



BONFIRE

San Jose Branch

Community Engagement Series

The Cosmos and Quest to Discover Extraterrestrial Life

Sat., May 10th at 1:30 PM

(Doors open at 1 PM)

Willow Glen United Methodist Church - Kohlstedt Hall

Join us for an unforgettable talk as Dr. Jill Tarter reveals her 35 year quest to uncover extraterrestrial life and the mysteries of the universe!

Please register:
bit.ly/aauwarter



**Free Community Event -
Guests Welcome!**

The Cosmos and Quest to Discover Extraterrestrial Life

May 10 at 1:30 pm (doors open at 1 pm)

Willow Glen United Methodist Church - Kohlstedt Hall

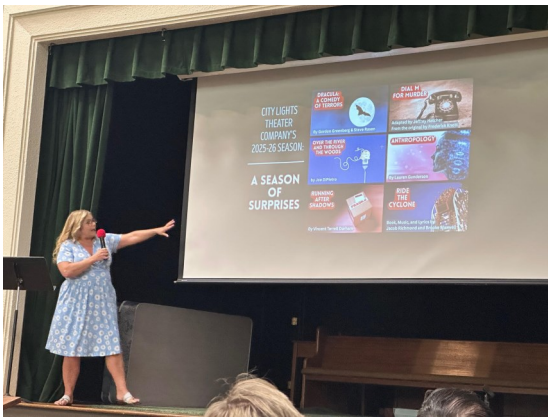
Prepare for an exciting afternoon with Dr. Jill Tarter, Chair Emeritus of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Research, a pioneering astronomer with over 35 years at the forefront of the search for extraterrestrial life! Named one of the 50 Most Important Women in Science by *Discover Magazine*. She'll share fascinating insights from her remarkable career. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided. Don't miss this captivating talk! Register here: bit.ly/aauwarter.



President's Corner Tynka Dees



Our annual meeting turned out very well with over 50 people in attendance. Thank you all for coming. We elected and installed our new officers. Following the business portion of our meeting, we heard an interesting talk by Lisa Mallette, the Executive Artistic Director of City Lights Theater Company. Lisa promotes a supportive environment for her actors to work in; she leads with kindness, which is inspiring. She emphasized the importance of the arts, especially at this time - we need joy and support for all arts organizations. We also want to lead with kindness to each other. To find out more about City Lights, see their website: <https://cltc.org/season-pass/>.



Lisa Mallette announcing City Lights Theater Company's shows for next season.

Our elected officers for 2025-26 are:

Tynka Dees - President

Judy Blegen and Mary Jane Vitkovich - Co-Presidents elect

Finance Officer - Katherine Oven

Treasurer - Paul Bowen

Secretary - Shelley Powers

Program VP - Donna Erickson

Membership Vice Presidents - Sueanne Snow, Linda Guyer, Barbara Handley, Beverly Lambert

AAUW Funds - Cindy Hansen

Building & Properties - Russell Malley, Linda Snashall, Jan Barlotta, Sandra Bonnet, Candace Roney, Judy Burt, Nanci Eksterowicz, Karlie Arkin

COFFEE & CONVO



*No agenda or speakers!
Just coffee & conversation!*



Sat. May 17

10 AM to 12 PM at HQ

Guests Welcome

Coffee and Convo | May 17
10 am-12 pm
AAUW San Jose Headquarters
1165 Minnesota Ave.
San Jose
Guests Welcome!

Come to a casual get-together for members and those interested in our programs and interest groups! We will have coffee (and tea) and some early morning goodies. Learn about our 501(c)(3) Community Action Projects, fun and informative events and actions to advocate for women's education and pay equity. Ask questions of long-time members, reconnect with members you haven't seen in a while, and meet new friends. Prospective members are especially welcome!

AAUW National Fundraising

Mary Jane Vitkovich, AAUW Funds VP

A great big “thank you” to our members who donated to our recent annual fundraising drive for AAUW National. Your donations enable National to sustain their core operations, advocacy efforts and program expansion. Here are just some highlights of what National achieved in 2024:

\$6.2 million awarded to 276 Fellows and Community Organizations

Sent 47,000 messages to elected officials via AAUW's [Two Minute Activist](#)

Provided 6,157 women (through their Economic Empower Initiative) with tools to achieve success financially and professionally

For more information on National's achievements, you are encouraged to go on the [AAUW National website](#).

Summary of Ideals Over Ideology Program

Cheryl Markman

For our March program, in celebration of Women's History Month, SJSU lecturer and AAUW San Jose member Michele Bertolone, spoke to a group of Branch members and community guests, sharing a little-known history of San Jose in the mid-20th Century.

Michele's presentation began with a history of community activism in the early 1900's, often led by women, largely focused on local issues such as mass transportation, better education and access to health care. In the 1960's and early 1970's, these activities centered on building deep and lasting bonds with diverse communities in the South Bay, including groups focusing on civil rights, free speech, justice reform, anti-war/peace and many other progressive causes.

Michele examined how these groups came together to play an essential role in Angela Davis' not guilty verdict in her trial. In November 1971, shocked community leaders learned that the murder trial of Communist and Black Panther Party leader Angela Davis, had been moved to San Jose. While the trial became a rallying point for organizations around the world, a broad-based group of San Jose social justice activists worked together, under the leadership of the small but dedicated San Jose Communist Party (CPSJ) Club with the help of local communities, played a unique and pivotal role in Davis' defense. Although the defense thought a fair trial in San Jose was impossible, she was nonetheless acquitted by an all-white jury, validating that the justice system had worked.

In the 1980's, the Communist Party declined significantly. In 1981, 80% of California Communists left the party, largely due to the failure of the leadership to support its professed causes. The Party had always been about ideals/justice over ideology/communism. Although never a large organization in San Jose, historically having only about a dozen members at any given time, the CPSJ suffered the same decline as other local CP clubs in the United States.

To see post-program survey results, go to <https://bit.ly/aauiwoi>.

Branch Members Show Up to Support Equity for All at San Jose Rally



More than 12 members donned their walking shoes and headed to downtown San Jose on Saturday, April 5, to support and protect democratic processes and the rule of law. They joined a crowd of more than 5,000 people who met in St. James Park and marched to San Jose City Hall and back to raise visibility of growing frustration with the direction of governmental change.



Gifts for Teens – Need and Gratitude

Cheryl Markman, Gifts for Teens

Sadly, the needs of our local community of foster care, homeless and poor youth seemingly never diminish. Fortunately, neither does the generosity of our more fortunate community members. And the Gifts for Teens committee continues to help alleviate the need, if only for a little while. The gratitude of the beneficiaries of our gifts is heartfelt. Here are some quotes from those recipients:

“It’s always hard to put true gratitude into just words because they never truly explain my feelings. No matter what is in the bag, it is the thoughtfulness that this thank you goes out to.” Mathew

“Thank you for the wonderful duffel bag. You have no idea how much it means during this time of year to know that people care.” Victoria

“Thank you so much for packing a duffel bag full of small gifts, the only present I got this Christmas! It means so much to know that people care and that we poor teens are noticed.” a male teen

“The duffel bag alone is awesome, and the things inside are even better. Thank you all.”

“I liked the hoodie and the gift cards the best. I am more than grateful to you for helping me and giving me a nice gift, something that hasn’t happened to me in a long time.” Gabe

“Thank you for the bag. I feel amazingly grateful to receive it knowing that there are a lot of kids that won’t receive anything. That makes me sad.”

And finally,

Agency Comment: “Our clients often show up with nothing or a black garbage bag with some clothes and personal items. To be able to give them a sturdy bag with new clothes, gift cards and essentials is very important. To have something that truly ‘belongs’ to them means so much to these young teens!”

What you do makes a difference,
and you have to decide what kind of difference
you want to make.

- Jane Goodall

Branch Recognized for Leadership in Education



AAUW San Jose was recognized by State Assemblyman Ash Kalra for “Leadership in Education.” President Tynka Dees, along with other Branch members, accepted the award at a downtown San Jose ceremony on March 19.

The award read, “Thank you for your exceptional leadership in education and advocacy. Through your commitment to advancing equity for women and girls, AAUW San José has empowered countless individuals to pursue higher education

and fight for workplace equality. Your scholarship support and tireless efforts to close the gender pay gap continue to inspire lasting change. On behalf of the 25th Assembly District, congratulations on receiving the Leadership in Education Award in honor of Women's History Month 2025.”

welcome

Welcome to Our Newest Members

Claire Campodónico

KRISTINA CUNNINGHAM received her degree in Political Science from San Jose State University. After being active in her children’s schools and in her community for many years, she was employed by former Santa Clara County Supervisor Blanca Alvarado’s office as Chief of Staff. After Alvarado’s retirement, Kristina served as the head of Adult Protective Services and as Director of the Public Guardians Office in Santa Clara County. She is now retired. Welcome, Kristina!

PAMELA DeMARTINI recently joined our Branch. We will have further information about her in our June-July BONFIRE.

LINA PROKOPCHAK earned her degree in Applied Economics from the University of San Francisco and then an MBA from Golden Gate University. After working in high tech for many years, Lina changed her focus to education and earned her teaching credential from National University. She retired after teaching in the Berryessa Union School District. Member Jan Bartolotta encouraged Lina to renew her membership.

DANUTA (MARGARET) BLASZCZYK received an MA in English Philosophy from Worclaw University in Poland. Soon after her graduation, she immigrated to Canada and eventually moved to California. She has devoted her professional career to teaching ESL. For more than 15 years she worked for the Sunnyvale-Cupertino Adult Board of Education. Now that she has retired, she searched the internet for a group with meaningful goals and was delighted to learn of AAUW.

JOAN VIOLA has joined our Branch through National. At present, we do not have any detailed information about her. If further details are made available, they will be included in a future BONFIRE.

Public Policy/Advocacy Update

AAUW CA Supports Transgender Rights*

Susan Karlins and Elaine Peterson, Public Policy & Advocacy

Many bills in AAUW CA's 2025 legislative agenda focus on protecting the rights of transgender people. Popular campaigns, executive orders and federal and state legislation have increasingly targeted transgender and nonbinary people who comprise 0.5% to 1.6% of the US population. Many of these legislative, popular and political attacks draw on longstanding dominant sex and gender norms to create fear and moral panic. They are not just targeting the transgender community generally, but transgender women and girls specifically. Infringement on trans and nonbinary rights is inseparable from broader attempts to restrict women based on gender stereotyping — regulating one's ability to access certain spaces (e.g., bars) or getting a business loan without someone else's (a man's) signature or minimizing the likelihood that you will be promoted. These are all based on assumptions about women's emotions and abilities or judgments about one's femininity.

AAUW CA's top 3 bills:

SB 771 "Social Media Platforms Endangering Californians" clarifies that a social media platform may be liable for civil penalty under existing law if/when its algorithms or AI aid individual users who engage in unlawful intimidation of others in online spaces. Social media companies have intentionally turned away from providing safeguards that they previously provided for targeted vulnerable communities.

AAUW CA opposes SB 579. This bill presumes denial of support for a youth's trans self-identity or refusal to provide or allow their gender-affirming care is not harmful and should not be considered child abuse under the law and cannot be considered for custody or removal decisions. This bill is opposed because every child deserves to be protected from emotional and physical abuse, including the right to be removed from a harmful household.

SB 418, "Ensure[s] Equal Access to Care for All". This bill would prohibit a health insurance provider from denying coverage or benefits to a person based upon their race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, including sex characteristics such as intersex traits, pregnancy and gender identity.

*Excerpted from an AAUW CA article



Tech Trek Campers Chosen!

Cheryl Markman, Tech Trek

This year, as always, Tech Trek had some phenomenal candidates for the annual STEM camps this summer. We received applications from 7th grade girls at four San Jose middle schools. The participating schools were Muwekma Ohlone, Renaissance Academy at Mathson, River Glen and University Preparatory Academy.

The application process included submitting an essay telling us about an area of science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) that they are most interested in and why, and what they have done to further their knowledge in this area. In March, they were interviewed in person by members of the Tech Trek committee.

As always, the difficult part was deciding which girls to send to camp. We were all impressed with the girls, their interest in STEM and their poise during the interview. After much discussion, we are excited to announce that we have chosen and notified six girls to attend Camp Hopper at Santa Clara University and four girls to attend Camp Carson at UC Santa Cruz. We selected two alternates, in the event that one of the originally chosen campers is unable to attend. At least two students were chosen from each school.

Interbranch Council will sponsor an Ice Cream Social at Branch Headquarters in June for the campers and their parents. This will be an informative meeting for them to talk about what Tech Trek camp is like, what to bring (and what not to bring) to camp and to answer any questions about Tech Trek.

Congratulations to each of these outstanding young ladies. Tech Trek camp will be the experience of a lifetime!

Once again, we want to thank everyone who donated to Tech Trek to make this opportunity possible for students with an interest in STEM. We couldn't do this without your help.



The logo features the AAUW logo on the left, with "San Jose" written below it. To the right, the words "HISTORY CORNER" are written in a large, bold, serif font. The entire logo is set against a light blue background with decorative flourishes on the sides.

On March 13, 2025, the Archive Committee and Branch members explored History San José (HSJ), which holds an impressive variety of collections, including the history of our Branch! Cate Mills, Curator of Library, Archives & Multimedia at HSJ, took us on a lovely tour, which brought back many fond memories. We marveled at the evolution of appliances, electronics and culture in San José and the Santa Clara Valley.



Cate Mills standing in front of 1909 radio broadcast equipment
Photo by Peg Carlson-Bowen



Left to right: Rebecca Fong, Cheryl Markman, Sarah Janigian, Nell Aiello, Bernice Redfern, Cate Mills (History San José Curator), Barbara Gilbert and Peg Carlson-Bowen. Photo by Diane Trombetta



HSJ preserves some of our Branch's scrapbooks, meeting minutes, member directories and other historical documents.
Photo by Rebecca Fong, Branch Archivist

May 2025

Submitted by Tynka Dees Calendar Editor

Please check with the organizer whether the meeting has changed and will be ZOOM or in person. **The most up to date calendar is always on our website.**

AAUW CA Voting April 26-May 16

Thu May 1	10-11 am	Clean out Program Closet (RSVP Ruth Dusan)
	2-3 pm	Great Decisions AM Hybrid (Monique Lee)
Sat May 3		Past Pres Lunch ((Cheryl Markman))
Sun May 4	9-10:30 am	Weekend Walkers (RSVP Judy Burt)
Mon May 5	6:30-8 pm	Neighbors Helping Neighbors (Bobbie Baker)
Tue May 6	10-11 am	German Conversation ZOOM (RSVP Barbara Snyder)
	1-4 pm	Film Fans Time to Be Determined (RSVP Nancy Wheeler Linda Snashall)
Wed May 7	5:30– 6 pm	AAUW Board Social Time (Tynka Dees)
	6-7:30 pm	AAUW BOARD Meeting Hybrid(Tynka Dees)
Thu May 8	9:30-11 am	Great Decisions AM Hybrid (Monique Lee)
	1-4 pm	Bridge 2 nd Thursday (RSVP Bobbie Eckerman)
	1:30-3:30 pm	Archive Committee (RSVP Diane Trombetta)
Fri May 9	10 am-1 pm	Duplicate Bridge (RSVP Lida Kluzek)
Sat May 10	1:30-3:30 pm	Dr. Jill Tartar Program at Willow Glen United Methodist Church (RSVP Ruth Dusan)
	6:30-9:30 pm	Couples Dining (RSVP Valerie Merklin)
Sun May 11	9-10:30 am	Weekend Walkers (RSVP Judy Burt)
Mon May 12	6:30- 9:30 pm	Light Gourmet (Cheryl Markman)
Tue May 13	10-11:30 am	Tuesday AM Book Group The Sweetness of Water (RSVP Sandy Bonnet)
	10-11 am	Conversacion Espanol ZOOM (RSVP Barbara Snyder)
	1-3 pm	Mahjong (RSVP Shelley Powers)
Wed May 14	11 am-1 pm	Art Appreciation (RSVP Jan Bartolotta)
	7-8:30 pm	Wednesday Night Book Dinners with Ruth HYBRID (Renee Sommerfeld)
Thu May 15	2-3 pm	Great Decisions AM Hybrid (Monique Lee)
	6:30-8 pm	Mystery Lovers (Sharon Shephard)
Fri May 16	10 am-1 pm	Bridge (RSVP Lida Kluzek)
Sat May 17	10 am-12 pm	Prospective Members & Member Meeting Coffee and Conversation (Membership@aauwsanjose.org)
Sun May 18	9-10:30 am	Weekend Walkers (RSVP Judy Burt)
Mon May 19	9:30-11 am	Exploring World Literature Hybrid Grand Avenue (RSVP Candace Roney)
	1-4 pm	Interbranch Council Hybrid (Linda Goldberg)
	6:30-9 pm	International Gourmet (RSVP Jan Bartolotta)

Tue May 20	Noon-1 pm 1-3 pm	French Conversation ZOOM (RSVP Barbara Snyder) Mahjong (RSVP Shelley Powers)
Wed May 21	1:30-3 pm 7-8:30 pm	Program Event Planning Zoom (RSVP Ruth Dusan) Public Policy ZOOM (Susan Karlins)
Thu May 22	9:30-11 am 1:30-3:30 pm	Great Decisions AM Hybrid (Monique Lee) Archive Committee (RSVP Diane Trombetta)
Fri May 23	1:30-3 pm	Local Scholarship (Beth Redmond)
Sun May 25	9-10:30 am	Weekend Walkers (RSVP Judy Burt)
Mon May 26	11 am-12:30 pm	Building and Properties Committee (buildings@aauwsanjose.org)
Tue May 27	10-11 am 12-2 pm 1-4 pm 1- 3 pm 7-8:30 pm	Italian Conversation ZOOM (RSVP Barbara Snyder) ISPF Meeting (Virginia Turner) Bridge 4 th Tuesday (RSVP Bobbie Eckerman) Mahjong (RSVP Shelley Powers) Great Decisions PM ZOOM (Sharon Shephard)
Wed May 28	12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch Bunch (RSVP Cheryl Markman Sueann Snow)



every human

San Jose Branch BONFIRE

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May 2025

AAUW BONFIRE San Jose Branch *Established 1909*

SAVE THE DATE

Neighbors Helping Neighbors June Soiree Monday, June 2 at 6 pm

You are cordially invited to the AAUW social event of the year, the Neighbors Helping Neighbors June Soiree! Come and enjoy a lovely June evening with food, drink and sparkling conversation. The fun starts at Headquarters at 6 pm and dress is casual.

This year we are recognizing two of our non-profits: Family Supportive Housing and Front Door Communities. Genevie Concha, representing Family Supportive Housing, will give a short presentation about this agency. We will be collecting new twin sheet sets and powdered cleansers (e.g., Comet) to hopefully fill Genevie's car when she departs! In addition, Jeanette Bumagat will describe the work of Front Door Communities. We will collect travel size sunscreen, travel tissues and lip balm for her agency. There will be bins in the entryway of Headquarters to place donated items before the Soiree.

We hope to see everyone there! Please contact Bobbie Baker or Mary Jane Vitkovich at neighbors@aauwsanjose.org if you have questions.



Empowering Women Since 1881