

SEPTEMBER

Our AAUW local branch hosted its Annual Membership Gathering on September 2, 2021, at Thompson Park in Watertown. There were 17 members and guests in attendance. It was a fun 'in-person' reunion in the midst of some COVID requirements.

There was a lot of mingling and good conversations, with a group discussion lead by Sonja Williams, our local President, about future programming events and membership involvement. Several ideas were shared:

1. Membership involvement and commitment - What are members' interests and how can we increase the participation level?
2. Reaching out to Jefferson Community College (JCC) - coordinate with JCC to introduce AAUW to students for their involvement and membership.
3. Reaching out to area High Schools - to educate students about AAUW and try to establish a H.S. Chapter.
4. Networking with other organizations to learn about their programs and resources and seek partnership opportunities.
5. Communication - reaching out to members via phone contact to assess their interests and needs to attend more AAUW events and increase the participation level. Also offer rides to members to attend AAUW functions, if needed.
6. Daycare - there is a need for this service when members attend meetings or events. A discussion ensued about general daycare provisions, eligibility and guidelines.
7. Importance of Media - coordinate with local tv stations to host a panel discussion on the accuracy of public news and other related matters.
8. Contact Governor Kathy Hochul's Office - to request her and/or representative as speaker(s) to address the challenges of women in politics and leadership positions.
9. International Female Riding Day - learn more about this event and have local members talk about their involvement and experience with this activity.

There was also a brief discussion and updates on general AAUW matters. The event ended with a peaceful and relaxing 'Tai Chi' demonstration by Irene Busler (certified instructor), and Betse Murphy (AAUW member who is working on her certification). AND delicious SNACKS were provided. We all had a good time and enjoyed being together again.

Please try to join us for future events!!! We would like everyone's support and participation.



VOTER REGISTRATION NIGHT

OCTOBER

Our 2nd annual AAUW 'Voter Information Night' was held on October 14, 2021, at the Sackets Harbor Ballroom. The speakers were Jefferson County Board of Elections Commissioner Jude R. Seymour (Republican) and Commissioner Michelle LaFave (Democrat). They addressed an audience of 25 members and guests (in person) and 5 via Zoom.

The Commissioners discussed the voting process, such as registration, absentee ballots, early voting and more. Most of the elections this year are for local officials, with many running unopposed. The importance of these elections was emphasized since these officials affect our daily lives.

Voters were advised to turn over their ballots in order to vote on the 5 proposals to amend the NYS constitution. Proposal #1 deals with redistricting. Proposal #2 also called 'The Green Amendment' is supported by environmental and social justice groups. It makes the right to clean water and clean air part of the NYS constitution, along with the right to freedom of speech and religion. Proposals #3 & #4 increase the access and ease of voting in NYS, by eliminating the 10-day advance registration requirement and allowing same day registration and voting. While absentee ballots still require an application, there is no longer any need to give an excuse. Proposal #5 increases the jurisdiction of NYC Civil Courts.

The Commissioners also addressed what they called very disturbing misinformation and voter suppression issues. They stated that the Dominion voting machines have been used for many years in Jefferson County and elsewhere. They are very secure and these machines cannot be hacked to switch votes. Limiting ballot drop boxes and voting hours elsewhere are also a disturbing trend.

Allowing Secretaries of State and other partisan officials to overturn decisions of local elections officials, although not possible in NYS, is a national threat to our democracy. This was another concern noted by the Commissioners.

Hopefully this will continue to be an annual event and next year will feature the Governor's race.

