

Volunteers First Session 1 Narrative

PRE-PROGRAM INTRO: This **Volunteers First** presentation will last about **35** minutes.

- It is designed so attendees do not need to take notes. The program slides, narrative, and handouts mentioned will be made available on the website.
- There will be time **after** the program for sharing comments and asking questions.
- If you have a comment or question, you would like the **monitor to ask for you**, please put it in the chat as we go along.

Slide #1

Pivot 2 shown before the beginning of the narrative

Slide #2

Thank you, Sigrid and **Good** evening! It's WONDERFUL **so** many of you **chose** to... give of your **time** to attend the first part of this ground-breaking program.

Volunteers First took a “village” of long-time AAUW CA and Oregon leaders and a few non-members. Today's program would **not have been possible** without:

- Sharrell Blakeley former president of AAUW Palm Springs Branch;
- Author and consultant with AAUW of CA, Barry Altland who **enlightened** our understanding of why and how *Engaging the Head, Heart and Hands of Volunteers* increases member engagement, retention and leadership. **And... consented** to our using his book for this program!
- Sigrid Moranz, AAUW CA Branch Leadership Development Chair,
- And...Gloria Holland Salem Oregon Branch member

I thank them all!

Slide #3

Volunteers First is an awareness program designed specifically for leaders of volunteers.

Volunteers First seeks serious consideration for a voluntary **pivot** – **FROM** a transactional approach where leaders *primarily assign tasks TO* a transformative approach where leaders *primarily* build and facilitate relationships. **Volunteers First** provides AAUW leaders and members with research-based information on how to discover, connect, support and recognize volunteer-members in ways that bring each joy as individuals.

To wrap our heads around the **importance** of this pivot requires your knowing a bit of background on why and how we arrived at Volunteers First.

Slide #4

SLOW

Since 1881, AAUW has prided itself in being unique by conducting research - giving us **guidance** for legislative advocacy and developing programs that empower women and girls **externally** like ones seen here. AAUW's continuing decline in membership begged to be researched **INTERNALLY**.

Slide #5

Sandi Gabe, former AAUW of CA President made a bold decision to do just that. In 2022, former AAUW CA members were surveyed and **asked... why** they dropped their branch **membership**. Particular attention was given to answers of those who had been leaders and/or actively engaged.

Other than moving or illness, a significant number said they left AAUW because they felt unwelcome, disconnected and/or just became disinterested in participating... **even for the cause.**

Sandi challenged the CA Leadership Development Committee to find a new and different but credible and effective volunteer leader program.

Slide #6

SLOW Our educational journey took months of research. After reading Barry Altland's book, *Engaging the Head, Heart and Hands of Volunteers* and meeting with him in person, we started to understand WHY we were losing members and HOW to make an effective leadership correction.

Barry had us look inward for **our** volunteer motivators. Once done, Barry suggested **OUR** collective **INTRINSIC** motivators are likely the **SAME** motivators as those of most of our members. Interestingly, they are similar to the ones on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs on this slide.

Barry **suggested**: all AAUW leaders have to do is learn and focus on satisfying the intrinsic needs – volunteer motivators - of our members and modify our leadership best practices accordingly.

Slide #7

We looked for and found **credible** RESEARCH that supports Barry's theory.

Volunteer leaders **around the world** were also **seriously** concerned about the drastic decline in volunteer membership. South American volunteers decided to conduct a study interviewing volunteers WORLDWIDE. The results were conclusive: universally, people volunteer to satisfy **one or MORE** of their **INTRINSIC needs. Those intrinsic needs are...**

- **to...Altruize**
- Socialize
- Learn and
- Self-Actualize

These INTRINSIC needs of volunteers look much like the higher needs on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, confirming Barry's theory.

Credible research indicates most AAUW members will **choose** to give of their time, talent and skills when at least **some** of their INTRINSIC needs are met.

Slide #8

Managing volunteers so they'll renew and lead to is NOT a matter of how we run our "business". Volunteerism is... an **AFFAIR of the HEART!**

If you take home nothing else from this conference, remember this:

Fulfilling the member's intrinsic motivators for volunteering is what touches their heart.

Fulfillment drives their choices for volunteering,

And **that JOY** is what sustains their passion for serving.

The **HEART** you see here represents this new-found awareness.

Slide #9

If AAUW leaders want to increase and retain membership and develop leaders they **MUST PIVOT...**

FROM... focusing primarily on the **TASKS**, (policy, procedure, process and business practices)

TO... a TRANSFORMATIVE focus on **PEOPLE**: To sustain our organization, AAUW leaders must focus on **Volunteers First!!!**

Slide #10

Australians also studied volunteerism. They compiled many studies of volunteer leadership from around the world and came up with a list of specific leadership “best practices” to improve member-volunteer retention, engagement and leadership development.

The results of the Australian study were universal!
Successful leaders of volunteers are ones who **BUILD AND FACILITATE RELATIONSHIPS**. It’s their #1 priority.

Slide #11

We simplified the recommended “best practices” for **HOW** to build and facilitate relationships into four interchangeable leadership abilities:

CARE, CONNECT, SUPPORT AND RECOGNIZE

In this session, we will cover how to **CARE** and **CONNECT**
We will cover how to **SUPPORT** and **RECOGNIZE** in the 4th Pivot session.

Slide #12

To build and facilitate relationships with and among members, AAUW leaders **MUST first and always** show they **gen-u-in-ely CARE** about each and every member.

An AAUW leader shows **CARING** by personally “Getting to Know” each **NEW** member as well as ...getting **acquainted** or **RE-acquainted** with a **RENEWING** member *who is not engaged*.

This is most effective when done *in person* by getting together with a member... over a cup of coffee in a small cafe, at home or outdoors in a park on a sunny day.

Slide #13

CARE means discovering what moves **each member** to volunteer: **what** interests and activities bring **each member** satisfaction and joy. What each member **hopes to gain** by being an AAUW member.

- **To...**Altruize?
- Socialize?
- Learn and/or?
- Self-Actualize?

Slide #14

Leaders **must personally** engage in meaningful, purposeful conversations, listen and accept the member's heart-felt answers – even if their reason for joining AAUW is not all that altruistic.

What moves a member to participate **varies for each person**. Some may only want to socialize, to learn or self-actualize. Some might want only to network for career or advance an AAUW-related cause.

Just as young women, working women and retired women all have a different amount of time to serve, all have different **INTRINSIC NEEDS** for what they hope to **GAIN** by being an AAUW member.

Slide #15

Discovering what **moves each** member to volunteer is the **first step** and **KEY** to member engagement.

Open-ended “**Getting to Know You**” questions can help leaders discover what an **individual** member hopes to **GAIN** by joining or engaging as an

AAUW volunteer as well as learning their skills, interests, hobbies and timeframe for volunteering and gathering.

- **Be curious** about each as a person. Prompt and listen for **their** ideas and suggestions.
- **Share** current and past programs. **Ask for** suggestions and welcome new and creative ideas.
- **Be open** to suggestions for new programs, activities and ideas. This shows the member you CARE and will be **valued**.

Slide #16

After “Getting to Know” new and unengaged members, AAUW leaders are then able to **CONNECT** them to other members who are involved in branch activities *of similar interest*. Connecting builds and facilitates relationships with and among members. The need for connection is powerful, especially now. Research shows a key difference between very happy people and less-happy people is good relationships.

Slide #17

Remember, AAUW leader’s #1 priority is **NOT to assign tasks** - even when **CONNECTING** members to each other.

Assigning tasks does not build relationships. Nor does it serve the purpose of putting the wants and needs of our member-Volunteers First. And, at this stage, it certainly might not bring them joy!

Leaders can avoid the temptation to assign tasks and recruit leaders by focusing on **CONNECTING** member-volunteers with each other:

- one-on-one,
- in a small or large group,
- or even via Zoom.

Slide #18

Branch leaders can **get help** with creating an enjoyable branch.

- **Share** the value of a “Volunteers First” focus with ALL branch members.
- **Model** caring and connecting members to each other,
- **Encourage** all members to care about and connect with members they don’t know well!
- **Express** appreciation to those who show caring and connecting.

Slide #19

Forming a formal or informal **Welcoming Team** of interested members – is one way to include **ALL leaders** -not just the Membership VP – in Volunteers First:

Welcoming members can

- Meet in person with a new or unengaged member.
- Meet, greet and sit with them at meetings.
- Follow-up or partner with members to ensure they are being welcomed, included and enjoying themselves.

Creating a **Communication Network**

- Keeps **ALL members** “in the know” with a **variety of** notices **particularly** to new and non-engaged members.

Another suggestion is to **regularly** include **Circles of Engagement** in **ALL** gatherings.

SLOW!!!

Slide #20

Circles of Engagement provide members with an opportunity to **connect** with members they don’t know well, **learn** about each other, create understanding and learn **how to talk to each other in new ways**. **Circles of Engagement** – where all members are given the opportunity and encouraged by other members to participate -can be part of:

- an all-member outing or interest group,
- member orientation,
- having members share in the decision-making and give feedback.
- And even for yearly planning: **Answering questions like...**
 - What do members need to make their volunteer experience more fulfilling?
 - What do members want to keep doing?
 - What's working? What's not working?
 - What do members want to eliminate?
 - What do members want to add?
- This might be a first step to a member acquiring interest in leadership or starting a new program.

Slide #21

Now...You're probably wondering: "How is it possible to create **time** for Circles of Engagement when **meeting time** seems so **short?**" Barry Altland suggests limiting leader and speaker time to 50% of the allotted time.

And... using the other 50% of meeting time for Circles of Engagement.

Using 50% of the allotted time for Circles of Engagement gives members time they wouldn't otherwise have - to think and reflect, to interact with a speaker, or engage in meaningful discussions with others they might not know – **beyond** socializing, which usually happens before and after meetings anyway.

Slide #22

Part of **CONNECTING** ALL member-volunteers to each other is to connect them to our common cause – the AAUW's mission and values.

- Members sometimes leave an organization they perceive is not **DOING** enough to fulfill the mission they **chose to support** when they first joined.
- In that regard, it is **VITAL** that branch leaders work with members – new and unengaged- to create an array of **AAUW mission-related** activities, programs and interest groups that give members the opportunity to experience the joy in belonging to AAUW.

Zoom to Me

I would now like to introduce you to our special guest. Sharrell Blakeley, MSW, University of Michigan and recent School of Social Work Dean's Advisory Board member; retired former-Director of the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, and former president of AAUW Palm Springs Branch. Sharrell was the first to **suggest** and **show** the **value** of including Circles of Engagement in branch programs. She is here tonight to share her passion for using circles of engagement.

Zoom to Sharrell

Slide #23

There is no substitute for genuine human interaction among us

Since 1881, AAUW women have been coming together to engage with like-minded women around the table. As strong women we have had to face daunting challenges and controversial issues throughout our lifetimes. Monthly Branch meetings give us the opportunity to listen to impressive women share their personal stories, professional expertise and their community accomplishments. All of these presentations have enriched our sense of purpose, enlightened knowledge of community and allowed us to build lasting friendships over the years.

Our first Circle of Engagement event happened during the Pandemic. We were gearing up for our annual Tech Trek

fundraiser which had to be by Zoom because we could not meet in person. We wanted to find a way to meet members' need to socialize in a meaningful and fun way. Since our members love to dress up and many hadn't had an opportunity to do so or get to know each as new members, we created a "Hats Off" theme.

We had a dual purpose: to honor the women and girls we support through Tech Trek, and give us an opportunity to share something personal about ourselves, both from long term and new members. We asked members to wear a special hat and tell the story that made their hat so special.

Members had a wonderful time! They enjoyed learning about each other and their 'hat story' disclosed aspects of themselves that brought back personal memories. This Zoom experience was fun, warm, engaging, beautiful and a unique form of Circles of Engagement. Twelve Tech Trek'ers went to camp that year.

Slide #24

For the second Circles event, while planning for the annual AAUW Fundraiser for our Branch, we decided to try something different. Again, we looked inward to the need of our members to connect with each other. We decided to encourage table discussion from two poignant books from our Book Group.

We began with a brief presentation about Michelle Obama's book, "All the Light We Carry" and Nina Totenberg's book, "Dinners with Ruth", we asked members at each table to discuss among themselves two very deeply personal considerations about the moral and ethical issues raised in these two books. The two questions were printed and placed on each table.

- (1) Why did Michelle Obama choose to wear her natural hair instead of the braids she so desired to wear, when she was First Lady?
- (2) What were the ethical issues Nina Totenberg and Ruth Bader Ginsberg faced in their decision to not disclose Judge Ginsberg's serious health issues, knowing that the Supreme Court needed stalwarts who supported women's rights?

Lively discussions ensued at each table and members chose one person to report out their comments. We got to know each other by sharing our common, personal experiences. Regarding Mrs. Obama's hairdo, many talked about tough childhood and high school memories, fear of being different and being negatively judged. Members said it worked because, in small groups, no matter our age or background, we were able to discuss how our own lives were affected by this issue.

When we discussed RBG's non-disclosed health issues that led to a missed opportunity for a Justice appointment, the discussion focused on the reverence for her lifetime of service, respect for medical privacy but also, the need to consider the vast political needs that lay ahead. Members discussed the need to put lives on the line for a greater purpose, which led to member's personal disclosures about family, friends and relationships.

After the report-out by each table, I connected our theme with AAUW and fundraising for AAUW Funds. That day, we raised more than in prior years. We cheered our collective accomplishments. I must also express the surprise and personal heartfelt satisfaction I felt for the standing ovation that followed. This is why I joined AAUW and became a leader.

Creating circles where members could share deeper thoughts and discussion, focusing on universal questions and issues where discussion is free and open, gave each a feeling of inclusion and belonging and connected them in a powerful way to each other and to AAUW.

Both of these Circles were easy to organize and implement. Both outcomes benefited women and girls and stimulated member involvement and enthusiasm. Most importantly, members deeply connected with each other. I encourage you to use your creativity and imagination and give circles a try.

Zoom to Peggy

Thank you Sharrell for taking me back to those joyful days and for being here to share your knowledge and heartwarming inspiration! You are so appreciated!

Slide #25

THIS is your pivot point...

As an AAUW leader, your first priority is **NOT to assign tasks**.

Successful leaders of volunteers put the heart of your members – our AAUW **VOLUNTEERS FIRST!**

AAUW leaders do that by **building and facilitating relationships** with and among every member - all the time!

Slide #24

When **we as leaders** - nurture belonging and joy within our membership;

When **we as leaders** genuinely **CARE** for **each and every** member as person;

When **we as leaders** personally discover what moves **each member** to volunteer and make that personal **CONNECTION**,

When **we as leaders create CIRCLES** where members can engage deeply and share openly with each other,

Then... We will see growth in membership, an increase in member participation, engagement and – yes!- even the desire of a few to lead and invest in sustaining AAUW. And... yes! Leaders will experience the joy **they hoped to gain** by becoming leaders!

Thank you!

Sigrid/Bev:

Thank you so much, Peggy. If anyone has questions about the presentation, please put them in the attendee survey. Peggy will get back to you next week.

Circle of Engagement

While we don't have a lot of time today, we would like to take about 8 minutes for each of you to think about and answer in the....

1. What you currently hope to gain from being an AAUW member.
2. What AAUW mission or vision-related activity would move you to engage in or lead?
 - a. How will this activity benefit women and girls, including branch women?
3. Briefly describe a previous AAUW activity that you found very rewarding. How did it benefit women and girls?