

the **Twig** branch newsletter – March 15, 2022



The 2022 Women's History theme, "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope," is both a tribute to the ceaseless work of caregivers and frontline workers during this ongoing pandemic and also a recognition of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing and hope throughout history.

Women as healers harken back to ancient times. Healing is the personal experience of transcending suffering and transforming it to wholeness. The gift of hope spreads light to the lives of others and reflects a belief in the unlimited possibilities of this and future generations. Together, healing and hope are essential fuels for our dreams and our recovery.

## **CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH:**

Tuesday, March 29, 2022, at Tomah's Best Western

The event starts at 5:30 pm. We ask that AAUW members to be there by 5 pm, if possible, to bring their food items for the reception, help set up the room, and be ready to greet guests. Please invite guests, especially potential members. A colorful invitation has been sent to our former honorees.

Please let Julia Palmer know if you (and any guests) are coming do that we know the number that plan to attend. Call her at 608-372-6065 home; 608-567-9386 cell; julianellp@gmail.com

**Thank You to the Tomah Chamber of Commerce:** We thank the Tomah Chamber for the invitation to join in the circus-themed festivities during its February 28<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. The excellent entertainment was a lot of fun to watch! Attending we: Audrey Chambers, Tia Hewuse & date, Jolene Renda, Julia Pamer, and Bonnie Peterson.

**Our Last Meeting:** On February 2<sup>nd</sup> we held a ZOOM meeting with documentarian Jim Theres. Jim is a military veteran who received recognition from Congress in 1977 for his work. He has self-funded his projects so that he can retain integrity over the productions. Jim said that he starts projects from a justice framework for telling the untold stories. He works to not tell the stories from a position of his own historical bias. The main topic for the evening was "6888" -- Six Triple Eight was an all-Black woman. self-sustaining and self-contained, WAC unit that demonstrated extraordinary leadership and focus during their service resolving the mail backlog in the UK during WWII. They were not expected to succeed, but these women tackle the job with proficiency and heart!

He discussed how he came about doing documentaries, which started when he was in Jackson, Mississippi and he decided to pursue a Master's Degree in History. He became personally motivated by struggles for civil rights and the history of people not always told. His first documentary is *The Thirtieth of May* (a Black celebration and annual march since the civil war). This was followed by *The Hello Girls* (Army telephone operators serving on France in WWI), and *Six Triple Eight*. He also published a historical novel that is available on Amazon: *American McBeth*.

Jim Theres grew up in Racine, went then to UW-Whitewater until 1988, weekends and breaks back to Racine, then to the Army for 8 years, 1989-1997, Persian Gulf War 1990-91, then private sector work at Fort Riley, 1997-1999, then the Milwaukee Journal Sales, Marketing, and Distribution, 2000-2007, then Start Renting, 2007-2009, in Madison, Wi., then VA-Tomah, 2009-2012, Jackson VA in Mississippi, 2012-2014, then National Cemetery Administration in DC, 2014-2021, then National Cemetery Administration (remote), 2022-present in Madison.

We thank Jim Theres for a very interesting ZOOM call.

**Congratulations, Dick Thiel:** The book that Dick edited will be run between March 14-25 on NPR's Chapter A Day! It is the Wallace Grange book, "*As the Twig is Bent*", published in late 2020 by the University of Wisconsin Press.

<https://www.wpr.org/programs/chapter-day>

**Notes From President Deb Thiel:** We had a very successful project! Thank you to all who assisted. AAUW-Tomah Branch was able to hand out 223 cosmetic kits plus another 150 items (not in kits/bags) to the Afghan Guests at Fort McCoy.

We also received 15 applications from Afghan Women for scholarships to the AAUW NCCWSL (National **Conference for College Women Student Leaders**). Very exciting -- we'll fund those we can (with the leftover funds from the cosmetic bag project) and I'll work on National and the State to see if we can get funding for more of them.

Dick and I are on a road trip - March 12-25. I'm actually planning one day to see a few of "my" Afghan gals in Arizona while we are there. WE'LL BE BACK for Women's History Month celebration!

**Afghan Women Guest Project:** Many thanks to everyone who helped to make this project a success! This includes: Linda Hagen – Mauston; Betty Wenzel – Rogers City, MI; Anna Mae Roudolph – Tomah; Patti Kopplin – Bangor; Jenna Moser – Tomah; Lacey Swenson – Galesville; Jenny Skrowski – New Lisbon; Lisa Kirschbaum – Tomah; Lisa Boulton – Tomah; Mollie Shoyer – Sparta; Kate Hansen – Tomah; Nancy Patterson – Tomah; Thelma Dunman – Kenosha AAUW; Peace Lutheran Church; quilters from Peace Lutheran Church. Others who made cash donations may not be on my list, but we are nonetheless grateful for the support.

**Shared by Audrey Chambers:** I would like to share some of the written notes from AAUW sisters across Wisconsin. Women who donated money for the Afghan Project - Prep for Success sponsored by the Tomah Branch.

Some of these notes said "Thank you for doing this!" "Thank you for your efforts and for letting others be a part of it." "Good work that you are doing," "Thank you for sharing your gifts!"

"Good luck with your project! Thanks for representing AAUW so well!" "This was a ray of sunshine to see that AAUW women are again making a difference! I am very pleased to make a donation to a worthy project."

And last, but not least a note from a Joan Malin a 60 plus year member of AAUW from Janesville. "I am a lonnnnnng time member of the Janesville AAUW. Use the money however you need to. Good luck Tomah. Glad to help!" She donated \$300.00.

Here are samples of notes written to Afghan Women from AAUW women who sent donations.

## WHEN YOU HAVE MORE THAN YOU NEED BUILD A LONGER TABLE NOT A HIGHER WALL!!!!!!!

Part of the handwritten note said "To all of you incredible and courageous Afghan Women May we celebrate with those we love and share with those we are just beginning to know. May you find peace; a home to warm you, work to sustain you and the love of friends to support you!"

"to my unknown Afghan sister: I just wish you happiness in your new country."

"Congratulations on your successful journey to America! I wish you much success as you go forward in your life!"

"Welcome to America! I admire your courage in leaving your homeland and hope you can spread your wings and find new life of happiness in your new home! Best wishes, and a hug to you from Wisconsin!"

"Welcome to America! We honor the many sacrifices you and your family have made - I hope you will be able to make a good home here, although I know it will not be easy. You will need patience to find your way and to forgive those people who don't understand you. But I trust you will accept whatever help is offered to you and take any rest you can to strengthen you. I wish you moments of joy and courage for your journey of discovery.

Welcome Home!!!

And here is a poem written by one of our AAUW sisters.

"Your dark days are gone  
It's time to sing a new song  
To a new future that is  
    bright  
Time to set your sight  
On your new life here  
Right now your path may  
Not be totally clear  
But stay strong and live  
    Without fear  
You will figure it out  
Day by day my Dear

Wishing only good days  
Ahead my Dear."

Anonymous Poet

I received a large box of Mary Kay products valued at \$2500.00 from Thelma Dunman, Kenosha Branch. She has pancreatic cancer and decided to stop selling Mary Kay. With the COVID virus she did not want people coming into her home to purchase the products. She stated in her letter she is pleased to donate her remaining MK products to such a "worthy project to help other women feel special." Bonnie sent her a tax receipt and a thank you note. However, I am hoping some of you also might want to send her a card. Her address is: Thelma Dunman, 2003 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140

Audrey said, "I just wanted to share the part of the project I liked most. What heartfelt messages and acts of kindness!"