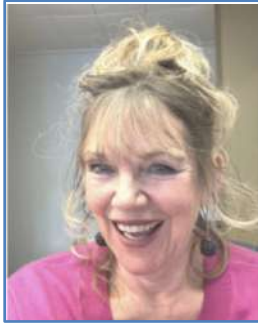


# 2025 Annual Conference Speakers & Presenters

Friday, April 25

Welcome Remarks - 4:30-5:00 p.m.



**Catherine Lutes,**  
AAUW of Oregon President



**Rebecca Grizzle, CEO,**  
Lebanon Chamber of  
Commerce

Presentation – 5:00-6:00 p.m.

***Do Something Challenging:  
Reflections on Eight Decades as an Activist Artist***  
**Betty LaDuke, Artist and Activist**



For eight decades, internationally renowned Ashland artist **Betty LaDuke** has used her artwork to illuminate the resilience and humanity of the people she encounters while traveling the world, as well as the social issues they face. Women - from goat herders in Rwanda to freedom fighters in Eritrea to

farmworkers in Southern Oregon to migrants on the Mexican border - have been the heroes in much of her work. In this talk, LaDuke will share what still keeps her working, traveling, and speaking today, including her recent passion for fashioning turtles carrying wisdom on their backs, speaking to the issues that confront us in these tumultuous times.

**Social Hour and Dinner - 6:00-7:15 p.m.**

**Anniversary Performance - 7:30-9:00 p.m.**

*AAUW of Oregon Centennial History:  
100 Years of Progress for Women's Rights*



**Gloria Holland** with Betsy McDowell, Elena Harchanko, Mary Ellen Dello Stritto, Darlene Barlow, Judy Coyle, Hilary Randall, Dolores Mlynarczyk, Peggy Shippen

*Some branches held tea parties. Some branches drew large crowds to gigantic holiday events. Some put on summer musicals. Some lobbied successfully for public school kindergartens. Many gave scholarships to give girls a shot at a higher education. One branch sold grapefruit to raise funds! From tree planting to offering STEM workshops, from selling quality used clothing to establishing childcare for war brides with children, AAUW women have been amazingly creative and active in Oregon for over 100 years.*

The AAUW Oregon Centennial History play, written by Salem Branch member **Gloria Holland** and featuring eight Salem Branch actors, will explore the serious work of advocating for women through education, research, and even lobbying. Over the years, some branches turned their serious goals into fun and frolic, activities that created powerful changes in the lives of many women and girls in Oregon. We can look back with pride at those changes, while remembering the hard work, the good friendships, and the incredible accomplishments of Oregon's branches.



It's a time to remember, and now a time to look ahead at what may be possible in the challenging days before us. AAUW provides strong, dedicated advocacy for women and girls in Oregon. Please join us as we look at the successes of AAUW Oregon branches over the past 100 years.

**Saturday, April 26**

**AAUW of Oregon State Annual Meeting – 9:00-10:45 a.m.**

**General Session – 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

***Space, Hope and Charity: A Documentary***

Charity Woodrum, Ph.D. and Filmmaker Sandy Cummings

This is an award-winning documentary film following **Charity Woodrum's** remarkable journey through poverty and tragedy as she chased her dream of becoming a NASA astrophysicist. Charity was a non-traditional student, a first-generation high school graduate, married and nine months pregnant when she decided to attend the University of Oregon to study physics. Three years in, she was thriving. Then what occurred was what she called "the worst day." But with help from strong mentors, childhood friends and perfect strangers, she was able to get her life back on track. She's now a NASA astrophysicist.



Charity's story explores themes of resilience, mentorship, and the power of human connection.

**Lunch and Panel Discussion - 12:45-1:30 p.m.  
with Charity Woodrum and Sandy Cummings**

**Charity Woodrum** has come a long way from her childhood in Canyonville, Oregon, where she found peace, many nights looking up at the night sky. Her dream from early on was to work for NASA one day, but it felt like a crazy goal for a kid from rural Oregon who had never met a scientist.



Through devastating tragedy, Charity has kept her eyes on the sky. She earned a Ph.D. in astrophysics from the University of Arizona in 2024 and is now working as a NASA astrophysicist on the James Webb Space Telescope Team at Goddard Space Flight Center. Her research uses the Universe as a time machine to tell the story of how galaxies evolve over cosmic time.



The writer/producer/director of *Space, Hope and Charity*, **Sandy Cummings**, is an award-winning broadcast journalist (3 national EMMY awards, a Columbia-DuPont Award, an Edward R. Murrow Award, Overseas Press Club Award, several Gabriel Awards and numerous nominations) with more than 20 years of experience working for NBC News as a senior producer and a producer, mostly for Dateline NBC. She has covered breaking news, investigative stories, legal stories, entertainment, medical stories and spent years producing long-form programs for the network before venturing out on her own. She has the unique ability to

get to the heart of a story and tell it in a way that engages audiences on a deeper level.

## **Plenary Session – 1:45-2:45 p.m.**

### ***Helping to Build an Oregon That Works***

Oregon State Senator Deb Patterson

**Senator Deb Patterson** will share legislative priorities and current legislative issues that match AAUW's mission.

Senator Patterson writes, "I'm proud to represent Senate District 10, which includes South Salem, Monmouth, and Independence. As a State Senator, I am committed to building an Oregon that works for everyone. I focus on the issue areas that affect our community the most, such as access to good, affordable health care, housing and homelessness, and environmental health."



## Saturday Afternoon Breakout Sessions

### Breakout Session One - 3:00-4:15 p.m.

1A)

#### ***Passion for Advocacy: A Public Policy Workshop***

**Sharron Noone**, Management Team Member of the AAUW of Oregon Public Policy Committee, Branch Members, and Public Policy Committee Members



This participatory session follows the Plenary presentation by **State Senator Deb Patterson** in which she will have shared legislative priorities and current legislative issues that match AAUW’s mission. This workshop will contain further discussion of the status of AAUW 2025 bills before the Oregon State legislature but in a workshop format in order to generate ideas of how to best support those bills at the branch level. Attendees will be divided into small discussion groups facilitated by Public Policy Committee members. They will be asked to focus on their interest areas: healthcare, education, and anti-age discrimination as well as local topics (i.e., banned books, school board members, childcare.) Also, there will be sharing about the recent March Lobby Days and advocacy efforts. All information gathered in this session will be shared with the branches.

1B)

#### **A Hands-on Celebration of STEM in Libraries**

**April Spisak**, Head of Youth Services, Albany Public Library and Founder of the Library’s Maker Space



Join the fun of STEM education in real-time and celebrate “the concept of libraries as third places...that supplement school curriculum, provide community space and entertainment and champion experimental hands-on learning.”

Since 2022, a Maker Space at the Albany Public Library has been open to the community. Librarian **April Spisak** has been key to the Maker Space’s success.

A partnership between the Mid Valley STEM CTE Hub and the Library created a program that features a 3D printer, sewing machines, and a variety of other materials for young makers! In addition to the Maker Space itself, STEM CTE Hub contributed nearly \$6,000 for STEM related kits that the library can share with partners all over the city and county. April will be bringing these STEM kits to this session so that participants can explore the world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

1C)

***Women Military Veterans: Acknowledging Their Service through Community and Connection***

Lt. Col. Jessica Bradley, USMC (Ret), Women Veteran Coordinator at Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs



This presentation will honor the service of Women Veterans across all eras of service and military branches through increasing awareness of shared service identity, access to resources, benefits, and the importance of community connections. Focus will highlight the visibility of women veterans across the generations and in our communities, their strength and resilience, and the barriers that are still being lifted.

**Jessica Bradley** is the Women Veterans Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and has been with the agency since 2021. She is a retired U. S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel, having served more than 22 years in both the enlisted reserve and active duty officer ranks. Her military career includes overseas and stateside assignments with all three Marine Expeditionary Forces, a combat deployment in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and senior staff and policy positions at Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. Her previous positions include Executive Officer of Combat Logistics Regiment 3, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for a Marine Logistics Group, and helping develop service-level transition programs for Marines, Sailors and families with the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment. Her final assignment was serving on the Secretary of Defense's joint task force on the review of DoD policies that restricted the assignments of women serving in the military.

Jessica is a native Oregonian. She holds a B.S. Degree in Philosophy from Oregon State University graduate, a Master's Degree in Business Administration, and is finishing her Doctoral Degree this month in Education Leadership at George Fox University.

## Breakout Session Two - 4:30-5:45 p.m.

2A)

### ***Volunteers First: A Cutting-Edge Awareness Program for Leaders of Volunteers***

**Peggy Shippen**, Public Policy Chair, AAUW Salem OR Branch



The focus of *Volunteers First* is to increase AAUW leaders' awareness of new and credible research showing leadership behaviors that when implemented, will result in a steady increase in membership, volunteer retention, engagement and leadership. *Volunteers First* highlights the personal motivators that drive AAUW member's choices for volunteering, engaging and leading. *Volunteers First* also highlights how AAUW leaders can create a branch environment that sustains our member-volunteers' passion for serving in ways that benefit women and girls: keeping AAUW and our mission alive well into the future.

2B)

### ***Portland State University Higher Education Prison Program***

**Deborah Arthur**, Nahlee Svanjey

The founder and former Director of PSU's Higher Education in Prison program, **Deborah Arthur**, and the current Director, **Nahlee Svanjey**, will talk about the development of and growth of Oregon's only bachelor's degree pathway for incarcerated students.



Deborah Arthur



Nahlee Svanjey

The PSU Higher Education in Prison Program began in 2019 at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Oregon's only prison for women, in Wilsonville. Their mission is to provide access to rigorous, quality higher education for people experiencing incarceration, and to support students post-release. Their vision is a community where the transformational power of education is accessible to all, changing lives, opening doors, reducing recidivism and enhancing community safety and well-being. The flagship program specifically addresses education and lifelong learning for incarcerated women, trans-identified and gender nonconforming individuals. PSU offers a full bachelor's degree pathway in Liberal Studies, with an optional Minor in Business Administration. Through the efforts of the HEP, Portland State University is the first four-year institution in the state, and among the first in the nation, to be designated an eligible "prison education program" by the Federal Department of Education. 75 students are currently enrolled at Coffee Creek, utilizing Pell grants to pay for their education.

2C)

***Panel: Women Filmmakers in Oregon***

**Sandy Cummings, Nisha Burton, Annie Lundgren**

This session will bring to light the work of three Oregon women writing, producing and directing films. Each takes on different roles, at different times, in the filmmaking process but all three strive to make the world a better place through their passionate commitment to creating excellent films.



**Nisha Burton's** award-winning films and documentaries have been featured in numerous film festivals and she has been commissioned by organizations like The Oregon Humanities and numerous foundations to make films about Oregon's history centering on the experiences and stories of BIPOC residents. With ten years of experience in leadership as the founder and Creative Director of a VR/AR agency, Nisha is a skilled, innovative leader who brings a unique passion to all of her work.



The writer/producer/director of *Space, Hope and Charity*, **Sandy Cummings** is an award-winning broadcast journalist (3 national EMMY awards, a Columbia-DuPont Award, an Edward R. Murrow Award, Overseas Press Club Award, several Gabriel Awards and numerous nominations) with more than 20 years of experience working for NBC News as a senior producer and a producer, mostly for Dateline NBC. She has covered breaking news, investigative stories, legal stories, entertainment, medical stories and spent years producing long-form programs for the network before venturing out on her own. She has the unique ability to get to the heart of a story and tell it in a way that engages audiences on a deeper level.



**Anne Lundgren** is an independent film producer living in Ashland, Oregon with her husband, director Gary Lundgren and their daughter. She has produced the features, *Calvin Marshall* (2009), *Redwood Highway* (2013), *Black Road* (2016), and *Phoenix, Oregon* (2019). In addition to producing features developed by her Ashland-based production company, Joma Films, Ms. Lundgren also works as an AD, PM and Location Manager for television, commercials, and indie features. She has also served on the Board of Southern Oregon Film and Media.



**Social Hour – 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

**Awards Celebration and Dinner - 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Welcome and Introduction**  
**Claudia Gray, AAUW Funds Chair**

***Presentation - Breaking Barriers Achievement Award***  
**Mardy Stevens**, Facilitator, Breaking Barriers Achievement Award

**Deborah Arthur**, Founder, and **Nahlee Suvanvej**, Director of Portland State University's (PSU) Higher Education in Prison Program (HEP) were nominated by the Gresham Area (OR) Branch of AAUW.

PSU's Higher Education in Prison Program is the only four-year degree pathway for incarcerated women in Oregon. AAUW of Oregon is proud to recognize the founder of the program, Deborah, and the director of the program Nahlee, as recipients of the 2025 Breaking Barriers Achievement Award. The recipients' successes highly support AAUW's mission, fills a need in communities, develops collaborations, ensures high visibility and plans for the future.

***Speaker: AAUW Fellow Barbara Hudson-Hanley, PhD, MPH***



It is an honor to hear from an AAUW Funds Award winner since AAUW is the largest funder of post-graduate fellowships for women.

Dr. Hudson-Hanley is an Environmental & Occupational Health (EOH) instructor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA. Her interests focus on evaluating EOH policies to protect human health and translating EOH research to prepare the health workforce of the future. She is especially interested in evaluating the effectiveness of chemical policies to control prenatal/early-life environmental exposures associated with adverse developmental outcomes, and evaluating the effects of parental occupational take-home exposures on children's health.

***Presentations of AAUW Funds Awards***  
**Claudia Gray, AAUW Funds Chair**



- Top Ten Branches
- Branch Named Gift Honorees
- Membership Awards
- Legacy Circle
- State Named Gift Honorees
- Funds Wrap up

***Concluding Comments and Closing of the Conference***  
**Catherine Lutes, AAUW of Oregon President**

