



Above from left:
Geneva Warren and
Sytia James.

From left: Carolyn
Taylor, Geneva
Warren, Sytia James,
Mary Fran
Schickedantz display
books used in the
program.



Greensboro Branch's Middle College at Bennett Project Supported by AAUW NC Mini-Grant

By Carolyn Taylor

At their April 29, luncheon, the Greensboro Branch collected the second batch of books this academic year to be distributed to the pre-school children of the Middle College at Bennett (MCB) students for the Summer break. The first batch was distributed in December. Lois Baldwin, social worker at MCB, stated that these books are many times the only print materials in the home, to the point the books might even be the only Christmas gifts from the mothers to their children.

On May 16, the Branch will be treated eight deserving students and two faculty members to afternoon tea at the O. Henry Hotel. Several Branch members will be in attendance, also. This is a first effort. If successful, we want to expand the event to include students at Bennett College for Women as well.

We presented graduation gifts – for the second year – to the approximately 37 graduates on June 2.

Eight branch members trained to be proctors for end of course testing in January. Ms. Dale McKinnie, guidance counselor, was conducted the testing.

At the Chrysler Classic of Greensboro golf tournament in September, the Branch worked the concession tent at the eighteenth green to raise money for the Educational Foundation. They also designated a portion of the funds to stay in Greensboro to be used for the MCB Project along with the AAUW NC Mini-grant.

We presented a membership in AAUW to MCB principal Esther Coble for the coming year.

The final project this year is placing books for circulation in the Holgate Library at Bennett College for use by the MCB students. We are negotiating with Barnes and Noble at Friendly Shopping Center to purchase these books at a reduced rate. We plan to include titles from the AAUW NC Juvenile Literature awards. Davetta Florance-Bristow, one of our members and English teacher at MCB, will be consulting with us.

The Middle College at Bennett is a joint venture between Bennett College for Women and the Guilford County School System. It is the only single-sex educational program for girls in the NC Public School System. It is similar to a project the president of Bennett College was involved with when she was president at Spelman College in Georgia. Thank you to AAUW NC for financial assistance to use in the expansion of this important work.

Brevard Branch Uses Mini-Grant to Improve Voter Education Process

Katie Thompson, Brevard Branch

Brevard branch used its AAUW NC Mini-Grant to modify the branch web pages and re-design/reformat candidates' questionnaires for the 2006 Voter Guide, so it can be answered and returned electronically in a format appropriate for web display. Funds were used for a web consultant and to purchase software to facilitate the revisions. The mix of funding was slightly different than projected in our Mini-Grant application, with less (\$85) being required for consultant fees and more (\$415) allocated to software purchases. Software costs slightly exceeded the Mini-Grant funds, with overage covered by the Branch.

In implementing the project, a consultant worked with branch web mistresses for the web site redesign and to choose among the options for design of candidate questionnaires that could be transmitted electronically. Improvements were made in the ability to edit, revise, and make additions to our web site by changing software. An education version of the software enabled us to work with it prior to purchase of a full and current edition from grant funds. In February, letters were mailed alerting candidates in races covered by the Brevard-Branch Voter Guide announcing the new capability, providing a preview hard-copy of the questionnaire appropriate to their campaign, and alerting them to expect the electronic copy for their completion and return via the Internet within a few days. In March, electronic messages with questionnaires for the 2006 Voter Guide went out to all candidates seeking to represent Transylvania County at the State and Federal levels with instructions for completion and return electronically.

Questionnaires were uniquely named for each candidate and were sent as Word attachments. The utility of Word to allow completion of blanks and counting of characters, cutting the response at a pre-determined limit was used (and saved countless hours over clarification and revisions with candidates from our past Voter Guides). Documents were protected so candidates could not change the questionnaire, but we were able to select responses to many of the questions with a simple click of the mouse. Candidates were able to edit their narrative responses within the document to assure that the words were as they wished them to appear. The returned questionnaires were then posted to the Voter Guide web pages in a format designed by our web mistress through a cut-and-paste process.

Effort still had to be expended with candidates and campaigns to get responses. However, the capability for electronic transfer made an

enormous difference in the time required from members of the Voter Guide Committee. All but one of the responding candidates was able to do so by electronic transfer; that candidate chose to respond by US mail. We no longer had long delays in receiving responses from candidates and were able to post candidates' responses for the primaries in time for voters participating in absentee and early voting. To our knowledge, our Voter Guide was the only one available to voters in Transylvania County for these state and federal offices prior to the Primary election.

Typically, participation by candidates in the Voter Guide before the primaries is lower than for the General election. This was the case again: Only one candidate out of four in the US Congressional race did not participate (the same candidate, our current Congressman, has never participated in any of our previous Voter Guides). The candidate for the NC House is unopposed either in the Primary or General election and did not respond in time to post for the primaries. Of the five candidates running in the Republican and Democratic primaries for the NC Senate, three participated; one of the non-participants won the Republican primary. Even with greatly reducing the time and effort required to respond to our Voter Guide questionnaires through the revisions which the Mini-Grant Project made possible, we clearly have more work to do – well beyond the Project goals – to convince candidates that providing information about their positions to the public is in their interests as well as that of the electorate.

We have confidence that, through the assistance provided by the AAUW NC Mini-Grant, we have removed many of the barriers to candidate participation in our Voter Guide and greatly reduced the time and effort required to produce it by branch members. Both accomplishments are critical to our being better-positioned to efficiently and effectively develop a Voter Guide for the more demanding 2008 election and to be able to sustain production of the AAUW Non-Partisan Voter Guide on the two-year election cycles for state and federal offices over years to come.

Thank you to the AAUW NC for contributing to the capacities of the Brevard Branch to improve and sustain publication of the AAUW Non-Partisan Voter Guide. You have helped us improve and produce a Voter Guide not only for this year but, hopefully, for many years to come when state and local elections are decided that have such potential import for the AAUW mission to "promote positive societal change."



Janet Weber, Raleigh/Wake County member, with Betty Bayless (right).

Bayless Addresses International Issues

Betty Bayless, AAUW Director-at-Large and member of the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund membership, strategic planning and public relations committees, spent May 6-7 in Raleigh. She educated branch members on the importance of the Fund and its projects (see www.vigif.org) as well as answering questions about AAUW and IFUW.

Ed. Note: Shirley Quisenberry, AAUW NC International chair, shared a letter at 2006 convention from Ruth Sweetser, AAUW president, to Griselda Kenyon, IFUW president, clarifying AAUW's position on a number of issues regarding our arrearages. In the business session, Quisenberry moved that "education about AAUW's history with IFUW and its current relationship with IFUW be included in branch programming and newsletters to help AAUW NC members respond to AAUW's possible new role within international women's issues." Discussion followed on the willingness of branches to send contributions to IFUW through AAUW. The motion carried with no dissenting votes.

Women's Advocacy Day
Tuesday, June 20, 2006
Raleigh
Learn everything you need to
know at www.ncwu.org
or 866.518.7657

Brevard Branch Member is Honored

Phyllis Stout, Historian

The Brevard Branch recognized Grace Monro Roy as an honorary 50-year member at the April meeting. Grace graduated from Winthrop College and received her MS from the University of Tennessee. She taught business at Brevard College for 36 years before retirement. A former student honored her with an endowed scholarship at Brevard College in her name. She was an active member of *Delta Kappa Gamma* and the Brevard Branch honored her with the Teacher of the Year Award and as the Outstanding Educator.

Grace's community services are numerous as are her offices in her church and in the Presbytery. She is a past-president of Brevard Branch and has served twice as secretary, by-laws chair, education committee chair for five years, nominating committee, Women Who Make A Difference Award Chair, Yearbook Committee and Cultural Affairs Chair.

Brevard Branch now has four 50-year members.