



AAUW

Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, research and philanthropy.

Written By **ROBIN SHEPHERD**

Here in America, women and girls enjoy freedoms and opportunities that don't exist for females in many other countries. But we didn't get where we are today by luck or accident. Generations of women blazed a trail for us to follow.

Throughout American history, women have joined influential organizations such as the American Association for University Women (AAUW). Working together they won the right to vote, the right to pursue an education and career path of their own choosing, and the right to equal pay.

The origins of AAUW date back to 1881 when 17 college alumnae made it their mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, research and philanthropy. That mission lives on today among the women of South County.

The Gilroy and Morgan Hill AAUW chapters boast more than 200 volunteers, mentors and leaders who are active in our community. Membership includes women who have distinguished themselves in healthcare, architecture, high technology, law, financial services, philanthropy, education and more.

While the history of AAUW is rich, the organization is very much forward-looking.

Areas of Focus

Education

- **Girls Engaged in Math & Science (GEMS).** An enrichment program for middle and high school girls in Morgan Hill and Gilroy Unified School Districts. Field trips and presentations by accomplished women of math and science provide girls with a vision of the possibilities that await if they pursue this path in their careers.

Last year, local GEMS participants visited sites including Elkhorn Slough, Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Computer History Museum and Joseph Grant County Park. On March 13 the current crop of GEMS participants will visit San Jose's Tech Museum to learn about one of the most challenging issues of our time: cybersecurity.

- **Tech Trek.** A one-week summer camp that engages girls in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) activities. It began in California and has been so successful that it is now a national program. Each year our local AAUW chapters offer scholarships to girls completing 7th grade. The camp is held at Stanford University.

- **Speech Trek.** An annual speech contest for high school students; organized, funded and judged by AAUW. Contestants are judged on speech content, organization and presentation. The contest provides opportunities to compete at local and state levels for cash prizes.
- **Scholarships and Grants.** Each year a number of different awards are made to new or returning female students in associate/ bachelor degree college programs, and in Gavilan College's nursing program. Additional grants provide past scholarship winners with follow-on support in completing their degrees.

Community Outreach

- **Outreach/Action Grants.** Competitive grants that support local non-profits such as Community Solutions, Discovery Counseling Center, Learning & Loving Education Center, and the Gift of Reading program.
- **Voter Education.** Organize election forums, register voters, and educate the public about non-partisan issues.

"In the late 1960s I received a Bachelor's degree in Economics from UC Davis. At the time there were very few careers available to women. AAUW has empowered thousands of girls and women to explore a wide range of career paths."

Penny Lockhart, Co-president
Gilroy AAUW

"It was guys telling jokes and saying, 'Oops...there's a woman in the room.' We've made a lot of progress but we'd like to see more women in engineering."

Sabra Dupree, Co-president
Gilroy AAUW



Alie Fohner, AAUW Gilroy Tech Trek scholarship winner now a PhD in Health Population Genetics.



Live Oak High School senior Julia Leal

Connecting Girls with STEM Careers

Alie Fohner attended Tech Trek on a scholarship from AAUW Gilroy in 1998. Today, she holds a PhD degree in Public Health Genetics and works in the Department of Genetics at Stanford University. Her mom, Nancy Fohner, is a long-time AAUW member who has served as a camp director and instructor over the years.

Looking back on her time at camp, Alie said, "Tech Trek introduces girls to the exciting and diverse things people are doing with science in the world. I can still picture myself at camp...learning about optics by building a pinhole camera and visiting a lab with huge and impressive equipment for studying biochemistry." Fohner added that attending camp at Stanford introduced her to dorm life, dining halls, and navigating the campus; an experience that she said for a middle school student was "incredibly empowering."

Live Oak High School senior Julia Leal plans to study Earth Systems when she enters Stanford University this fall. Leal will be the first in her family to attend college. She often looks back on Tech Trek as a life-changing experience. AAUW Morgan Hill provided her camp scholarship.

"Stepping onto the Stanford campus and learning about the possibilities inherent in STEM careers inspired me," Leal said. Along with Tech Trek, Leal was also involved in the GEMS program and participated in a summer internship at Stanford in Soil Science and Sustainable Agriculture.

Last month AAUW Morgan Hill held a special STEM workshop in memory of Lauren Jenkins, a branch member who passed away in 2015. Jenkins founded the Girls Club, which later became GEMS, and was an early Tech Trek coordinator. "The girls enjoyed a hands-on experience of an emerging area of science," Cox said. "Afterward, they learned about environmental science careers from a panel of young women science professionals." Both activities were held at Anarobe Systems in Morgan Hill. AAUW Co-President Mary Cox organized the event, which provided more than a dozen high school girls with insight into how agricultural crop waste can be naturally fermented to produce fertilizer and hydrogen for re-use.

Leadership, Advocacy and Philanthropy

- **Sponsorships.** Selected AAUW members have an opportunity to participate in leadership training programs such as that of Leadership Morgan Hill. Morgan Hill AAUW sponsors a college student to attend the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders training.
- **Education Foundation.** The AAUW Education Foundation supports projects and research in alignment with the AAUW mission.
- **Advocacy.** Support of other AAUW priorities including public policy and legal advocacy related to equity for girls and women.

Interest Groups

According to AAUW Gilroy Co-president Sabra Dupree, "I've never met a group that is more supportive of each other. I can take people to AAUW events and know they'll be most welcome. It's easy to start up a group based on member interests."

Dupree shares the co-presidency with Penny Lockhart, who added that "AAUW is a great organization for young moms who crave adult conversation and are looking for opportunities to network with other women involved in the community."

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS give members a chance to share thoughts and reactions to books.

SYMPHONY AND THEATER OUTINGS

provides members with an opportunity to enjoy virtuoso performances by South Valley Symphony, as well as award-winning plays and musicals at South Valley Civic Theater, Pintello Comedy Theater and Limelight Theater and other venues. "Wine & Whine" brings members together for a little libation and conversation at local restaurants and wineries.

LUNCH AND DINNER GET-TOGETHERS help members stay connected while enjoying a meal together. These include gatherings in member's homes (sometimes sharing recipes and cooking together) as well as at local restaurants.

"AAUW has connected me with several generations of women who have made positive changes in their lives and in the community. In the late 1980s I decided to pursue a graduate degree so I could transition from academics to a high tech career. A grant from AAUW helped me achieve my goal."

Jenny Redfern, Co-president
Morgan Hill AAUW

"I joined AAUW and was amazed not only by the group's welcoming attitude, but also its diversity and the opportunities to connect with women I might not have met otherwise...women who are leaders in the community."

Mary Cox, Co-president
Morgan Hill AAUW

Quilt Show Returns to Gilroy

AAUW Gilroy will once again host their popular quilt show at the Veterans Building in May. Visitors will be treated to an array of more than 70 beautiful handmade quilts on display for leisurely viewing and enjoyment.

The event will include a raffle for chances to win this year's "Opportunity Quilt" as well as other prizes.

This show is always a crowd-pleaser for quilters as well as people who have never sewn a stitch. It's easy to appreciate the artistry and craftsmanship of local quilt makers. It's also fun to learn about what inspired a particular quilt design or how it was made.

AAUW GILROY QUILT SHOW & LUNCH

Saturday, May 7, 2016

11 am to 2 pm

VFW Post 6309

74 West 6th Street

Gilroy

Fundraiser for scholarships for women and girls. Event tickets are available through AAUW members, or at Nimble Thimble or the Garlic City Mercantile.



GUEST LECTURES AND DISCUSSION GROUPS provide a chance for members to learn and share ideas about major political and social issues of the day. For example, last October, Gilroy and Morgan Hill AAUW chapters got together at Morgan Hill Grange to host Senator Bill Monning and Dr. Faith Protsman, Vice Chief of Staff, St. Louise Regional Hospital, for a discussion on bioethics and the politics of healthcare and end-of-life issues.

HIKERS can explore our wonderful local park trails together.

FILM-LOVERS can connect with other members to catch a movie together.

eGALS get together to learn new ways to leverage their smartphones.

MEMBER OUTREACH is an AAUW tradition extended by our local chapters to their alumnae. One long-time member said that during a particularly challenging time in her life, AAUW members came alongside her, "like family," with caring support.

These are just a few of the interest group activities available to AAUW members. Check websites of the Gilroy and Morgan Hill branch chapters for details.

AAUW Stories

Back in 1920, AAUW helped set up polling places when the time came for America's voting men to vote for women's voting rights. When the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified that year, millions of women cast their votes at the polls.

But it wasn't until 2009 that the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was signed by President Obama. The Ledbetter Act amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to help protect working women from pay discrimination. "It behooves us to work for better working conditions and better pay," Dupree said, referencing present-day inequities that continue to make headlines.

One week every spring, AAUW members visit local high school Econ/Civics classes to talk with students about the pay gap that persists in the workforce. "We bring them fresh-baked cookies that each have a chunk cut out," Dupree explained. Of course the kids want to know why. "We tell them it represents the gap between salaries of men and women in the same jobs. A little humor is a great way to get the point across."

Wildflower Run Turns Thirty-Three

Morgan Hill AAUW's annual Wildflower Run is a big favorite with community members who like to blend camaraderie and competition for a worthy cause.

According to Elizabeth Mandel, who volunteers as Run Director, the 2015 event attracted 1160 participants and raised over \$49,000 from runner registrations as well as donations from corporate sponsors and AAUW members. She estimates this year's event will draw as many or more participants than last year.

Mandel said that she joined AAUW while her daughters were in middle school because she saw AAUW's mission as "very relevant" to creating the kind of environment she wanted her daughters to grow up in. She also noted that the organization provides a wealth of leadership opportunities.

The Morgan Hill Wildflower Run Research and Projects Grant Endowment was begun in 2014 and when completed will fund community action and career development grants.



AAUW MORGAN HILL WILDFLOWER RUN

Sunday, April 3, 2016
First race begins 8:30 am

Kids 2K Fun Run
5K Run/Walk/Stroller
10K USATF Certified Run
Seniors (60+) 2K Run/Walk

Fundraiser for scholarships for women and girls. Medals and prizes.

Visit facebook.com/wildflowerrun
Register at WildflowerRun.org

Learn More about AAUW

Membership is open to anyone holding an associate or equivalent (RN), baccalaureate, or higher degree from an accredited college or university. Student affiliation is available to undergraduates enrolled in a two- or four-year college or university.

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