

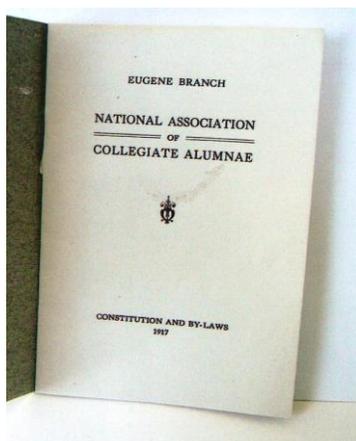
AAUW Eugene-Lane Branch History

1907 - 2023

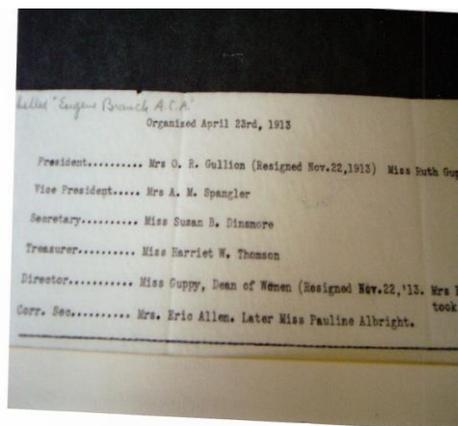
“In 1907, Dr. Luella Clay Carson, Dean of Women at the University of Oregon (photo below) called alumnae together in her room at commencement time to form a society that would ally more closely the women of the University so that they might work for the good of their alma mater throughout the state. She and many others were anxious to have an association that would admit Oregon women to the American Collegiate Alumnae and also desired a parent association for local alumnae societies.”¹ Following that first general meeting, plans were made for forming the American Collegiate Alumnae (ACA, later to be renamed the Association of University Women, AUW) as soon as enough women from accredited schools were on campus. Although Dr. Carson left to become the president of Mills College in 1909, this early group was the foundation of our American Collegiate Alumnae Branch in 1912 under the auspices of the new Dean of Women, Miss Ruth Guppy, and seven officers with degrees from other colleges but who were associated with the University of Oregon.



Dr. Luella Clay Carson



Eugene Branch Bylaws, 1917



Eugene Branch officers, 1913

Graduates of the University of Oregon could only be Associate Members at that time as the University was not accredited, lacking the required dormitory situation. In 1918, the University of Oregon was placed on the accredited list of the national organization after the dormitory problem was solved and the University of Oregon graduates could become active members. The national group became The Association of University Women in 1922.^{2, 3}

Although the early minutes in the Oregon Collection (archived in the Knight Library at the University of Oregon) cover only the years from 1913 to 1918 and 1932 to 1939, the list of accomplishments is impressive. The first year we created a loan fund for women through the University and arranged for local dentists to give talks on tooth care in various grade schools. In 1915, we raised \$500 toward a women's building on campus, and in 1927, they invested \$1,000 toward a new fine arts building. The

¹ This quote is not attributed in the Branch 100th Anniversary brochure (noted by Sheila Ramerman, Jan. 14, 2024).

² **Old Oregon**, by Ruth Dozier, June 1943

³ **Eugene Register-Guard**, "Dr. Carson's Story Told," Nov. 12, 1953

group sponsored Saturday matinee movies for children at the Heilig Theater and helped with the W.P.A. nursery. We sponsored one public kindergarten in conjunction with the University for five years and worked continuously toward making public kindergartens available statewide.

We did more fundraising for the Fine Arts Museum to bring in special art exhibits, and we promoted legislation to support our Health Department and protect our food safety. When a scandal about the unsanitary conditions in Portland dairies erupted, we lobbied for statewide milk inspection. Our fundraising activities included sponsoring the very popular Moroni Olson plays, lectures by well-known speakers, the annual tour of homes, and teas. In 1927 a larger fund, \$1200, to be applied to a fellowship for an Oregon girl wishing to study for an advanced degree, was established at the state level to be funded and directed by the mutual cooperation of all the state branches. Our \$200 portion was raised and a candidate chosen by a state committee. The program continued for several years and then passed to the management of the National program. In 1928, after a visit by the National AAUW Director, the branch moved into a study group format: international studies, psychology, elementary schools, the books group, preschool, music, art, and drama. These became the forerunners to some of our later interest groups. The study groups met and worked with research material provided by the national program, reporting back to the other members. Some of the international speakers were foreign students attending the University and a few of the reports are included in the archived material.

The study group format existed into the 1970s, by then narrowed to four areas: Community Outreach, International Relations, Arts, and Education. Each local chairman was matched by one from state and another from national. The research and material were provided by national AAUW with a different topic for each biennium.

Over the years, our archives show other contributions to community needs: kindergartens, Girl Scouts, the collection of Pioneer Material for the Historic Museum, selling Tuberculosis Stamps, contributions to the Iron Lung fund, the Displaced Homemakers and Widow Services, and numerous other causes. During the two World Wars, Red Cross and War Relief work was done. During the Second World War, members of AAUW sold Savings Bond Stamps.

In 1949, at the national convention held in Seattle, the color barriers for membership in AAUW were dissolved.

In Eugene, our branch was meeting in people's homes. We arranged a yearly luncheon in Gerlinger Hall for women graduating from the university. We also began giving a Senior Recognition Award to an outstanding woman student who made significant contributions to campus life as well as achieving academically; this award continues today as the AAUW/University of Oregon Senior Woman Award with the awardee invited to our June branch meeting to be recognized in person.

In the 1960's, our branch and an early education group lobbied to include kindergartens in basic school support funding. It was successful in 1981, with seven years for smaller districts to comply. During that same time period, our branch lobbied successfully for permanent elementary school libraries, and then helped staff the libraries until librarians could be hired. That program was the victim of Measure 5 in

1990, which slashed local school funding based on property taxes. Our organization, with the Library Association, established a library at the Lane County Jail.

We collaborated with the schools on a national mother-daughter program designed for Junior High, to increase communication between the two and encourage an interest in science. Several of our members worked with the groups in local schools.

By the 1970s our membership included women from other nearby towns, so we applied to change our name from Eugene Branch to better reflect our group. During that time period, we co-sponsored the forum, *Wages, Welfare or What*, with the League of Women Voters. We also committed to the local goal of raising \$35,000 in the Educational Fund for scholarships and research. We reached that goal in 2001.

In 1981, the Legal Advocacy Fund was established to support the protection of the legal rights of those facing discrimination. We have supported two cases involving Oregon women faculty members.

- In 1980, math professor Anna Penk was the lead plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against the Oregon State Board of Higher Education for sex discrimination. They lost the case and appeal. However, the case sparked debate which ultimately led to a law against discrimination in institutions of higher education.
- In 1994, Vickie Dugan, former women's softball coach at Oregon State University, sued the university for sex discrimination and retaliation. She had protested against the university attempt to drop women's softball as a university sport as well as cooperated in a federal investigation of the University's Title IX compliance. She won the case and a financial settlement. Some of our members attended the hearings faithfully, wearing their AAUW name badges to illustrate our support.

During the 1990s, we continued efforts to reform campaign finance and worked to encourage women to become more knowledgeable about legislation and to use their vote.

The years 2006-07 found members Peggy Shippen, Carol Miller and Janice Strupp attending meetings with teachers and administrators presenting "Teaching Tolerance", free educational materials designed to help teachers build communities that welcome diversity and teach tolerance. One element of the program is the now-international *Mix It Up At Lunch Day*, held on the last Tuesday of October each year, when students are encouraged to move out of their comfort zone and connect with someone new over lunch. Several of the area schools participate. The material was also presented to a large classroom of University of Oregon students in the elementary teaching program.

Under the leadership of President Peggy Shippen, in 2008, our branch, in cooperation with the Lane Community College Foundation, established the Kappy Eaton Scholarship for female students wanting to continue their education at a four-year college or university. The first recipient, Ashley Ordway was chosen in 2009. Our branch also helped finance her trip to the National Conference for College Women Leadership (NCCWSL). As funding allowed, the branch continued to fund NCCWSL attendance.

In 2015, led by branch members Peggy Shippen and Kappy Eaton, the Eugene-Lane branch created CHiPS (Civics, History, Political Science), a project for Eugene-Lane AAUW to increase civics education

and active learning opportunities for public school students, particularly for girls and young women. CHiPS also works to increase girls' participation in public leadership and CHiPS careers. Members made presentations to local school districts with offers to help them achieve the CHiPS goals. Willamette High School created a Mock Trial Team, and the branch supports them with donations for transportation costs, registration fees, and Trial appropriate attire.

In 2019 Eugene-Lane lobbied the Oregon AAUW to add the CHiPS initiative to the Public Policy goals, urging the state to adopt a graduation requirement of 1 semester of civics. Along with our friends at the League of Women Voters, the effort was successful and high school graduating classes of 2026 will be required to earn one half credit in civics to graduate.

In 2019, we formed a committee to recognize and organize activities to celebrate the centennial of the passing of the 19th Amendment, in 2020. A schedule of activities was developed and each monthly branch newsletter included an informational item about the 19th Amendment. A group of us created an exhibit table and were able to exhibit at one educational event in Florence, OR – in period dress - before the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled all the rest.

With the pandemic, the branch experienced the brave new world of remote meetings, most members conquered their fear of Zoom, and continued regular attendance at the monthly meetings that way. In the early days, it was a valuable way to interact with someone outside our immediate households. By the time in-person meetings were again possible, the branch decided to continue offering the remote option for members who couldn't attend in person for some reason.

One of our best attended recent branch programs was in June 2022 where we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Title IX legislation that requires equity for women and girls in education, where members from across Oregon joined the meeting virtually. Vickie Duggan and two attorneys from her legal team attended to talk about the 1994 trial mentioned above as well as advances since then. Branch member Becky Sisley, Women's Athletic Director at UO during that same time period, also discussed similar conditions she dealt with at UO.

The branch history would not be complete without a few words about Kappy (given name Mary Katherine) Eaton. Kappy was an active branch member and faculty member at UO. She lobbied every session of the Oregon Legislature for 50 years and she held a long list of advisory and appointive city, county and state positions. Among her many accomplishments and interests, Kappy worked to improve the lives of women all over the world. She led workshops at the United Nations Women's Conference in Kenya (1985), and China (1995). Kappy served as AAUW's National ERA coordinator and led workshops and lobbying efforts in over 30 states in the effort to earn ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Kappy was also one of the founders of AAUW's Legal Advocacy Fund, which informs people of their rights and barriers to those rights and uses the legal system to seek justice and change. She served as Eugene-Lane branch president and AAUW Oregon president.⁴ Kappy passed away in 2018, but her legacy lives on in our CHiPS program and the Kappy Eaton Scholarship.

⁴ **The Register-Guard**, Mary "Kappy" Katherine Eaton obituary, published Aug 17, 2018

WHO WE ARE TODAY (2023)

We have found that our interests have changed since the pandemic, as has the way we're willing to spend our time, and we experienced the passing of several long-time members over that period of time, too. So our branch membership is somewhat smaller than in past years, but those of us still active are dedicated to growing the branch and are actively looking for ways to do that.

Our newest branch project, started in 2023, is a Technology Grant in which we'll provide a reconditioned computer to Ophelia's Place. They are a local nonprofit that gives teenage girls (ages 10-18) the support they need to build resiliency, find their voices, and discover their strength. Ophelia's Place will put the computer in one of their smaller locations for clients to use for college admission and scholarship applications. The branch has offered to provide assistance with completing those applications.

Also in 2023, we crafted a Branch Message to replace the Mission statement on our branch brochure, website, and other materials. It started as a response to a member's question "If we're trying to recruit new members and be more visible in the community, what are we going to say to tell them who we are?" We wanted something similar to a 30-second elevator speech. Over the course of several board and branch meetings, the purpose and content of the Branch Message were discussed, refined, and finally approved by the branch. We now have branch business cards, with branch contact information and logo on one side and a bulleted summary of the Branch Message on the other side. Members each have several cards to carry with them to use when telling someone about AAUW and our branch. The full Branch Message is now on our website. We also purchased branch polo shirts with the branch logo. We've worn them to branch meetings and will wear them when we attend those girls' basketball games we keep talking about.

Members continue to support women who reach to extend their abilities and we continue to act as watch dogs to defend the rights of women and children throughout the US. To support those causes, we contribute to the national AAUW Greatest Needs, Economic Security, Education and Training, and Leadership Funds. We also continue to support the local Kappy Eaton Scholarship. The scholarship amount has been approximately \$2,000 each year for the last few years, and we are actively looking at ways to increase the endowment and/or allow members to contribute directly to the scholarship.

Locally, the branch has sponsored a Kidsports middle-school girls basketball team each year since 2010 by paying the team's registration fee; in exchange, our branch logo is displayed on the girls' jerseys. Last year (2023), the team signed a jersey and presented it to the branch in appreciation of our support. The signed jersey is now in our branch archives.

We support STEM opportunities for girls entering 6th-8th grades by donating towards registration costs for a local summer science camp (SPICE Camp – Science Programs to Inspire Creativity and Excellence) that is affiliated by UO. Members can donate directly at branch meetings or via AAUW Oregon's Special Projects Fund, and our goal for 2024 is to fully fund 3 registrations, \$1200 total.

We still present the AAUW UO Senior Woman Award to a graduating woman who has an excellent academic record, who has contributed significantly to campus life, and whose past activities and plans for the future mirror AAUW's mission.

We continue to support attendance at NCCWSL as funds allow, and in 2024 will award a full scholarship for the first time in several years. Those of us who travel collect toiletries along the way to distribute through the Looking Glass Foundation for homeless youth.

Our monthly branch meetings feature speakers from community service groups or nonprofits, educational leaders, members of the arts, environmental leaders, and others to increase our knowledge and stimulate new ideas.

Prior to the pandemic years, branch interest groups included a book club, a study group, bridge group, an Out to Lunch group, and a Readers' Theater group. More recently, the Out to Lunch group and Dining Out (dinner) groups are the only active interest groups. Smaller, informal groups of members with similar interests also meet occasionally. We've started a Book Sale table at branch meetings, where branch members contribute books they've read and enjoyed for resale to other members, at very reasonable prices. The proceeds help to support the Kidsports basketball team, and we've had many great conversations with each other about the books we've read as we look over the Book Sale table's offerings each month.

Several of us are also active in other community organizations and causes within our interests, we keep each other informed of those activities, especially those that have crossover with AAUW's mission, and we collaborate with other local, like-minded groups on important projects when the opportunity arises. We've explored a civics day camp in conjunction with the League of Women Voters and will talk to the local Soroptimist chapter about supporting Ophelia's Place with us.

Branch Presidents, 1962 - present

Year	President	Year	President
1962-1963	Katherine Eaton	1994-1996	Maxine Hudgins
1963-1965	Elizabeth Gullion	1996-1998	Marguerite Emery
1965-1967	Loretta Pond	1998-2000	Jeannine Guardalabene
1967-1969	Linda Axtel	2002-2004	Gwyneth O'Connell
1969-1971	Karen Alvarado	2004-2006	Jon Ann Lawrence
1971-1973	Donna Pierce	2006-2008	Peggy Shippen
1973-1975		2008-2010	Janice Dresser and Marian Spath
1975-1977	Caol Hammons	2010-2012	Josephine Brew
1977-1979	Marguerite Emery	2012-2014	Jo Brew and Carene-Davis-Stitt
1979-1980	Sandy Kribs	2014-2016	Carene Davis-Stitt
1980-1982	Ginny Ehlen	2016-2018	Cindy Parker
1982-984	Kay Warner	2018-2020	Wendy Cook
1984-1986	Marni Reinmuth	2020-2022	Sheila Ramerman
1986-1988	Carole Iskra	2022-2024	Sheila Ramerman
1988-1990	Kay Burg Fry		
1990-1992	Evelyn Perkins		
1992-1994	Patricia Skipper		

Sources for this history:

- Eugene-Lane "Branch 100 Anniversary Brochure – final" from branch archives (September 2012)
- Eugene-Lane Branch Directory, 2019 (Presidents List)
- Branch Member Cindy Parker (CHiPS section)
- Branch Member, Sheila Ramerman (Who We Are Today (2023) section, updated Presidents List)