Our Branch is fortunate to have such a wonderful artist who is willing to share her paintings with our members. Thanks to Diane for her inspiration!



Thanks to the MCL Staff!



Thanks to the MCL staff for recording May's presentation on book banning! The recording, made available online for two weeks after the event, enabled members who were unable to attend to hear the presentation and the discussion which followed. Amy Reigner, we are grateful!!



Local Author Fair

**Saturday, June 29th
10:00am-3:00pm**

**Murrysville Community Library
4130 Sardis Road
Murrysville, PA 15668**

Free to attend!

The Murrysville Community Library Local Author Fair will bring together writers and readers from the community for a day of literary discovery.

You'll find a variety of books and genres, including children's, memoir, poetry, humor, mystery, history, and more!

Are you a published local author?




For just \$15 you can join the fun!
Meet local readers, sell your books, and
join a community of book lovers for a
fun day at the library.



To Register:



For more information and registration, scan
the QR code or contact Amy Riegner at
amy.riegner@wlhonline.org

Summer 2024			
6/4	Tues.		Duplicate Bridge – hosted by Dodie Hagan at her home on Indian Lake.
7/4	Thurs.		
8/19	Mon.		Deadline to email Focus articles to Donna Beard at djbeard2@gmail.com .



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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.