

## Niceville/Valparaiso/Ft. Walton Beach

Thank you for that introduction. I am delighted to be here with you. My name is not a typographical error. It is NEWNAM. Some day, I hope you will refer to Paul Newman as Paul Newnam.

Tell me, why did you join AAUW? And you?

I joined AAUW to find some bridge players - and Venice didn't have a Newcomer's Club at that time. It just shows what can happen. Of course, I believe in our Mission - Equity for all Women and Girls, Lifelong Education and Positive Societal Change. But I stay in AAUW because that's where my friends are. I look forward to every meeting because of the people I know or the people I meet. I'm sure you feel the same way.

An important goal for my two years as FLAAUW President, is to see a reverse in the slow erosion of our membership numbers. I was Director for Finance for four years so I received all the state dues from all the branches. I saw the membership in the state of Florida go from 5044 in 1999/2000 to 4149 in 2002/2003. That is more than 900 in less than

four years and it has an affect on our budget and our effectiveness as an organization. As of February 1, 2005, just passed, we are down to 3567 so we haven't halted the downward trend. We need to change that.

But there is some good news. Total AAUW membership as of February 1 is up to almost 110,000 – up from 106,500 the year before. Branch membership has risen from 66,595 to 75,535. So maybe nationally we have turned a corner – but in Florida we have to keep working at it.

Many times I find myself defending frivolity in AAUW - I'm a spokesperson for fun - an ambassador of frivolity. Some people disparage those who only play bridge, or participate in the book group or the Gourmet cooking group. I say, by paying their dues, they are supporting the mission of AAUW and we should appreciate them for that. After all, I joined to find some bridge players.

Our branch has started summer programs. They are just for fun activities. We have pot luck luncheons, cocktail parties with husbands,

and antique shopping trips. Since I live on the beach I always host a beach walk followed by donuts or pastries - so we don't lose too much weight from the walk. I think fun activities make us stronger - they enhance our group spirit and make us more effective and cohesive.

On an individual basis, we can give our friends an opportunity to see what a wonderful group of women we are and what a terrific organization AAUW is. Invite your friends to a meeting and get them involved. And always present a warm and friendly atmosphere to all who come. I think my own branch is as successful as it is, because we are warm, supportive and friendly. That goes a long way toward persuading someone to join and keeping them coming back. Always carry a membership folder with you. It doesn't take much room and it will be there when you meet a prospective member.

We can be proud to be part of an organization that has produced so much good research on women and girls. Our Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America and How Schools Shortchange Girls, have had a

tremendous impact on education in America. And the Educational Foundation has continued with *Hostile Hallways* and *Growing Smart: What's working for Girls in School*. And more recently, “Women at Work”, “Tenure Denied” and the latest, *Gains in Learning, Gaps in Earnings* . We can be proud to be part of an organization that promotes wonderful programs in branches for women and girls, Sister to Sister, Tech Check and Transitions. And we can be proud of the activities of our branches.

I was very proud to represent the State Board a few years ago when Naples conducted the first Transitions Conference in the country. The moving force behind that conference, Donna Carty, told me she was successful in getting community support because of the research she had available in *Gaining a Foothold: Women's Transitions Through Work and College*.

And Financial Independence for Girls was initiated by a Florida Branch. Joan Moloney of Deland recognized a need, got a Mini-grant from the

State AAUW, and gathered materials to offer training to middle school girls on the basics of finance - credit cards, checking accounts, etc.. The state then got a grant from the national organization to buy enough materials that can be used by branches to conduct their own Financial Independence for Girls seminars. These kinds of programs help make us more visible in the community and can attract new members to our branches.

I just returned from Tallahassee where I and our Public Policy Director, Dr. Rosalind Osgood, participated in Lobby Days with the Florida Women's Consortium. We have a Lobbyist in Tallahassee now, Vicki Wooldridge, and she was very helpful to us. I sometimes feel that if the Legislature is meeting we are somehow in more danger. But since my mantra is we will keep showing up, we have to keep telling them we are here, we aren't going away and we will keep showing up. When you get emails on public policy issues, it is important that we respond to our legislators to let them know we are concerned. There is a bill now that is named, Student & Faculty Bill of Rights. That sounds good, doesn't

it. But actually it has language in it that would seriously limit the ability of faculty to speak freely in the classroom. So we are asking that our members oppose this legislation.

Some new developments at the State level of AAUW:

- State board members have come up with a much simplified program and application to replace the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Recognition Program, that we are calling “Florida’s Finest”. The deadline was March 15. I hope many of our branches found this new recognition program easy to use and that many branches have submitted applications. Awards will be given at Convention in April.
- The Board voted to join a Coalition for Fair Adoption which has been working to eliminate the ban on gay adoption. Florida is the only state that has an outright ban on gay adoption, even though gay couples and individuals can foster children.
- And, as I mentioned earlier, we have hired a Lobbyist to represent our concerns in Tallahassee.

- We have an exciting convention coming up April 15/17. Because of tight budgets at the Association, they are not providing Leaders on Loan for our convention – but we are bringing Lisa Maatz, Director for Public Policy and Government Relations, down at our expense. Betty Castor will be our keynote speaker Friday night and we have an LAF plaintiff coming, also at our expense, from New York. On Friday evening we will have a cocktail hour to meet the candidates who are running for office.

And now for some of the developments that are taking place in our organization:

AT THE ASSOCIATION – See EdEqChange #13

Finally, some of you may know, I have been talking about a Mantra for the next two years. It is based on the Woody Allen quote that 90% of success is showing up. He was talking about acting, but I think it applies to our work just as meaningfully. When there are attacks on women’s rights, erosion of reproductive freedom, attacks on Title IX

and on separation of church and state, we will keep showing up We won't go away and we won't go backward, as some would like us to do.

So our Mantra is that we will keep showing up. You will continue to hear it from me, you will see it on our website and in Florivision.

Here are places you should show up:

-State Convention, Orlando Renaissance Airport, April 15/17

-Association Convention, Washington, DC, Omni Shoreham Hotel, June 24/27

More about all this in FloriVision and on our website [www.florida-aauw.org](http://www.florida-aauw.org) and on the Association website, [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org).

Thank you very much for all that you do for AAUW and for Equity for all Women and Girls.