

Presidents' New Year Message: Breaking the Princess Syndrome

As advocates for women and girls we still face challenges in developing young women interested in engineering, computers, digital technology. Just one quarter of technical jobs are held by women in today's world. But how many young girls are interested in being a princess? The princess complex that is pushed upon our young girls within our current society leaves no room for girls in the designing and building of castles, ships, bridges, skyscrapers. The pink syndrome directs girls into toys that encourage a stereotype of a girl with high heels, a crown and a hot pink computer. Some toy manufacturers are attempting to interest girls in being builders and designers, but even these toys have plans for building a parade float for a princess to ride in, or a pink castle where the beautiful princess grooms and feeds her favorite horse and takes a ride in a carriage in the countryside. Lego's Friends, a Lego line designed for girls, offers "Princess Ariel and Undersea Castle", or a "Dolphin Cruiser" where an ocean adventure takes place with a water slide, not a captain's deck.

What examples are we offering our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren? According to the New York Times on November 22, 2013, "Women earned just 18% of computer science degrees in 2010, down from 37% in 1985, according to the National Center for Women and Information Technology. Analysts say the low numbers are partly because girls are not encouraged to pursue science as often or as enthusiastically as boys."

Just when did our little girls become princesses? None of us grew up with the idea of being a princess. The marketing of separate toys for boys and girls, princesses' accessories and the concept of being special and needing someone to save us or to serve as a lady in waiting became a financial success through advertising. According to Claire Cain Miller in her New York Times article of November 22, 2013 "Ad Catches Fire Online: Less Doll and More Awl", the advertising media are predominantly run by men and portray men as heroic and funny and women as sidekicks or homemakers. "Girls can't be what they can't see," states Rachel Sklar, an advocate for women in technology and co-founder of TheList, digital media company for women.

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Our role in the development of young girls, granddaughters and great granddaughters may be the resurrection of the female self concept of “Free to Be You and Me”, from the late 1970’s and early 80’s. We can start by providing toys that are not gender specific, Lego’s without the girly focus, building toys that attract both boys and girls. Put away that princess dress and bring out the doctor kit. Our influence as an AAUW member, grandmother and great grandmother can make a difference for our families and for others as we make toy selections and speak with others about women’s roles in society.

Happy New Year and away we go!!

Co Presidents

Marilyn Corey and Jean Burns Slater



How Important is Economic Stability for Women?

If you answered VERY, don't miss our January program (January 20 at the Women's Club). Two local AAUW women involved in bringing AAUW financial literacy programs to young women will speak at the January meeting. Lynn Janeway (San Luis Obispo), a state director, and Barbara Brogan (Atascadero) will speak on Money Trek and \$mart \$tart Campus Initiative.



Money Trek is a program developed by AAUW-CA Financial Literacy Committee to teach younger women the basics of financial literacy. The program has six modules, with topics ranging from bank accounts to buying a house.

\$mart \$tart Campus Initiative was developed with the non-profit WAGE to provide college women with the knowledge and skills to negotiate salaries and benefits so they receive fair and realistic compensation. Topics include job titles and the effect of market realities on salaries.

Barbara was on the Financial Literacy Committee last year, and she and Lynn presented a \$mart \$tart program at Cal State Northridge last year.



Fund-Raiser Report: A big thanks to all AAUW members and friends who helped support and attended the annual AAUW Art Reception and Raffle at the Seaside Galley in Pismo Beach, held on November 23rd. It was a fun afternoon, hosted by Gallery owners Sherie and Tom Burgher, whom we also thank. Their gallery had a tremendous collection of art works, which members enjoyed viewing and anticipating what they would "spend" their winnings on. Through the efforts of our members we were able to raise \$775 in ticket sales which goes to our mission of supporting equity for women and girls through philanthropy, education, advocacy, research, and leadership. This year I was the lucky winner, and will be going to pick out my artwork this weekend. Thanks again to all who made this event a success.



Donna Gillette, Chair



Cooking Together

Please join us for our next dinner in January at 5:30 p.m.

January 25, 2014

Kathy Cohon 594-1249

- Please call or e-mail the hosts your RSVP at least one week before each dinner so that they can plan accordingly.
- Please bring a bottle of your favorite beverage (alcoholic or not) to share with the group. Cost per person is \$10 paid to the hosts. Hosts will print copies of all recipes for the dishes we prepare for everyone to take home.

Your Committee Chair, Lisa Walker.

Questions? Phone 473-0075 or e-mail LWalker@vtc-sm.org



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