

AAUW Today

by Jeanette D. Knapp September 1998

CAST & PROPS:

LEADER: relaxed woman with a clipboard plus perhaps cord and whistle

FIRST VOICE: Young woman with a day-book planner

EXPERIENCED VOICE: Give her a choice of hats, either old-fashioned with a veil or new & stylish

IMPATIENT VOICE/PUBLIC POLICY CHAIR: wears a baseball cap, backwards, holds public policy brochures

SLOW, SWEET VOICE: wears a colorful scarf

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION CHAIR: holds a stack of EF brochures

LAF & MEMBERSHIP CHAIR: holds LAF brochures & membership brochures.

DIRECTIONS:

Before meeting day:

1. Read script and insert local information where needed: name of branch, date founded, name of city, a branch project, branch interest group(s)
2. Prepare seven scripts, one for each reader. Mark each script with the name of the reader and highlight that reader's part.
3. Assemble props--suggested ones or others that suit your branch. (Optional: Make lemon squares to serve. Make copies of lemon square recipe to hand out.)

At theater time:

4. Leader asks for 6 volunteer readers. She hands a script and props to each, keeping the LEADER script for herself.
5. Recipe for lemon squares is included; if you like, you can make copies available, and perhaps serve lemon squares as refreshments.

SETTING:

If the group is small, less than 20, arrange chairs in a circle, and let readers remain seated. If the group is larger or chairs cannot be arranged in a circle, readers should come to the front when it is their turn to read and remain there throughout the reading (about 12 minutes).

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FIRST VOICE: *(standing up, and walking to the front if it's a large group):*
OK, so what is the American Association of University Women? I mean, it was a great program. I loved the speaker. The lemon squares were out of this world, and I just met the professor who started one of the first women studies programs in the country. But if I join, what am I saying yes to?

LEADER: Anyone want to answer that question?
[If someone without a script volunteers to answer this question, terrific; hear her out and then go on to next reader.]

EXPERIENCED VOICE: Well, I'm not quite as old as Marion Talbot, the first president of AAUW, but I always like to begin at the beginning. 1881. Boston. Seventeen women—all college graduates—and let me tell you, there weren't many in those days. No job recruiters had come to interview them. Those young women formed an organization to do practical educational work. They wanted to open the doors of higher education to other women and to find wider opportunities to use their own college training.

FIRST VOICE: What did they do?

EXPERIENCED VOICE: Lots of things. Good ideas take on a life of their own. College women formed local groups in city after city. The New York City branch was founded in 1886, and the _____ Branch in _____. *[Insert name and date of local branch.]* One of the first projects was a study. They gathered facts from their own members to disprove a popular book by a Boston doctor. He claimed that higher education was harmful to a young woman's physical and mental health.

IMPATIENT VOICE/PUBLIC POLICY CHAIR: Never mind that old stuff. We're a here and now organization. We lobby, a lot. In Washington, in Albany, and right here in _____ *[Insert name of local community]* Public education. The arts. Reproductive rights. Equal opportunity. Equal pay and promotion. If it affects girls and women, we care about it.

EXPERIENCED VOICE: Our resources are limited, so we concentrate on major issues. AAUW is well known as the primary national organization promoting education for women

LEADER: When you join our local branch, you're also joining the New York State division and the national association. You'll receive publications from all three with information about women's issues and what you can do about them.

EXPERIENCED VOICE: You'll also be joining the International Federation of University Women. We work with women's organizations in 67 other countries to promote peace, to protect human rights, and to improve the status and education of women and girls.

IMPATIENT VOICE: Members set the public policy priorities. The association staff does the research. They gather facts for us to use when we e-mail our Congress people, call the school board, or write to the editor. "Action Alerts" help you make your voice heard when and where it counts.

LEADER: AAUW is a good place to develop your leadership skills. It's inspired some of our members to run for public office.

SLOW, SWEET VOICE: Not me. I don't lobby, though I'm glad other people do. I come for the people. Where else would I meet women who are teachers, artists, professors, school board members, musicians, organic farmers, librarians, writers, realtors, and business owners. It's a marvelous group.

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION CHAIR: And generous. Each year we raise money for graduate fellowships and community action projects. The grants are awarded by the AAUW Educational Foundation.

LEADER: Our branch [*Alternately, instead of branch, could say New York State*] members gave \$_____ [*Insert amount*] to the Educational Foundation last year.

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION CHAIR: AAUW is the largest non-governmental source of funds for graduate education for women. And teachers receive fellowships to work on school programs that will help girls succeed.

IMPATIENT VOICE: Don't forget the public policy research funded by E.F.

FIRST VOICE: Who?

IMPATIENT VOICE: Sorry. I mean the Educational Foundation. Just wave your hand if we lapse into acronyms you can't follow. Anyway, the report about How Schools Shortchange Girls made news across the country. It showed that even teachers who think they're treating boys and girls equally, often pay much more attention to the boys than the girls. That makes the boys feel important, and it lowers the girls self-esteem.

FIRST VOICE: But what do you do here in _____?
[*Insert name of local community*]]

LEADER: We've been encouraging girls to study science and math so they won't be shut out of a lot of careers and _____

[Insert one or more other important things AAUW is doing locally.]

FIRST VOICE: What about sexual harassment? School can be a tough place for girls.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR/LAF CHAIR TO FIRST VOICE: We need someone to work on that. You could be our Ed Equity chair. Its easy. Your committee does all the work.

FIRST VOICE: I don't think I could—

LEADER: Not so fast. Let her find the area that interests her by joining a committee or two first. We believe in mentoring, both girls and our new members.

EXPERIENCED VOICE: There are lots of ways to get involved. When the Hostile Hallways report came out, we surveyed local school districts to see if they had a sexual harassment policy. Some of them didn't. We provided samples and asked them to develop one that protects students.

LEADER: We tackle the problems that need to be solved here and now. And that's the genius of AAUW. For more than 100 years, it's been able to reinvent itself in different eras and different communities.

EXPERIENCED VOICE: Voter education is vital in towns and states where public education is being starved or women's rights are in danger. But in other cities, its senior housing or after-school programs that are needed. Some branches are combating censorship and the hidden agendas of some ultra conservative groups.

SLOW, SWEET VOICE: I've learned a lot about other people and respecting differences in AAUW. Americans come in all colors, shapes, and backgrounds. We need to know how to work together if we're going to solve community problems. That's what our diversity program is all about. Celebrating difference—and not planning a big event on someone else's religious holiday.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR/LAF CHAIR: The Legal Advocacy Fund began right here in New York State. In 1980, eleven faculty women at Cornell sued the university for unequal treatment in pay, promotion, and tenure. Professor Alice Cook, a longtime member of AAUW, helped mobilize the Ithaca branch and the national association in their support.

LEADER: Her vision and leadership on behalf of the Cornell 11 led AAUW to establish the Legal Advocacy Fund. The campus climate for all women —faculty, staff, and students— has improved since AAUW started helping women to sue for sex discrimination.

IMPATIENT VOICE: That story shows the power of one. There is strength in numbers, but much can be accomplished by one committed person and a dynamic organization like AAUW.

MEMBERSHIP/PLAFCHAIR: We also recognize colleges that are doing it right. Both the Association and New York AAUW present Progress in Equity Awards to colleges for great programs that help women faculty, staff, or students succeed.

SLOW, SWEET VOICE: Of course we also know how to have fun. Our Art Group *[substitute bridge group/gourmet group/book club/garden group/music group]* brings women together who appreciate beauty and skill. And we have a good time raising money for scholarships too.

LEADER: Have we forgotten anything?
[Wait for group to respond. After responses, continue script.]

EXPERIENCED VOICE: I've moved a lot. In each new community, AAUW has helped me find new friends and understand and appreciate my new town. Nationally there are 160,000 AAUW members. In New York alone there are 55 branches of AAUW.

LEADER TO FIRST VOICE: Have we answered your question?

FIRST VOICE: I'm impressed. But what does the name mean? Are you all teachers or do you all work for a university?

MEMBERSHIP/PLAFCHAIR: The name means we're all college graduates, and we believe in education, our own and for others. If you're a graduate of a four-year college or university, you're eligible, and we'd love to have you. If you're an undergraduate, you can join as a student affiliate. Membership is not by invitation. We want our branch to reflect the diversity of our community.

LEMON SQUARES

1 cup FLOUR

1/4 cup POWDERED SUGAR

1/8 tsp. SALT

Combine flour, powdered sugar & salt in mixing bowl.

Cut in 1/2 cup BUTTER until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Press into greased 8 x 8 x 2 inch pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 15 minutes.

While crust is baking, mix

1 cup GRANULATED SUGAR

2 T. FLOUR

1/2 tsp. BAKING POWDER

1/8 tsp. SALT

2 EGGS, slightly beaten

1 T. LEMON JUICE

1 tsp. LEMON RIND

Spread mixture over baked layer. Return to oven and bake at 325 degrees about 25 minutes, until beginning to brown. Cool.

Lemon glaze:

1/2 cup POWDERED SUGAR

1 T. LEMON JUICE

1 T. MELTED BUTTER

Blend sugar, lemon juice and butter until smooth.

Frost. Cut into squares when glaze is set.