



# The Woman's Club of WashU

## NEWSLETTER

### Winter 2026

### A Message from the President

There is a floating shelf in the hallway of our home that displays several items we've collected from our travels over the years. When the winter morning sun hits the wall just the right time, the treasures all come to life....an Ancoma Pueblo ceramic bird, a miniature wood-carved Dala horse, a small Portuguese Fado guitar, and a larger-than-life, ceramic garlic bulb from Crete.

Seeing these objects transports me to wonderful memories formed while traveling. The sounds, smells, and sights rush back, awakening my senses as the recollections come into perfect focus. Especially the interactions and conversations made with the people I met along the way. Some occurred awkwardly, with a handheld dictionary and terrible pronunciation; others leisurely and relaxed, while waiting for the bus, or exploring the local market. It is these human connections that I cherish most; that bring me joy, that help me learn about the world I live in, and with luck, a bit about myself and my role in it.

### Member Resources

- Search the directory.
- Join an interest group.
- Browse upcoming events.
- Serve and learn.
- Keep learning with OLLI.
- Visit Ibbey's garden.
- Read past newsletters.
- Keep up with WashU news.
- Travel with WashU.
- Make a gift or tribute.

### Contact Us

womansclub@wustl.edu

314-935-0491

As you move forward into 2026, I invite you to keep connecting. And thanks to the tremendous line up of Special Interest Group gatherings and Events the Woman's Club of Washington University has organized; you, your guests, and future members will find many ways to do so!

- **TOMORROW, January 30th, [RZW CAPS Scholarship Luncheon and Presentation by Andrea Urice, WashU Teaching Professor of Drama](#)**
- **February 23rd, [Enjoying Nature: Orchid Show at MoBot](#)**
- **March 1st, Arts & Entertainment: [Edison Theater, Our Town](#)**
- **Spring Luncheon, TBA**

During our calendar year, our Special Interests Groups hold gatherings whose interests range from Creative Writing to Hiking and Crafting! You will find contact person links, event registration links, and links to our many Special Interest Groups in the Newsletter below.

Wishing you all a joyous 2026, filled with good health and illuminating connections!

Sincerely,



Alki Lappas-Case  
President

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## Member Spotlight

### Petra Fischer-Stolle

#### Connecting Across Mediums

One of the very first ways Petra Fischer-Stolle, 56, described herself on my visit to her Chesterfield home, was as someone who “loves contrasts.” I saw this in her aesthetics as I gazed about the living area and the dining room where we sat at the table to talk: Almost austere wooden, linear furniture does stand in contrast to the rounds of ceramics, mostly bowls and vases, dozens on shelves in every room, some matte, some gleaming, some both, some flawlessly smooth, some roughly organic like bark or slate roofs—all these pieces hers, all crafted on the wheels in the past two years at Craft Alliance. As we talked about the cultural, scientific, and artistic bounty she’s integrated in her lifetime, I thought less about “contrast” than Walt Whitman’s line: “I contain multitudes.”



*Petra posed in front of her handmade ceramics*

Petra arrived in the US and St. Louis three-and-a half years ago—without ever having visited because of pandemic restrictions—from Hong Kong, where she and her husband, Gunter Fischer, had lived for 12 years. As is evident from the recently planted native species gardens in the backyard where only a sparse lawn had been when they found their house, the spouses are all about plants. Both Petra and Gunter are trained botanists and were called to St. Louis after Gunter’s work around the world, with Petra’s active involvement, in research conservation, and ecological restoration. Petra recalls with pride and satisfaction that many communities’ livelihoods were recovered along with their landscapes.

They had first encountered the Missouri Botanical Garden, where Gunter serves now as Senior Vice-President for Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainability, years earlier in Madagascar, where the Garden has for decades invested in botanical research and conservation. Before they moved to Hong Kong, Gunter conducted scientific work on the island during extended three-month stints in his roles with the Universities of Vienna and Salzburg; Petra often joined him. Gunter has since returned to Madagascar numerous times and in his current position oversees the Garden's work there.

It was in Austria, though, that they were born, raised, and educated — Salzburg for both; Gunter earned his Ph.D. in Vienna. Creative Petra studied graphic design with particular interest in producing magazines and brochures and photo editing, working full-time in the field until they left Austria.

Gunter first became an orchid expert, and Petra, since her childhood meanderings in nature on the outskirts of Salzburg, grew herbs and became interested in plant physiology, discovering “universes in every cell.” Plants, from seeds to seedlings to adults, introduced her to AWE “in the beauty of ordinary things.” Salzburg was also where the two met on their way to a botany expedition in Sicily. After seven years they married in 2005. Austria, Madagascar, Hong Kong, and the US, a world and life excursion, each setting, culture, and people, fascinating to Petra, who has learned “to jump in” to the possibilities confronted in every move.

She had been in St. Louis only five days when a new acquaintance introduced her to the Woman's Club Butterfly Garden; she has volunteered ever since and met “wonderful people.” She attributes her comfort here to the Woman's Club and to two other groups: (1) the International Spouses Group (and Susan Gobbo) in which accomplished wives of recruited husbands are supported and make local connections as they face the shock of new customs and values compounded by being prohibited legally from working for payment, and (2) International Mentoring St. Louis (and Annie Schlafly), an organization that provides a local mentor to each newcomer for a full year, teaching them on a fundamental behavioral level how to fit in, answering questions about navigating everyday life, in their new home. Petra recognizes that she is also fortunate that she felt “immediately at home” when she was introduced to the house where they continue to live, and that she has been also at home in English since early schooling.

Elegant, warm, ceaselessly curious, Petra summarizes her creative life choices now as moving in four active directions: “working with plants”—soil and growth, “cooking”—delighting the palate and conjuring fragrances, “graphic design” – in form and line, and “ceramics”—shaping with her hands, constantly incorporating new techniques. And always, connecting with people, listening to their stories.

-Suzanne Doyle, 2026

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## Upcoming Events



**MAGGIANO'S**  
LITTLE ITALY.

## Risa Zwerling Wrighton Endowed Scholarship Luncheon

**TOMORROW, Friday, January 30**

11 a.m. at Maggiano's Little Italy  
#2 The Blvd. Saint Louis  
Richmond Heights, MO 63117

We look forward to seeing those attending our Scholarship Luncheon, a time for members to gather and hear from a remarkable speaker while we celebrate students who are continuing their degrees in WashU Continuing & Professional Studies. This is also an opportunity to hear about their educational and career goals.

Our guest speaker is Andrea Urice, Teaching Professor of Drama, WashU Performing Arts Department. She is the Director of *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder.



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## Out and About Group

**Tuesday, February 10**

11:30 a.m.

**Bailey's Range**

4175 Shaw Blvd, St Louis, MO 63110

Join the Out and About Group on **February 10** at 11:30 a.m. at **Bailey's Range**. They're a popular restaurant in St. Louis known for their burgers and shakes, onion rings, and fried pickles.

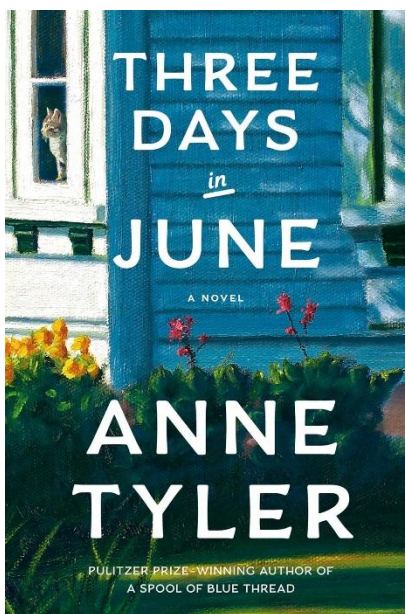
Reach out to Jennifer Luner at [jjluner26@gmail.com](mailto:jjluner26@gmail.com) and 314-323-3263 to RSVP for lunch.

*Join the Out and About group mailing list by emailing Jennifer Luner or Charlotte Ellis! An email will go out with meeting*

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details so be sure to hold the 2nd Tuesday at 11:30 am of each month.

[RSVP for Lunch](#)



## Book Club - February

**Thursday, February 12**

1 - 3 p.m.

Reviewer: Jennifer Luner

Book: ***Three Days in June*** by Anne Tyler

Prepare for a wonderful discussion of *Three Days in June* accompanied by dessert!

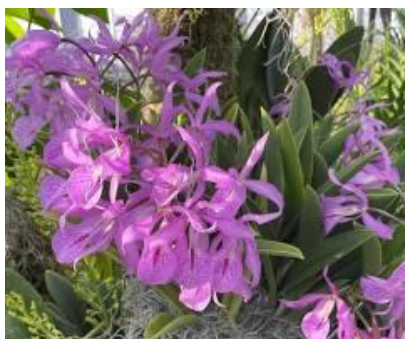
Please RSVP to Jennifer Luner at [jjluner26@gmail.com](mailto:jjluner26@gmail.com) and 314-323-3263.

For those who like to plan ahead:

**March 12:** *Patriot* by Alexei Navalny

**April 9:** *Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy

**May 14:** *Delicious* by Ruth Reichl



## Visit the Botanical Garden for the Orchid Show

**Monday, February 23**

Missouri Botanical Gardens

4344 Shaw Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63110

Meet at 9:45am in the Lobby of the Visitor's Center

The Enjoying Nature group will meet at 10 a.m. to tour the Orchid Show in the Emerson Conservatory. The group will walk through the show together and docents will be in

the show if anyone has questions. The show features a tropical display of their extensive orchid collection.

Consider staying for lunch with members of the WCWU at Sassafras, the restaurant in the Visitor's Center.

Please RSVP to Jennifer Luner at [jjluner26@gmail.com](mailto:jjluner26@gmail.com) and 314-323-3263.

[RSVP for the Tour](#)



## Arts and Entertainment

**Sunday, March 1 at 2 p.m.**

***Our Town***

Edison Theater

Ticket information and details to come!

A theatrical American classic. Winner of a Pulitzer Prize. Performed at least once a day somewhere in the world. What keeps an almost 90-year-old play vibrant and consequential? The story and the storytelling. Following the everyday lives of a town, the story contains luminous extractions from life—some joyous, some ordinary, some shattering—that make up resonating, shared points of contact across places and time. The play's storytelling style is one that imaginatively concentrates eyes and ears on the dramatically essential moments that make up the endless stream of life.

*Our Town* is a powerful antidote to a world that seems precariously fractured by Thornton Wilder and directed by Andrea Urice.

[RSVP for the Show](#)

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## Ongoing Events



### Creative Women Who Write

Creative Women Writing meets the **second Thursday** of the month, September through May, from 9 - 11:30 a.m.

If you want to gain momentum and confidence in your writing, please join this group of creative writers who come with a broad range of writing experiences. We complete monthly writing assignments designed to inspire, guide, and develop our skills.

*Every one will make you think!*

Join by contacting Jennifer Luner at [jjluner26@gmail.com](mailto:jjluner26@gmail.com).  
Members are welcome to join the group at any time!

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## Past Events



### Elizabeth Danforth Butterfly Garden Celebration and Woman's Club Fall Welcome Reception

On September 9, guests and members enjoyed the garden and delicious treats before being welcomed for the season. They also heard from Suzanne Langlois, from Meds & Food for Kids.

[Listen to Suzanne](#)

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## Fall Member Recognition and Full Board Meeting

The Woman's Club held their luncheon on October 3 at Pietro's Italian Restaurant for the Full Board meeting and to celebrate the years of service of members. It was a wonderful time for the ladies and their guests to catchup with each other and enjoy a lovely meal in a cozy space. Our members range from having just joined this year, to those who have been members for over 70 years!

[View the Photos](#)



## Exploring Nature at the William Danforth Plant & Science Center

Members were guided on a docent led tour on October 22 to learn of the Center's mission to feed the hungry and improve human health, preserve and renew our environment, while enhancing the St. Louis region as a world center for plant science.



## Galleries & Sights: SLAM Curator Tour

Members enjoyed a private tour of the new SLAM exhibit by painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer entitled *Anselm Kiefer: Becoming the Sea* on October 30. Melissa Venator, Assistant Curator of Modern Art, led members through this impressive collection of German art, sharing insights on the role of rivers, poetry and history in Kiefer's work and his exploration of unconventional materials such as ash, metal and straw.



## Tree Planting in the Elizabeth Danforth Butterfly Garden to Honor the late Professor Stan Braude

Stan Braude was a professor of practice in biology and in environmental studies, and he was the first curator of the Washington University Arboretum. Stan's wife, Professor Nancy Berg, helped to plant the beautiful Oak cultivar named "Sweet Braude". Cody Azotea, horticulturist and Focal Point manager, created the cultivar and conducted the ceremony on November 7 which was attended by Nancy, family friends and Butterfly Garden volunteers.



## Galleries & Sights: Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art: *"Making their Mark" Works from the Shah Garg Collection*

This exceptional tour, led by Sabine Eckmann, the Museum's Director and Chief Curator, featured works by all-female artists from around the world. Works on display were in painting, sculpture, installation, textile, beadwork, and ceramics from the past eight decades. Members were introduced to celebrated pieces that explore themes such as: Painting & Technology, Gestural Abstraction, Craft is Art, Of Selves and Spirits, Disobedient Bodies and Luminous Abstractions. The group went on December 13.

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## International Women, Remembering Pat Sarantites



On November 21, the International Women's group honored a very special member. Sadly, Pat Sarantites, one of our leaders, passed away in July. For many years, Pat was instrumental in introducing newcomers to the WashU community, and St. Louis, using visits to sights in the city, crafts, celebration of holidays, and shared stories of home countries. Club members are spouses or friends of international faculty or staff members. Many have young children to care for and legally cannot work in the United States. Life can be very lonely in a new country where customs and language are unfamiliar. Within the International Women's group, many new friendships were formed.

Members gathered to enjoy a potluck lunch and share memories of Pat. They watched a video showing activities enjoyed over the years. Smiles and laughter permeated the gathering. Warmth filled the room. Pat would have loved it. It was a memorable event.

Several people have inquired about making a donation to an organization in Pat's name. If you would like to honor Pat's memory, please consider donating to the Humane Society in her name. Her daughter, Jennifer, reminded us that Pat really enjoyed working with animals.

# Get Involved!

## Find a group that sparks your interest

The Woman's Club boasts a wide variety of opportunities for members to get involved in. All club members are invited to attend Special Interest Group meetings. If you are not a regular group member but wish to attend a meeting, please contact the group chair and ask to be added to their email list. You will be informed of the upcoming meetings. In addition, Woman's Club members are encouraged to invite prospective members to join them at Special Interest Group meetings.

Click on any of the icons below to reach out to the group chair and [explore our other groups online](#) to get involved during the year!



Join this year-round group to do beading, knitting, crochet, and needlepoint crafts.

The group meets on the **third Thursday** of each month from noon to 3:00 pm. Bring a brown-bag lunch for yourself and share dessert by rotating contributors.

To join, contact: **Evie Shucart (314-698-6779)**

[Arts and Crafts](#)



All new players of all levels are welcome to join this social bridge group that meets the **first Thursday** of each month (September-May).

We meet for lunch at 1:00 p.m. at the Pasta House and play bridge at 2:00 p.m.

To join, contact: **Margaret Israel (314-997-0431)**

[Bridge](#)



Do you want to gain momentum and confidence in your writing? Please join our group of creative writers who come with a broad range of writing experiences. We complete monthly writing assignments designed to inspire, guide, and develop our skills. This group meets the **second Thursday** of the month, September through May, from 9:00–11:30 a.m.

To join, contact: **Jennifer Lur (314-323-3263)**

Creative Writing



The Dancing Damsels of Washington University group is a large and vibrant group of mature ladies, who not only benefit from dance but also gain self-confidence, poise, and balance and develop creativity with a support system, all needed as we grow older! We meet the **first Saturday** of each month at 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM at Carmen’s home.

To join, contact: **Carmen Dence (314-813-0325)**

Dancing Damsels



We meet at the home of the hostess the **second Thursday** of the month, (excluding December) at 1:00 pm to discuss books. We also serve dessert during our meetings.

Upcoming months:  
***Tell Me Everything*** by Elizabeth Strout  
***The Color of Water*** by James McBride  
***History of Love*** by Nicole Krauss

To join, contact: **Jennifer Luner (314-323-3263)**

Literature



This group meets the **second Tuesday** of each month, year round, to lunch at restaurant in St. Louis. We socialize with new and old friends and explore new neighborhoods and areas together. The group meets at 11:30 a.m. Restaurant choice is communicated via email and RSVP’s are requested so a reservation can be made with the restaurant of the month. Members collaborate to select the restaurants.

To join, contact: **Charlotte El (314-623-8523)**

Out and About

# Tributes

The Woman’s Club is thankful for the contributions from its members and friends in the community who continue to support the ongoing educational activities of the organization. Tributes can be made [online by selecting where you want it designated](#) or

mailed to the Woman's Club Administrative Coordinator at 7425 Forsyth Blvd, MSC 3100, St. Louis, MO 63105.

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## Obituaries



### **Audrey S. Mathews**

*May 6, 1931 – November 29, 2025*

*Woman's Club member since 1965*

Audrey was known for her wit and opinionated conversations about almost anything. Audrey also enjoyed traveling and visiting with an extensive network of friends in St. Louis, other parts of the US and overseas. Trips to the opera in Chicago, the Stratford theatre festival in Ontario, bike and barge trips in Europe and beach vacations in Hawaii were among her favored travel experiences.

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## Opportunities

Washington University in St. Louis has many opportunities for learning virtually. Please visit the following websites for more information:

Lifelong Learning Department: <https://osher.wustl.edu/>.

Virtual Connections: <https://alumni.washu.edu/events/>. These events require registration to receive a Zoom link.

The Brown School has a variety of presentations and webinars on the calendar. Visit <https://brownschool.washu.edu/events/> for a list of upcoming events, and to register.

For more events visit <https://happenings.wustl.edu>.

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## The Woman's Club Directory is Online

The Woman's Club directory for the 2024-25 season is available online! You can access the directory online on the [membership page](#) of our website and clicking on the

“Woman’s Club Directory (PDF)” button in the green box. Feel free to print a copy at home.

[Access the Directory](#)

Reach out to [womansclub@wustl.edu](mailto:womansclub@wustl.edu) if you have any issues or need to update your information.

**The password is: WCWU24-25**

\*Please note the password is case and space sensitive\*

## The Woman’s Club Executive Committee

**Alki Lappas-Case**

President

**Helen Wall**

Director,  
Communications

Phyllis Markus

Director of Finance

**Charlene Kass**

Vice President

**Elena Maksaeva**

Director, Service to the  
University

**Annaliesa Hanebrink**

Recording Secretary

Iris Malone

Director, Educational  
Programming

**Charmaine Leonard**

Director, Symposium  
Luncheons

Lisa Schmidt

Treasurer

Jane Schaefer

Director, Membership

**Sarah Fowler-Dixon**

Immediate Past President

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Washington University in St. Louis, MSC 3100  
7425 Forsyth Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63105

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