

Volunteers First Session 1 Narrative

PRE-PROGRAM INTRO: This **Volunteers First** presentation will last about **35** minutes.

- It is designed so attendees do not need to take notes. The program slides, narrative, and handouts mentioned will be made available on the website.
- There will be time **after** the program for sharing comments and asking questions.
- If you have a comment or question, you would like the **monitor to ask for you**, please put it in the chat as we go along.

Slide #1

Thank you, Sigrid and **Good** evening! It's WONDERFUL **so** many of you **chose** to... give of your **time** to attend this ground-breaking program.

Volunteers First is certainly not the program I envisioned giving a year ago, but it is what I now believe WILL **empower** AAUW leaders with the means to bring us joy and simultaneously retain engaged AAUW members, develop leaders and keep the AAUW mission alive.

Volunteers First took a “village” of long-time AAUW CA and Oregon leaders and a few non-members. Today's program would **not have been possible** without:

- Sharrell Blakeley: MSW, University of Michigan; recent University of Michigan School of Social Work Dean's Advisory Board member; retired former-Director of the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, and former president of AAUW Palm Springs Branch, who... with her heart, wisdom and the depth and breadth of her experience - **inspired** and helped shape my vision;
- Author and consultant with AAUW of CA, Barry Altland, who **enlightened** our understanding of why and how *Engaging the Head, Heart and Hands of Volunteers* increases member engagement, retention and leadership. **And... consented** to our using his book for this program!

- Sigrid Moranz, our AAUW CA Branch Leadership Development Chair, gave me autonomy and endless encouragement.
- And...Gloria Holland, retired English teacher, long-time AAUW Salem Oregon Branch member and branch playwright, helped me **put pen to paper** for a narrative I never could have written alone.

Thank you all so much!!

Slide #2

Volunteers First is an awareness program designed specifically for leaders of volunteers. **Volunteers First** highlights the **personal** motivators that drive AAUW members' choices for volunteering... for joining, engaging, and leading.

Volunteers First seeks serious consideration for a voluntary leadership pivot - from *primarily assigning tasks* to *primarily facilitating relationships* and *creatively orchestrating a branch environment that fulfills our members' passions for serving*. The leadership practices discussed tonight are also the basis for member-recruitment.

Research shows the volunteer motivators and the coinciding leader behaviors presented are UNIVERSAL. When implemented together, there is credible reason to believe AAUW leaders can and will experience the **joy** of a steady increase in membership, engagement, retention and leadership - keeping AAUW and our mission alive well into the future.

Slide #3

I'm not sure you are aware of this but...

- ❖ Non-profit, volunteer organizations **worldwide** have been facing a steady decline in members and volunteers for over 20 years. WE are not alone!

- ❖ Until recently, research that might have helped all of us was unavailable.
- ❖ AAUW and other non-profits everywhere did the best they could and adopted the Business Leadership Model for recruitment, retention, productive engagement and leadership because it was familiar and made sense.

Slide #4

As we know, employees show up and work productively for **MONEY**. Employees then use the **MONEY** to buy things that will satisfy their **BASIC NEEDS** – the ones on the bottom of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs - for food, water, shelter, safety and comfort.

MONEY is what **touches the head, heart and hands** of the **EMPLOYEE**.

Slide #5

Since **money** is the employee’s main motivator, it follows: a business leader’s *primary* job is to keep employees productive and profitable so there will be enough **MONEY** to keep the business profitable. **MONEY** is the **-payback!** - given an **employee** for “a job well done”.

Slide #6

AAUW has had excellent success in **SOME** areas using the business leadership model:

- Accountability to donors and members is good;
- And...most importantly, we have developed an array of engaging community programs that have - measurably - advanced and empowered women and girls throughout the country.

Sadly, the business leadership model has NOT helped volunteer organizations – AAUW included– with a solution to stop the **steady decline** in membership, volunteer engagement and leadership.

It is puzzling because our cause is **one of such great passion...** to so many women.

Try as we may, we have **not** been able to get out of this pickle.

Slide #7-

SLOW Since 1881, AAUW has prided itself in being unique by conducting research - giving us **guidance** for legislative advocacy and developing programs that empower women and girls **externally**. AAUW's continuing decline in membership begged to be researched **internally**.

Sandi Gabe, former AAUW of CA President (from 2022-24) made a bold decision to do just that. In 2022, former AAUW CA members were surveyed and **asked... why** they dropped their branch **membership**. Particular attention was given to answers of those who had been leaders and/or actively engaged.

Other than moving or illness, a significant number said they left AAUW because they felt unwelcome, disconnected and/or just became disinterested in participating... **even for the cause**.

Slide #8

A year later, Sandi Gabe challenged the AAUW of CA Leadership Development Committee to design an effective and credible leadership program that would:

- Retain and engage members,
- Develop leaders,
- And be different than what we've been doing ...**BECAUSE – “what we've been doing has NOT been working...”** at least... to give us the **membership result** we NEED to survive.

Slide #9

SLOW Our educational journey took months of research. After reading Barry Altland's book, *Engaging the Head, Heart and Hands of Volunteers* and meeting with him in person, we started to understand WHY we were losing members and HOW to make a leadership correction.

Since volunteers cannot be paid off with **MONEY**, to show up and be productive, Barry suggested we look inward for **our** volunteer motivators. In the three sessions he held last year for AAUW CA branch leaders we revisited what moves each of us - **uniquely** - to renew, stay engaged and become leaders.

Barry suggested **OUR INTRINSIC** motivators are likely the **SAME** motivators as those of most of our members. Similar to the ones on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, these motivators **touch our heart and give us joy**.

Barry **suggested**: once **each** AAUW member-volunteers' unique INTRINSIC motivators are discovered, all we have to do is develop a volunteer leadership program that **replaces MONEY** as the **payoff** for engagement, with branch opportunities that will give intrinsic need-satisfaction or **joy** to our members when engaging. Simply put... satisfaction and joy **replace money** as **the payoff** in the business model.

Slide #10

We looked to see if there was any **credible** RESEARCH that might support Barry's theory. And there is!!

Volunteer leaders **around the world** - also **seriously** concerned about the drastic decline in volunteer membership, recently, conducted a study by interviewing volunteers WORLDWIDE. The results were conclusive: universally, people volunteer to satisfy **one or MORE** of their INTRINSIC needs. **Those intrinsic needs are...**

- **to...Altruize**
- Socialize
- Learn and
- Self-Actualize

These INTRINSIC needs for volunteers look much like the higher needs on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Credible research indicates most of our AAUW members will **choose** to give of their time, talent and skills when at least some of their INTRINSIC needs are met.

Barry calls these the **needs of the heart**. Others might say it's the **joy we feel** when we are:

- DOING something for a cause we chose to join.
- The joy we feel... When we socialize and feel belonging with like-minded people
- The joy we feel ...When we learn together
- Or when we DO something we always wanted to do but never had the opportunity

Slide #11

Simply put, volunteer engagement an **AFFAIR of the HEART!**

"Fulfilling the member's intrinsic **motivators for volunteering** touches their heart,
drives their choices for volunteering,
 and **sustains their passion for serving.**

The **HEART** you see here is an actual patchwork quilt design. It symbolizes the **JOY VOLUNTEERS** feel when their **intrinsic needs** are **satisfied**. It represents our new-found awareness of the organizational - and **personal** value of focusing **first** on the intrinsic motivational needs of our AAUW members.

“Fulfilling the member’s intrinsic motivators for volunteering is what touches their heart.

Fulfillment drives their choices for volunteering,
And **joyful fulfillment** sustains their passion for serving.

Slide #12

Looking back on MY years as an AAUW leader, I have to admit I paid more attention to the **needs of AAUW and our branch** – filling positions and planning programs and activities –rather than focusing on the intrinsic needs of our members. I thought each member was naturally intrinsically motivated to take on almost any AAUW task *just because* they had a passion for the mission.

I now know I was wrong. Not all! but many AAUW member want more as an AAUW member than being assigned a task of which they have no passion or interest - no matter how important that task is for the cause or the branch.

Branch **administrative tasks and certain positions** are undeniably needed to manage and sustain a branch, but most members are not interested in doing those jobs; some are not even interested in engaging in *successful* activities and programs born of another’s passion or of another time.

IF: members will not volunteer to take on an assigned task or join a program ... UNLESS their HEARTS have been touched,

THEN: the focus of AAUW leaders MUST BE... to find which of the four intrinsic needs touches the member’s heart.

Trying to assign tasks, putting members into activities and asking new and unengaged members to lead is “putting the cart before the horse.”

Slide #13

With our new-found knowledge and organizational self-awareness, we can now **choose** to change our leadership model or maybe just make a slight focus pivot **from** *assigning tasks* **to** *creating a branch environment that* will give **each member** an opportunity to experience personal joy and satisfaction working for the cause.

But HOW to do this in ways we can be more certain will be successful and positive?

Amazingly, we found another **recent study** - also conducted with volunteer organizations **around the world** -that gives us a **credible** focus and **credible** leadership guidance.

Spinning off the research mentioned previously, this study concludes:

- Successful leaders of volunteers put VOLUNTEERS FIRST - not the organization or what we as leaders want members to do to satisfy our agenda, our needs and our “shoulds” or those of the branch.
- Successful leaders of volunteers first leadership priority is: **BUILDING AND FACILITATING RELATIONSHIPS.**
- Four interconnected WAYS the study suggests for HOW leaders build and facilitate relationships is to:

CARE, CONNECT, SUPPORT AND RECOGNIZE member-volunteers in ways that are personally satisfying and joyful to **THEM!!**

We will cover how to **CARE** and **CONNECT** with our members tonight and **SUPPORT** and **RECOGNIZE** in the next session.

Slide #14

SLOW...

To **build and facilitate relationships**, AAUW leaders **MUST** show they **gen-u-in-ely CARE** about **each and every** member.

An AAUW leader shows **CARING** by personally “Getting to Know” each **NEW** member as well as ...getting **acquainted** or **RE-acquainted** with a **RENEWING** member *who is not engaged*.

This is most effective when done *in person* by getting together with a member... over a cup of coffee in a small cafe, at home or outdoors in a park on a sunny day.

Slide #15

Discovering what **moves each** member to volunteer is the **first step** and **KEY** to member engagement. And... discovering what is in the member’s **HEART**...what each hope to gain by being an AAUW member **is especially beneficial when done by a leader in person**.

What moves a member to participate **varies for each person**.

Some may only want to socialize, to learn or self-actualize. Some might want only to network for career or advance an AAUW-related cause. Just as young women, working women and retired women all have a different amount of time to serve, all have different **INTRINSIC NEEDS** for what they hope to **GAIN** by being an AAUW member. And...some members’ motivators may not be all that altruistic!

Successful leaders of volunteers take time to personally discover **every** member’s **passion for volunteering** no matter how much or how little **time** that member can or is willing to give. As long as a member’s interest in benefitting women and girls is related to the AAUW mission, leaders of volunteer’s welcome and care about each as a person.

Open-ended “**Getting to Know You**” questions can help leaders discover what an **individual** member hopes to GAIN by joining or engaging as an AAUW volunteer as well as learning their skills, interests, hobbies and timeframe for volunteering and gathering.

- **Be curious** about each as a person. Prompt and listen for **their** ideas and suggestions.
- **Share** current and past programs. **Ask for** suggestions and welcome new and creative ideas.
- **Being open** to suggestions for new programs, activities and ideas shows the member you CARE and will be **valued**.

A handout of sample “Getting to Know You” questions will be posted on the website. We will also include the AAUW National Public Policies to help leaders clarify whether or not suggested program and activities are actually “related to the AAUW mission”. AAUW members vote on these public policies every year, so they are an accurate reflection of endless possibilities for a member to have JOY creating a new and different program or activity “related to the mission.

Joyce Zook, past AAUW of Oregon Co-President, long-time AAUW Salem OR Branch member and current branch Membership Co-VP has a STORY she would like to share.

Slide #16

“A few years ago, a friend was caring for her two young granddaughters. They were sitting at the kitchen table with gum drops, icing, sprinkles, peppermint and thin pre-baked cake walls for making a Gingerbread house. She started making suggestions bordering on perfection. But then, her daughter said, “Mom, you need to remember that the **process** is more important than the product.

With our AAUW members, if we want them to engage in ways that help women and girls advance, members must be invested in ways that

meet **their** needs. Our priority as a leader is to ensure the **process** of **their** engagement is fulfilling and joyful.”

Thank you, Joyce. The girls certainly look like they are happily engaged!

Slide #17

After “Getting to Know” new and unengaged members, AAUW leaders can begin **CONNECTING** them to other members who are involved in branch activities *of similar interest*.

Remember, AAUW leader’s #1 priority is **NOT to assign tasks** - even when **CONNECTING** members to each other.

A Volunteers First leader’s #1 priority is to **BUILD AND FACILITATE RELATIONSHIPS**.

Leaders can avoid the temptation to assign tasks and recruit leaders by focusing on **CONNECTING** member-volunteers with each other one-on-one, in a small or large group, or even via Zoom. Connecting members **facilitates relationships**.

Slide #18

Volunteers First leaders can get **help** from other members and begin creating an enjoyable branch **culture** of relationship building, inclusion and belonging:

- **Share** the value of a “Volunteers First” focus with ALL branch members.
- **Model** **caring and connecting** members to each other,
- **Encourage** all members to **care** about and **connect** with members they don’t know well!
- **Express** appreciation to those who show **caring and connecting**.

Slide #19

AAUW leaders might find it helpful to create a...

Welcoming Team of interested members – include ALL leaders, not just the Membership VP.

- Meet in person with a new or unengaged member.
- Meet, greet and sit with them at meetings.
- Follow-up or partner with members to ensure they are being welcomed, included and enjoying themselves.

Another suggestion is to create a...

Communication Network

- Keep **ALL members** “in the know” with a **variety of** notices **particularly** to new and non-engaged members.
- Make frequent personal contacts, following up and initiating two-way exchanges.

Claudia Carmichael, president of AAUW Salem, OR Branch will share her rewarding experience laying the **groundwork** for a Welcoming Team and Communication Network:

Claudia...

Slide #20

“Hello!

Over the last year, I have been reading and trying to adopt Barry Altland’s suggestions for engaging our AAUW members. I have made CARING and CONNECTING new members a priority and it seems to have worked. In the last year we have increased our membership 15% (12 members). Member engagement level has also increased and new/unengaged members are willing to take on Co-leadership roles.

“I lead the effort but work as a team with the Membership VP and three other members who make sure everyone has a nametag and serve as greeters at all gatherings. All five of us make sure new and

unengaged members are sitting with someone with whom they are engaging.

“The Membership VP and I make sure each potential, new and unengaged member receives the newsletter, even if they haven’t yet joined. A couple of years ago, a branch member who was interested, began sending send out reminder notices to all members for upcoming monthly events. We make sure our potential and new members get these notices also.

“The Membership VP sends a “Get to Know You” questionnaire out to all new members and chats with them about their reasons, and hopes for joining AAUW, their skills and interests. With their permission, another member “interviews” the new member in person and writes a “welcome” article for the newsletter. Between myself and the Membership VP, we arrange to introduce the new member to other members who have similar interests or are engaged in an activity that interests the new member.

“I keep a list of new and potential members near my computer so if I don’t see them attending any of the programs or interest groups, I call or email them to make sure they know what activities are planned and haven’t fallen through the cracks. You can’t always assume members read emails either. Sometimes it takes a phone call to alert them to upcoming events and encourage other members to call them also, especially if they have expressed interest in the group or activity the other member is leading.

“I guess the moral of the story is—as much as possible don’t give up. We all need to feel connected and in this busy age it sometimes takes a bit more effort. But it’s worth it!”

Thank you, Claudia!

SLOW!!!

Slide #21

In addition to creating the groundwork for a **Welcoming Team** and **Communication Network** to **CONNECT** new and unengaged members, another suggestion is to **regularly** include **Circles of Engagement in ALL gatherings.**

Slide #22

Circles of Engagement provide members with an opportunity to **connect** with members they don't know well, **learn** about each other, create understanding and learn **how to talk to each other in new ways.**

Circles of Engagement – where all members are given the opportunity and encouraged by other members to participate -can be part of:

- an all-member outing or interest group,
- member orientation,
- having members share in the decision-making and give feedback.
- And even for yearly planning: **Answering questions like...**
 - What do members need to make their volunteer experience more fulfilling?
 - What do members want to keep doing?
 - What's working? What's not working?
 - What do members want to eliminate?
 - What do members want to add?
- This might be a first step to a member acquiring interest in leadership or starting a new program.

Sharrell Blakeley, former president of AAUW Palm Springs Branch was the first to **suggest** and **show** the **value** of including Circles of Engagement in branch programs. She is here tonight to share a couple of those experiences with you:

Slide #23

Sharrell...

“Since 1881, AAUW women have been coming together to engage with like-minded women around the table. As strong women we have had to face daunting challenges and controversial issues throughout our lifetimes. Sharing those experiences builds lasting friendships.

“After the pandemic, our branch Book Group thought it would be powerful and moving for all of our members to reunite with each other by having a 'table talk' discussion about the moral, ethical, and personal issues raised in two of the books. After a brief presentation about Michelle Obama's book, "All the Light We Carry" and Nina Totenberg's book, "Dinners with Ruth", I asked members at each table to discuss:

- Why did Michelle Obama choose to wear her natural hair and not the braids she so desired to wear when she was First Lady?
- What were the ethical issues Nina Totenberg and Ruth Bader Ginsberg faced in their decision to not disclose Judge Ginsberg's serious health issues, knowing that the Supreme Court needed stalwarts who supported women's rights?

“Lively discussions ensued at each table and members reported out their comments. We got to know each other better by sharing our common, personal experiences. Members said it worked because, in small groups, **no matter our age or background**, we were able to discuss how our own lives were affected by these issues. As president, I made engaging members a priority and encouraged other leaders to do the same. Our efforts served as catalyst for an increase in member participation as well as retention and recruitment of new AAUW members.”

Slide #24

Sharrell dons her hat!

“My second Circle of Engagement story happened **during** the Pandemic. We were gearing up for our annual AAUW and Tech Trek fundraiser which had to be by Zoom. Since we hadn’t been meeting in person, we wanted to find a way to meet our members need to socialize in a meaningful and fun way.

Our members love to dress up and many hadn’t had an opportunity to do so or get to know each. So...we created a “Hats Off” theme that had a dual purpose: to honor the women and girls we support and to give us an opportunity to share something about ourselves. Each member wore a special hat and told the story that made their hat special.

“Members had a wonderful time! They enjoyed learning about each other and their stories brought back happy memories AND...our fundraising goals were met!

Engaging members in a way that touched their heart was also good for the AAUW cause.”

Thank you, Sharrell!

SLOW

Slide #25

You’re probably wondering: “How is it possible to create **time** for Circles of Engagement when **meeting time** seems so **short?**” Barry Altland suggests limiting leader and speaker time to 50% of the allotted time.

And... using the other 50% of meeting time for Circles of Engagement.

Using 50% of the allotted time for Circles of Engagement gives members time they wouldn’t otherwise have - to think and reflect, to interact

with a speaker, or engage in meaningful discussions with others they might not know – **beyond** socializing, which usually happens before and after meetings anyway.

Slide #26

Leaders can WELCOME, ASK, LEARN AND CONNECT MEMBERS TO EACH OTHER by simply “floating” around the room, being friendly and chatting with members during social time.

Leaders can also effectively **CONNECT** with members **during the 50% of the meeting time that is dedicated for branch business:**

- Ask members to turn and introduce themselves to each other - at every gathering,
- **Communicate** what’s happening and how member participation fulfills the AAUW mission, and....
- **Frequently** share recent branch successes - connecting them to the AAUW mission.

Yes! Part of **CONNECTING** ALL member-volunteers to each other is to connect them to our common cause – the AAUW’s mission and values.

- Members sometimes leave an organization they perceive is not **DOING** enough to fulfill the mission they **chose to support** when they first joined.
- In that regard, it is **VITAL** that branch leaders work with members – new and unengaged- to create an array of **AAUW mission-related** activities, programs and interest groups that give members the opportunity to experience the joy in belonging to AAUW.

Slide #27

Many years ago, AAUW adopted the business leadership model. Perhaps the time has come for us to embrace a **new** AAUW “Volunteers

First” Leadership Model. A Leadership Model with an image that envisions and represents:

- Caring and connecting
- Welcoming, inclusion and belonging
- And an empowering leadership style of: **Building and facilitating relationships!**

Slide #28

So, what have we covered today?

AAUW CA members looked **inward** and found members leave AAUW because they feel unwelcome, disconnected and disinterested.

We’ve learned: People **worldwide** volunteer for the opportunity to **satisfy personal, intrinsic needs** that cannot be satisfied elsewhere.

People universally volunteer to altruize, socialize, learn and/or explore ways to self-actualize while engaging joyfully in a cause of their passion.

Slide #29

VOLUNTEERISM IS AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART!

Fulfilling our AAUW member’s volunteer motivators **TOUCHES** their heart,

DRIVES their choices for volunteering,
and **SUSTAINS** their **PASSION** for **SERVING**.

Slide #30

THIS is your pivot point...

As an AAUW leader, your first priority is **NOT to assign tasks**.

Successful leaders of volunteers put VOLUNTEERS FIRST!

In putting Volunteers First, an AAUW leader's FIRST priority is to **build and facilitate relationships** with and among every member - all the time!

When **we as leaders** - nurture belonging and joy within our membership;

when **we as leaders** genuinely **CARE** for **each and every** member as person;

When **we as leaders** personally discover what moves **each** to volunteer; then - **CONNECT** with **each member** in person,

When **we as leaders personally** connect members to each other,

Then...we will experience the joy of leadership: We will see growth in membership, an increase in member participation, engagement and – yes!- even the desire of a few lead and invest in sustaining AAUW.

Thank you!