



Janet Sutton Named 2025 Outstanding Woman

The Murrysville Area AAUW is delighted to honor Janet Sutton as their 2025 Outstanding Woman. Janet is remembered as an enthusiastic participant from the very beginning of her membership. In Great Decisions she made insightful contributions (often from personal life experiences, such as living in Panama and from her travels). She helped set up wonderful tours. She continues to bring in extraordinary speakers and programs.

Her knowledge, gained over many years of experience as an MLS graduate from the University of Pittsburgh, has helped tremendously with the Used Book Sales, especially her expertise with books that are valuable for both the sale and for Half-Price-Books. The book sale committee is grateful for her steady and patient guidance.

Susan Petrie, who served as Co-President with Janet, notes, "It was a pleasure working as Co-President of our Branch with Janet. She is knowledgeable, organized, and has excellent ideas." Janet is simply a joy to work with and listen to. We are very fortunate to have her in our organization.

Janet's reputation as a great listener, and a very open-minded leader of a kind demeanor and approachable nature, prompted Nina Damato to note, "You know the adage...watch out for the quiet one... In this case the "Janet the Quiet One" did a Herculean job in a situation that was unprecedented",

It is for this Herculean job that we are delighted to honor Janet Sutton as our Outstanding Woman of 2025. Janet kept our Branch afloat during the most trying of times.

As we now as a nation mark the five-year anniversary of the Covid pandemic, we find ourselves reflecting on those dark times of uncertainty and fear, of isolation and apprehension, and the cessation of normal life as we had come to know it. AAUW was no less traumatized.

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In early March of 2020, Jake Oresick spoke to our Branch about the history of Schenley High School, Amy Riegner was our new Library Director, and we were anticipating the arrival of spring and daylight savings time. A few weeks later, the library was closed and all AAUW programs, tours, and activities were suspended. Covid-19 was among us.

By April of 2020, under Janet's leadership, the Board had its first online meeting and established online voting procedures by email. Her message was consistently positive, as was the reflection that "Not Everything is Cancelled." Branch meetings were held at the Veteran's Field Pavilion where Janet encouraged members to gather "to reconnect, to talk together". Janet soon moved Board meetings to Bluejeans, an online platform provided by the library staff.

Not Everything Is Cancelled

SUN is not cancelled.
SPRING is not cancelled.
RELATIONSHIPS are not cancelled.
LOVE is not cancelled.
READING is not cancelled.
DEVOTION is not cancelled.
MUSIC is not cancelled.
IMAGINATION is not cancelled.
KINDNESS is not cancelled.
CONVERSATIONS are not cancelled.
And most of all, HOPE is not cancelled.

Working tirelessly to keep members connected through the Focus, Janet arranged member profiles for the newsletter,



In Memoriam
Janet's Cat
Sassy

instigated the formation of a Branch "phone tree" to keep members informed, began a puzzle, book, and magazine exchange, encouraged publication of recipes, pictures of members' paintings and nature photographs – we even published photos of our furry pet companions!

Janet's President's Letters featured small vignettes about the lives of remarkable women of Western Pennsylvania: Mary Cassatt, Nellie Bly, Gertrude Stein, and Rachel Carson. Janet was consistently encouraging, ending every column with the advice, "Stay positive and test negative!"

Janet arranged for the Branch to resume in-person meetings in the TechNook of the library in September 2021. Then the Delta variant dealt us yet another blow, and AAUW was forced to ask the speaker from the Flight 93 Memorial to give his lecture by Zoom. Everyone attending the meeting was required to wear a mask. In October 2021, Janet arranged for Branch members to have even more room for social distancing by meeting in the Murrysville Community Center. Members wore masks for the remainder of the year.



Janet Sutton

In July of 2021 we observed the 50th Anniversary of our Branch, founded in July of 1971. It is through the quiet, determined, and inspired leadership of women like Janet Sutton that we have served this community for 50 years.

Janet, we are grateful for your steady hand at the helm during the Covid crisis, for seeing us safely ashore, and successfully launching us forward into our next 50 years of service.



President's Letter

Trailblazing Women in Our Community



For those members lucky enough to have attended our May Branch meeting, hearing the stories of Bertha Lamme Feicht (engineer and

mathematician), Mary Cardwell Dawson (founder of the National Negro Opera Company), Helen Richey (stunt pilot), Mary Lou Williams ("The First Lady of Jazz"), Ida Tarbell (journalist), and Nellie Bly (world traveler and correspondent), it will come as no surprise that Western Pennsylvania was the home to many "trailblazing women"!

I propose that there continue to be many trailblazing and remarkable women among us. When looking at the list of Outstanding Women named in the Branch Directory, I am sure that many among us can remember the contributions of these amazing women who contributed so much to our Branch and the community. We continue to the present day in the company of outstanding women like Janet Sutton, our 2025 Outstanding Woman, who so provided such inspiring leadership for our Branch during the Covid pandemic.

I invite you to please thank the outstanding women among us who labor so diligently to make our Branch such a vibrant part of the community. Please thank Jane Kerr and Susan Petrie for their dedicated work on the Used Book and Puzzle Sale (held this year as the community struggled to regain its footing after a major storm). We owe a great debt of gratitude to Andrea Cole, not only for her enlightened work in bringing exciting speakers to us but also for her behind-the-scenes efforts to facilitate the Cookie Reception which follows each monthly program. Annie Rivers and Carol Gezon challenge us to read –and share– the most amazing books, while Dodie Hagan schedules the ever-popular Bridge Club. Donna Beard publishes the Focus each month, an invaluable tool for communication and Branch cohesion.

Janet Sutton, Andrea Cole, and Diane Conway bring an amazing variety of speakers to our

monthly meetings, while Sally Haleen welcomes members and guests as our Vice-President for Membership. Lisa Roudabush brings great clarity to the minutes of both Board and Branch meetings. For many years Carol Gezon has devoted her time and talents to the financial well-being of our Branch. The entire community would be poorer without the amazing job that Susan Greenberg does in covering Public Policy and Information, while Nina Damato makes sure that AAUW has a presence on line and in social media.

We will welcome four highly accomplished women to our Board next year: Andrea Cole, Vice-President for Programming, Susan Petrie and Deborah Ulusoy as Co Vice-Presidents for Membership, and Susan Long as Finance Officer.

I must end my remarks by acknowledging our many unsung members who provide such stimulating ideas and questions at Branch meetings; who ask such penetrating questions at Reading for Pleasure, who constantly support and encourage everyone; and who bring a sense of organizational memory all that we do. We are blessed to have these outstanding women among us.

May this summer be a time of rest and reflection for each of us so that we may return to AAUW in the fall revitalized and ready to carry on the tradition of community service established by the trailblazing women who have gone before us.

Best regards,
Diane Kaufmann

Outstanding Woman

Special recognition has been given to a member of the branch who has made an outstanding contribution to AAUW. The three basic criteria used as guidelines for selection are:

1. Demonstrated commitment to AAUW goals and ideals
2. Involvement in the community
3. Leadership in AAUW

1979	Marilyn Hoellen	1997	Donna Carson
1980	Carolyn Hott	1998	Peggy Pontious
1981	Judy Johnson	1999	Solveig Peters
1982	Kathy Guthrie	2000	Judy Shields
1983	Nancy Veyo	2001	Betty Hollingsworth
1984	Marian Weihe	2002	Chris DuBois
1985	Pam Cook	2003	Becky D'Angelo
1986	Diane Eldridge	2004	Bobbie Fabish
1987	Marge Hanes	2005	Shirley Murphy
1988	Susan Goodman	2006	Betty Soergel
1989	Dorothy Pack	2007	Susan Greenberg
1990	Michele Clarke	2008	Erika Treu
1991	Lou McBurney	2009	Betty Morrison
1992	Patty Duchin	2010	Betsy Aiken
1993	Bjoerg Granger	2015	Lane Neff
1994	Annie Rivers	2019	Sally Haleen
1995	Pat Westine	2023	Donna Beard
1996	Helen Pollis	2024	Judith Johnson

Community Connection Volunteers

Franklin Regional Primary School invites
AAUW Members to be Involved



What If Every Child Had One More Adult Cheering Them On?

Stronger Schools Through Stronger Communities

Imagine the impact if every child had one more person—someone to cheer them on, read with them, and help them explore their potential. This simple yet powerful vision can transform schools, strengthen communities, and change lives.

Local involvement is the key to building a solid support system around students, teachers, and families. When community members step into schools as volunteers, they bring real-world connections and open doors to new opportunities. Retirees, in particular, offer decades of life and career experience that can enrich the classroom environment and inspire young minds.

The Impact on Student Learning and Well-Being

Volunteer involvement goes beyond academics. Reading buddies and one-on-one math mentors provide essential academic support, but their presence also brings powerful social-emotional benefits. More positive interactions with caring adults help boost student confidence and self-esteem. Volunteers from diverse backgrounds serve as role models, showing students that success comes in many forms and from many different paths.

Benefits for Volunteers, Teachers, and the Community

This is truly a two-way street. Volunteers often find a deep sense of fulfillment, knowing they

are making a difference. Their presence lifts morale and shows educators that their community stands with them. These interactions also create valuable intergenerational connections and turn community members into passionate advocates for local schools and education at large.

What Volunteer Support Can Look Like

Support can take many shapes, from classroom helpers to dedicated reading partners and math mentors. Every role counts—whether it's a weekly commitment or even just an hour here and there. The important thing is showing up and showing students they are worth the time and attention.

How to Get Involved

Getting started is simple. Our volunteer onboarding process is designed to make joining easy and welcoming. A clearance workshop is tentatively scheduled for August. We especially encourage retirees and other community members to consider the powerful impact they can have by lending their time and experience. Together, we can create stronger schools through stronger communities—one child, one volunteer, one hour at a time.

Audra Meehan, MTSS

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Coordinator,
FR Primary School

Information about the "clearances workshop" will be sent to all members in August.

The following link will take you to the Google ["Connections Volunteer form"](#)





Summer Used Puzzle/LEGO Mini-Sale



Date: Monday, August 4, and Tuesday, August 5, from 9:30 AM – 7:30 PM

Location: Murrysville Community Library

We have puzzles that are processed and ready to sell from our Spring sale. We will request donations of used LEGO bricks — complete sets as well as loose bricks — to sell as well. LEGO donations can be dropped off at the library until August 2.

Here's what YOU can do to help:

- Volunteer to work a 3-hour shift at the Mini-Sale.
- Spread the word for our request for used LEGO donations.
- Spread the word about the Mini-Sale.

Let's put our talents together once again to meet or even beat our total profits from our 2024 Sales so that we can present a sizable year-end donation to our library for all that it does for our community! 😊

Please contact me to volunteer.

Thank you,
Jane Kerr
Used Book & Puzzle Sale Chair
724 331-5458
jskerr4829@gmail.com



Reading for Pleasure 2025-2026 Selections



James by Percival Everett (*Huck Finn* by Mark Twain as a companion book)— September 25, 2025 (Discussion led by Annie S. Rivers at the home of Carol Gezon)

Becoming Madam Secretary by Stephanie Dray—October 23, 2025 (Discussion led by Janet Sutton at the home of Susan Petrie)



Gray Mountain by John Grisham—December 4, 2025 (Discussion led by Betty Hollingsworth at the home of Sally Haleen, 1:00 PM)

The Women by Kristin Hannah—January 22, 2026 (Discussion led by Debbi Ulusoy either at the Murrysville Community Library or at the home of Bjoerg Granger)



The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon—February 26, 2026 (Discussion led by Andrea Cole at the MCL or at the home of Debbi Ulusoy)

Dinosaurs at the Dinner Party by Edward Dolnick—March 26, 2026 (Discussion led by Carol Gezon at the home of Susan Petrie)



Memorial Days: A Memoir by Geraldine Brooks—April, 2026 (3rd, 4th, or 5th Thursday to be determined) (Discussion led by Diane Eldridge at the home of Judy Johnson)



2025 Spring Used Book & Puzzle Sale (UBS)



We did it! Although our usual 3-day Sale became a 2-day Sale, by the combined power 💡 of MANY, the UBS successfully persevered. My sincere THANK YOU to each of our members who helped in so many different ways. Every little “watt” helped!

Here are the numbers:

190 total boxes of books collected during April:

- 152 culled and sorted boxes of books prepared for UBS
- 38 boxes to Half Price Books before Sale

Of the 152 boxes prepared for UBS:

- 112 boxes of books sold at UBS on May 2 and 3
- 40 boxes to Half Price Books after the Sale

600 puzzles culled and sorted for UBS

- 311 puzzles sold at the Sale on May 2 and 3
- 269 puzzles stored for the next Sale
- 20 unsold puzzles donated to the Thrift Shop after the Sale

Over 30 AAUW branch members, Library staff members and community volunteers helped in some way with the Sale. THANK YOU TO ALL!

I look forward to your continued support in 2025 to meet or maybe even beat 🍷 the total money we raised last year. Watch local print and social media, our web site <http://Murrysville-PA.AAUW.NET> and the library website (murrysvillelibrary.org) for more information about the upcoming mini-sale of Used Puzzles and Legos this summer. Hope to see you there! ☀️

With gratitude,
Jane Kerr

AAUW Used Book & Puzzle Sale Chair



RFP Luncheon

Our 2024-2025 year of Reading For Pleasure came to an end with a lovely meeting and luncheon at the home of one of our members, Donna Beard. Pitching in for the luncheon by bringing salads, breads, desserts, and beverages were members Betty Hollingsworth,

Lisa Roudabush, Andrea Cole, Carol Ellis, Björg Granger, Kathy Sankovich, Sally Haleen, Susan Petrie, Debbi Ulusoy and Annie Rivers. Everything was delicious and enjoyed by everyone attending.

The following pages lists many of the books which members have read this past year and enjoyed. Prior to our luncheon meeting, Co-Chair Carol Gezon asked members to each choose fifteen. Carol then collated the voting. The dozen books which garnered the most votes were discussed and debated. After a lively discussion, the seven books listed on page 5 were chosen. For each book, a member volunteered to research and lead the discussion, and members volunteered to host each month's meeting in their homes.

From the Victorians' fascination of dinosaurs to a midwife's life in 1789 Maine; from a historical novel based on the life of Francis Perkins to the lives of nurses serving in the Vietnam War; from the retelling of a Mark Twain classic as told by the slave Jim to a memoir of an author's life after the sudden death of her beloved husband: our Reading for Pleasure members will be reading, discussing and debating these thought provoking books.

All Murrys ville Area AAUW Branch members are welcome and encouraged to join our RFP group and attend our meetings. Join us and bring along your favorite authors and books to share in the future.

"Thank you" to all who participated in our RFP meetings this past year. And a special thanks to my Co-Chair Carol Gezon, who even came to the luncheon straight from her cataract surgery!

Thank you
Co-Chair Annie S. Rivers

Luncheon Recipes

Wedgewood Inn Salad

Sweet/sour Marinated Vegetables

1 can french style green beans
1 can tiny peas (le seur brand)
1 small onion, chopped
4 stalks celery, diced
1 green pepper, diced
1 small jar pimento, chopped (Delallo sells ones already diced)

Drain canned vegetables. Chop pimento if not already diced. Finely dice fresh vegetables. Combine all vegetables. Marinate overnight or at least 10 hours in dressing. Drain to serve.

Dressing:

½ c. each--cider vinegar, oil, water
⅔ c. sugar
1 tsp. each salt and paprika

Mix until sugar dissolves and pour over vegetables.

Apricot Nut Bread

1 cup dried apricots, chopped in ¼-inch pieces
1 cup sugar
2 Tablespoons shortening, softened
1 egg
½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
½ cup nuts (walnuts or pecans), finely chopped
¼ cup coconut (optional)

- Grease then lightly flour a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan.
- Mix the sugar, shortening and egg thoroughly. Stir in ¼ c water and the orange juice.
- Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt, and stir.
- Gradually add dry ingredients to the wet ingredients. Then stir in nuts, apricots and coconut.
- Pour the batter into the pan and let stand for 15 minutes before baking.
- Preheat oven to 350°. Bake until a tester comes out clean, 55 to 75 minutes. Let cool in pan on a rack.

RFP Recommended Reads 2024-2025

Most descriptions are quoted from Amazon, unless a description in writing was submitted when the book was recommended.

- *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros. More dragons
- *French Windows* by Antoine Laurain. Short stories, charming whimsy and thrillers with a French twist
- *The Year of What If* by Phaedra Patrick. Explores love, self-discovery and the intricacies of past and current relationships
- *2034: A Novel of the Next World War* by Eliot Ackerman & James Stavridis. A gripping narrative and a compelling introduction to the risks of great power, competition and a cautionary tale
- *2054: A Novel* by Eliot Ackerman & James Stavridis. This reads like a thriller even as it demands that we consider the trajectory of our society.
- *This Book Won't Burn* (YA) by Samira Ahmed. A timely and gripping social-suspense novel about book banning, activism and standing up for what you believe
- *Neverworld Wake* (YA) by Marisha Pessl. A year after graduating from private school a group of friends are involved in a serious auto accident that leaves them all in the "Neverworld".
- *Democracy Awakening* (NF) by Heather Cox Richardson. A call to action about the precarious state of American democracy; important facts of 150 years of America history
- *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck. Published in 1931, Pulitzer winner, from author born in Pocahontas County West Virginia; story of a poor family's village life in early 20th century China
- *Sisters of War* by Laura Kurtchik. Sisters in 1941 Kiev face the withdrawal of Russian troops in the face of Hitler's advance.
- *The Shadow Key* by Susan Stokes-Chapman. Dismissed by a prestigious London hospital, doctor forced to take a job as a private physician in Wales. Mystery ensues. Superstitious villagers involved.
- *Oil for the Lamps of China* by Alice Tisdale Hobart. Best seller in 1934; "American business man wants to bring "light" and progress to revolution era in China
- *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. Story of Black and Jewish residents of the Chicken Hill neighborhood of Pottstown in the 1920's
- *Cascade Failure: A Novel* (Ambit's Run Book 1) by L.M. Sagas. High octane, Sci-fi adventure; a fierce, messy, chaotic space family exploring ways to be—and not be—human
- *Gravity Lost: A Novel* (Ambit's Run Book 2) by L.M. Sagas. Sequel, equal to #1.
- *The Mighty Red* by Louise Erdrich
- *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. #1 NY Times Reviewers choices of 21st century books. First 16 years of two girls life in small 1950's town near Naples. Life style, relationships, conflicts, education. First in a series.
- *A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway. A memoir of life in Paris as a struggling expatriate writer in 1920's Paris?"
- *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington. A narrative of the rise from Virginia slave to become the most influential spokesman for African Americans of his day.
- *The Thursday Murder Club* (4 book series) by Richard Osman. A group of wealthy retirees (one a former MI6) solves crimes from their senior living facility. Humorous
- *The Wide Wide Sea* by Hampton Sides. Captain Cook's last voyage; close look at his personality

- *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk* by Kelli Estes. A novel about 1882 era of ethnic cleansing of the Chinese in Seattle
- *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck. Travelogue depicting a 1960 road trip around the US with his dog
- *Tales of Madness* by Roald Dahl. Ten unsettling tales of unexpected madness
- *Hillbilly Elegy* by JD Vance. An inclusive account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town; a probing look at the struggles of America's white working class
- *All the Water in the World* by Eiren Caffal. A literary thriller set partly on the roof of NY's Museum of Natural History in a flooded future
- *The Emperor of Rome: Ruling the Ancient Roman World* by Mary Beard. A sweeping account of the social and political world of the Roman emperors by "the world's most famous classicist". Read this rather than listen.
- *All the Colors of the Dark* by Chris Whitaker. An exploration of the thin line between triumph and tragedy set in 1975 America.
- *The Echos of Old Books* by Barbara Davis. A novel about the magical lure of books and summoning the courage to rewrite our stories
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Ann Jacobs. A firsthand account of the author's life as a slave
- *The Accidental Medium, Gin Palace, Cross Bones* by Tracy Whitwell. Series about ghosts
- *The Windsor Knot All the Queen's Men* by S.J. Bennett. Lovely series with Queen Elizabeth II as a sleuth; very respectful to the royal family: fluff is stress relieving
- *A Season for That: Lost and Found in the Other Southern France* by Steve Hoffman. Minnesotan Francophile moves his family of four to a tiny village in France and learns from his mistakes.
- *The Whole Town's Talking* by Fannie Flagg. Novel in the tradition of Wilder's *Our Town* which tells the story of life, after life, and the importance of community.
- *Give Me Your Hand* by Megan Abbott. A life changing secret destroys an unlikely friendship in this magnetic psychological thriller.
- *The Secret Keeper* by Kate Morton. A gripping story of family and deception set in London and the English countryside, it seeks to discover the stories of three strangers from the past.
- *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters. A four year old Mi'kmaq girl goes missing from the blueberry fields of Maine. Unsolved mystery haunts the survivors for fifty years.
- *The Stone Raft* by Jose Saramago. Annie recommends you listen to this because of the way it is written. The story is very philosophical as it follows five persons and a dog traveling the Iberian peninsula.
- *A Grim Reaper's Guide to Catching a Killer: A S.C.Y.T.H.E. Mystery* by Maxie Dara. Follows the trend of a ghost helping the protagonist; first in a series
- *Killers of a Certain Age and Kills Well with Others* by Deanna Raybourn. First two books of a series about four professional female assassins who retire after forty years only to return to their profession to take care of old business.



May Meeting Photos



Guest Audra Meehan
presenting Community
Connections



New Branch Officers

Susan Long, Finance Officer, Andrea Cole, Vice-President for Programming, Susan Petrie and Deborah Ulusoy, Co Vice-Presidents for Membership



Meeting Social



Meeting speaker Judith Sutton

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.