

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

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. 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 and I have continued to watch those numbers carefully. I saw the membership in the state of Florida go from 5044 in 1999/2000 to 3565 in 2004/2005. That is almost 1500 members in six years and it

has an affect on our budget and our effectiveness as an organization.

During that period, St. Lucie County went from 25 members to 15 last year; Port St. Lucie went from 44 to 28; and Ft. Pierce went from 40 to 0. We haven't reversed the trend and that needs to change.

There is a change to our membership requirements that was voted in as a bylaws change at the Convention in June. Now those with an associate degree may join AAUW. Originally, I thought this would have little effect on membership numbers. I didn't think there were a large number of people clamoring to get into AAUW, but I'm changing my mind. I live in a small condominium – 12 units – and in the summer, there are only four units occupied. When I told them of the change last summer, two of my friends in the building expressed an interest in joining. So maybe this change will help us halt the erosion of membership numbers. I certainly hope so. The other woman in the building, is 98 and seldom leaves her bed.

I was very proud to lead the Florida delegation at convention in June in Washington, D.C. The Association Convention is always exciting and doubly so when it is held in Washington, D. C. There we hear from wonderful speakers. Madelyn Albright, the first woman to hold the position of Secretary of State, received the Educational Foundation Achievement Award. We heard from Jehan Sadat on her efforts toward peace and social justice for women. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Representative from the District of Columbia praised AAUW's work in support of Title IX. And before we became "the great teal machine" going up on the Hill, Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader, stopped by to encourage our efforts to present the AAUW view on privatizing social security and modernizing the Higher Education Act to our Representatives and Senators.

In addition to passing the change in membership requirements that I spoke of earlier, the delegates at convention, formalized the merger of LAF and EF by removing references that are now inaccurate. But I want to make clear that LAF still exists and will continue to support cases of

discrimination in the academic world. We still have a Director for LAF on the state board and I hope that branch support for LAF will not be diminished.

The question of payment of dues to IFUW was not resolved completely. The Association was urged to continue to explore ways to maintain our association with IFUW.

A new Program theme, approved by the Association and Educational Foundation, was announced – Education as the Gateway to Women's Economic Security. This theme will serve as a guide for new AAUW programs, developed at the national level and refined and implemented by states, branches and other institutional and community partners. This theme was adopted because research from many sources identifies economic security as one of the top issues for women, both within AAUW and without. There will be additional information on this theme coming out of the Association/EF later.

At the state level, in addition to being a member of the Florida Women's Consortium – FLAAUW is part of two coalitions:

A fair adoption coalition which is working to eliminate the ban on adoptions by gay individuals or couples. Florida is the only state with such a ban. Gay individuals and couples can serve as foster parents but cannot adopt. Sen. Nan has a bill that would allow a judge to decide on the basis of what is good for the child to allow adoption by foster parents. There were hearings this past week on this bill but a vote was put off because they were afraid it would lose. We are now trying to convince a couple of members of the Children and Families Committee to support the bill.

The second coalition we are part of is the committee for fair elections. In the last election, not one incumbent was defeated. That is at least partially because legislators draw the boundaries of legislative districts. With computer technology, gerrymandering has taken on a whole new meaning. We have one district that stretches all the way from the east coast, wanders around Lake Okeechobee and ends on the west coast. I have the feeling it was drawn to put all black voters across

Florida, in one district so that they wouldn't have any influence in other districts. In any case, that's not compact – that's not contiguous which should be the standard. This coalition has presented petitions that would change who and how districts are drawn – and take it out of the hands of legislators.

We have contracted with a Lobbyist to represent us in Tallahassee during the session. She works closely with Rosalind Osgood and with me to coordinate our lobbying efforts both when we go to Tallahassee with the Florida Women's Consortium and in email/phone/letter writing efforts. By the way, our Ros Osgood is going through a difficult time. She has thyroid cancer and chemo treatments are really hard on her. She is young and we hate to see her so debilitated and I know she would appreciate your positive thoughts.

Last year, there was a bill that was named, Student & Faculty Bill of Rights. That sounds good, doesn't it. But actually it had language in it that would seriously limit the ability of faculty to speak freely in the classroom. Our Lobbyist followed developments closely and it did not

get out of committee after we and other organizations objected. Our lobbyist represented us at the hearing on fair adoptions this week and reported back to me on what needs to be done next. Now we are gearing up for the next legislative session and she is working to let us know what to watch out for. Sometimes, I think, if we could just keep the legislators from meeting, we would be in a lot less danger. But since we can't, we have to keep showing up to let them know what we think. I'M on my way to Tallahassee March 13 to lobby once again for the ERA and other issues of concern to women with the Florida Women's Consortium.

And we are going to have a terrific state convention April 21/23 in Sarasota at the Hyatt Hotel. We have some terrific workshops lined up, including one that our Historian Helen Landers is promoting: – I think of it as story telling and she hopes to preserve the individual experiences of FLAAUW women in the Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. So if you burned your bra, or went to jail, or marched on Washington, Helen will want to hear about it.

We are bringing back Lisa Maatz, Director of Public Policy and Government Relations, at the Association, who did such a fine job last year. We also will have Ann Gustafson, Chair of the Association Membership Committee. We had our state board meeting at the Hyatt last month and it is a lovely hotel. Sarasota is a wonderful destination, so put it on your calendar and plan to come to the west coast.

Many times I find myself defending frivolity in AAUW - I'm a spokesperson for fun - an ambassador of silliness. 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.

If we are to grow as an organization and reverse the downward trend in membership numbers, we all have to become recruiters. 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. At the national convention, I attended a membership workshop where one of the panelists told of her own experience in a new location. She looked for and found an aaaw member who promised to send her information about the local branch – she didn't. She found another member who promised to send her information – but didn't. But she was persistent and showed up at a branch meeting anyway. When the nominating committee was looking for candidates for office, she volunteered to serve. She was told she was too new and too young. I'm amazed that AAUW didn't lose her forever. But she kept trying and was on the panel as state membership director. I

think my own branch is as successful as it is (and we were the largest branch in the state last year), 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.

And involve them with the organization and be willing to get involved your self. Be willing to take an office or serve on a committee. By working together you will develop closer friendships with other branch members and find your membership even more rewarding. No disrespect to your President, Gloria, but I've always found the Branch President's job to be the easiest job of all. When AAUW people say they will do something, they do it. So the Branch President simply has to find a few people to take on the jobs necessary to running the branch, sit back and watch them work. When I was Venice President we were having our one big EF fundraiser, a cardparty with 400 people. As I was taking a shower the morning of the cardparty, I thought to myself, I haven't talked to Gerry Wagner for a couple of weeks, I should probably

call and make sure everything is ok. Of course, when I called she had already gone to the community center. And everything was fine. She said she would chair the Card Party and she did. I just had to sit back and watch – and go to the mike to welcome everyone.

We can be proud to be part of an organization that provides so much support to those fighting discrimination in academia, that provided 3.6 million dollars in fellowships and grants last year by the Educational Foundation and that has produced so much good research on women and girls. From *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* and *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, to more recently, “Tenure Denied” and *Gains in Learning, Gaps in Earnings* . The latest report, *Drawing the Line*, a report on sexual harassment on college campuses was just released and has had a lot of media interest. We will be talking about that at convention too.

Finally, some of you may know, I have been talking about a Mantra for my term as state president. 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.

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

I'm happy to answer questions if you like. If not, I'd like to ask you some questions about your branch. What are your favorite branch activities? Do you have interest groups? Do you raise money for EF?, LAF? Local Scholarships? Should the three branches merge?