



The Branch

September 2025
Vol 76 Issue 1

Welcome Back! September Branch Meeting

**Saturday, September 6
9:30 a.m.**

**Wharfinger Building, One Marina Way, Eureka (Bay Room
Downstairs)**

Brunch Menu: Croissants, jams, cream cheese, fresh fruit, coffee or tea - \$12.00
Coffee or Tea only - \$8.00

Please make your reservation by clicking [here](#) or calling Carolyn Miller at 707-798-1503. Reservation deadline either online or by phone call is September 1. Please make your reservation by the deadline. Late reservations cannot be guaranteed seating or food/beverage.

Speaker: Alida Nicklas Demystifying Fiber Infrastructure in Our Community

Learn about how Vero has been working in the Humboldt County community for years through the Digital 299 Project, Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, and now through fiber to the home services in Arcata and Eureka. Established in 2017, Vero Fiber started by delivering reliable and affordable internet to school districts in unserved and underserved communities. Recognizing the broader need for high quality, fiber-to-the-home solutions, Vero expanded its mission to serve the residences and businesses of those areas too. What began as a small operation in Colorado has evolved into a key fiber-optic provider, now serving communities and school districts across the nation. Bring your

questions about fiber infrastructure, construction timelines, and more.

Speaker Bio: Born and raised in Arcata, Alida Nicklas has always had a passion for developing and fostering relationships within the community. She holds a B.A in Political Science with an emphasis on Environmental Sustainability from Cal Poly Humboldt and previously worked for Redwood Coast Energy Authority



Shall we create less waste?

Perhaps we could even make it a fun tradition—bringing a favorite plate, mug and napkin to share stories about. Small actions like these not only reduces our environmental footprint, but also encourages mindfulness and camaraderie within the group. Every little bit helps, plus it builds sustainable habits as well as reduce waste in our landfills. Our hostesses will always have paper products on hand just in case one is in need. I appreciate you joining me. Alex Stillman



Four Local Middle School Students Sponsored to Attend Tech Trek Science Camp for Girls

AAUW-Humboldt sponsored four local middle school students to attend the **2025 Tech Trek Science Camp** held at Sonoma State University.

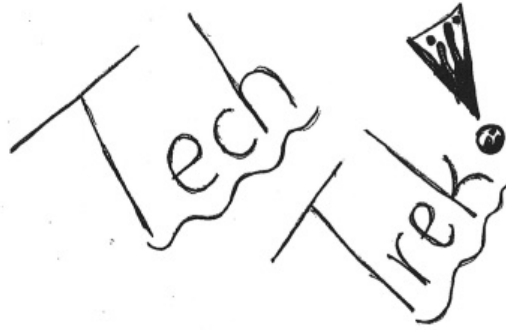
This weeklong science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) camp offered hands-on learning experiences, access to female scientists as role models, and exposure to a range of science-based careers. The girls, who will be 8th graders in the fall, were nominated by their science teachers in recognition of their aptitudes and interest in STEM-related topics. They then completed applications and interviews before being selected in a highly competitive process.

AAUW-H branch members have the opportunity every year to support these Tech Trek camper through financial contributions as well as attending camp as volunteers. Members who have attended in past years have found the experience very rewarding, attending sessions with astronomers demonstrating how telescopes work and helping students build jiggy robots and more.

This year's sponsored students, pictured above (left to right), were **Alia Collins** (SunnyBrae Middle School), **Carlie Moore** (Fortuna Middle School), **Soraya Cabrales** (also SunnyBrae) and **Neva Herrera** (Pacific Union/Arcata).

$$F = m \cdot a$$

STEM!



Gravity on moon
 $= 1.61 \frac{m}{s^2}$ ← did in class!

$$E = mc^2$$

Dear Humboldt County Branch,

Thank you so much for selecting me out of the whole county as a girl to go to Tech Trek. I've had so much fun here, and learning new and fantastic things in STEM!

So far, we've had two lectures on very different things, one depicting engineering, the other talking about astronomy → of exoplanets and their history. Both were very enticing, and I took a lot of notes on both. I've really been feeling like a

College student these days, sleeping in dorms, walking around campus, going to meals in this giant dining hall, they're all going to be memories that I will remember. I've also made many different dorm mates, even one from Humboldt! My core class, has been a curriculum depicting aerospace, all about space and aerodynamics of man-made things that fly. Overall, my time here has been so fun, with many exciting events and activities at every turn!

Thank you,

— *Sofia*

Dear Humboldt branch,

Thank you for sending me to Tech Trek. I really enjoyed it because it was very fun and I really liked making flash lights, because soldering was fun, I also really enjoyed my core class which was electrical engineering. In my core class we made circuits and we learned about 2 types: Parallel and Series. Parallel circuits are more complicated but the light shines brighter when you use Parallel. We also built a ring structure. My group made a class room, and in the classroom we made an electric circuit we used parallel with 3 light bulbs we also built a lot of stuff. My furniture was really cute and cool. Thank you again for sending me to Tech Trek.

Sincerely, Alia

The students are always very appreciative of our branch's support. Here are their Thank-you notes.

Dear Humboldt, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. I enjoyed the entire experience. Thank you for giving me the chance to try something new, something I might never have tried on my own. Thanks for letting me try something fun that was out of the usual. I had a lot of fun, made a lot of new friends. My favorite part of the entire experience was my core class, forensic CS. We tried to figure out who killed the victim, which was a stuffed animal. I enjoyed trying to figure out who it was with my group. I also liked hanging out with my branch. We all became friends really quick. I hope maybe someday I can do something like this again.

Sincerely,
 Nera Herrera

Tech Trek 2025

6/27/25

Dear AAUW Humboldt branch,

Thank you for sending me to Tech Trek. I had so much fun. I felt so honored to get to have this experience. I loved getting to meet so many amazing people. My core class was Botany.

In Botany we learned how to dissect a flower. I didn't know that there are so many different parts of a flower. Seed can be dormant for decades. We also went stargazing and I got to see more through a telescope. And with the naked eye. Thank you again for this amazing opportunity.

Sincerely, Carlie Moore

Notebook Computers Awarded to Two Outstanding Continuation High School Graduates



Dorothy Skjonsby and Mary Lou Lowry coordinated the awarding of notebook computers to two 2025 graduates of Continuing Education Schools in Humboldt County. Selected by their teachers for their outstanding high school performance and interest in continuing their education, these students have achieved success despite life challenges that took them off the typical path and into continuation programs.

Our branch has been offering an annual award to one or two outstanding female continuation high school students in the county for about 40 years now, starting out by awarding dictionaries but shifting to digital platforms as the times have changed, with this year's awardees each receiving a notebook computer.

Anika Gonzales (photo at left) from East High School was selected to receive a 2025 Continuing Education Award. According to Natalie Heckman, Student Support Counsellor at the school, Anika consistently stands out as a respectful, intelligent, and hardworking student. She brings a thoughtful and kind presence to every space she is in, and her creativity shines through in both her academics and personal interactions. Anika will be attending College of the Redwoods in the fall with the goal of becoming a teacher – a path well suited for her compassion, leadership, and dedication to learning. Heckman added that Anika will no doubt make a meaningful impact in the lives of future students, just as she did at East High.

Heidi Rayburn (pictured at right with Branch President Beth Haynes) earned her high school diploma from Eureka Adult School and is enrolled at College of the Redwoods, where she will begin taking courses this fall, working towards an Associate of Arts (AA) in Social Work. Her ultimate goal is to become a youth substance use disorder counselor. As a student, Heidi stood out for her dedication and perseverance. Adult Education Teacher Rebecca Twiss praised Heidi's personal qualities of enthusiasm and positivity, along with her big compassionate heart, which she knows will fuel her to accomplish her goals and help others in need.



Interest Groups: (right) Susan Beecher and her pottery creations at the recent Open Studios tour, (left) June Stitch In Time meeting.



August 1st was National Mahjong Day. Margery Zwerdling (our fearless leader), Maggie Fleming, Winifred Creamer, Carrie Peyton-Dahlberg and Karole Ely celebrated with a mock cocktail. If you want to learn to play & join our weekly group, Carrie & Rosemarie Weaver are teaching a class through Ollie in September. We meet Fridays from 1 to 4 at the Phillips House Museum.

AAUW WA Online Branch Program on Title IX

**September 17, 2025,
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm PST**

Our panel presentation will explore the historical evolution, current landscape, and future implications of Title IX, with a focus on its impact on gender equity in education, athletics, and beyond.

This panel will provide attendees with a deeper understanding of the legal, cultural, and political dimensions of Title IX—from its 1972 origins to the most recent developments in 2025.

Panelists will share insights on enforcement trends, lived experiences, and strategies for upholding gender equity in the face of evolving interpretations and challenges.

Panelists include:

- Dr. Dorothy McBride, professor emeritus of political science at Florida Atlantic University**
- Dr. Julie McCleery, Co-Director, UW Center for Leadership in Athletics, College of Education**
- Dr. Domanic Vanthom, WSU Vancouver, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator**

To register click [HERE](#). This will take you to a Google Form. Complete it and then 48 hours before the presentation you will receive the Zoom link. Remember you must pre-register to receive the Zoom link to attend.

Join us for this informative and timely VIRTUAL Program!



Will Likely Impact K-12 Education in California

By Missy Maceyko, Public Policy Director, AAUW CA

During LGBTQ+ pride month, a decision was issued in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, a case involving the LGBTQ+ community that was heard by the Supreme Court of the United States during the 2024-2025 term. The outcome of this case may have an impact on the important [legislative](#) and on-the-ground work that AAUW California has been doing (via the [School Board Project](#) (SBP)) to protect historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education and schools given the likely increase in legal opt-out requests by some parents.

The *Mahmoud* case began in 2022, when the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) Board, in Maryland, updated their curriculum with more diverse and inclusive storybooks, working with childhood development experts to select books across the curriculum that would have common childhood themes but a wider array of characters, to make sure all students could see themselves in some of the texts. This included adding a handful of story books with LGBTQ+ characters.

In response to the addition of the LGBTQ+ story books, a coalition of Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox parents asked for an opt-out provision for any storybooks that included a normative portrayal of LGBTQ+ families, such as *Pride Puppy*, a rhyming alphabet book that tells the story of a family having a fun day together at a LGBTQ+ pride event, and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*, a classic children's book about how to address the anxiety that children feel when their family grows and changes, in this case through marriage.

While [the MCPS school board initially tried to accommodate opt-out requests that arose from parents](#), the school board received such an influx of requests that course administration became unmanageable. [Opt-out policies are expensive, costly for students, schools, and taxpayers](#). This means that mass opt-outs can put further stress on already stressed logistical systems within financially burdened school districts.

On top of the logistical and actual costs and administrative struggles created by the mass opt-out requests, the MCPS school board in this case also noted that the influx of requests fundamentally [“undermined the schools’ educational obligations toward inclusion, equity, and respect.”](#) [Opt-outs can hurt kids](#) whose lives and families are mirrored in the books, in this case explicitly positioning LGBTQ+ families’ experiences as something potentially problematic and harmful to others. It also teaches young people that they can opt out of teachings that encourage being decent to all humans, even those who do not look, think, act, or love in the way that their families do. Lack of access to and understanding of diverse experiences and viewpoints and the inability to engage meaningfully with widespread inclusivity also leaves the opted-out students themselves less well-equipped to move forward to function in a diverse world, a pluralistic democracy, and a global workforce.

After the first year of implementation, MCPS school board ended the opt-out request option.

In response, the parents in the *Mahmoud* case filed a lawsuit, arguing that requiring their children to engage with story books like *Pride Puppy* and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*, whether independently or via neutral reading lessons created around them, would be a violation of their religious beliefs. Specifically, these parents claimed that lack of an opt-out provision, providing them with the ability to opt their children out of these lessons, was a violation of their First Amendment rights to freely exercise their religion, impeding their ability to instruct their children on faith-based issues related to gender and sexuality and to control when and how these issues are introduced.

Based on a 2008 case in Massachusetts, [there was precedent for ruling against these kinds of opt outs](#) because participation in public school instruction that simply exposes a child to ideas that conflict with the religious beliefs of their parents, “does not inhibit the parent

from instructing the child differently.” However, on June 27, 2025, [the majority of the Supreme Court](#) broke with this precedent, deciding the case in favor of these parents’ and upholding their constitutional right to make these opt-out requests on religious grounds. The majority decision in the case called parents’ inability to opt their children out of story books like *Pride Puppy* and *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding* a “substantial interference” with the religious development of their children as the books and instruction around them were deemed “coercive.”

As such, the ruling gives a great deal of latitude to parents who want to claim a religious exemption from existing public school curricula. This means that we will likely see not only an uptick in opt-out requests for LGBTQ+ material on religious grounds throughout the country, but also an uptick in requests for opt-outs on *other* topics that parents mark as potentially problematic. Echoing some of these concerns, [Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Justice Elana Kagan gave voice to this issue during oral arguments](#) as well as in [their dissent in the case](#), noting the [potentially broad scope](#) of the parents’ position. Historically, Sotomayor and Kagan note, there have also been objections to “biographical material about women who have been recognized for achievement outside their home,” as well as books featuring divorce, interfaith marriage, and immodest dress.

Because this was a federal decision, the ruling in *Mahmoud* will likely have an impact on public school curricula and administration in California, as well.

Parents in California already have the ability to opt their children out of some material, perhaps most notably around [comprehensive sexual health education](#). However, these opt-out provisions are limited in scope. As the protection and expansion of historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education in California has been an important focus for both AAUW CA’s School Board Project and our legislative priorities, we need to watch how the decision in *Mahmoud* may spark expanded opt-out requests on religious grounds. While protections for inclusive curricula remain in place in California, the outcome in favor of the parents in this case is likely to create a wave of costly social and legal challenges, including a call for more expansive opt-out policies, which will have an impact on how we continue to engage in meaningful work around this priority area in the future. A possible outcome of this is that many districts will pull back on their DEI materials, setting up a potential collision course with existing CA laws.



A Singularly Unfeminine Profession

When Mary Rolph Gaillard was 18, a neighborhood boy asked her what she wanted to do with her life. She told him she wanted to be a physicist. “A singularly unfeminine profession,” he replied.

Decades later that remark would inspire the title of Dr. Gaillard’s memoir on her career spanning a golden age of particle physics., when the outlines of how nature behaves at subatomic scale was just beginning to emerge.

Known by most as Mary K, Dr. Gaillard was the first woman ever hired by the physics department at the University of California Berkeley and later became a

senior scientist at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. She also worked for many years at CERN, on the French-Swiss border. A fellow physicist said, “If she calculated something, you could believe it was correct.”

The newest, most elegant telescope and camera are now mounted at the Atacama Desert high above Chile, giving us our first real view of the cosmos. It is named the Vera C. Rubin Observatory, honoring her work\ in astrophysics, exploring dark matter, which was not taken seriously by most other scientists. We now know that it makes up more than 80% of all matter in the universe. Astounding photographs are now available to view, taken by the world’s largest camera, built right here in northern California, at or by Stanford’s Linear Accelerator.

Vera’s career began in the 1960s, when she insisted on studying science while her male advisors told her she should not. The observatory has been named for her to honor the truly stellar work she has done.

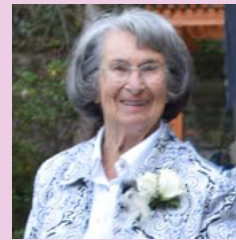
Both Mary K and Vera were mothers to three children also. Many of us can remember that “physics is not for girls.”

from the *New York Times* (thank you Jean Guthrie).

Rose Ann Burger Hurst

July 19, 1927 – July 18, 2025

Rose Ann Burger Hurst passed away peacefully on July 18, 2025, hours before her 98th birthday, surrounded by her loving family. A lifelong resident of Eureka, Rose Ann lived a life of deep devotion to family, education, and community.



Born on July 19, 1927 to Ernest Burger and Frances Cabrera Burger, Rose Ann was raised in the apartment above her family’s grocery store at Harris and California Streets, where she developed a strong work ethic and a lifelong love of learning. She attended Nazareth Academy and graduated from Eureka High School in 1945. She pursued higher education at Dominican College, majoring in Spanish and minoring in music. She later earned her master’s degree and teaching credential from Stanford University, where she formed lifelong friendships and became an avid Stanford sports fan. In 1950, she met WWII veteran Bob Hurst at her parents’ anniversary party. They married in 1952 at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church and went on to raise six children. Rose Ann balanced motherhood with a career in education, teaching Spanish and music in local schools and later substitute teaching well into her eighties, being known for her dedication to her students.

When Bob passed away in 1968 after a battle with cancer, Rose Ann stepped into his role at the family grocery store, working alongside her brother Tom until her retirement in the early 1990s. All six of her children worked alongside her in the store, learning from her example of resilience, discipline, and compassion.

Rose Ann had a love for adventure and travel. She toured Europe in 1949, visited family in Switzerland and Mexico, and later traveled across the U.S., Canada, and beyond. She never missed a chance to attend her grandchildren’s celebrations, join a cruise, take a train ride, or travel with her bridge friends.

Her legacy continued, as she was a proud member of the American Association of University Women, served on the board of the Humboldt Literacy Project, volunteered at the Food Bank, and was active in the Young Ladies Institute. Rose Ann was an enthusiastic and devoted member of St. Bernard’s Parish.

She was also a talented pianist, a dedicated bridge player, and a joyful berry picker and jam maker and fruitcake baker. Rose Ann was deeply proud of her Mexican and Swiss

heritage and instilled that pride in her children and grandchildren.

Rose Ann was predeceased by her husband Bob, her parents, and her brothers Arthur and John. She is survived by her brother Tom Burger (Tina), her six children Terri Matson (Byron), Bob Hurst Jr. (Holly), Patti Randall (Peter), Marcia Skavdal (Stan), Carolyn Marley (Jon), and Frances Casey (George); 12 grandchildren: Beth Weitz (David), Nick Matson (Jessica), Madeleine Smith (Ben), Tyler Randall (Danielle), Greg Randall (Avery), Nathan Skavdal (Becky), Dan Skavdal (Kelly), Hannah Skavdal (Zach), Matt Seneca (Thia), Krietta Marley (Niral), Amelia Casey Hinks (Ben), Georgina Casey (Cass), and five great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her sisters-in-law Arlene Burger and Brenda Burger.

Rose Ann's life was a testament to family, love, service, and strength. She will be remembered for her sharp wit, generous heart, and unwavering commitment to her family and community.

Rosary and funeral services will be held on August 28 at St. Bernard's Catholic Church in Eureka. Rosary will be at 10:30 a.m., followed by the funeral at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Humboldt Literacy Project or the American Association of University of Women Humboldt Branch



2026 Women's History Tea Nominations

Each March we celebrate women from the past and present who have made a difference in Humboldt County. If you would like to nominate a recipient of this honor, please complete this nomination form and forward it to ehaynes@mnsi.net by December 31, 2025. The Board of Directors will be selecting recipients in early February. Please nominate a person or persons that you feel should be considered for this honor and explain why.

Your Name _____

I would like to nominate _____

In what way has this person/group made a positive difference in Humboldt County through her activities, education, occupations, or professions?

Please provide the contact information for your nominee:

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR NOMINATION to:
Elizabeth Haynes (ehaynes@mnsi.net)
2615 N Street, Eureka, 95501



The Branch is published eight times a year by the Humboldt Branch of AAUW. Submissions of articles, news items and photos from members are welcome. Submit them by the 20th of each month to shelleydmitchell@gmail.com.

AAUW | PO Box 5116 | Eureka, CA 95502 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!