

# A Storied Tradition

## AAUW marks golden book sale anniversary



Joan Bowser, president of the Fond du Lac Chapter of AAUW, eyes a biography of Mary Todd Lincoln during preparations this week for the 50th annual AAUW Book Sale at the Cow Palace at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds. The sale is scheduled Thursday through Sunday.

THE REPORTER PHOTO BY JUSTIN CONNAHER

## FdL event is 'largest AAUW book sale in the state'

BY MONICA M. WALK  
Special to The Reporter

Once upon a time, a group of local civic-minded women wanted to raise funds for scholarships.

They agreed to organize a sale of used books, a commodity aligned with their intent to provide higher education opportunities for young women. Their first sale was a resounding success, as was the next year's event, and the next ... for the next several decades.

Fifty years later, the annual AAUW book sale continues happily in Fond du Lac — no ending in sight.

Those who enjoy the group's large literary collection and want to add a page to its fundraising ledger are encouraged to attend the 50th annual AAUW Book Sale

### FOUR DAYS TO STOCK UP ON BOOK DEALS

Four days of sales offer used book lovers a variety of shopping possibilities at the AAUW Book Sale being held Thursday through Sunday, March 17 to 20, in the Cow Palace at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds.

■ 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday — Premiere night; \$3 entry donation collected at the door. Lines of shoppers frequently begin forming at the Fairgrounds in mid-afternoon, anticipating the tens of thousands of used books inside.

■ 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday — Used books remain for sale at prices ranging from \$1 to \$20. Puzzles and video tapes also are available.

■ 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday — Items are reduced to half price.

■ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday — Books are sold for \$5 per box; boxes provided by AAUW.

from Thursday through Sunday, March 17-20, in the Cow Palace on the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds (see box for details).

Longevity isn't the only defining characteristic of the Fond du Lac event.

"From a relatively small town, we have the largest book sale in

the state and raise the most money," noted Karen Arrowood, who for the fourth time co-chairs this year's local event with Dolores Mick. Arrowood — a third-generation AAUW member, whose mother Chris Arrowood and grandmother Marion Hauer

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also belong to the Fond du Lac branch — reports that many AAUW groups around the nation hold fundraising book sales.

Mick attended the book sale before joining the organization and admits, "The book sale made me want to join."

This ongoing story of camaraderie and community service has deep roots in the Fond du Lac Chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), a national organization founded nearly 130 years ago to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

The Fond du Lac branch was organized in 1922 with 53 charter members, including Elizabeth Waters, longtime Fond du Lac educator and first woman to serve on the UW Board of Regents, for whom the local elementary school and a UW-Madison residence hall are named.

"Most people are attracted by the book sale," said membership chair Mary Cappellari. "They like the fact that we are raising money by recycling books."

## Local scholarships

Proceeds are used for scholarships for local high school graduates and local women re-entering higher education. The group also donates to the national organization to provide grants and fellowships to outstanding women around the globe.

Scholarships awarded locally vary in number and amount depending upon the money brought in by the book sale.

The first sale, held at the YMCA in 1962, reaped gross receipts of \$233.21 from the sale of approximately 2,500 books and

supported the education of one scholarship recipient.

In 2010, gross receipts of \$26,241.03 from tens of thousands of books funded several local scholarships of \$1,000 each plus an equal donation to the national AAUW fund, \$1,340 in summer scholarships, \$2,000 to special projects, and another \$6,548 in endowment to a fund managed at the Fond du Lac Area Foundation with the intent of keeping scholarships going in perpetuity should the book sale one day end.

"A couple of years ago, we noticed we are getting older," said program co-chair Kay Conrad, "and wondered if we can continue to do the sale. So we made the fund at the Fond du Lac Area Foundation to give scholarships. We are trying to (have the scholarships) be forever."

Women who join AAUW frequently remain committed long-term. The group has several women who have participated for more than 50 years, and many of the younger members have belonged for 15 years.

## Increased sale size

Diane Fricken is a 50-year member. She recalls how the group initially would meet in a member's basement to sort books, children peddling around nearby on tricycles while their mothers worked.

A few sales were then held in empty storefronts.

"We barely filled the store," she said. "And we were very excited by what we made ... hundreds of dollars."

Fricken has experienced how much the sale has grown in the years since it moved to the Cow Palace in 1969.

"It is so exciting to see the boxes of donated books brought in by workers from Brooke Industries," she said. "They just keep bringing in boxes. Last year I had 140 boxes

of books in the religion category, which I price. I ran out of room on six tables, so I priced them on the floor."

The long-term cooperation of the community and the Fairgrounds and its staff helped make the book sale a local institution, asserts chapter historian Karen Kalsbeek. Beginning in November, the Fairgrounds keeps Building E open for community members to drop off donated books and then stores the books until the sale. AAUW branch members meet five times before the sale to extensively sort and box the books into categories. Sale setup begins the Monday before the event.

Mick noted that mysteries, westerns, romances and classics sell out quickly, and that the children's section will be smaller than in past years because of a recent law requiring the removal of books printed prior to 1987 due to controversy over potential lead paint. Books range in price from \$1 to \$20 on opening day. Puzzles and older video tapes round out the offerings.

Opening night generally draws a crowd. "The first night, we have so many people it is hard to see," Conrad said. "And people come back. Some come every day of the sale."

"The sale provides an opportunity for people to recycle their books," Kalsbeek said. "They don't want to see books go in the trash. We serve a need in the community."

With energy focused on smoothly running an event of such a large size, the AAUW volunteers are taking only one action to mark their 50th anniversary event: They will wear matching gold colored T-shirts during the four days of the sale, as they once again spin used book sales into scholarship gold.