

Welcome Back

Hello AAUW Tampa Members:

I hope your summer hiatus was restful and you had a chance to reconnect with loved ones, travel, or find what brings you joy. As we return, we're excited to begin a new membership year filled with purpose, progress, and community.

AAUW Tampa is kicking off the 2025–2026 membership year and here's what's inside this newsletter to get us started:

- **Pages 2–3: President's Message:** Our branch president shares our vision, goals, and recent achievements.
- **Page 4: Membership Year Kickoff – September 20:** Get inspired by stories from our Tech Trek campers.
- **Page 5: Celebrations & Observations:** Catch up on birthdays, observances, and key dates to stay in the loop.
- **Page 6: Save the Date – Jingle Bells & Jazz Holiday Social:** Print your flyer for our December 6 celebration—it's going to be a festive event!
- **Page 7: New Member Orientation & Social:** Help us welcome new members and build meaningful connections.
- **Page 8: Tribute to Shirley "Sherry" Foecking:** We honor the life and legacy of a cherished Lifetime Member.
- **Page 9: Good Reads:** Check out what our members are reading and recommending this season.
- **Page 10: Why AAUW Tampa Matters to Me:** Members share what keeps them inspired—want to join in? [Click here to contribute](#) to the newsletter.

As we begin a new season of purpose, we invite you to explore this issue. Each page reflects AAUW Tampa's dedication to equity, education, and empowerment.

Happy reading!

Demetrix Rostick-Owens, Ed.D.

AAUW Tampa Director of Communications

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President's Message

Welcome back, AAUW Tampa family! I hope each of you had a refreshing and joy-filled summer. Whether you traveled, spent time with loved ones, or simply enjoyed a little rest and relaxation, I hope you took time for yourself to recharge as we begin another powerful year together.



Dr. Shella Miller, President
AAUW Tampa 2025-26

As we launch the 2025–2026 membership year, I am inspired by the energy, commitment, and vision that our members bring to this branch. Together, we are part of a proud legacy—AAUW's mission to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy remains as critical as ever. It is an honor to work alongside our dedicated Board of Directors, who have been planning and strategizing to ensure this year is filled with meaningful programming, impactful advocacy, and opportunities for connection.

In August, we held our annual strategic planning session, where we refined our goals and mapped out a clear path for the year ahead. Our focus remains on building a strong and welcoming branch that is effective, engaging, and relevant to our members. Our three strategic priorities are:

- Member Recruitment and Retention
- Quality Programming, and Public Advocacy,
- Social Action, and Community Collaborations.



These pillars will guide our work and ensure that our efforts not only support our members but also make a lasting impact in the Tampa Bay community. But we cannot do this alone—we need you. Your ideas, your energy, and even the smallest contributions will help us move from good to great.

I am also thrilled to share some wonderful news! **AAUW Tampa has earned multiple stars in the AAUW National Five-Star Program** for FY25—specifically in Public Policy & Advocacy, Governance & Sustainability, Programming & Communication, and External Relations. This recognition is a direct reflection of the hard work and dedication of our board and members. Congratulations to all of you for helping us achieve this milestone! In addition, several of our members have been appointed to key leadership roles at the state and national levels:

- Ms. Kim Rostick – Appointed Co-Chair for Tech Trek Florida
- Dr. Gloria Hilton – Appointed as a Director on the Supporting Foundation Board
- Ms. Michelle Douglass, JD – Appointed as AAUW FL State Policy and Bylaws Officer
- Dr. Kay Lee-Smith (Current AAUW FL President) – Appointed to the National Public Policy Committee

These accomplishments showcase the strength, leadership, and influence of our branch members. I am so proud of each of them!

CONGRATULATIONS
On your recent State Appointment!

President's Message

Our first membership meeting of the year will be held on Saturday, September 20, 2025, from 11 AM to 1 PM at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County (1002 E. Palm Ave., Tampa, FL 33605). This meeting is always one of my favorites because we'll hear directly from our Tech Trek campers, who attended this year's Florida Tech Trek program at Stetson or FAU.



Their stories and experiences remind us of why our work matters. I hope to see a full room of members and guests as we set the tone for an exciting year ahead. Please bring a guest—inviting others is one of the best ways to grow our reach and amplify our impact.

I am equally excited to announce a new and exciting fundraiser we our branch is coordinating: ****Designer Bingo!**** This fun and dynamic event will not only build community but also raise funds to support AAUW Tampa Tech Trek, scholarship, and programming. Winners will have the chance to take home fabulous designer bags, and we'll also feature a special AAUW-themed bingo round to help our community learn more about who we are and what we do. If you would like to serve on the planning committee, please reach out to Ms. Carolyn Austin at carolyn@carolynlaustin.com.

B I N G O					B I N G O				
9	30	35	54	66	7	29	38	49	61
13	16	37	57	73	9	30	40	54	70
7	17	FREE	55	65	2	27	FREE	52	62
6	22	34	51	69	4	22	31	59	69
1	29	38	58	68	10	18	33	56	74



B I N G O					B I N G O				
9	30	35	54	66	7	29	38	49	61
13	16	37	57	73	9	30	40	54	70
7	17	FREE	55	65	2	27	FREE	52	62
6	22	34	51	69	4	22	31	59	69
1	29	38	58	68	10	18	33	56	74

As we begin this new year, I want to remind you that there is a place for everyone in AAUW. Whether you serve on a committee, lend your voice to advocacy, help us welcome new members, or simply share ideas, every contribution—big or small—matters. Together, we are stronger, and together, we can continue breaking barriers and creating opportunities for women and girls in Tampa and beyond.

I look forward to seeing you at our September meeting as we kick off another year of impact growth, and community. Let's make 2025–2026 our most inspiring year yet! With gratitude and excitement,

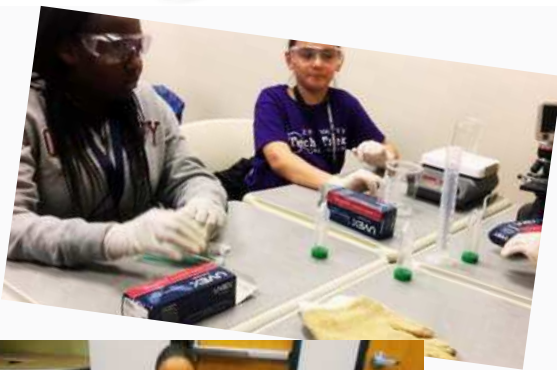
Shella M. Miller, PhD, FACHE
President, AAUW Tampa

"... there is a place for everyone in AAUW.

Whether you serve on a committee, lend your voice to advocacy, help us welcome new members, or simply share ideas, every contribution—big or small—matters."

AAUW Tampa President, Dr. Shella Miller

September 2025



MEMBERSHIP YEAR KICKOFF MEETING: SEPT 20, 2025

Join us on September 20, 2025, as we kick off the season with a celebration of curiosity, courage, and discovery. Our featured speakers will be rising 8th-grade girls from our Tech Trek program, sharing personal reflections from their STEM-filled summer.

Tech Trek is a one-week camp focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Campers explore these fields through hands-on projects and mentorship from women in STEM careers. The experience builds confidence and helps girls envision futures in areas where women are still underrepresented.

Come celebrate these young trailblazers and the promise they carry forward. It's more than a meeting—it's a moment of transformation.

You're Invited

Join us Sat., September 20, 2025 (11a-1p) at
the Children's Board of Hillsborough County
1002 E. Palm Ave, Tampa, FL 33605

EVENT AGENDA

- Welcome Back from Summer
- Strategic Priorities for 2025-2026
 - Impact
 - Growth
 - Recruitment and Retention Efforts
 - Quality Programming
 - Public Advocacy
 - Social Action
 - Community Collaboration
- Celebrating Achievement
 - State-level Appointments
- Tech Trek Campers' Presentations
- Upcoming Fundraiser: Designer Bingo
 - Collective contributions



#2025-2026MembershipGoals
#Get-Involved

How? Join a Committee, Advocate for
a Cause, &/or Join a Program!

Upcoming Events

AAUW Tampa – September 2025 Highlights

Let's celebrate our members!

Rev. Martha V. (Sep 11), Catherine M. (Sep 17), Dora S. (Sep 17), & Carolyn A. (Sep 24)

September Beauties!

Happy birthday! May your special day be filled with joy, laughter, and everything that makes you happy. May your year bring endless happiness, new adventures, and unforgettable memories!

Monthly Observances

Healthy Aging Month, Leukemia and Lymphoma Awareness Month. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Hispanic Heritage Month (Sep 15), & Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Key Dates & Events

1 Sep: Labor Day

A national holiday honoring American workers and marking the unofficial end of summer.

9 Sep: AAUW Florida Membership Meeting

Join Dr. Marjorie Fontalvo at 6 PM EST via Google Meet. Questions? Email: aauwfl empowerment@usf.edu for access.

9 Sep: AAUW Florida Public Policy Meeting

At 6 PM on Zoom, hear from Nancy Tray and Anne Tressler about book bans in Florida schools. [Click her to pre-register](#)

10 Sep: World Suicide Prevention Day

Raises awareness about mental health, reduces stigma, and supports those affected by suicide.

11 Sep: 9/11 Commemoration

Honor the lives lost and the heroes of 9/11 by engaging in acts of service and remembrance.

16 Sep: National Working Parents Day

Recognizes the dedication of working parents—especially mothers—who balance careers and caregiving.

18 Sep: International Equal Pay Day

Spotlights the gender pay gap and advocates for equal pay for equal work, especially for women of color and mothers.

20 Sep: Membership Meeting Kick-Off

Join us at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County (11a–1p) as we hear inspiring stories from our Tech Trek campers & see fellow members.

22 Sep: Business Women's Day

Celebrates the achievements of over 7.7 million women-owned businesses driving innovation and economic growth.

24 Sep: National Women's Fitness Day

Encourages women to prioritize wellness. Highlights key health issues like heart disease, osteoporosis, cancer, and autoimmune disorders. Promotes preventive care and mental well-being.

25 Sep: National Daughters Day

A day to celebrate daughters and advocate for girls' empowerment, education, and opportunity.

6 Dec: Jingle Bells and Jazz Holiday Social

Join us from 12:30–2:30 PM at Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church Hall, Temple Terrace. Enjoy music by Zeta the Babe, catered lunch by Simple Delights Catering, door prizes, dancing, and an ugly holiday outfit contest!

🎫 Tickets: \$25 via [Zelle](#) or check

👤 Invite a friend or prospective member to share in the joy of the season!

AANW Tampa Presents

Jingle Bells and Jazz Holiday Social



December 6, 2025

Join us from 12:30–2:30 PM at
Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church Hall
304 Druid Hills Road, Temple Terrace, FL

Enjoy music by Zeta the Babe, catered lunch by Simple Delights Catering, door prizes, dancing, and an ugly holiday outfit contest!

 Tickets: \$25 via Zelle: aauwtampafinance1@gmail.com or
Check: P.O. Box: 292275, Temple Terrace, FL 33687

 Invite a friend or prospective member to share in the joy of the season!



Membership Matters

2025-2026 New Member Orientation & Social



On August 16th, AAUW Tampa's Membership Committee held the 2025-2026 New Member Orientation and Social. New members-Clementine Duke and Vernetta Mosley, prospective members-Dr. Cierra Davis, Ms. Althea Jackson, Ms. Kimberly Martin, and returning member, Ms. Aleseya Pinkney, were celebrated. What a vibrant, enthusiastic group of women! Tampa AAUW was established in 1916. Over the years, one fact has remained true: a full-bodied membership of satisfied, enthusiastic, and like-minded individuals can work wonders in promoting and supporting equity for women and girls in the workplace, in schools, and in the community.

After a fun and revealing icebreaker, Dr. Shella Miller, Dr. Gloria Hilton, Ms. Kimberly Rostick, Ms. Carolyn Austin, Ms. Irene Bembry, and new member Ms. Clementine Duke presented warm and welcoming "orientation briefs" that were well-received and generated a wealth of questions and suggestions for future activities and groups.

In an attempt to generate ideas and test absorption of material, attendees engaged in the fun activity of creating and producing a one-minute "television advertisement". The results were extremely creative, informative, and fun.

The afternoon activities ended with a scrumptious meal, lots of mingling, connecting, commitments to join, and laughter.

The winning team included L-R: President Shella Miller, Ms. Kimberly Martin, Ms. Aleseya Pinkney, Reverend Martha Vaguener, and Ms. Mattie Parr. Each received an AAUW-branded tote bag for their efforts

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS



A big thanks is given to the Membership Committee Members who made this beautiful event happen! It is because of your diligence and thoughtful planning, that our new, returning, and prospective members felt welcomed.

Membership Committee Members:

Dr. Berthenya (Bert) Dunbar & Reverend Martha Vaguener (Co-Directors) and Ms. Clementine Duke, LTC Paula Stewart, Ret., & Ms. Nina Thomas (Committee Members)

In Loving Memory



SHIRLEY "SHERRY" FOECKING

A STAR HAS FALLEN: REMEMBERING SHIRLEY "SHERRY" FOECKING

Sherry Foecking joined AAUW Tampa in 1965, making her a 50-year-plus Lifetime Member! On July 24, 2023, Sherry passed away at the age of 100. She and a small group of long-term friends celebrated her birthday the week before she passed.

Sherry made a lasting positive impact on the AAUW Tampa branch in various roles over many years. When there was a job to do, Sherry stepped up to the plate with eagerness and a smile. She served as president or co-president of the branch six times. She was editor of the newsletter for twenty-five years. She spearheaded the writing of the branch's first bylaws. Additionally, she wrote short plays for holiday celebrations. And she never failed to enter a holiday ugly sweater or Colors Day contest. Sherry was a fierce competitor. However, you couldn't tell by her demeanor. She "dressed to win" and ended up taking home the top prize several times in both contests.

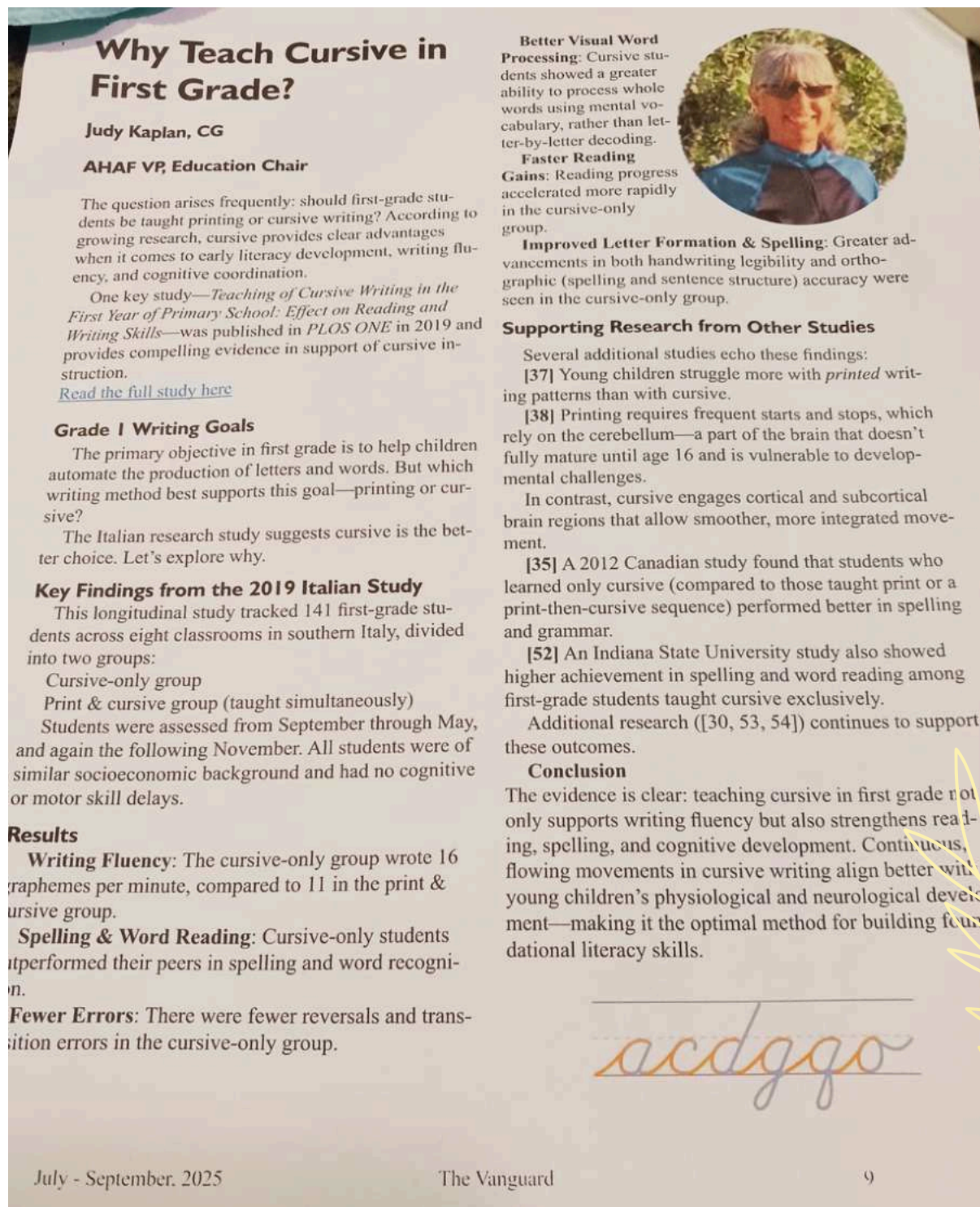
Sherry was an easy-going "go-to" person. Many looked to her for mentorship and friendship. She was asked in an interview for the Tampa AAUW's webpage to share her life motto. Sherry said, "I am not sure I have a motto, but every day I do two things that I should do and do not necessarily want to do, and one thing just to delight me! Sounds like Sherry? She will be missed.

Sincerely,
Dr. Berthenya (Bert) Dunbar

Good Reads 2025

We're pleased to unveil **Good Reads**, a new feature in our newsletter where AAUW Tampa members can share compelling articles, books, and resources they're currently exploring. Whether it's a powerful editorial, an inspiring book, or a timely report, this space is designed to spark curiosity and conversation.

If you've come across something that you think others would enjoy or learn from, we encourage you to submit it for the next newsletter. Mark your calendar and make it a habit to share your discoveries—your recommendation might be just the insight someone else is looking for!



Why Teach Cursive in First Grade?

Judy Kaplan, CG
AHAf VP, Education Chair

The question arises frequently: should first-grade students be taught printing or cursive writing? According to growing research, cursive provides clear advantages when it comes to early literacy development, writing fluency, and cognitive coordination.

One key study—*Teaching of Cursive Writing in the First Year of Primary School: Effect on Reading and Writing Skills*—was published in *PLOS ONE* in 2019 and provides compelling evidence in support of cursive instruction.
[Read the full study here](#)

Grade 1 Writing Goals

The primary objective in first grade is to help children automate the production of letters and words. But which writing method best supports this goal—printing or cursive?

The Italian research study suggests cursive is the better choice. Let's explore why.

Key Findings from the 2019 Italian Study

This longitudinal study tracked 141 first-grade students across eight classrooms in southern Italy, divided into two groups:

- Cursive-only group
- Print & cursive group (taught simultaneously)

Students were assessed from September through May, and again the following November. All students were of similar socioeconomic background and had no cognitive or motor skill delays.

Results

Writing Fluency: The cursive-only group wrote 16 graphemes per minute, compared to 11 in the print & cursive group.

Spelling & Word Reading: Cursive-only students outperformed their peers in spelling and word recognition.

Fewer Errors: There were fewer reversals and transition errors in the cursive-only group.

Better Visual Word Processing: Cursive students showed a greater ability to process whole words using mental vocabulary, rather than letter-by-letter decoding.

Faster Reading Gains: Reading progress accelerated more rapidly in the cursive-only group.

Improved Letter Formation & Spelling: Greater advancements in both handwriting legibility and orthographic (spelling and sentence structure) accuracy were seen in the cursive-only group.

Supporting Research from Other Studies

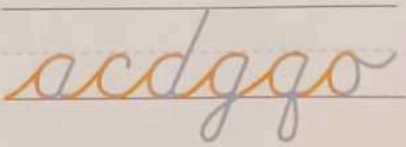

Several additional studies echo these findings:

- [37] Young children struggle more with *printed* writing patterns than with cursive.
- [38] Printing requires frequent starts and stops, which rely on the cerebellum—a part of the brain that doesn't fully mature until age 16 and is vulnerable to developmental challenges.
- In contrast, cursive engages cortical and subcortical brain regions that allow smoother, more integrated movement.
- [35] A 2012 Canadian study found that students who learned only cursive (compared to those taught print or a print-then-cursive sequence) performed better in spelling and grammar.
- [52] An Indiana State University study also showed higher achievement in spelling and word reading among first-grade students taught cursive exclusively.

Additional research ([30, 53, 54]) continues to support these outcomes.

Conclusion

The evidence is clear: teaching cursive in first grade not only supports writing fluency but also strengthens reading, spelling, and cognitive development. Continuous, flowing movements in cursive writing align better with young children's physiological and neurological development—making it the optimal method for building foundational literacy skills.



July - September, 2025 The Vanguard 9

This **Good Reads**, article was submitted by Rev. Martha Vaguener

Why We Matter?

Why AAUW Tampa Matters to Me

Tampa is my adopted home, and it has been both rewarding and fulfilling for me and my family. Since moving here in 2019, I've found a vibrant, supportive community—and within two years, I became a proud member of American Association of University Women (AAUW) Tampa. Now, going on five years of membership, I can confidently say that AAUW Tampa continues to matter deeply to me and plays an integral role in my life.

The AAUW Tampa Branch has been a leading voice in advancing gender equity for women and girls since 1916. Through a powerful combination of research, education, and advocacy, AAUW works to break down barriers and open doors for women at every stage of life.

- **What makes AAUW Tampa especially meaningful is its local impact:** Scholarships for College Students: We invest in the future of young women in our community by providing financial support to help them pursue higher education and achieve their dreams.
- **STEM Exposure for Rising 8th Graders:** Through engaging programs and hands-on experiences, we introduce middle school girls to the exciting world of science, technology, engineering, and math—empowering them to envision futures in fields where women are still underrepresented.
- **Support for Women in Tampa:** AAUW Tampa is a space where women of all backgrounds come together to learn, lead, and thrive. Whether through professional development, community engagement, or advocacy, we uplift one another and work toward a more equitable future.



AAUW Tampa matters. It empowers women to lead, learn, and thrive. Its programs equip girls and women not only with the skills to negotiate fair salaries, but also to become strong self-advocates—confident in their worth, their voice, and their ability to shape their own futures. Our mission amplifies the voices of women and girls, advocates for systemic change, and builds a future where gender equity is not just an aspiration, but a reality.

I Am Curious... Why does AAUW Tampa continue to matter to you?

As we look ahead to the 2025–2026 membership year, ask yourself: How will you show the value of your membership? Why does AAUW Tampa matter to you? What actions or contributions are underway for you?



If you'd like to share your response to any of these questions and want them communicated in the next Tiempo Newsletter, let me know by emailing your responses to these questions to me I'd love to hear from you!

Let's continue to rise up together.
Demetrix Rostick-Owens, EdD