AAUW Howard County Branch Report of Activities July 2018-April 2019

The Howard County Branch has 75 members including several new members this year and a budget of $7,575 that covers operating expenses and scholarships. The following are highlights of this year’s activities.

**The Public Policy Committee** worked with legislators in the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates to develop two bills that would extend parental support from age 18 (age of majority) to 21 for those young people pursuing post-secondary education at a college/university or technical training school. Members of AAUW MD, MLAW, and Maryland NOW provided support and testimony at two judiciary committee hearings – Senate and House-- in the 2019 session of the MD General Assembly. Although neither bill made it out of committee, they brought awareness to lawmakers about the need for parental support for young people past the age of 18 to further their education past high school and prepare them to support themselves in today’s high-tech, complex work world.

**Our Education Committee** conducted two Start Smart Seminars providing salary negotiation training to college students through our partnership with Howard Community College. Due to a low student turnout, we will be reevaluating with HCC whether to hold another training session in the spring or fall. We will continue to support the online Work Smart training on AAUW National’s website.

This year we awarded a record eight **scholarships**: 2 for students transferring from HCC to a 4-year college, 4 for ongoing HCC students, and 2 for the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders.

In March we staffed a booth at the annual **Girl Power STEM Festival** at Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, MD. There was a display of “Star Struck: Women in Astronomy and Space” where our very own PhD. astrophysicist talked to the girls about her career and other famous women in the field. We handed out 400-self-inflating balloons, 275 word-search and crossword puzzles on space and about 4 pounds of Starburst candies! Attendance included over 800 kids and a total of 1,200 people.

We also continue to work with the **Hammond High School Diamonds**. This is a student group, in Columbia, MD, that focuses on the personal development of minority girls and promotes academic achievement with the goal of earning acceptance to college, especially for a STEM field major. This spring we are supporting a bus trip for the students to visit several nearby colleges.

Last year **the Diversity Committee** chose China as the country for the branch to learn about through a Chinese lunch, discussion of the book*, The Leavers* by Lisa Ko, and a presentation to the branch. This year the focus is on South Korea that will include a lunch, a presentation to the branch on the conflicting roles and responsibilities of Korean American women, and a taste of typical Korean desserts.

Our fundraising and **Philanthropy Committee** raised about $4,000 at last year’s annual fashion show and we expect to do the same at this April’s fashion show. A night at Tino’s Bistro in Columbia last fall netted the branch $500 and the silent auction at our holiday party in December brought in about $1,000. We are planning two new fundraisers this fall and will continue to look for new ones so that we may increase our scholarships. Our non-monetary donations included non-perishable food donated to the Howard County Food Bank.

We held Several **Programs** for our branch meetings are worth mentioning. Kate Stevenson, AAUW MD Co-Chair, gave us an animated presentation in the fall about how women got the vote in Wyoming. At another meeting we heard about how to create and strengthen sustainable communities in Howard County. In February we held a Book Bash luncheon where we heard five of our members discuss books about exceptional women. As part of National Women’s History Month in March, we heard a story map presentation about women’s suffrage in Maryland. We held seven board meetings and four branch meetings including a salad supper where we met HCC scholarship recipients and a pot luck dinner in September; also

Our **Communication** Vice President turned out nine informative newsletters and worked with the Branch President to update and reorganize our branch’s website. We will continue to make improvements to make it easier to access our information and engage the reader. It is a work in progress.

Our special interest groups continued to meet regularly and included Great Decisions on international issues, AAUW Readers, Adventures in Dining, and Lunch Bunch.