



## Ferguson-Florissant (MO) Branch

Carolyn Herkstroeter, President

Shirley Breeze and Judy Holmes  
Program Committee Co-VPs

Ruth Field and Gwen Westbrooks,  
Membership Co-VPs

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Pat Kelemen, Editor

### **REPORT ON NOVEMBER BRANCH MEETING--by Judy Holmes**

#### **IMMIGRATION (ACTUALLY, REFUGEES)**

At our November 18 branch meeting, our speaker, Kelly Moore, asked us if we knew the difference between immigrants and refugees. We decided together that a major difference is that immigrants choose the country they go to while refugees are sent, often in groups.

Since the topic of immigration is so broad, Ms. Moore narrowed the topic to the services offered to refugees by the International Institute of St. Louis. She explained the international and domestic agencies that control numbers and destination of refugees. As well as government involvement. Only ten countries accept refugees, the United States being one. She explained some of the budget statistics, specific monies to refugees and some of the costs to those individuals.



Kelly Moore

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Ms. Moore is the Community Relations and Program Development Supervisor at the Institute. The Institute does serve more than 7500 immigrants from 75 countries annually in St. Louis city and county, and has extensive programs for refugees, who number approximately 500 for the current year. This is the 94<sup>th</sup> year for the Institute.

The service programs are called “pillars,” and there are three. IMMERSION includes English classes, counseling, job training and placement, as well as resettlement, which includes finding housing and the immediate necessities of life for people who come with very little. INVESTMENT is the various phases of economic development, both in fitting into the community and in personal ways such as financial literacy and asset building. INCLUSION involves culture and the community. Workforce training and the Institute’s annual Festival of Nations are part of this.

It was a very interesting and educational evening. The question and answer session could have gone on longer if we were not limited by time.

## **BOARD MEETING**

There will not be a board meeting in December.

## *Carolyn’s Corner*

Congratulations to our robotics girls, who were commended for outstanding teamwork in their first ever competition. As a result of being involved in the robotics project, the girls have not only learned new technology skills, they are focusing more on their school work and making better grades. We applaud Toni Burrow for her dedication to the team and thanks to our AAUW volunteers who encouraged and supported them. We look forward to continued involvement with the girls as they continue to explore and learn new STEM skills.

Speaking of STEM, our branch has been invited to participate in the Hazelwood STEM EXTRAVAGANZA on January 25<sup>th</sup>. I hope we can take advantage of this opportunity to spread the word about AAUW and our advocacy for STEM opportunities for girls. Toni and the team also plan to participate.

Thank You to Judy Holmes for organizing the interesting and informative November program. Kelly Moore, from International Institute, spoke about immigrants and refugees who arrive in St. Louis, the problems they face, and ways in which the institute helps them find homes and jobs, learn a new language and adjust to a different lifestyle.

December is just around the corner, and I look forward to seeing everyone at our annual Holiday Celebration at my house, Sunday, December 8, from 2:00-4:00. Please bring an appetizer or dessert finger food and invite a friend. For directions, RSVP to me.

Be sure to sign up for a gift-wrapping shift at Barnes & Noble. At the November meeting we voted to allocate gift-wrapping proceeds to AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund to help women who have faced sexual harassment or abuse while in military service. Thanks to Lovene Hartman for coordinating the gift wrapping schedule. She will be contacting you!

*Carolyn*

## **OUR WEBSITE**

Our website is still under construction, but branch members can see it by going to <http://fergusonflorissant-mo.aauw.net/>. The website team has worked hard on this and thankfully has had plenty of help from Megan Morrison at site-resources at national. Keep watching as our site grows.

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## **PUBLIC POLICY--by Martha Panetti**

### **ERA . . . Voting Rights . . . And more. How can you Help? Equality for women has always been an issue of top priority for AAUW**

**So . . . What can we do?** As I mentioned at our branch meeting, AAUW is part of a coalition of organizations that intend to make a major push for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in Missouri next year. Many of you worked for ERA ratification on the early 1970s. As you know, at that time ERA was ratified by 35 of the 38 states needed to have the ERA become part of the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, Missouri was one of the states whose legislatures did NOT ratify the ERA. While many people point to progressive legislation that has moved toward equality for women, the fact is, laws can be repealed. The ratification of ERA is essential!

In order for this effort to succeed, we need lots of volunteers willing to help. Of course, some people will be needed in Jefferson City. But you can also help in small ways. Your phone calls, letters, emails, tweets will all be needed so that Missouri legislators will know that, in fact, Missourians think this is important and want them to act.

Lovene Hartman and I are in the process of learning more specifics of how our branch needs to be involved. Stay tuned!

**The right to vote! Is anything more essential in our democracy?** We all need to be concerned about the growing number of states planning to enact voter suppression laws. As you know, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, ruling that the protections affecting voters in those states which had previously denied voting rights to African-American citizens were no longer needed. The League of Women Voters reports that Texas announced its restrictive voter photo ID law would go into effect immediately. Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina are all trying to enact laws designed to keep thousands of people in each of those states from voting. In fact, AAUW reports that state legislatures have introduced 82 restrictive voting laws just this year, with nine actually passing and several more pending. People of color, whether African-American, Hispanic, or Native American are being targeted in efforts to lower voter turnout. The laws also target women generally, the elderly, and people with low incomes.

### **ERA FACT**

“Every Constitution written since the end of World War II included a provision that men and women are citizens of equal stature. Ours does not.” Ruth Bader Ginsburg

### **MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS by Gwen Westbrooks**

The Ferguson-Florissant branch has welcomed five new members so far this year. They represent a group of talented women of varied backgrounds. Following is a bit about three of our new members.

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Wilzetta Bell: Wilzetta was born in Oklahoma and moved to St. Louis at the age of six. She earned degrees from Harris Teachers College, St. Louis University and Washington University and served her professional career in the educational field as a teacher, counselor and administrator. Wilzetta worked in schools in California, as well as locally, in the St. Louis Public Schools, Normandy and Hazelwood school districts.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, serves on the Board of Women’s Society of Washington University, and was a past president of Harris-Stowe State University’s Alumni Association. Wilzetta’s interests include music and theatre, and she enjoys being a member of a card club. She has two children, who live in other states, and she now cares for her mother full-time.

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Myra Talkington: Myra is proud to be a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She has two grown children, four grandsons, and one great-granddaughter. Myra was born in Utah (so her brother called her little Mormon), but she was raised in California, near Fort Ord, which was the primary departing area for men

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being shipped to the Pacific in WWII. This upbringing instilled her with a patriotic spirit.

Myra attended Murray State University, Western Kentucky University and SIU-Edwardsville. She retired from the education field after teaching on the elementary school level in Hazelwood School District for thirty years.

Myra is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Florissant Kiwanis Club, and she participates in the Missouri Veterans Project. She is also trained as a Hospice Volunteer with Passages. Her interests and passions include tutoring children, reading, needlework, oil painting, and basket weaving.

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Carletta Washington: Carletta was born and raised in St. Louis and graduated from Normandy High School. She earned a doctoral degree in Education Leadership and spent nineteen years as an educator, serving as a teacher, curriculum and instruction coordinator and assistant principal. Carletta is the founder and executive director of the non-profit education organization, Education 4 All, Inc.

It was the encouragement of a friend, along with the studies and programs pertaining to women that drew Carletta to join AAUW. She hopes to learn more about the organization and assist in carrying out its mission. Carletta is an author and public speaker.

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Needless to say, our branch of AAUW is fortunate to have these new members among us. Look for more profiles in the next newsletter.

### **FIRST FRIDAY VIDEO**

The First Friday video will be shown at 1:30 on Friday, December 6 at the home of Nancy Gerber. “Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day” tells how a prim, middle-aged British governess finds herself caught in a love triangle when she goes to work for a dizzy American actress in 1939 London. It is a breezy and delightful romantic comedy.

Please contact Nancy if you plan to attend.

### **TUESDAY AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP**

Tuesday Afternoon Book Group will hold a Christmas event on December 3 at 11:30 at the home of Lillian Boly. Members are asked to bring a holiday poem or short story to share. Bring a sandwich. Please notify Lillian if you will attend.

### **SPRING FLING**

Here is preliminary information about the annual Spring Fling for 2014:

Date: Saturday, March 1, 2014

Time: 11:00-2:30 pm

Place: Old Hickory Golf Club, 1 Dye Club Drive, St. Peters

Speaker: Dr. Anne Flaherty, former AAUW American Fellow

Cost: \$25.00, guests welcome

Mail reservations to Lynda Hendren

Reservations deadline: February 20, 2014

Fundraising: Basket Raffle and Wine Auction

### **DOWNTOWN LUNCH GROUP**

The Downtown Lunch Group will meet at the Lemp Mansion Restaurant, 3322 DeMenil Place, on Tuesday, December 17 at 11:45. Please call Jean Shull for reservations.

**Contact us by e-mailing Gwen.**

**CALENDAR**

**December 3--Tuesday Afternoon Book Group**

**December 6--First Friday Video**

**December 8--Holiday Celebration**

December 17--Downtown Lunch Group

January 11--Women's Legislative Retreat

January 25--Hazelwood STEM EXTRAVAGANZA

March 1--Spring Fling

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