

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM AAUW-THOUSAND OAKS

November 2026

President's Perspective

Editors: Rossanna Guerra & Vallerie Aguilar Quintanilla



PHOTOGRAPHY *by* Brian Gaffney

Our 60th Year – President's Message – Narda Fargotstein

NOW IS OUR TIME TO ADVOCATE FOR THE FUTURE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS!
Now is our time to ensure the next generation of girls and women continue to have the advantages we advocated for and won: women can get their own credit cards, buy a house without a co-signer, go to Harvard, and become doctors. We don't want to lose these hard-won rights.

In the local Thousand Oaks Acorn, I wrote about our branch's history of advocacy by stating the following, "Our local advocacy can be seen every day in Thousand Oaks. Since 1966, two years after the city's incorporation, Marilyn Carpenter, one of our branch's founders, served two terms as a Thousand Oaks Planning Commissioner

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60th ANNIVERSARY RECOGNITION
FROM THE CITY OF THOUSAND OAKS

We received a commendation from the City of Thousand Oaks at the City Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 29 at 6:00 PM. If you weren't able to attend, Sally Hibbitts and I spoke on behalf of AAUW Thousand Oaks. You can view our presentation on the City Website. Thousand Oaks City Council Meeting - September 29, 2026. Additionally, AAUW Thousand Oaks also received commendations from the California State Senate and AAUW California.

OCTOBER EVENTS

In the midst of all of the planning for our 60th Anniversary Fall Breakfast, we co-hosted a candidate forum on October 1 with the ***League of Women Voters of Ventura County***. And on October 4th they presented a wonderful in-depth analysis of the California Propositions on the ballot this November. Both events were well attended, especially the non-partisan review of the ballot measures. There wasn't an empty seat. Thank you to Kathy Morgan and her committee members and presenters. Thank you to Rossanna Guerra for working with the library and the League to ensure a successful forums. Many attendees thanked us for the thorough presentation so they could make an informed vote!

And if that weren't enough to do in October, we had the pleasure of watching Chaise Rasheed and Michelle Ascencion at **Charity Karaoke-Sing for A Cause**. In the midst of this election season, Michelle (Ventura County, Clerk Recorder) took time to perform a fantastic duet with Chaise. Chaise was our entry last year and agreed to represent AAUW Thousand Oaks for a 2nd year at Charity Karaoke to raise money for our scholarships! ***More in this issue.***

60th Anniversary Fall Breakfast

Thank you to everyone who attended our 60th Anniversary Fall Breakfast. It was a pleasure to see so many old friends, and welcome new friends. Our 50-year founding members, Dorothy Robinson and Marilyn Carpenter, who were with us at the 50th Anniversary in 2015, were with us in spirit as we toasted all past presidents. A big thank you to the Fall Membership Breakfast Committee, who had the additional task of celebrating our 60th Anniversary. Thank you to Rossanna Guerra, FMB Chair, and committee members: Wendy Hoffman, Laura Schwartz Ziff, Betty Stapleford,

the baskets for the Silent Auction as well as collecting donations from our community businesses. The Silent Auction was beautiful and a great success! ***Dr. Michaela Reeves***, who presented for our 2015, took us on a quick PowerPoint journey from the Middle Ages to the present, focusing on women's roles and bringing us up to the present day. Equal pay has been a consistent problem for women over the past 50 years and remains so despite women's advancement in education. Dr. Reaves mentioned that AAUW has been at the forefront of research on a variety of issues of importance to women for many years. She mentioned that AAUW Thousand Oaks has been an important advocate in the Conejo Valley. Through the Creative Options program, a joint program with AAUW Thousand Oaks and CLU, Betty Friedan was a keynote speaker. The entertainment was provided by the lovely ***Katherine Reaves,*** who lent her beautiful vocals at the beginning and ending of the program. Here is a link to the YouTube video that was created for the event. **https://www.youtube.com/shorts/wLs_v84F0y0**

If you have any questions, thoughts, or would like additional special interest groups, contact Narda Fargotstein at 805-990-1885 (cell) to get involved.

EVENTS

A Stellar Night for AAUW-Thousand Oaks

Another big thank-you to Chaise Rasheed and Michelle Ascencion for their stellar performance representing AAUW Thousand Oaks at Charity Karaoke–Sing for a Cause on Sunday evening, October 11, at The Canyon in Agoura Hills. They delighted a sold-out audience at this event supporting 20 nonprofits. Sally Hibbitts coordinated AAUW's participation.

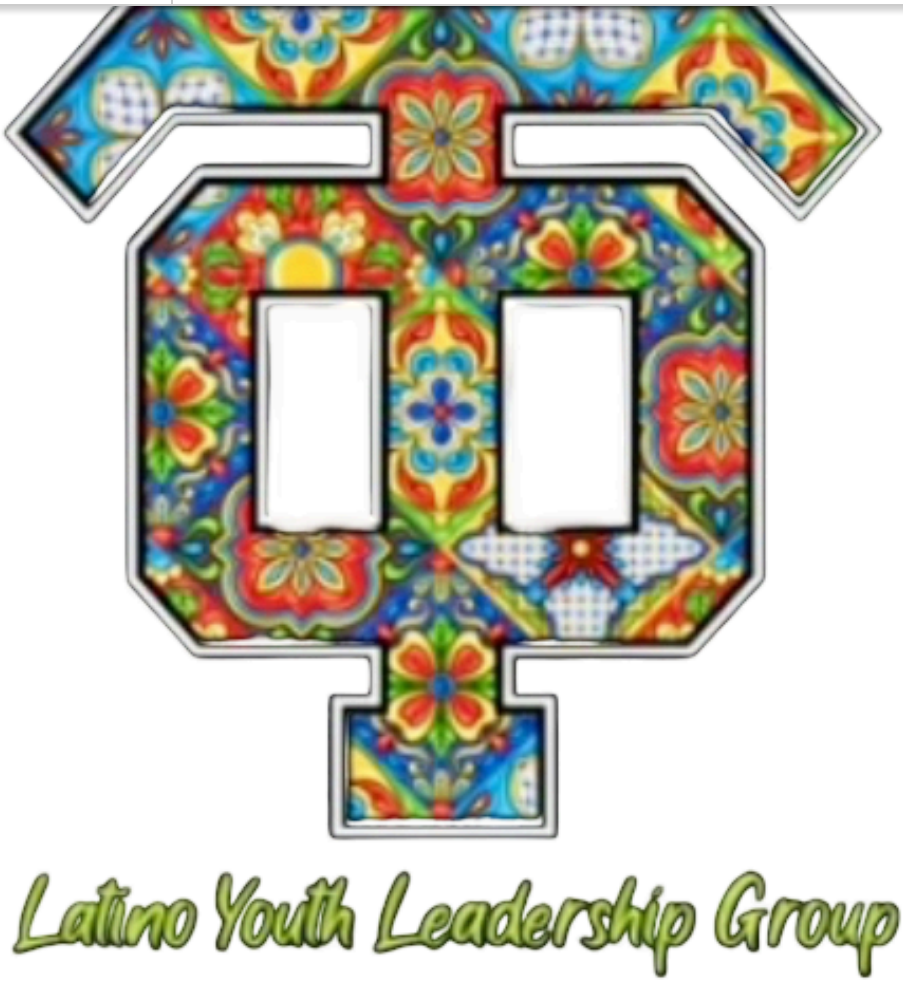
Chaise shared, "Michelle and I made up much of our performance at Charity Karaoke–Sing for a Cause as we went along, but we did spend time rehearsing and making sure we would deliver a performance that would entertain the audience." Thank you both for sharing your talent and enthusiasm for AAUW!

Conway for her personal donation of $1,000 to AAUW in honor of Chaise and Michelle's stellar performance. Her generosity deeply touches our branch and supports our work advancing education and opportunities for women and girls. Thank you, Laura, for championing AAUW and making this evening even more meaningful.

(Michelle Ascencion and Chaise Rasheed onstage. Photo by David Newman.)




the Canyon
Where music
the Soul
LOS ANGELES



2026-27 Latino Youth Leadership Group at Thousand Oaks High School

This fall school term began the 11th year of this important support group, under the sponsorship of our Thousand Oaks AAUW branch. Their first regular meeting was October 6th., and we will have bi-monthly meetings after that for the rest if the school year. But the AAUW mentors, advisor, and officers who were elected in the spring had already begun planning for the year ahead. And the officers have shown great skill in moving the group forward.

Last spring, Thousand Oaks HS teachers and others were invited to nominate new members for the group, and students submitted applications for membership. Those who were selected by the LYLG student board were invited

the first meeting.

The pictures below are from a recent meeting where members made decorations for the Salsa Fiesta on October 22 at Conejo Academy of Leadership and Language Immersion from the event.

In these troubling times for immigrants in our country, we are happy we can provide encouragement to these dedicated Latino/a students through programs and experiences in character development, community participation, volunteerism, public speaking, future educational support, and many other skills for success. If you would like to join us in this rewarding volunteer opportunity, please contact Sally, Hibbitts, Betty Stapleford. Marcine Solarez, or TO High School Advisor, Sandra Martinez. You will be glad you did!

One way you can help is through providing snacks for these hungry teenagers, we offer two ways to contribute:

● Signup Genius—our preferred option: Choose a meeting date and follow the guidelines provided in the **link.**

● Amazon Wish List: Donate nonperishable items that can be shipped directly and then brought to school. Please follow the list's additional notification and shipping directions. Hit **Amazon**

Whichever option works best for you, your generosity helps make this year's program a success. Thank you for supporting and encouraging our students.

(The pictures below are from a recent meeting where members made decorations for the Salsa Fiesta on October 22 at Conejo Academy of Leadership and Language Immersion from the event.)







Tech Trek Needs Your Support Now for our 2027 Campers

Help Send Local Girls to Camp Blackwell

Give her a week of discovery—and a future of possibilities.

Your donation helps local girls explore science, technology, engineering and math at Tech Trek's Camp Blackwell at UC Santa Barbara in summer 2027. Help them build confidence, discover new interests and imagine what they can become.

Donate by personal check • Preferred

Make your check payable exactly to: "AAUW CA SPF"
Memo line: Trek Thousand Oaks 2027

Mail to Sally Hibbitts
3119 W. Adirondack
Westlake Village, CA 91362

Select CAMP BLACKWELL and enter Thousand Oaks as your branch so our campers receive credit for your gift.

Credit cards accepted. No PayPal account needed.

Thank you for investing in a local girl's future.

Questions? Sally Hibbitts • 805-750-3119 • sjhibbitts@aol.com
AAUW CA SPF • Tax ID ***Highly Sensitive Data***

(Below are two of our wonderful 2026 Tech Trek Campers)





(photo credit Brian Gaffney)

Introducing Tech Trek Alum Group AAUW-Thousand Oaks Branch



Hello, Thousand Oaks branch members! My name is Sheyla Ramirez, and I was so fortunate to attend Tech Trek back in 2018. Time truly flies, as I have recently graduated from Mount Saint Mary's University with my degree in Business Administration and am currently participating in a digital marketing fellowship with COOP Careers. Having experienced the value of Tech Trek firsthand, I am super excited to participate in our branch's newest initiative: the Thousand Oaks Tech Trek Alum Group (TTAG)!

inspiring week that fuels their curiosity. TTAG is our way of making sure that support continues long after camp ends. We hope to create a warm, close-knit space where those who have attended Tech Trek feel encouraged to stay connected and pursue their passions in STEM and much more throughout high school, college, and beyond.

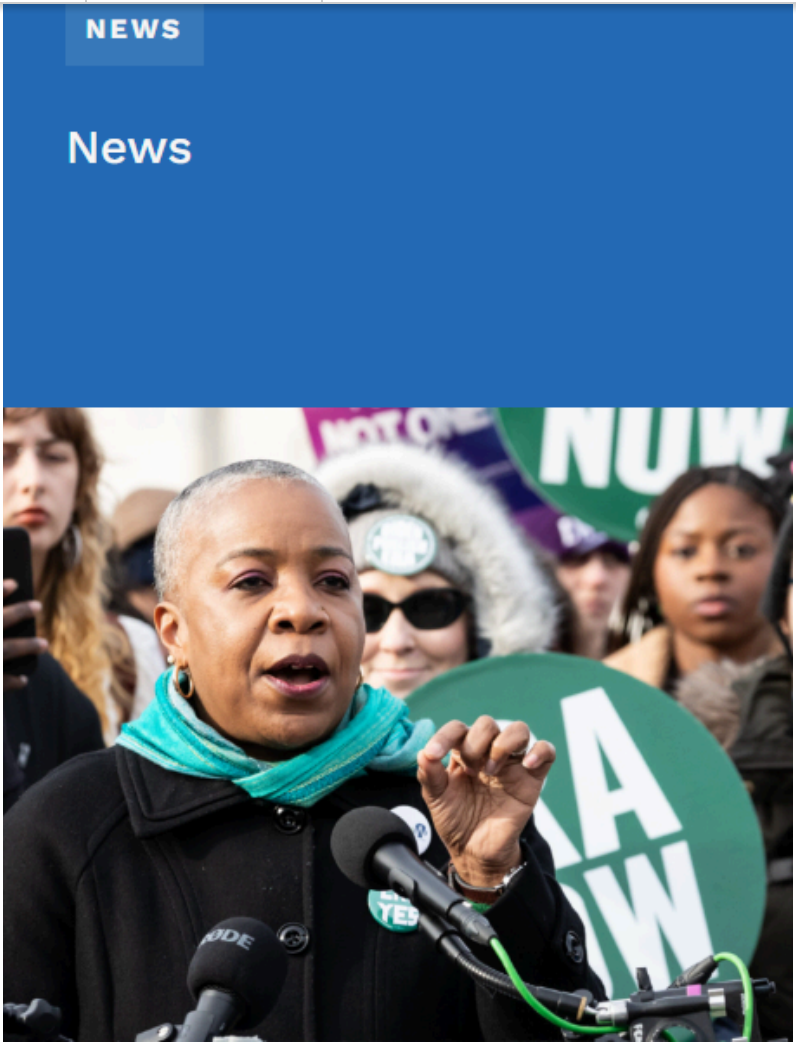
We recently held our first general meeting where we discussed the direction of the group as a whole. Additionally, we were able to connect with the Simi Valley TTAG to share ideas and explore collaborative events. Based on camper input, we have an exciting lineup taking shape. To make this community as strong as possible, we are always looking for members who would like to get involved! If you are interested in volunteering as a mentor, sharing your career insights, or even supporting our amazing group of Tech Trek campers along their journey, we would love your help. Please reach out to Sally Hibbitts to get in touch.
Hope to share more about this wonderful group soon!



Get Involved

AAUW-Thousand Oaks has a variety of ways to become involved, from monthly book groups to educational programs and events. Place a check next to the interest group that you would like to engage in. The member leader will contact you with more information about the group, meeting times and how you can become involved. We want to hear from YOU! Click on **GET INVOLVED** and leave the rest to us!

An Article by Gloria Blackwell, CEO, AAUW National



The Third Question Every College Must Answer

Gloria L. Blackwell
Oct 8, 2026

EDU Ledger Opinion

A young woman went to Cornell University for an education. She left without a degree.

Court papers call her Jane Doe, and her September lawsuit describes her assault at a fraternity house in October 2024. Prosecutors have reopened their investigation, but the accused deny wrongdoing.

We leave the facts of this case to the courts and investigators. But a survivor should not need a courtroom to get help, and most will never go near one. She needs a school that responds when she reports. Too often, that is not what she

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) was founded in 1881 to open higher education to women. A woman pushed out of college is not a side issue for us. It is *the* issue.

More than a decade ago, the country treated this as urgent. A White House task force issued policies for prevention and supporting victims. Title IX made clear that sexual violence is a civil rights issue. Congress added campus protections into the Violence Against Women Act and the Clery Act with bipartisan votes.

Since then, prevention became a movement, and that work matters. Too much of the responsibility is placed on women and girls to keep themselves safe, and not enough on preventing assault, changing the culture that enables it, and building a strong network of support for survivors.

Support for survivors, meanwhile, became a link on a resource page. Ask most students what help they can get the day after an assault, without filing anything, and you will hear silence.

The national conversation narrowed to two questions: how to prevent assault, and how to punish it. A third got lost: how do we keep survivors in school?

Title IX offers a path, despite the Education Department's efforts to lower the legal minimum for how schools must respond to sex-based harassment. Its protections are a floor, not a ceiling. Nothing stops schools from doing more, and they should. The Clery Act, as strengthened by the Violence Against Women Act, adds another layer: schools must provide the accommodations a survivor requests, whether or not she makes a formal report.
These are called supportive measures, and they are free. A student does not have to file a formal complaint, sit through an investigation, or go to the police. She only has to tell her school,
which she can do confidentially. Schools are required to provide supportive measures. They may include:

- **Help her feel safe** with a no-contact order, a campus escort, or a move to a different class or dorm.
- **Help her stay on track** by extending deadlines, recording lectures, offering a tutor and providing protection for funding she might otherwise lose.

does not cost her family thousands.

The choice is hers. These rights belong to survivors of every gender.

The timing matters. On September 28, the Education Department locked in weaker Title IX rules during the campus "Red Zone", when new students face the highest risk of sexual assault. In May, a Democrat and a Republican in Congress highlighted that its civil rights office had not posted a single resolved sexual harassment or sexual violence case since January 2025. Students cannot count on Washington. Colleges must lead.

To colleges and universities: say the hard part out loud. No school can promise a student she will never be harmed, but every school can promise support if an assault happens. Put a list of supportive measures where students look: at orientation, in every syllabus, and on the student portal. Name one person to call. Make clear that no complaint is required. Put leave and tuition credit policies in writing. **Put her education ahead of your reputation.**

To Congress: reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act before it expires in 2027, with the bipartisan support that passed it before. Protect its campus grants, which pay for the staff and advocates survivors rely on. And use your oversight power to make sure the Education Department enforces the law.

To every survivor: your education matters. You have rights. Your school owes you help. We will keep pushing until every campus says so out loud.

If you or someone you know needs support, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673.

Ventura County Community Foundation

AAUW Thousand Oaks Inc. (CA) Branch

Education & Empowerment Fund

Investing in Women and Girls. Strengthening Our Community.

A New Way to Support Our AAUW Thousand Oaks Scholarship Funds

AAUW Thousand Oaks is very pleased to announce the establishment of the AAUW Thousand Oaks Education & Empowerment Fund, created this summer in partnership with the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF). This new fund provides a convenient way for members, friends and community supporters to make tax deductible charitable contributions to strengthen our local scholarship program. Administered by VCCF, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, the fund will primarily support scholarships for deserving local students, particularly young women pursuing their educational goals.

Our VCCF partnership gives AAUW Thousand Oaks an additional opportunity to reach individuals, businesses and community supporters who believe in expanding educational opportunities for women.

Ways to Give:

Donations may be made online by credit card using this LINK, or by check payable to Ventura County Community Foundation, with "AAUW Thousand Oaks Education & Empowerment Fund" in the memo line and mail to VCCF, 4001 Mission Oaks Boulevard, Suite A, Camarillo, CA 93012.

VCCF can also accept stock, IRA distributions and other planned gifts.

Every gift, large or small, helps us provide meaningful educational opportunities for deserving students in our community. Please consider contributing—and sharing this opportunity with others who support our mission.

For additional information or questions, please contact Dorothy Hatfield.



Movie Lovers Group



Hello, Movie Lovers!
I hope you're as excited as I am about our Movie Lover's Group! It's coming together, and we're ready to begin. And there's still room for a more movie lover's, so if you enjoy good films and lively conversation, please join us.

Cinema has a wonderful ability to stir emotions, hold a mirror to the present or the past, and create lasting memories. Do you remember your first Disney movie? Mine was *Bambi*! Or a film so unlike anything you'd seen before that it has stayed with you ever since?

For me, that was *Star Wars* when it was first released. I stood in line with my date, feeling a little unsure about what I was about to see. Then the lights

moviegoers made it all the more memorable. That's part of what makes movies so special—and why I'm looking forward to enjoying them with you.

As you've probably gathered, I'm a movie buff! Now I'd love to hear about your interests. Are you drawn to current releases, older films—perhaps selections from the American Film Institute's list of greatest movies—or a mix of both? With Oscar and Golden Globe nominations on the horizon, we should have plenty of films to choose from.

For our first gathering, I suggest meeting at my home so we can get acquainted, talk about what we'd like to watch, and stream a recent release together.

Finding a Time

Now comes the scheduling challenge! I know some members work full-time, while others may prefer to avoid evenings. With that in mind, here are a few possibilities:

- **Weekdays:** Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday after 4 p.m.
- **Weekends:** Saturday or Sunday afternoon or early evening.

Please reply with 1) your preferred days and times, 2)when you'd be available to begin, and 3)the kinds of films you'd most enjoy. Feel free to suggest a movie for our first gathering, too! You can email your responses to **Rossanna Guerra (click).**

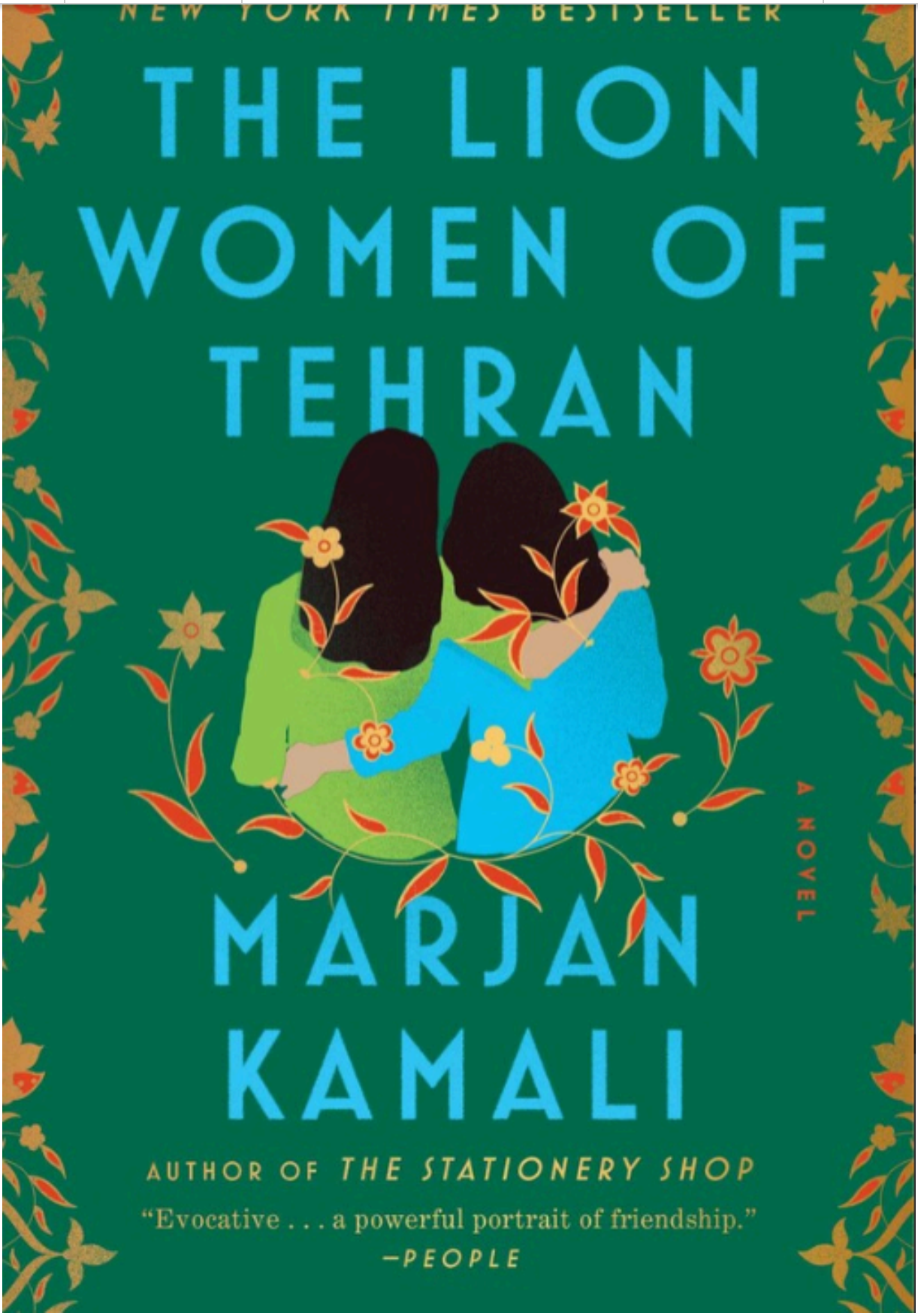
I look forward to sharing good films and lively conversation with you!



Join us on ***Monday, November 9th at Fusion Grill i***n support of AAUW-Thousand Oaks educational programs & scholarships. Wonderful food, excellent company among friends and members of AAUW-Thousand Oaks.

SEE YOU THEN!

DAYTIME BOOK GROUP


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
THE LION WOMEN OF TEHRAN
A NOVEL
MARJAN KAMALI
AUTHOR OF THE STATIONERY SHOP
"Evocative . . . a powerful portrait of friendship."
—PEOPLE

years, but we'd love to have new members. We meet on the ***4th. Monday of each month***, except when holidays or other activities interfere.

We gather in the Conference Room of the Children's Library at the Thousand Oaks Library at 10 a.m. As usual, we have chosen the books to read and discuss for the year by consensus.

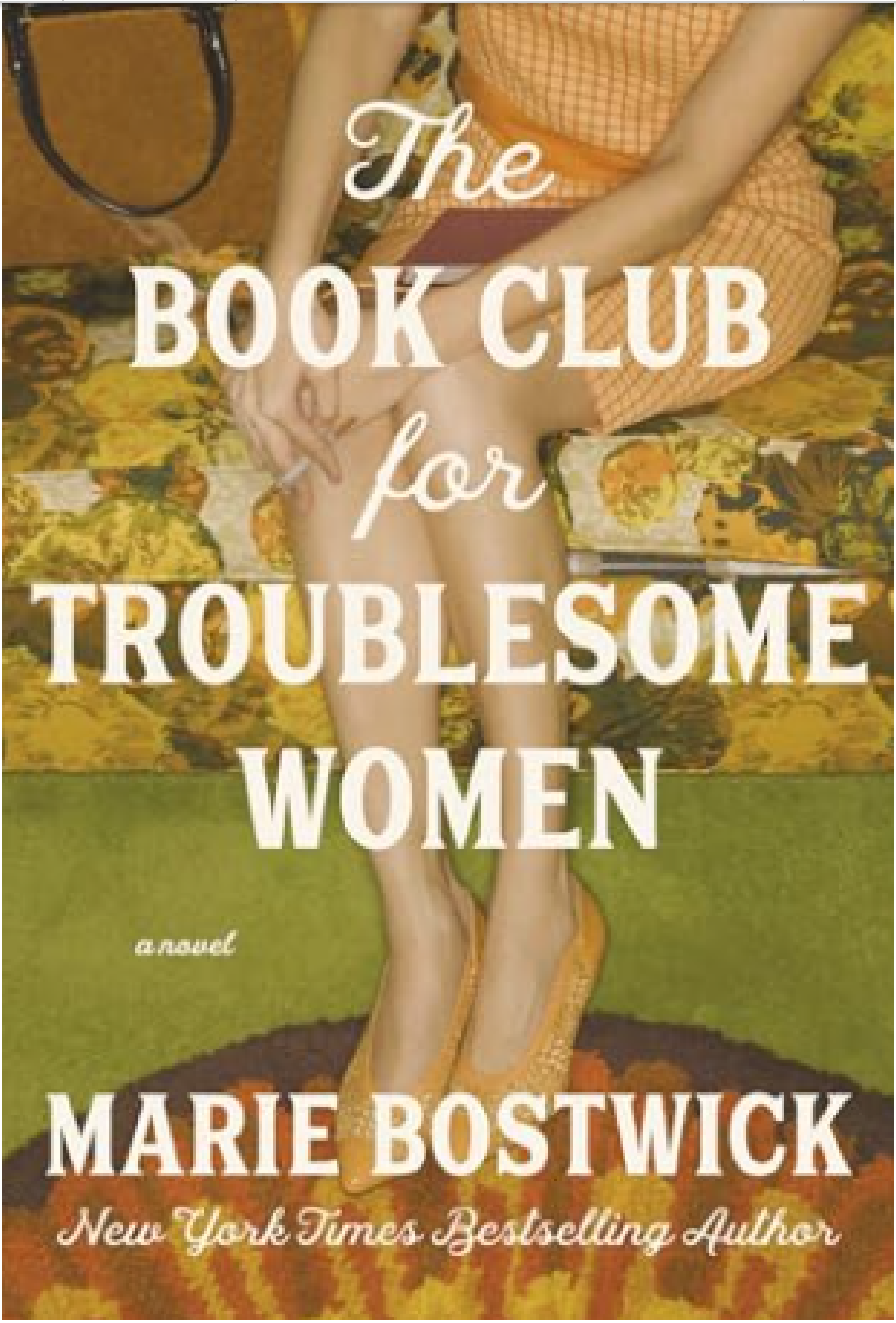
Our next meeting this year will be on ***November 16***, and we will be discussing ***The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamal**i. It is an historical fiction novel that begins in the 1950's in Tehran.

At that time, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father. That event forces Ellie and her mother into a tiny downtown home, Ellie endures her mother's constant grievances and longs for companionship.

Luckily, on her first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind, courageous girl with an irrepressible spirit. As years pass and the friends come of age, they pursue their own visions of a meaningful future. But as political unrest in Iran reaches a breaking point, a devastating betrayal changes their lives forever.

Jeane Maxwell will be our facilitator.
For more information, please contact **Betty Stapleford**

LUNCH BUNCH GROUP


The
BOOK CLUB
for
TROUBLESOME
WOMEN
a novel
MARIE BOSTWICK
New York Times Bestselling Author

The Lunch Bunch Book Group meets at local restaurants on the ***third Thursday of the month at 12:30 pm***. We always welcome new members and are very pleased with the addition of new members, Elaine Wilson and Dr. Shelley Fryer who have recently joined our group. While reviewing books of different genres and enjoying a tasty lunch and maybe a little wine. We are thinking about adding some movies between meetings if something sounds interesting. Please contact ***Sharon Dyer by text at (818)904-4645 if you have any questions.***

The **November 19th** meeting will take place at ***Tuscany II Ristorante located at 968 S Westlake Blvd., Westlake Village***. The selection for November is **The Book Club for Troublesome Women by Marie Bostwick.** Margaret never really meant to start a book club . . . or a feminist revolution, for that matter in this bold and plucky novel from New York Times bestselling author Marie Bostwick. “Ideal for those who enjoyed Bonnie Garmus's Lessons in Chemistry." --Library Journal, starred review.

DIVERSITY & UNITY BOOK GROUP



We had a great meeting in October at the home of Wendy Hoffman and it's wonderful to see several new members. Just a reminder all are welcome to join us at any time.

We will be discussing at our next meeting on **Thursday, November 12 at 3:30 PM** the book *Inheritance* by Dani Shapiro. Here is an excerpt from Goodreads....

shame or self-protectiveness; secrets we keep from one another in the name of love. It is the story of a woman's urgent quest to unlock the story of her own identity, a story that has been scrupulously hidden from her for more than fifty years, years she had spent writing brilliantly, and compulsively, on themes of identity and family history. It is a book about the extraordinary moment we live in—a moment in which science and technology have outpaced not only medical ethics but also the capacities of the human heart to contend with the consequences of what we discover.

Our meeting will take place at the lovely home of ***Nancy Taylor-Walker, 1987 Goldenrod Court, Westlake.*** Above is our graphic that shows the books we have selected for our reading year, which will continue through July. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Hibbitts or at 805-750-3119.

November 2026

Connect. Explore. Make a difference.

03 TUE

Happy Hikers Group
9:30–10:30 a.m.
Lynmere Trail
From Hwy 101, take Lynn Road north about a mile to Camino Manzanas and turn left. Drive to Camino Magenta, turn right, and continue to the dead end. Park on the street.

Latino Youth Leadership Group
2:30–4 p.m.
Thousand Oaks High School

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07 SAT

Coffee and Chat
9:30–11 a.m.
Pickles Deli Restaurant • 1940 Newbury Rd.

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09 MON

Fusion Grill Fundraiser
All day

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12 THU

Diversity and Unity Book Group
3:30–5 p.m.
“Inheritance” by Dani Shapiro
At the home of Nancy Taylor-Walker

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16 MON

Daytime Book Group
10–11:30 a.m.
T.O. Children’s Library

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17 TUE

Happy Hikers Group
9:30–10:30 a.m.
Wildwood Park
Park in the lot at the west end of Avenida de Los Arboles.

Latino Youth Leadership Group
2:30–4 p.m.
Thousand Oaks High School

View the branch calendar
aauwthousandoaks.com/calendar

AAUW
Thousand Oaks Inc. (CA) Branch

View this email in your browser

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