

Gold Filings



Mid-May Edition

Branch Website: <https://amador-ca.aauw.net>

SAVE THE DATE!

Our Annual Branch Meeting will be Saturday, June 18 at 11am.

Important! Come to vote, to honor our scholarship winners and make some plans for next year. It will be a potluck of salads & desserts, with drinks provided.

Membership Matters

New Member Welcome--Devin Snyder



I had the distinct privilege to take moment to get to know one of our new members, Devin Snyder. It is my honor to introduce her to you. She is a scientist, wife, mother, and exceptional new member of our organization. Devin, as she says, has come from all over. She was born in Hawaii and then moved to Arizona where she lived until she was 10, then she moved to Michigan. This is where she found her interest in science.

While in Michigan she attended magnet schools, attending one school for the social studies, english and the like and then bussing to another school for math and science. She attended Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego for her undergraduate studies and went on to Baltimore for her Graduate Studies. She holds a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She found herself here in Amador County by way of her husband who is from the area. I love how she explained that he followed her to Baltimore and they decided to return to Amador County upon the completion of her graduate studies. Then COVID emerged into all our lives and what was to be a brief stay in Amador County has turned into a longer one. Her husband is a Nurse and currently working for Sutter Amador Hospital.

Devin went on to explain that there is bench work and administrative work in biology and that she found she liked the administrative part of it. Her explanation of bench work and figuring and calculating the factors within your experiments and failures of experiments was quite interesting to me, but I digress. With her husband finding a job at the hospital she considered staying home with their son but opted to submit some job applications. For the past year and a half, she has been a Project Manager through UC Berkley, where she oversees 5 labs, for a grant project funded by the Aligning Science Across Parkinson's. This is a global initiative that promotes open science and collaboration in Parkinson's disease research.

By Anna Jones Williams

Member Spotlight--Gretchen Kingsbury



Gretchen Umland Kingsbury was born August 2, 1933, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She was the oldest of three children. The family moved to California in 1937 when her father took a position as advertising manager for Granat Brothers Jewelry in San Francisco. They were the first family to move across country by airplane. Gretchen grew up in Burlingame, and graduated from Burlingame High School at 16. She attended San Mateo Junior College and graduated from San Jose State College, where she obtained a BA in Health Education and a teaching credential. She later received her MA in education.

Right out of college, Gretchen taught Health Ed and PE at Lowell High School in San Francisco. She married Paul, a corporate stock broker, in 1956 during Christmas break, and enjoyed their honeymoon snow skiing. The couple purchased a 4-plex in San Francisco, which they remodeled together. Their first child, Karen, was born in San Francisco. They then moved to Santa Clara, where Diana was born, and after that Modesto, where Paul had become Wells Fargo branch manager, and two more children — Hale and Jan — were born. While living in Modesto, Gretchen helped other teachers by correcting papers and tutored, saving her money to buy a piano for the family.

In 1966 Gretchen and her family moved to Amador County.

Her fifth and last child, Tom, was born here, and she continues to live in their family home just outside of Sutter Creek. Being a mother has been the greatest joy of Gretchen's life. She was very involved in her children's activities when they were young, acting as, among other things, Sunday school teacher, scout leader, 4-H project leader, and softball coach in the Amador County Girls' Softball League, which she and a friend founded. In 1969, Gretchen was a founding member of, and the first president of Amador Branch AAUW. She has been an active member ever since!

Gretchen went back to teaching full-time in Amador County, teaching girls' PE and Health Ed at Jackson Senior Elementary for decades before she became the GATE teacher, inspiring her to get her second MA in GATE Education. Her last two years she taught 6th grade. Gretchen was in her 70s when she was called out of retirement to be the Homebound Teacher. She loved the one-on-one interactions this instruction allowed. Gretchen finally fully retired at 82 years young!!

As a teen Gretchen developed a love of horses. She took riding lessons and eventually taught riding. She owned two miniature horses which she had as pets until a few years ago. Except for the past few years, Gretchen has always had a dog. Other interests include reading (mysteries, westerns), playing the piano, guitar and ukulele. As a child Gretchen enjoyed working on household projects with her father. This led to her hobby of remodeling, and the creation of Gretchen's Painting and Papering, a business which she had for over 20 years.

I first met Gretchen Kingsbury in the mid-1960s when I was a young teenager, as we were family friends. My mother was a charter member of Amador Branch AAUW along with Gretchen. It was about 20 years later that I found not only do we share a first name, but also a birthday, twenty years apart! Since meeting her all those years ago, she has held a special place in my heart. I call her G1, and she calls me G2.

Gretchen Carlson

Leadership Chair's Message

I have become increasingly disturbed (as many of you are too) with the movement to ban books in school and public libraries. These actions fly in the face of AAUW's policy of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. I read an article in today's Sacramento Bee that addresses those concerns. Young people are taking action to protect their right to read. Here are excerpts from that article:

Teens fight for right to read with lawsuits, banned-book clubs

BY HANNAH NATANSON
THE WASHINGTON POST

AUSTIN, Texas. On a hot, dusty Wednesday afternoon, 10 girls gathered in their high school library to talk about a book the adults said they weren't allowed to read. They convened to review I.W. Gregorio's "None of the Above." The book tells the story of Kristin, a high school student who discovers she is intersex, a condition in which people are born with atypical combinations of chromosomes, hormones, gonads or genitals. In December, the Leander Independent School District had banned the novel from classroom libraries and from use in high school student book clubs – along with 10 other books – because it features "sensitive topics" and "concepts of sex and anatomy." "So the main thing for this one," Ella said, tucking her blond hair behind her ears, "was strong language and sexual references."

The teens in Texas – who would spend the next hour sharing how they never knew people could be intersex, and wondering what other aspects of the world will remain hidden if grown-ups keep banning books – are part of a swelling movement of students who are gathering all across the country to fight, in ways large and small, for the right to read.

In Missouri, two students filed a lawsuit against their district for yanking eight books from school libraries. In New York, a group of students from the Brooklyn Public Library's Intellectual Freedom Teen Council are meeting weekly on Zoom to coordinate national resistance to the censorship of school books. And in Pennsylvania, students held daily protests outside their high school last fall until administrators reversed their decision to ban more than 300 books, films and articles, the majority by Black and Latino authors. "I didn't want little kids growing up in the district to feel as if African Americans don't matter because our books are not on the shelves," said 17-year-old Christina Ellis, who is Black and helped lead the Pennsylvania demonstrations. "There's no room to grow if you dismiss our history."

Challenges to books in America this academic year reached the highest level since the American Library Association started tracking the issue decades ago. PEN America, a nonprofit that advocates for freedom of expression, found that 1,586 books have been yanked from libraries or classrooms in the past nine months, with the majority disappearing secretly, outside proper procedures. By comparison, 2018, 2019 and 2020 each saw about 300 book challenges or bans, according to an ALA tally. Most of the books targeted feature LGBTQ or Black characters or address LGBTQ themes, race or racism.

Conservative lawmakers in 17 states have passed laws restricting what teachers can say about race, racism and sexism, according to an Education Week tracker, and legislators in at least seven states have passed or are considering laws that limit instruction on gender identity and sexuality.

Cate Marshburn: "They're creating a very small image," the 16-year-old said, "of what people are supposed to look like in the world." Almost exactly two weeks earlier, Christina Ellis had risen before dawn on a Thursday and driven two hours from her home in Pennsylvania to Washington to testify before Congress. She was scheduled to speak before the House Oversight subcommittee on civil rights and civil liberties, which was holding a hearing on "Book Bans and Academic Censorship." Now the high school senior told the lawmakers about the time her elementary school teacher played a documentary on slavery, causing the other children to turn and stare at her, the only Black child in the room. She told them how she avoided bringing her family's Caribbean food to lunch, to forestall snarky comments. She told them how she straightened her hair throughout grade school, hoping White students might feel less tempted to reach out and touch without permission.

“Books that highlight our differences and teach others to respect diversity are crucial,” Ellis said. “This would decrease bullying and judgmental stares.”

In Missouri, meanwhile, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in February on behalf of two student plaintiffs seeking to reverse book bans in the Wentzville School District. The ACLU charges in its lawsuit that district officials are infringing on students’ “First Amendment right to be free from official conduct that was intended to suppress the ideas and viewpoints expressed in the Banned Books.” The lawsuit notes that many of the banned books are authored by or feature people of color and LGBTQ individuals, and “engage their readers with a diversity of ideas and minority viewpoints.”

One student recalled seeing a racial epithet scrawled on school bathroom walls, uttered in school hallways and hissed at him on the basketball court. He said this will never stop if other students – his district is more than 80 percent white – do not learn to see African Americans as people just like themselves.

“The more we hide this stuff from people, keep it down and muffled, nothing is going to change,” he said.

FAITH IN CHANGE

Hope for change is what inspired 16-year-old Raisa Islam, a South Asian and Muslim high school junior in New York City, to join the Brooklyn Public Library’s Intellectual Freedom Teen Council. The council, formed last year, meets once a week on a video call to plan ways students can combat book removals. Early ideas include a newsletter offering a list of tips and resources, Raisa said. The library is also offering a free digital membership, granting access to its 350,000 e-books, to any American age 13 to 21.

Raisa said she will never forget how reading Angie Thomas’s “The Hate U Give” helped her process an incident in which a white man, biking past her on the street, yelled out a profanity. Raisa, at the time 14, was walking home wearing a hijab. By reading Thomas’s book, Raisa said, she came to believe that the man harassed her because he was scared of what he did not understand – the religion of Islam. If the man had grown up reading about all kinds of people and faiths, she believes, he wouldn’t have been so afraid.

From the Sacramento Bee
May 22, 2022

“To pull books from a school library because of the discomfort they create in adults is a recipe for disaster. It erodes the trust young people have in the adults in their lives and pushes them to secrecy. It undermines the studied opinion of professional librarians and educators. It supports a false idea that there is one version of life that is acceptable. And, it denigrates the work of authors who are brave enough to name experiences that are difficult and real.”

Freedom to Read Foundation
FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY
Meg Medina



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