

The BayStater

Dear Tamara,

Welcome to the first issue of our online newsletter. Please feel free to forward to others who may be interested in our mission and activities. Branch leaders, please print out a copy and mail to those members without email.

President's Message



It is with great pride and excitement that I greet you, AAUW-MA members, as your newly-installed President. As former President of the Taunton Area Branch, I have known many of you for the past decade in which I've served as a member of the State's Leadership team. Yet there are many new members, National members and branch members who I'm eager to hear from and share suggestions with on how we grow AAUW-MA and encourage others to join! With what some have labeled the "War on Women," we, as colleagues and friends in American Association of University Women, are constantly made aware these days, not only of how far we've come since AAUW's inception in 1881 right here in Boston, but given the number of legislative issues that surround women's rights this upcoming election, how far we still have to go! As a non-partisan organization we cannot dictate who you vote for, but it is our responsibility to encourage you not only to vote, but to educate yourselves and those around you how those we elect to office this year may play a major role in impacting the civil rights of our mothers, daughters, sisters, nieces, cousins and their families for generations to come!

With the Republican National Convention ended and the Democratic National Convention in full swing, I am keenly aware of the myriad challenges before us. However, I know that the charge you have given me as your President for the next two years also represents an awesome opportunity.

We can help change the course of our future, both as citizens of the United States and as members of AAUW, by actively supporting our National Campaign titled "It's My Vote: I Will Be Heard." As Rebecca Rutenberg, our Public Policy liaison from National, stated in her blog last week, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts boasts among the highest numbers of students entering colleges and universities this Fall! Thus my challenge to AAUW-MA during my term is to greatly increase our outreach efforts to these students, their faculty and the administration of the over 85 colleges in the Greater Boston Area, alone!

As well-informed women we know that Equal Pay is still an elusive dream for far too many of us - even if you have a job today!! Comments from candidates such as Rep. Todd Akin's (R -MO) abhorrent and "medically incorrect" statement last week about "legitimate" rape and pregnancy still stun most of us and cause us to pause and reflect on what has happened to the women's movement in this new millennium. Too many courageous women and men have fought and died for our rights to choose supporting our respectability as women and ultimately, our right to vote with our own consciences to allow apathy or genuine frustration keep to us from doing what we can both individually and collectively to make this a more just society for the next generation! As a Cultural Anthropologist, I'd be remiss if I didn't add the often quoted Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Join us in attending this year's Fall State Conference on October 27, 2012 aptly named "Women and Politics" because EQUITY (unfortunately) is STILL an Issue!

Yours in AAUW Spirit,

Barbara Burgo, President

Fall Conference: Women and Politics

Join us on Saturday, October 27, 2012 at the University of Massachusetts Women's Center for an interesting and informative program about women and politics. There will be an exciting keynote speaker, panel discussion, and after lunch, a showing of Miss Representation, a movie which explores the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America, and challenges the media's limited portrayal of what it means to be a powerful woman. Registration starts at 8:00am with continental breakfast and lunch served. Details will be forthcoming, but save the date.

It's My Vote: I Will Be Heard Campaign Update

As the summer draws to a close and the final months of the 2012 presidential campaign swing into action, the potential that millennial voters have to provoke a substantial political change has never been greater. Despite the fact that young people ages 18-30 make up one of the largest subsets of the electorate by standing over 46 million people strong, the voter turnout rate of millennials is staggeringly lower than older voters, leaving many important voices of their generation silent.

For the rest of the election season, AAUW Massachusetts has planned numerous events to promote the "It's My Vote: I Will Be Heard" get out the vote campaign to show millennial women that their voices AND their votes are important. Branches including Bedford-Lexington Area, Boston, Canton, Cape Cod, Hingham Area, Newburyport, North Shore Area, and Worcester have committed to holding voter registration drives at local colleges and universities. Upcoming drives are scheduled to take place at Worcester State University, Cape Cod Community College, Massasoit Community College, Boston University, Quincy College, and North Shore Community College. The Boston branch has partnered with a community service sorority at Boston University in an effort to coordinate several community outreach efforts including canvassing, phonebanking, and issue panels.

Several other branches have reached out to local community partners to coordinate voter registration drives at upcoming local fairs, festivals, and parades. Drives are currently scheduled to take place at the Bedford Day Fair, Raynham Community Pride Day, Watertown Faire on the Square, and the Seaside Festival Parade. The Cape Cod branch has made plans to include a Susan B. Anthony reenactment in their GOTV efforts to further impress the ability of women to inspire substantive political change.

Interested in attending an event, planning your own, or leaning more about the It's My Vote: I Will Be Heard campaign? Visit AAUW-MA's website for specific event details or contact Becca Rutenberg, Massachusetts Campaign Organizer, via email at rutenb@bu.edu or by phone at (610) 675-5958.

Hollie's Challenge



At her retirement party, Hollie Bagley offered to match donations to AAUW-MA up to a total of \$1000. Although your contribution will not be tax deductible, it will go a long way to help AAUW-MA when it gets requests for small amounts to help support such worthy causes as branch Sister-to-Sister Summits, NCCWSL students, sponsorships at collaborative partner events, etc. Many of these requests must be turned down due to lack of funds. If you would like to honor Hollie for her work as Administrative Coordinator by meeting her challenge, please send a donation payable to AAAUW-MA to Robin DeMott, 71 Robbins Street, Acton, MA 01720 by October 1st. Both Hollie and AAUW-MA will be very grateful.

Playing field not gender even

Inga Schowengerdt, a resident of Newburyport, is pursuing her Ph.D at the University of Cambridge in England. She is a member of the American Association of University Women. On Saturday, August 11, 2012 The Boston Herald published her op-ed piece.

Countless young girls have been watching the Olympics in the past twoweeks, many harboring their own Olympic dreams and imaging themselves ascending the podium to receive medals. Growing up, I was not one of these girls. If you had told me when I was 13 that playing sports would change my life, I would

have laughed. Sports were not my forte.

But in eighth grade I was enrolled in a school that required all students to play three seasons of team sports. For me the year promised to be miserable. In the fall, my feet wouldn't maneuver a soccer ball. In the winter, my attempts to dribble a basketball and run were downright comical. But when springtime arrived, and with it lacrosse season, I finally found a sport I loved and that loved me back. Lacrosse taught me to be assertive, to push myself physically and to question my assumptions about my limitations.

I stuck with lacrosse through high school and picked up rugby in college. This new sport taught me even more: how to manage fear and to question others' assumptions about my limitations. Now 32, I no longer play team sports, but my experiences with them still influence how I approach challenges and perceive limitations.

Would this have been possible without Title IX, the federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance? It's doubtful. Before Title IX, locker rooms and athletic budgets illustrated blatant gender inequities.

Elsewhere in education, girls were routinely excluded or discouraged from taking STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) classes. And in higher education, female students had been filtered out through quotas and higher admissions criteria, or they were excluded outright.

Last month marked the 40th-year anniversary of the bill that changed it all. Title IX has opened doors for women and girls. The proportion of female high school athletes skyrocketed from 8 percent in 1971 to 41 percent today. Girls are no longer underrepresented in high school biology, chemistry or math classes (and are rapidly catching up in physics), and women now make up almost 60 percent of undergraduate and graduate students.

Nevertheless, there is much to do before Title IX's full objectives are realized. Non-compliance with Title IX is prevalent in K-12 athletics programs. For example, girls' athletic events are often scheduled for unfavorable time-slots that conflict with academics and discourage spectator attendance. Sexual harassment is so prevalent in schools that last year, nearly half of students in grades 7-12 report being victims. Sex segregation persists in higher education, where women constitute 90 percent of students in courses leading to female-dominated careers but earn only 20 percent of computer science and engineering degrees.

If we are to overcome persistent gender inequities in education, it's not enough to target the exclusion of and discrimination against women and girls. We must also consider the quality of their experiences and access to less-tangible resources.

We need to talk to our children in an effort to prevent or at least to report incidents of sexual harassment.

Finally, we need to urge members of Congress to oppose efforts that would compromise the effectiveness of Title IX or weaken its enforcement and support the High School Athletics and Accountability Act which would require that high schools report basic data on the number of female and male student-athletes and the amount of money spent on each team.

For 40 years, Title IX has been a champion for women and girls, and our society has benefitted immensely. Now it's our turn to champion Title IX.

I hope you enjoyed this new version of our newsletter. I welcome your feedback. The next BayStater will be published in early October.

Sincerely,
Tamara Gaydos

Editor

AAUW: Advancing Equity for Women and Girls Through Advocacy, Education, Philanthropy, and Research