



American Association of University Women  
 Lake/Sumter Branch, Inc.  
 Learn – Connect – Support

December 2024

## Presidents' Message



Greetings Everyone,

As we end 2024, we reflect on the outreach of our branch to the Lake and Sumter County communities. This year, we were able to send 13 middle school girls to

Tech Trek, a STEM summer camp. Additionally, we are currently supporting seven women with two-year scholarships as they complete their baccalaureate degrees.

We want to say a special thanks to the 18 Adopt-a-Precinct volunteers who served this past year. Members and spouses volunteered in this wonderful fundraiser which provided ~ \$7,500 to our branch while assisting voters in the Sumter County community. Our volunteers attended in-person and online training, set up the precinct the day before voting and worked on Election Day from 5:45 a.m. until well after the polls closed at 7 p.m.

Also, thank you to all our AAUW members for making our Tech Trek and scholarship program such a success this year. Neither would have been possible without your time, talent, and generosity.

In addition to our outreach to the local community, we continue to provide social and educational opportunities for our members.

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As we begin looking forward to the new year with our branch, we will be featuring our Tech Trek students at the January meeting. What a joy it is to meet these young women and hear their stories! Be sure to add the January 25 meeting to your calendar!

Remember, February is not too far away which is when we will have our jewelry drawing for a fabulous gold bracelet generously donated by Gold in Art of Lady Lake. We hope you will support this fundraiser by encouraging friends and neighbors to purchase a \$10 ticket.

We wish you a blessed holiday season and good health and happiness in the new year. Thank you again for all you do to make our branch a success!

Bonnie Weaver and Jennifer Thompson  
Co-Presidents  
Lake/Sumter AAUW  
Learn – Connect – Support

## 501(c)(3) and You

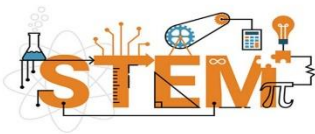
As the end of the year nears and you decide on your charitable contributions, please keep AAUW Tech Trek and Scholarship on the list.

Beth Hicks  
501(c)(3) Implementation Co Chair



## LEARN

### Public Policy



The Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields are some of the fastest growing — and highest paying — jobs of the future. Yet women are significantly underrepresented in STEM higher education and occupations such as engineering, computers, chemistry, biology, and math. Girls are still not on par with boys in preparing for or entering into these fields. Research shows that there is no inherent difference in math and science capability between girls and boys, suggesting that gender differences in math and science are largely due to cultural and environmental factors, not ability.

The Tech Trek Florida Summer Camps have been designed as an opportunity for girls entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade who have expressed a strong interest in STEM fields. The girls

participate in a variety of core classes and workshops which focus on various STEM careers. They also attend a STEM women's dinner at the camp where they interact with professional women in STEM careers. Last year, our Lake/Sumter Branch provided the funds to send 13 girls to the 2024 Tech Trek Summer Camps, more girls than any other Florida branch! Fundraising is currently underway to sponsor as many girls as possible in 2025.

In May 2023, Governor DeSantis signed a bill that he spearheaded that banned Florida's public colleges and universities from spending money on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs beginning July 1, 2023. The law also bans what can be taught in the state's higher education institutions. General education courses cannot "distort significant historical events or include a curriculum that teaches identity politics," or critical race theory.

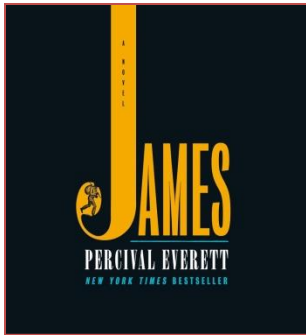
In January 2023, the Florida Board of Education passed regulations implementing the law which limit the use of government funds for DEI programs, activities, and policies in the public college system. The board defines DEI as "any program, campus activity, or policy that classifies individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, gender identity, or sexual orientation and promotes differential or preferential treatment of individuals on the basis of such classification."

The rule adopted by the Board prohibits Florida State University System institutions from using state or federal funds to administer programs that may be defined under the state's definition of DEI. This could impact classes, clubs, and other programs on public Florida campuses. Since Tech Trek gives preferential treatment to girls, it is unclear what impact the DEI law and regulations might have on Tech Trek at Florida Atlantic University, which is a part of the Florida State University System. Stetson University at Deland, the other college hosting the Tech Trek program, is a private university, so is not impacted by the current law.

Elizabeth White & Susan Laluk  
Public Policy Co-Chairs

*DEI Committee*

Keep an eye out for upcoming DEI events. Happy Holidays.



## James

by Percival Everett

2024 Barnes & Noble Book of the Year • Shortlisted for The National Book Award & The Booker Prize  
Winner of the 2024 National Book Award

In development as a feature film to be produced by Steven Spielberg

An action-packed reimagining of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, told from the enslaved Jim's point of view, this novel is both harrowing and darkly humorous. When Jim overhears that he is about to be sold to a man in New Orleans, separated from his wife and daughter forever, he decides to hide on nearby Jackson Island until he can formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Huck Finn has faked his own death to escape his violent father, recently returned to town. As all readers of American literature know, thus begins the dangerous journey by raft down the Mississippi River toward the elusive and often unreliable promise of the Free States and beyond.

While many narrative set pieces of the classic *Huckleberry Finn* remain in place (floods and storms, unexpected death and unexpected treasure, scam artists), Jim's agency, intelligence and compassion are shown in a radically new light. Huck Finn steps to the side, and Jim takes center stage in a powerful, and often very funny, story of family, home, and freedom.

Available at Sumter County Library Branches  
Amazon.com

Book Summary courtesy of

## Day Trips



On Thursday, November 14, 21 AAUW members and a guest drove to Ocklawaha to visit the last home of notorious gangster Kate "Ma" Barker (63) and her son, Fred (32). The house, built in 1930, was a rental property and the site of a January 16, 1935 shootout between the Barkers and the U. S. Department of Justice, the organization that was the predecessor of the FBI. Bullet holes still riddle the walls and furniture and, aside from the addition of air conditioning, and a move by barge across Lake Weir to its current site in the

Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area, the house still stands as it did on that fateful day in 1935.

Upon arriving at Carney Island, a Marion County Park, we met our guide, Wayne, and were transported by tram to the site of the house. Wayne, who has studied American gangsters extensively, spoke to us for approximately 90 minutes about the house, the Barker crime family, and the history of several notorious gangsters – men and women who became notorious folk heroes by robbing and killing their way across the Midwest in the depths of the Great Depression. Wayne even told us two stories that suggest that the house may be haunted. In one case, he was talking with a tour group in the living room when an easel that was sitting in a corner suddenly came out of the corner and flew across the room. On another occasion when he entered the house, he found that the assortment of photographs displayed on the dining room table had all been turned face down except for one.

Today the house is a museum where visitors can step back in time and explore a piece of American history. Most of the Depression-era furnishings are original, and are supplemented by some period pieces as well as photographs of the Barker family and the house and decedents following the shootout.

After our visit to the Barker house, we said good-bye to our guide and drove about five minutes away to Gator Joe's Beach Bar and Grill, also in Ocklawaha. There we enjoyed our luncheon fare along the shoreline of Lake Weir. The weather was very pleasant and many of us opted to eat outside by the water.

Finally, we made our way back home, never to be quite the same for having relived the day when two of America's ten Most Wanted fugitives were gunned down by federal authorities.

## **Book Club**

The AAUW Book Club will be meeting at 12:00 pm on Wednesday, December 11 to enjoy our annual luncheon at the Arnold Palmer Legacy restaurant. Note that this is not our regular meeting date

January's read will be *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett. The books for the remainder of the year along with the meeting dates are listed on the next page.

<b>2024-2025 Book Club Selections</b>			
<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Book</i></b>	<b><i>Author</i></b>	<b><i>Discussion Leader</i></b>
12/11/24	<i>Holiday Luncheon</i>		
1/15/25	<i>Tom Lake</i>	Ann Patchett	Anne Wilkens
2/19/25	<i>The Girl Who Wrote in Silk</i>	Kelli Ester	Judy Reinhardt
3/19/25	<i>The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir</i>	Kao Kalie Yang	Linda Carpenter
4/16/25	<i>An Unfinished Love Story</i>	Doris Kearns Goodwin	Katie Haviland
5/15/25	<i>Remarkably Bright Creatures</i>	Shelby Van Pelt	Marge McQueston

# CONNECT

## Membership

### We Are In this Together, Membership Matters

AAUW Florida Members, your active participation is the heartbeat of our organization. Members drive our initiatives, build community, and generate essential resources. Stay engaged, communicate effectively, and enjoy personalized experiences. Together, we amplify our advocacy and develop leadership. Let us thrive together!

Our Membership is holding right around 100 members now. We have three new members as of this past month so let us meet them:

**Sherry Whallon** lives in Rio Ponderosa next door to her mother, AAUW member Cathy Cirocco. She and her husband, Paul, also have a home in Atlanta where he is still working. Born and raised in Miami, Sherry is a grad of University of Florida and South Polytechnic of Georgia where she majored in chemistry and communications leading her to her career as a technical writer. They have 2 sons.

**Jean Schlais** lives in The Village of Fernandina. She spent most of her life in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and just across the border into Wisconsin. After college and



gaining her administrative certification, she served as a school guidance counselor and a high school administrator. Jean has 3 daughters and 3 grandchildren. In The Villages she enjoys golf, Samba, Mahjong and her time at the gym.

**Tina Getz** spent most of her life in New Jersey and Colorado with a short stint in the Teacher Corps in Gary, IN where Michael Jackson attended school. She lives with her husband Tom in The Villages of St. Charles and enjoys dragon boating and bridge. Tina taught for 40 years from middle school up through community college. They have a daughter, a son, and 2 grandchildren.

## *Directory*

To accommodate member requests, we have printed the 2024-25 Membership Directory. It is available for \$5.00; contact Membership Co-Directors Leslie Flanders or Terri Slotterback to get yours. The printed directory is current as of October 14, 2024, and will not be re-printed this year.

Our online directory is updated regularly as we welcome new and renewing members to our branch. Please check your entry in the directory, located in the Members' Pages of our website ([www.lakesumteraauw.org](http://www.lakesumteraauw.org)), to make sure your information is correct and complete. If you need the password for the Members' Pages, email Linda Carpenter to request it.

Members can also send a photo to go with their entry. The photo should be a headshot in .jpeg format; it can be sent as an email attachment. Email Linda with any changes to your entry.

## *Downloading the Directory and Saving to your Desktop*

Once you have the password, you can access the Members' Pages of our website and download the current directory to your computer's desktop. Instructions for downloading the directory are posted in the Members' Pages.

## **Website**

Our Branch website (<https://www.lakesumteraauw.org>) has been updated, with particular emphasis on the Members Pages. You will find resources for current branch administration as well as branch archival documents. But members who are contemplating more active participation will want to visit our Leadership Resources. This information provides after-action reports on past fundraisers, position descriptions, and marketing materials among other resources for branch leaders.

We will add to these materials as new programs and events are planned and implemented. Our intent is to provide readily accessible resources so future leaders won't have to start their work from scratch.

Work will now begin on our digital scrapbook. If you would like to work on this project or have suggestions about digital scrapbooking, please contact me...I'd love to hear from you.

Linda Carpenter  
Webmaster

## **SUPPORT**

### **Adopt a Precinct**

A special thank you to the following Lake/Sumter members and spouses who worked the very long day at Seabreeze precinct on the November 5th Election Day. They earned \$2,500 for our branch!

David Otis  
Keith Flanders  
Liz Schweers  
Sue Hanson-Otis  
Jacquie Latzer  
Barbara Fieldman  
Katie Haviland  
Anne Sobocinski  
Stan Carpenter  
Jennifer Thompson

Thank you also to our alternates who were trained and ready to serve.

Paul Sobocinski  
Leslie Flanders  
Diane Ericson  
Ellen Speckman-Randall

### **Jewelry Raffle**

Once again Ritchie Kluesener, owner of Gold in Art, has donated a beautiful piece of jewelry to support our branch fundraising efforts. Please support the scholarship committee by asking your friends and neighbors to participate in our drawing. See the picture below of the beautiful 18 karat yellow gold bracelet consisting of 9 1/4" rope textured circles within 9 highly polished circles. The retail value of the bracelet is \$3,200.00.





The end of this newsletter on page 13 has your personal flyer and donation form to support our scholarship fund by selling tickets to friends and neighbors.

## **Fundraising Concert**

Planning for our fundraising concert featuring entertainer Steve Poltz is moving right along. We have secured the Venetian Center at Leesburg's Venetian Park for our venue on **Wednesday, February 26th from 2 to 4 pm** with the doors opening at 1:30. There are 450 available seats all at circular tables. For refreshments we will have trays of cookies and bottle water on each table. Ticket prices are Students \$15, General Seating \$30, and the front tables will include donor seating at \$100 per seat or \$1,000 per table for a total of 4 tables. Marketing plans are underway and plans for online ticket sales are in the works and should be available in early January. With over 400 tickets to sell we will be marketing far and wide and we plan that the show will be a sell-out.

Additionally, Claudia Schmidt will be playing a concert at Leslie Flanders' home on Tuesday, January 14th from 5pm to 8pm. There are 40 seats at \$30 each and each person or couple needs to bring an appetizer to share. The Flanders will provide beer, wine, soft drinks, and water. Claudia has reduced her fee in half so that we can raise funds to pay for the incidental expenses of the Steve Poltz concert. Give Leslie a call if you want her to reserve a seat for you.

Donors have already contributed \$4,000 for the entertainer and \$440 for the venue. The Claudia Schmidt concert should bring in another \$700 to cover the refreshments.

The net proceeds of all of this will be used for both our Tech Trek scholarships and our College Scholarships for women in their final two years.

## Tech Trek



The Tech Trek Florida Summer Camps are a wonderful opportunity for girls entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade who have expressed a strong interest in STEM fields. The girls participate in a variety of core classes and workshops which focus on various STEM careers. They also attend a STEM women's dinner at the camp where they interact with professional women in STEM careers.

The Lake/Sumter Branch was able to provide the funds necessary to send 13 girls to the 2024 Tech Trek Summer Camps. Our branch sent more girls this past summer than any other Florida branch!

To send girls to the Summer Camps, your help is needed. Consider being involved in this important endeavor by either volunteering to be a member of the Tech Trek Committee and/or donating to specifically support Tech Trek.

Contact Sue Hanson-Otis, Tech Trek Coordinator, if you are interested in being a member of the Tech Trek Committee.

## Scholarship

*Update from one of our scholarship winners, Kelli Ann Wallace*

Things are going well here. I am graduating on December 13<sup>th</sup> of this year. I fast tracked by stacking classes. This semester I have six, that way I did not have to wait until the spring to graduate.

THANKFULLY the semester is almost over. I was a bit ambitious taking all these classes that are heavy writing and working full-time, but I am maintaining my 3.79 GPA. I cannot tell you how excited I am to finish!

I am planning on going for the Masters. I am just deciding between the MBA or a Masters in Human Resources. I have a colleague that has a tutoring business and she's searching to see if there's any type of scholarships for the masters' programs. That may also determine where I go and when.

I cannot thank the AAUW enough for all the support that you've given me. Receiving your scholarships has been instrumental in me being able to graduate this year. My niece was so excited to be able to go to that event to meet all the women who donate money for the scholarships and she's counting down the days until I graduate so she can cheer me on.

Thanks again for everything and I am so happy you reached out! I look forward to being able to support other women reach their dream of a degree one day.



**American Association of University Women  
Lake/Sumter Branch, Inc**

***Learn – Connect – Support***

This edition may not have the usual polish as my sidekick extraordinaire is not here to give it the Linda touch. But at least the news is out! Deadline for the January edition is December 20...please get the info to me when you can.

Editor: Beth Hicks  
[aauwsnews@gmail.com](mailto:aauwsnews@gmail.com)

#### AAUW Websites

Local: <https://lakesumteraauw.org>  
State: <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net>  
National: <https://www.aauw.org>



American Association of University Women  
Lake/Sumter Branch

## Lake/Sumter AAUW Scholarship Fund

Help worthy young women complete their college education with AAUW scholarships, while giving yourself and your friends a chance to receive this stunning 18k gold bracelet.



Past recipients of Lake/Sumter AAUW Scholarships have had this to say about their awards:

- “Being awarded the AAUW Scholarship has opened more doors for me and broadened my mindset...” Kelli-Ann W.
- Evelyn O. is originally from Chile and is the first in her family to attend college.
- “All my accomplishments have been made possible because ...the American Association of University Women has given me the opportunity to pursue my goals through their generous support. I am beyond grateful for this inspiring group...” Jordan T.

Someone will be gifted with this beautiful piece of jewelry, valued at \$3,200, which has been donated by **Gold in Art Jewelers**. Why shouldn't it be you? Or one of your friends, a family member, or a neighbor?

Using the attached form, clearly write the name of each donor (including yourself if you are donating), the amount of the donation, and the donor's email address. For each \$10 donated, a card with the donor's name on it will be entered into a chance drawing.

If the donation is made by check, also write the check number on the form. Donors should make checks payable to **AAUW Lake/Sumter**. Mail the form with the donation(s) to: Susan Gold, 3022 Dafoe Terrace, The Villages, FL 32163-2597

Visit our website [www.lakesumteraauw.org](http://www.lakesumteraauw.org) for additional forms.



### Donation Form

Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
Phone:				
Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
Phone:				
Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
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Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
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Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
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Name:	Amount		Check #	Email:
Phone:				
<i>For Administrative Use Only</i>				
Form #	Total		Date Received	Date Confirmed
_____	_____		_____	_____

