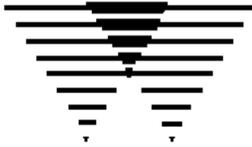


American Association of University Women



December  
2021



AAUW  
Empowering  
women since  
1881

President's Message

Dear Friends,

AAUW National is offering several opportunities for you during December to participate in several sessions relevant to the mission of AAUW. On **December 2 at 3:00 p.m. CT**, the **Inclusion and Diversity Committee** will present a discussion on how to create inclusive spaces. On **December 7 at 11:00 a.m. CT**, you can join the ongoing webinar series addressing equal pay called "**Equal Pay Every Day**". Please see the included links to register to attend either of these Zoom events.

President

**June Klimash**

Vice-President

**Julie Sukkar**

Secretary

**Unfilled Position**

Treasurer

**Pam Baldwin**

Nominations

**JiJi Jonas and**

**Eileen Kennedy**

Historian

**Position Unfilled**

Newsletter Publisher

**Melanie Hanley**

To contact any  
officer or  
member, send a  
message to

[aauwbatonrouge@  
gmail.com.](mailto:aauwbatonrouge@gmail.com)

[AAUW National's Inclusion and Equity Committee](#)

[Equal Pay Every Day](#)

Save the Date – the annual **Holiday Happening** will be held on **Saturday, January 8, 2022 from 6-8 p.m.** More details will follow in late December.

As we head into January 2022, I ask all branch members to **carefully consider serving the branch as Vice President, Treasurer or Secretary in 2022-23**. The nominating committee will begin calling on members to share in the leadership of AAUW-BR so this important organization can continue to thrive.

The newsletter is an important resource for the branch and provides our members with information on all the events happening every month. Thanks to member and newsletter editor **Melanie Hanley** for tirelessly working to keep us informed.

In closing, I wish you all Happy Holidays and look forward to a new year where we can once again gather together.

June



**Board Meeting**  
**Wednesday, December 8**  
**6:30 p.m.**  
**by Zoom**  
**All members are invited.**

## Reminder:

To contact any officer or member, send a message to  
[aaubatonrouge@gmail.com](mailto:aaubatonrouge@gmail.com)

The message above appears on **page one of the newsletter, lower left corner.** Some time ago, AAUW Louisiana and AAUW Baton Rouge boards decided that we would no longer post email addresses or telephone numbers of members in lists or stories because anyone can view our newsletter online and obtain private contact information.

If you want to RSVP to an interest group, the newsletter will include the name only. If you need to get in touch with a member for whom you do not have email or telephone number information, first check to see if you saved the member roster that was provided to each of us when this change went into effect. If you do not have access to that list in pdf format, write to the address above and **Pam Baldwin** will provide you with what you need.



## **Recommended AAUW National Webinars See the President's Message on Page One**

### **Inclusion and Diversity**

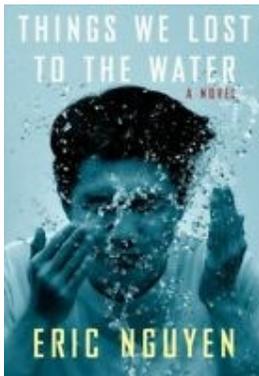
“How do you create inclusive spaces? What does it mean to create an inclusive space? Diversity is only the beginning, and it isn't enough. To create truly diverse spaces, those spaces also need to be inclusive, where all parties feel welcomed, appreciated, respected and heard — and have full access to all resources and can contribute to AAUW's success. Please join the national AAUW Inclusion and Equity Committee on December 2 at 4 p.m. ET (3 p.m. CT) for this important conversation.”

### **Equal Pay Every Day**

“Pay inequality thrives on silence—among legislators, executives and even the employees most directly affected by it. Join AAUW, a leader in the fight for fair pay, for a one-hour virtual session that will provide a safe opportunity to start talking.

The webinar is the last in a three-part series, Equal Pay Every Day, focused on the role that New York-based employers can play in helping to close the gender and racial pay gaps. This final conversation is intended for senior leaders who want to ensure their organizations foster fairness. Our expert panel of executives across industries will speak to the responsibility they have as employers to compensate all employees fairly, and why doing so enables them to attract—and retain—the best and brightest.”

### Evening Book Club



#### *Things We Lost to the Water*

by Eric Nguyen

Wednesday, December 1

6:30 p.m. by Zoom

Reviewer: **Julie Sukkar**

RSVP **Ann Sperry**

or **Catherine Roundtree**

### Gourmet

**Deck the Halls!**

**Fa La La La La!**



#### *Christmas Tapas*

at the home of

**Pam and Greg Baldwin**

Saturday, December 18

5:00 p.m.

RSVP Pam Baldwin

to accept a recipe for  
preparation and sharing

### Great Decisions

**No meeting in December**

Meetings will resume in January with **Rebecca Triche** leading a discussion of the World Health Organization from the 2021 topics list. That discussion was postponed from the fall.

In February, the group will begin to discuss 2022 topics.

### Insights

Insights will not meet in December but will resume meeting in January.

The results from a poll of members is to resume in person. Details of location, etc. will come out in January.

## Graze with Gourmet this Spring!

### Contact JiJi Jonas

On **Saturday, January 22**, guests will gather at the home of **Carolyn** and **Charles Stutts** at 6:30 p.m. **Ann Sperry** will co-host. The menu has not been announced yet, but you are welcome to prepare a recipe that Carolyn will provide and join the group.

On **Sunday, February 20**, at noon all comers will meet at Mestizo's Mexican Restaurant.

On **Sunday, March 13**, at noon, **JiJi** and **Larry Jonas** will host at their home. Recipes to be provided for preparation will come from the Jambo Cookbook, a publication of an African restaurant in Santa Fe.

On **Saturday, April 9**, the group will converge on Zorba's Greek Restaurant at 6:00 p.m. to dine together.

And on a date yet to be decided in **May**, **Lorraine** and **Donal Day** will host at their home. Shh! It's still a surprise what the theme will be, but there is a possibility that it will be French food.

**The Gourmet Group**  
met at the home of **Margot Kiefhuss**  
on November 12.

Attending Left to right: **Larry Jonas**, host **Margot Kiefhuss**, **Carolyn Stutts**, **Pam Baldwin**, **Judy Neilson** and **JiJi Jonas**. Not pictured are **Cathy Roundtree**, **Chuck Neilson**, **Greg Baldwin** and **Charles Stutts**.



Reminder:

Thanks to AAUW Baton Rouge member **Ann Sperry**,  
who is employed by Catholic Charities,  
here is information about how our chapter may help Afghan refugees  
who arrive in Baton Rouge.

**See the following page for a first hand account of one Afghan refugee who has been settled in Bossier City by Catholic Charities.**



**“Although challenges await, Ahmad is thrilled to be safe and grateful for Catholic Charities. “They are helping out, supporting and in touch,” his thoughts in a faraway place, where the people he loves most remain in peril.”**

To be sure that you are all fully informed and use correct terminology, the US Government makes a distinction between an immigrant (one who freely chooses to come to the US but could safely remain in their homeland) and refugees (one displaced due to war, or persecution and cannot safely remain in their homeland).

While most folks don't seem to know the difference, I wanted you all to be aware of the difference here. The Afghans coming to BR are by this definition refugees and not immigrants although their refugee status is considered SIV (Special Immigrant Visa).

In any case, they receive SIV status as I am sure you've read because they were engaged in helping the US military during the war in Afghanistan and cannot safely remain for fear of persecution and death from the new Afghan government.

While there is a lengthy list of things these folks will need to successfully resettle here, Catholic Charities generally is able to provide most of the items with government funding provided to them for this purpose. What is needed is **time** dedicated to working with families to help them resettle. This would include time to:

- **help their children adjust to school - facilitate parent-teacher conferences if needed, learn bus routes, provide information on school operations in US, encourage parent involvement in child's education etc.**
- **locate and attend religious services - find transportation if needed, see if someone at the church would be willing to mentor**
- **learn bus routes or provide transportation for shopping, medical appointments, etc.**
- **open bank accounts, provide guidance with budgets and bill payments - Catholic Charities' will assist with getting SS cards for these individuals and pay them a small stipend that can be used to open a bank account.**
- **provide help connecting with other local services - such as SNAP and Medicaid benefits**

Reprint from *The Catholic Commentator*, November 19, 2021, by Richard Meek.

Despair engulfed “Ahmad” as he approached Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. The elation he had experienced only minutes earlier when he successfully persuaded a taxi driver to drive though a Taliban checkpoint was usurped with a sense of hopelessness, a feeling that despite all of his efforts and the efforts of others his dream of fleeing from what he labeled “hell” was slipping away.

“When I get to the airport it was very crowded and there were many, many people,” Ahmad said. “I was thinking I would not be able to make it.”

Ahmad’s odyssey to freedom is on of a growing number of successful evacuations from Afghanistan. But tens of thousands, including some Americans, remain behind, hoping to flee a country that only recently fell under Taliban control in the wake of President Joe Biden’s decision to withdraw all American troops by Aug. 31. Biden’s decision, which was opposed by the Pentagon, led to the collapse of the Afghan army, paved the way for Taliban control and effectively ended a 20-year war, a time in which the Afghan economy was moving to prosperity and women, overcoming centuries of oppression, were welcomed into classrooms and the work force.

Ahmad’s own journey, one in which he received assistance from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, initially began Aug. 15 when Taliban forces overthrew the Afghan government. As a former employee of the United States military forces and an official of the former Afghan government, Ahmad understood death was certain if he remained in Afghanistan.

On the morning of the Taliban takeover, Ahmad, a government employee at the time, was in his office. Later that afternoon he started collecting his documents from his old computer, as well as other documents such as his passport and identity cards.

Ahmad, who had contracted with the U.S. State Department in Afghanistan on two separate occasions as an interpreter, called his contact, Tony Matteson who lives in Bossier City for assistance. Matteson eventually contacted Congressman Mike Johnson and the process began.

But by the night of Aug. 26, Ahmad knew he could wait no longer and told Matteson he was going to the airport to essentially make a run for it.

“I told him I can’t advise you what to do but if

that’s what you need to do, do it,” Matteson said.

“It was a very hard decision. I really jeopardized my life by going to the airport but I didn’t have any other choice,” he said.

Ahmad left his home at 8 p.m., and on the way to the airport encountered a Taliban checkpoint. Taliban military members were searching every car and scrutinizing each individual’s documents.

“So they would know I have worked for the U.S. military forces and I was an employee of the former government,” Ahmad said. “It is really very, very dangerous for me and I knew if they started searching, I would not be alive.

He pleaded with the taxi driver, who was his neighbor, to run through the checkpoint. The driver initially balked, citing the obvious danger, but eventually consented. As it turns out running through the checkpoint was not so difficult.

“When he drove and did not stop it was very good and I got really happy and delighted,” Ahmad said.

He spent the night outside of the gates at the airport, his mind racing with anxiety and fear but early the following morning he was able to board a plane. Once nestled in, the relief was overwhelming as he took one final look at his home country.

Once I was inside the airport I realized I got out the hell and was going to leave there,” he said. “I felt I made it.”

His joy was shared by the other passengers, who enthusiastically clapped as the aircraft continued to climb, leaving the chaos of a country under siege.

Ahmad went to Spain for five days before settling in El Paso, Texas and eventually Bossier City.

Catholic Charities, through its refugee resettlement program, has become a leader in assisting refugees like Ahmad and many others to settle into their new environments. Lisa Lee, director of CCDBR’s Refugee and Resettlement Program, said the agency has already provided assistance for several Afghan refugees in the Baton Rouge area.

The agency is approved to resettle up to 49 individuals, and Lee said the majority of those who have already arrived are staying in the Baton Rouge area.

Lee said CCDBR is contracted with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for resettlement. The contract calls for Catholic Charities to prepare a furnished apartment, or at least a hotel room, culturally appropriate food for a week and a culturally appropriate meal when a refugee or family arrives.

The agency will also coordinate interpreters if needed.

“USCCB tries to give as much time possible but sometimes it’s less than 24 hours,” said Lee.

Carol Spruell, CCDBR director of administration, stressed the refugees are required to be vaccinated and vetted. They will also receive limited financial assistance for up to eight months,

They are also required to take the first job that is offered to them.

“We do our best to make sure the job is going to be the best fit for them, for their skill, their location,” said Lee, who noted CCDBR has a job specialist who assists in the placement process.

She said two Afghan refugees have been placed in jobs in the past few weeks.

Perhaps not surprising Ahmad has encountered several challenges adjusting to a life and culture far removed from which he is accustomed, although, with a smile, he said he was eagerly anticipating his first foray to a Mexican restaurant.

His mind and heart, however, remain halfway around the globe as he seeks a solution to evacuate his mother and four siblings to join him. For now, Ahmad said his family must remain indoors for their own safety, as the Taliban government is tracking down and killing family members of former government employees who have fled.

Ahmad’s father died in 2007. “I miss home and think about home,” Ahmad said. “My family is happy I made it but I am really worried about them. That is my biggest concern; I left family behind.”

Ahmad is also disturbed by the continued downfall of his homeland, saying security is sketchy and the economy is tanking.

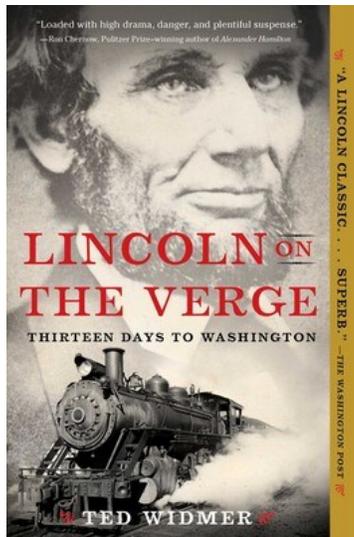
“For two decades we gained knowledge, we were educated, and now everything is gone,” he said. “People are really suffering from bad situations. All of the women and men who are educated are hiding at home.”

## Help yourself to Evening Book Club this Spring!

Contact Ann Sperry.

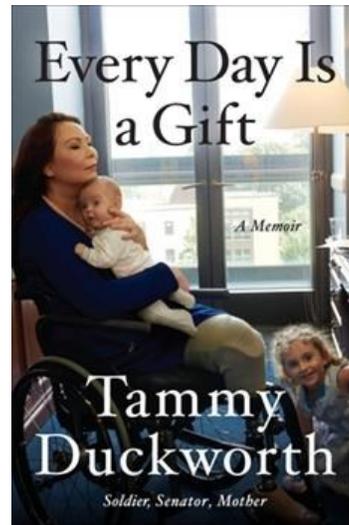
To be reviewed by  
Melanie Hanley

on January 5



To be reviewed by  
Catherine Roundtree

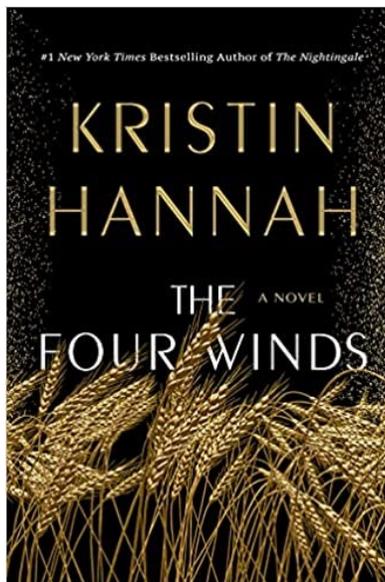
on February 2



To be reviewed by

Mary Francis

on March 3



To be reviewed

by Susan Smolinsky

on April 6

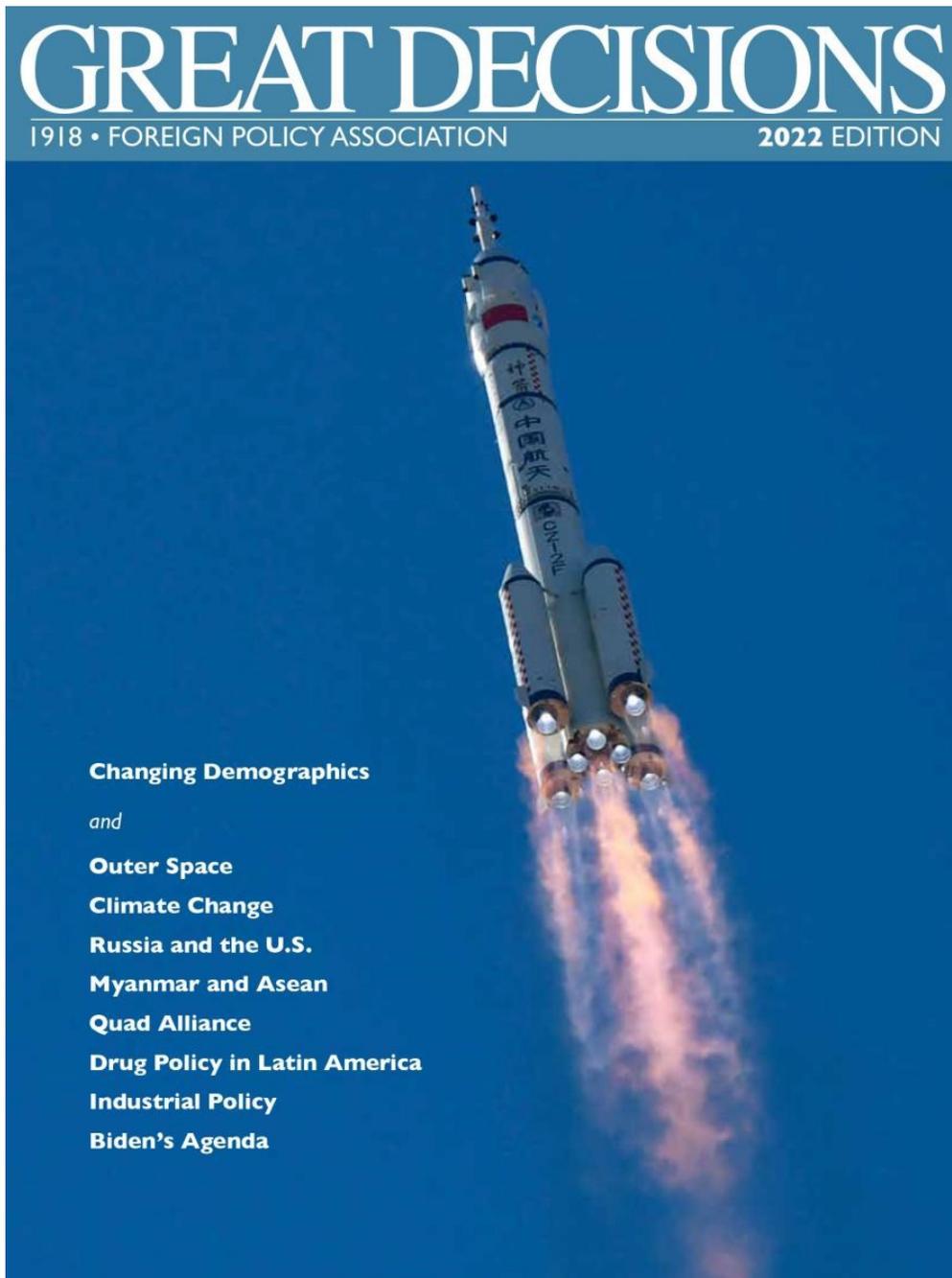


## Add an interest group to your participation with AAUW Baton Rouge in 2022!

The Great Decisions Group invites you to join us as we explore global current events informed by readings from the Foreign Policy Association. You are invited to visit with us or to join us monthly.

We are enthusiastic about learning more about our world.

Contact Melanie Hanley.



**Wanted**

AAUW Baton Rouge member to represent our branch by attending monthly meetings of the Inter-Civic Council.

This is an opportunity to message a large group of prospective members who may not be familiar with AAUW.

**Eileen Kennedy**, who serves on the nominating committee, has graciously accepted appointment as one of our representatives. **We are recruiting a second representative.**

If you are interested, you are invited to speak with **JiJi Jonas** to learn more about this volunteer opportunity. JiJi and her husband represent another organization to which they belong. She has experience.

Meetings are held at Hunan's Chinese Restaurant on South Sherwood Forest Boulevard and by Zoom.

The Inter-Civic Council selects Baton Rouge's Golden Deeds Award recipient each year and sponsors the gala dinner at which the recipient is honored.

FYI:

Inter-Civic Council

**Participating Organizations**

Altrusa International of Baton Rouge  
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area

**American Association of University Women -- Baton Rouge**

American Legion -- Nicholson Post 38  
Baton Rouge Area Chamber  
Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank  
Brave Heart -- Children in Need  
BREC Foundation  
Cajun Clickers Computer Club  
Capital Area Law Enforcement Foundation

East Baton Rouge Lions Club  
Exchange Club of Baton Rouge  
Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge  
Friendship Force of Baton Rouge  
GFWC Lagniappe Woman's Club  
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Info Center of LA

FYI:

Inter-Civic Council

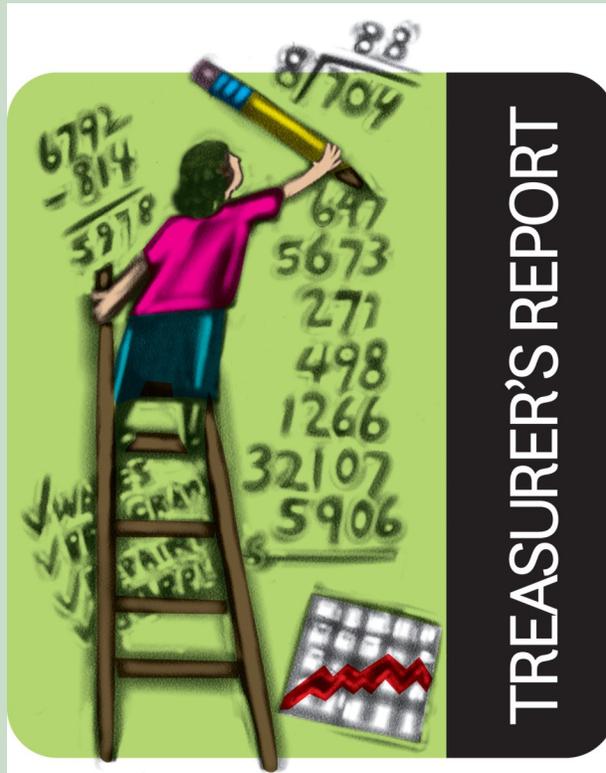
**Participating Organizations**

GFWC Lagniappe Woman's Club  
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Info Center of LA

Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank  
Kids Orchestra  
Kiwanis Club of Baton Rouge (Downtown)  
Kiwanis Club of Cortana  
Kiwanis Club of Early Risers  
Kiwanis Club of Louisiana State University  
Kiwanis Club of Red Stick Louisiana  
Bonsai Society  
McMains Children's Development Center  
Metanoia, Inc.  
O'Brien House  
The Hospice of Baton Rouge  
Women's Council of Greater Baton Rouge  
YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge



STEP UP FOR AAUW  
STEP UP FOR  
STEP UP  
STEP



TREASURER'S REPORT

**Wanted**

AAUW Baton Rouge member to serve as **branch secretary** for the remainder of a two-year term which began July 1, 2021.

When officers were last installed, the office of secretary was unfilled.

The member who accepts this appointment will have only two responsibilities: to attend regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the board and to produce minutes of the board meeting.

We archive our minutes, so this position is important. It requires a minimal commitment.

AAUW Baton Rouge member to serve as **branch treasurer** for a two-year term which will begin July 1, 2022. AAUW national regulations require that branches have a minimum of two officers, president and treasurer. Our branch cannot continue without filling both of these offices, Responsibilities include attending regularly scheduled monthly meetings and handling payment of dues to the national organization and the local allocation of dues and scholarship funds.

November 28-December 6 Hanukkah

Tuesday, December 2 AAUW National Inclusion Webinar

Wednesday, December 1 Evening Book Club

Tuesday, December 7 AAUW National Equal Pay Webinar

Saturday, December 18 Gourmet

Sunday, December 26-Saturday, January 1 Kwanzaa

Saturday, December 25 Christmas

Friday, December 31 New Year's Eve



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# December

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			1 EVENING BOOK CLUB	2 AAUW NATIONAL WEBINAR SEE PAGE 1	3	4
5	6 HANUKKAH ENDS	7 AAUW NATIONAL WEBINAR SEE PAGE 1	8	9 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO SUSAN SMOLINSKY 	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 GOURMET
19	20 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MELANIE HANLEY 	21	22	23	24	25 CHRISTMAS
26 KWANZAA BEGINS	27	28	29	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE	