

The Waves



January 2026 Volume 47 - Number 5

editor: jbslater2006@gmail.com

President's Message Happy New Year! Susan Gray, January President

Here's to 2026, new beginnings, new hopes for the new year, new projects, and new experiences. How many of you are considering a new project, a new learning experience? One of our longtime members will be moving and taking on new her own new life experiences. For many years [Linda Lidberg](#) has held numerous positions in the Branch. This is a common pattern, with a few members wearing many hats. And Linda has worn many hats. With her move to Colorado, many of her contributions to our branch will be missing. Most of these jobs are not that big or take much time. Some do not even require attending meetings, or leaving the house. They do require some basic computer skills, but learning new skills is good for you. Learning new skills builds self-confidence and brain power, both deterrents to dementia. Some jobs are part-time and require participation for part of the year and may be shared.

Open positions are:

Email blast: Send emails to all the members. No need to leave the house or attend meetings

Directory: Compose the Directory, one time a year. No need to leave the house or attend meetings.

Website Manager: Manage the Branch website, typically once a month update. No need to leave the house or attend meetings

Adopt-a-Poll: Manage the precinct if the branch decides to participate in the elections. This is a big one. And this also is one of our main fundraisers.

Tech Trek: Pam Zirion has accepted the chairmanship, but would like someone to assist her. This job typically is only part of the year for a few weeks.

Linda will be here for a few more months and will help with setting up and learning the various tasks. Step up, take a new job, and learn a new skill which will benefit the Branch and you!

Our January meeting will be at the Mesa Dunes Clubhouse on January 24, at 10 am. The speaker will be from the League of Women Voters discussing the challenges to voting rights and the upcoming Congressional elections. This is an extremely timely and important topic. I hope many of you can be at the meeting to learn the latest on this issue.

Look forward to the challenges of the New Year, meeting them head on. We have the skills to do so.

January Events

- 5 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting: Zoom
- 8 11:30 a.m. Lunch Bunch: Gina's Italian Cuisine Arroyo Grande
- 9 11:30 a.m. Daytime Page Turners: Mary Weeks' home
- 13 6:30 p.m. Night Readers: Rose Ann Steiner's home
- 21 12:30 p.m. Finessing Femmes Bridge: Roz Clausen home
- 24 10:00 a.m. General Meeting: Mesa Dunes Club House

January Birthdays

- Jean Burns Slater
- Marjorie Ott
- Joan Knowlton
- Mary Matakovich
- Liz Wineman

February Preview

- 2 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting: Zoom
- 5 11:30 a.m. Lunch Bunch: Adelina's Bistro, Nipomo
- 21 10:00 a.m. General Meeting: Five Cities Homeless Coalition: Mesa View Club House

Action Alerts

- Voting Rights General Meeting page 2
- School Board page 6

JANUARY 5, 2026 BOARD MEETING

The January Board meeting will be held Monday, January 5, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. If you or your committee have an action item to place on the agenda, forward it to Susan Gray susang481@gmail.com by January 1 for it to be considered at this meeting.

Leadership Handbooks were distributed to Board members at the December General Meeting: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Program Coordinator, Parliamentarian, Membership, Eager Readers, Scholarship, Tech Trek, AAUW Funds, Communications, Public Policy, and Fund Raising. A "tour" of the handbook contents will be provided at the January Board meeting.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION CORRECTIONS

Please correct your directory information for the following items:

Joan Knowlton's phone number is 805-235-8954

January General Meeting is January 24, 2026 Saturday

BINGO SILENT AUCTION UPDATE

Thanks again to all workers who contributed to the success of this year's fundraiser. It brought in \$8,928.44. After offering a donation for the use of St. Johns's Church and required sales tax, we netted \$8,508.32.

Good news! St. John's confirmed that we can continue to have our fundraiser there on a Saturday. However, we cannot get access to the hall until 6:00 PM the night before. Kathy Cohon will speak to St. John's and secure dates and details in January. We look forward to another year with improvements. We will soon be asking all members to give us feedback. Look for an email in the upcoming month. Kathy Cohon, Pam Zirion Co Chairs

JANUARY 24, SATURDAY GENERAL MEETING 10:00 A.M.

The January general meeting will be at the Mesa Dunes Clubhouse on January 24, at 10 am., 765 Mesa View Dr., Arroyo Grande. The speaker will be from the League of Women Voters discussing the challenges targeting voting rights and the upcoming Congressional elections. Staying informed is the responsibility of all citizens in a democratic government.

DECEMBER BRANCH MEETING: HOLIDAYS ARE FOR KIDS

The annual holiday celebration was held on Saturday, December 13 at the home of Jim and Priscilla Alquist in Arroyo Grande. Twenty members attended, bringing a main dish, fruit/salad or bread to share, potluck style. Priscilla, along with Susan Gray, Patti Melshiemer and Mary Weeks arranged the

food, seating, and general atmosphere. Toys were collected to donate to a charitable organization; baby pictures were gathered with attendees attempting to identify pictures of members. At 11:30 the surprise entertainment arrived, **The Trilogy Symphonic Kazoo Marching Band** with nine members. The Band passed out kazoos and holiday lyrics to all attendees and encourage all to play or sing along with the band, resulting in a cacophony of sound. Delicious food was shared. After brunch, several business topics were addressed including: Recognition of the Silent Auction Bingo event efforts; Leadership Handbooks



How does this kazoo work?



FRIENDSHIP OUTREACH

The sun broke through for our annual December Holiday party! Yay!! It was a wonderful day to gather in fellowship and enjoy delicious food, great entertainment, games, and best of all - time with each other! Although two of our members suddenly came down with flu and Covid and could not join us, 20 members attended the party and enjoying a great time.

Later in the month, I enjoyed visiting with Nancy Sperling, one of our members who was unable to join us for the party. She is in our AAUW Book Club, but has been unable to attend recently. She

and husband Roger live at The Oaks at Nipomo, a lovely assisted living facility, where she keeps busy. She could use a ride to our activities, so feel free to give her a call.



We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!!

Submitted by Priscilla Alquist Sunshine Chair

LUNCH BUNCH

Gina's Italian Cuisine, offering a delightful culinary journey through Italy's rich flavors, featuring handcrafted pastas, fresh seafood, and classic Italian dishes made with the finest ingredients, is the location for January 8, Lunch Bunch. This is one week later than usual to avoid the New Year's Day holiday. From the savory Pollo Saltimbocca to the indulgent Shrimp and Lobster Ravioli, each dish is prepared with passion and authenticity.

Gina's Italian Cuisine

138 E Branch St, Arroyo Grande

Thursday, January 8, 2026

11:30 am

RSVP no later than Sunday, January 4, 2026 to aauw5cpblunchbunch@gmail.com

Free parking behind the restaurant. *To be added to or removed from our Lunch Bunch e-mail distribution list, please send your request to aauw5cpblunchbunch@gmail.com.*



December Lunch Bunch attendees visited the Gardens of Avila Restaurant at the Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort. A private room with tasty food offered a festive visit.



At the December Board meeting it was decided to fund camperships for 6 middle school girls to attend the 2026 Tech Trek camp to be held at UCSB. Previously that campus was not going to be available this coming summer due to renovations. However, it was confirmed by AAUW California Tech Trek committee that UCSB will be able to host the Blackwell campus of Tech Trek in 2026. That is indeed good news for us as it is a much closer commute for campers and parents to that campus than others around the state. Math and Science Middle School teachers in Lucia Mar Unified School District have been asked to submit names of girls who would benefit most from this week-long STEM program. Those submissions are due in February with interviews in March. Please contact Pam with your offers to help with the program. Pam Zirion, Tech Trek chairperson

Paige Benson



Dear Five Cities Pismo Beach Branch,
I would like to thank you for this opportunity to attend Tech Trek. In my core class, Forensics, I learned so many new ways to identify evidence in a crime scene. We got to participate in lots of different labs, making this class an amazing experience. I also enjoyed learning about how to spend and save my money during "The Bite of Reality." This trip was a great way for me to live like a college student would on campus. I made so many new friends and I'm now aware of plenty STEM job opportunities. Thanks again for the chance to come to this camp.

Katelyn Lager

Thank you so much for the wonderful learning opportunity. I got to take an Anatomy class this week and we did so much cool stuff. Some of my favorite things we did this week were going bird watching by the lagoon, going to the Moxi museum and doing nature journaling. I also learned a lot of new material this week like how blood flows through your heart, the skeletal system, and the tools we use for dissections. I had an amazing time at camp and I am so grateful for everything you guys do for me!



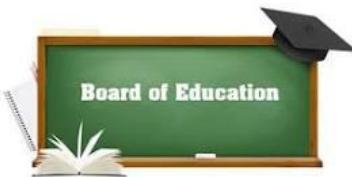
LET'S TALK TRAVEL

This interest group is reorganizing for the new year and welcomes anyone interested in joining. Meeting location, dates and times are to be determined. If you like to share or hear about adventures with useful travel tips, this is your group. Just message Jean Burns Slater jbslater2006@gmail.com.

DAYTIME PAGE TURNERS

Interested in reading, sharing lunch and dessert during lively discussions on selected books? If you are contact, Jean Burns Slater, jbslater2006@gmail.com, to join Daytime Page Turners. We will be reading Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Kimmerer in February and James by Everett Percival in March. Join us. We meet at 11:30 a.m. on the first Friday of each month at private homes.





HELP MONITOR OUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD!

Lucia Mar USD Board of Trustees Calendar

7:00 p.m. 602 Orchard Street, Arroyo Grande

Next Meeting Dates: January 20 February 10 March 3 March 17

American Association of University Women is committed to our mission of advancing gender equity for women and girls. Thus, we have a responsibility to stay informed and assist whenever possible in fulfilling our mission. School Board elections are at the heart of our mission, focusing on candidates that are looking out for educational opportunities for all students through the public education offerings. Refer to the December Waves newsletter for details on school board elections' districts and details for applying to run for a school board position. Balanced school board candidates, *without* a set of ideological views that encompass specific political, cultural, or religious beliefs, will best serve our community and students

In 2026 there are 4 seats up for election, offering a possibility of changing the entire school board focus. The trustees are elected based on their area of representation. We need solid candidates.

Four Trustee positions up for election in 2026 in the following areas:

Area 3	Currently held by Andrea Naemi-Vergne
Area 5	Currently held by Colleen Martin
Area 6	Currently held by Eilene Pham
Area 7	Currently held by Donna Kandel

SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT

AAUW California Public Policy Committee Announces School Board Symposium

By Kathi Harper, Chair AAUW Public Policy School Board Project

In *The Once and Future King*, T.H. White wrote: “[Y]ou may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn... That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you.”

In 1881, a small group of female college graduates demonstrated that they understood the importance of learning to women's ability to advance in the world, when they banded together in what would become the American Association of University Women to encourage more women to pursue higher education.

Almost one hundred years later, Congress demonstrated that they understood the importance of equal access to learning when they added Title IX to the U.S. Education Codes in 1972, prohibiting discrimination in educational opportunities on the basis of sex; and again when they established the U.S. Department of Education on May 4, 1980, with a mission to strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual.

Now, fifty-five years later, it does indeed seem the world is being “devastated by lunatics.” In 2016 Title IX protections against sexual harassment were eviscerated in the first Trump administration.

Attempts by the new administration in 2020 to reverse those changes, and to provide additional protections for our LGBTQ+ and pregnant students were [thrown out by a Federal court](#). In 2022, Florida passed [the Stop WOKE Act](#) restricting classroom discussions of race, gender and sexual orientation and banned 2300 books in just the 2024-25 school year alone [followed by 23 other states](#). This spawned the “Moms for Liberty” movement, whose goal is to install school board members across the United States whose values include banning books, censoring curriculum and enacting policies harmful to our LGBTQ+ students.

And it gets worse. In his inaugural address in January 2025, [the President declared](#) “As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female.” In February he sent a “[Dear Colleague](#)” letter to all school districts making federal funding contingent on eliminating race-based considerations from [all policy decisions](#). To date eight universities have capitulated to the current administration’s lawsuits or threats to withhold grants by agreeing to curtail or eliminate DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) programs and policies under an Alice-in-Wonderland [definition of discrimination](#). And the latest blow: in late November of 2025, the Trump administration took a major new step to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED). After deep staff cuts, ED announced six “partnerships” on November 18 that shift the day-to-day work of key education programs to other federal agencies, despite Congress creating ED to centralize federal education expertise and protect students’ civil rights.

Is your hair on fire yet?! I know ours (AAUW California Public Policy Committee) is. That’s why the School Board Project is more important, more relevant, and more urgent than ever. We are doing everything we can to empower you, our members, to make a difference at the grass roots level to fight to save the value of learning in your local school districts, by speaking up for our values at school board meetings and supporting school board candidates who share those values. **If you’re ready to fight back, please join us for a half day of our own learning, on Saturday January 31, 2026 9:00am to 12:30pm PT, for our symposium “AAUW School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy.”**

In just 3 1/2 short hours you will learn:

- How the federal government’s restrictive laws impact California’s protective laws
- How to effectively advocate for AAUW values with your local school board members
- Why advocating on behalf of LGBTQ+ students is a crucial AAUW priority
- How to support progressive school board members in conservative districts
- How to respond to parents’ concerns with accurate information
- How to form and sustain valuable coalitions in your district with like-minded organizations
- How to identify, recruit and support school board candidates whose values reflect AAUW California’s Public Policy Priorities

Don’t just be on fire, be fired-up! Join us for a day of learning, by [registering HERE](#).

LEARNING IS THE ONLY THING FOR YOU!

[Trump’s Funding Freezes Against Universities in 5 Charts](#)

You can read AAUW’s response here: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/aauw-gutting-the-department-of-education-betrays-students-civil-rights/>

COMMUNICATIONS

Happy New Year everyone. May this new year bring you love in your heart, peace in your mind and joy every day. Please remember those who are not as fortunate as we are. Be ready to start the new year by participating in the branch activities. Let us know if someone is needing help. Blessings.

With the anticipated move of Linda Lidberg to Colorado, the Branch needs a technology savvy person to be a webmaster of our web page, send out email blasts, update and publish the Directory and generally help members out with their technology.

Many, many thanks to Linda Lidberg for her consistent work at keeping us up to date with emails. She is the one responsible for our wonderful directory and updates to our webpage. Linda always goes above and beyond and is truly dedicated to our branch. She will be deeply missed for her contributions and commitments to our branch and on a personal level.

If you have any information to share, please contact me. Susan Brazil. 209-747-6663.



Leah Litman Speaks to AAUW on Roe Commemoration (Webinar: Thursday, Jan 22, 2026)

November 18, 2025

Leah Litman, a leader for women's issues and well-known podcaster, will be the keynote speaker at the AAUW Silicon Valley Branch annual event, Step Out for Pro Choice, held annually on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision on **January 22, 2026, at 1 pm PT**. This is a Zoom event.

Litman is a professor of law at the University of Michigan Law School. She teaches and writes on constitutional law, federal courts, and federal post-conviction review. Litman is a co-host of Strict Scrutiny, a podcast about the Supreme Court of the United States, alongside Melissa Murray and Kate A. Shaw.

She was a law clerk for Judge Jeffrey Sutton on the Sixth Circuit from 2010 to 2011 and then for Justice Anthony Kennedy on the Supreme Court of the United States from 2011 to 2012.

She is the author of the recent New York Times best-selling book **LAWLESS: How the Supreme Court Runs on Conservative Grievance, Fringe Theories, and Bad Vibes**. In 2023, the American Law Institute named Litman a recipient of its Early Career Scholars Medal.

[Click HERE to Register](#)

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OPERATION SURF

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Acknowledging the dedication of the AAUW Five Cities Pismo Beach Branch as it works to change our world.

Andi & Jeff Portney

