



Ferguson-Florissant (MO) Branch

Shirley Breeze and Pat Kelemen
Co- Presidents

Wilzetta Bell
Program Vice President

Gwen Westbrooks
Membership Vice-President

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Pat Kelemen, Editor

NEXT BOARD MEETING

The board will next meet on February 1, 11:30, at the Corner Coffee House.

NOVEMBER BRANCH MEETING

In Honor of Military Veterans

November is the month to recognize the many contributions that military veterans have made to the United States. The Missouri Veterans History Project works to have these many contributions identified and preserved. Audrey Mack, the Executive Director, provided the details of this extensive, important project at the November 16, 2015 branch meeting. Katie Kilroy, a veteran, spoke about her experiences in joining the Missouri National Guard, serving in Afghanistan, and returning home to teach first grade. Thanks to them for the excellent program and to Myra Talkington for arranging for it.

A brief business meeting followed.



HOLIDAY EVENT

The annual holiday event will take place on Sunday, December 13, from 1-5 pm. DUE TO CONCERNS REGARDING WEATHER AND DRIVING CONDITIONS, THE LOCATION HAS BEEN CHANGED. IT WILL BE HELD AT ST. PETERS CHURCH AT WEST FLORISSANT AND STEIN. The madrigal singers will perform around 3 pm. Thank you to Fran Johnson and Carolyn Herkstroeter for making the arrangements. If you are a board member who signed up to bring finger food to the party, please don't forget.

GIFT WRAPPING

Branch members will be gift wrapping at Barnes & Noble in Ladue on December 18, 21, and 24. If you have signed up, please remember that. Check with Lovene Hartmann if you have questions.

FERGUSON FARMERS' MARKET

We have signed up to have an informational table at the indoor Ferguson Farmers' Market at St. Stephen's Church on Darst on February 20. People are needed to staff the table.

**Contact us by e-mailing Gwen Westbrooks at gwestbrooks@hotmail.com
Visit our website at fergusonflorissant-mo.aauw.net.**

PRESIDENTS' LETTER by Pat Kelemen

The holiday season, perhaps the busiest time of the year, is upon us. Family and community traditions surround us. Many community and church groups increase their efforts to ensure that even the poorest people, especially the children, have what they need and some of what they want. I'm sure that many branch members always join in those efforts.

Celebrations are part of the season. Church services, decorations galore, and family gatherings brighten the days. In our branch, the holiday event will be a chance for us to gather to enjoy each other's company, good food, and beautiful entertainment. Book group is also planning a holiday gathering.

Life being what it is, the fun and joy of the season are tempered by certain realities. We mourn the passing of 49-year member Elaine Simpson. We are also fully aware that hard work remains for the whole North County community in the aftermath of last year's events in Ferguson. Several members have been involved in this work and continue to be. International events raise our levels of anxiety.

The challenge for all of us is to maintain a balance that allows us to fully enjoy the beauty of the holidays.



PUBLIC POLICY by Shirley Breeze

The Missouri Legislature goes back into session on January 6, 2016. What can the citizens of Missouri expect from this session? All reports indicate that many of the same issues and legislation that were filed and debated last session will reappear in 2016. Bill filing starts for the upcoming session on December 1, 2015.

Minimum Wage

The current minimum wage in Missouri is \$7.65. Six out of 10 minimum wage workers are women. Two of the prominent low wage jobs are child care workers and home health aides, both 90 percent female. Their average wages are far below the \$15 per hour usually called for in minimum wage legislation across the US. Other low-wage earners are found in fast food jobs, as cashiers and in retail stores, all of which are predominately women.

Syrian Refugees

Governor Nixon has not made a definite statement whether Missouri would be willing to accept these refugees. A major portion of the people affected are women and children.

Payday Loans

The average annual interest rate on payday loans in Missouri currently is 444 percent. Many poor families, many headed by women, depend upon payday loans to get them from one pay check to the next.

Medicaid Expansion

Missouri's legislature continues to refuse to expand Medicaid. The 10-year total cost in Missouri would be \$1,573 million. The federal funding lost by not expanding Medicaid amounts to \$17.8 billion; the hospital reimbursement loss is \$8.8 billion. Two-thirds of those who rely on Medicaid for their healthcare are women and their children.

Ethics

A recent national report on state ethics gave Missouri a D-. Currently, there is not cap on donations to sitting legislators; also, they can accept any and all lobbyist gifts, including dinners, sports tickets, etc. Legislators can become lobbyists immediately upon the end of their terms of office. Most other states restrict this practice. The recent high level cases in Missouri's legislature affecting young women illustrates the need to address ethics in Jefferson City.

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Right to Work

This issue was hotly debated last session. Governor Nixon vetoed it. His veto was sustained. Union members who are women make a considerably higher wage than those who are not union. A recent report found that women represented by a union earn an average of \$212 more per week than women in nonunion jobs.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

NEW DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TOOL KIT

National AAUW has put together a Diversity and Inclusion Tool Kit to help branches create a plan.

It can be downloaded from a November 2 email from Erica Stout of AAUW. The email contains Lead On: AAUW'S Newsletter for Member Leaders.

Ferguson-Florissant AAUW Branch has a Diversity Committee. The Committee has met twice and some of the suggested strategies in the Kit have been used. The Committee is currently exploring ways to be more inclusive of non-degreed women, many of whom are supportive of the Branch activities. We are also looking for ideas for a Branch program on some phase of Diversity. We are supplying an article in each local monthly newsletter to help familiarize members with Diversity and Inclusion issues. The next meeting of the Committee will be January 22, 2016.

It would be very helpful if members would look at the Diversity and Inclusion Kit and tell us what you feel is most important or what you would like emphasized. Please email or phone me any input.

Anyone who would like to join the Diversity Committee, or just sit in on a meeting, is welcome. If you need the November 2 Newsletter with the Tool Kit download in it, let me know and I will forward it to you.

Judy Holmes,

Mickey.holmes@att.net

Diversity Committee Chair

Phone: 314-355-1125

APPRECIATING DIVERSE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS by Martha Panetti

What are your Holiday traditions: Do you celebrate the exact same ways as your neighbors? Or your in-laws?

I was well into adulthood before I learned that on Thanksgiving, not everyone "carves the turkey" at the dining room table ala my relatives or the family on the Cosby show. Even more surprising, some folks don't choose turkey as the main entrée.

Christmas, of course, includes many traditions. A friend from Austria, and another originally from Germany, both told me that in their native countries the Christmas tree was never trimmed until Christmas Eve, and that real candles were used to trim the real tree. In Austria, Kris Kind (the spirit of the child angel, Jesus) brings gifts for children rather than the U.S. Santa Claus.

While Christmas, by definition, is considered a Christian holiday, many people who are not Christian celebrate Christmas. A friend who grew up in Korea told me that Christmas is a national holiday in Korea, despite the fact that there are more Buddhists than Christians in Korea. Buddhists observe April 8 as their major religious observance.

While people of the Jewish faith observe several high holy days, many Jewish people also observe the secular traditions associated with Christmas.

Many African Americans observe Kwanzaa from December 26 to January 1. It celebrates the seven principles of African heritage.

Muslims, of course, observe Ramadan.

So as we consider aspects of diversity in our communities, we might want to recognize and respect the diverse traditions our neighbors celebrate.

GAME DAY

Carolyn Herkstroeter and the Game Day committee are finalizing plans for the annual Game Day fundraiser to be held on Monday, January 18, 2016. Save the day and start planning what items you can donate to the silent auction--nice items that will appeal to members and guests who will be bidding. You can also offer services. The "price" of admission is a canned good for TEAM community food pantry or

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small items (toiletries or hygiene items like toothpaste) for the homeless. These donations are in appreciation of the church's allowing us to use their space.

The flyer for Game Day is included with this newsletter. Feel free to copy and distribute it to friends.

TRIBUTE TO ELAINE SIMPSON

Longtime branch member Elaine Simpson died Friday, November 13 after a courageous battle with cancer and other serious health problems. A memorial service was held on November 20 at the First Baptist Church of Ferguson. Twelve branch members and many church members and friends attended. Burial was in Springfield, Missouri.

Elaine was born in Springfield, Missouri. She received her Bachelor's from Missouri State University and her Master's from Indiana University. She taught in the business department at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, from 1957-63 and then taught accounting at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley 1964-94.

Elaine was an accomplished organist and served as interim or substitute organist in many churches. In retirement, she was an avid volunteer for Friendship International, ESL classes, St. Louis Symphony, St. Louis Chamber of Commerce Visitors Bureau, The Touhill at UMSL, and at her church, First Baptist Church of Ferguson.



Elaine (left) with Sylvia



Elaine (right) with Myra at Earth Dance Farm

Elaine joined AAUW on July 1, 1966. She was always a very active member. She served as Treasurer for eleven 2-year terms, Secretary for three 2-year terms, Educational Foundation chair for nine terms, Finance chair for three terms, AAUW Funds chair for 2 terms, and Public Policy Chair for one term. Elaine could always be counted on for branch projects. She was a named gift honoree in 2010. She also enjoyed "fun raiser" outings and book group. She led the book group discussion of 41 about President George H.W. Bush at the October Book Group meeting shortly before she entered the hospital.

SAD NEWS

Many members remember Velja Lacey, who was an active member several years ago. Among other things, she was a member of Book Group and served as branch president in 1975-77.

Velja's husband Bob died suddenly on November 11. His funeral was attended by present and past members of our branch. Our sympathies to Velja and her family.

IMPORTANT BRANCH DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS

Lillian Boly says these corrections should be made to your 2015-16 Directory:

The correct prefix for Mary Ellen Starr is 521 (not 921). Mary Ellen's house number is 1032.

Fran Johnson's correct zip code is 63034.

Joyce Wolf's email address is j.wolf14@att.net.

Add new member Carolyn Henning, 1544 Sycamore Glen Ct., Florissant, MO 63031, 314-839-3455, carhenning@att.net.

NEW SOUND SYSTEM

Contact us by e-mailing Gwen Westbrooks at gwestbrooks@hotmail.com

Visit our website at fergusonflorissant-mo.aauw.net.

Pam Meyers and Wilzetta Bell researched the sound systems now available for use during meetings. The equipment was purchased and was used for the first time at the November branch meeting. It is easily portable and has an adjustable volume to suit the size of the room. The member who first suggested we need such equipment was Elaine Simpson, who unfortunately did not live to hear it in action.

Our thanks to Wilzetta and Pam for making this happen.

LEGISLATIVE RETREAT JANUARY 16, 2016

Join women activists from all over the state on January 16, 2016, for the Annual Legislative Retreat. Hear presentations from women working with Missouri legislation and legislators, discover what legislation is proposed for the Missouri House and Senate for the 2016 session, make plans for effective lobbying for women's issues, learn how to effectively work with legislators, determine legislative priorities, and much more.

State Representative Stephen Webber will be the keynote speaker.

The Retreat will be held in the second floor conference room at the Hy Vee Grocery, 405 E. Nifong Boulevard, in Columbia. It begins at 8:30 and will be completed by 2:20. There is no cost for registration. A free complimentary continental breakfast will be available upon arrival at 8:30. Lunch Saturday will be purchased at the Hy Vee Deli by each participant.

To register call 314-831-5359 or 573-449-8062 or e-mail sbreeze@mindspring.com or gbutler111@aol.com.

BOOK GROUP

Book Group will meet on **Tuesday, December 8** at the home of Carolyn Herkstroeter. The theme is Holiday Humor--strictly nonfiction! Share your funniest Christmas story(s) or holiday happening.

Bring a wrapped book that you no longer want--good or bad/serious or silly--any topic--for a hidden book exchange.

More fun and surprises!

Recommended reading for possible future discussion: *Spare Parts* by Joshua Davis.

Bring a sandwich.

Notify Carolyn if you plan to attend.

DOWNTOWN LUNCH

The Downtown Lunch group will meet at 11:45 am on December 17 at The Restaurant at the Cheshire, 7036 Clayton Ave., St. Louis MO. RSVP to Kay Meyer, 314-932-7487 or kicmeyer51@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

December 8--Book Group

December 13--Branch holiday event

December 17--Downtown Lunch

December 18, 21, and 24--Gift wrapping at Barnes & Noble

January 16--Legislative Retreat

January 18--Game Day

January 22--Diversity Committee Meeting

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