

## VIRTUALLY YOURS

### *President Hedy Tukey Writes to Members*

Dear Summit College Club Members:

Welcome to our “virtual” 100th anniversary celebration.

The actual date of Summit College Club’s centennial was February 25, 2020. We had kicked off the 2019-2020 year with a program honoring the suffragists and were planning to continue our celebration with a Gala Anniversary Brunch at the Grand Summit Hotel on April 5, 2020.

Summit’s mayor issued a proclamation naming February 25, 2020 as Summit College Club Day. Preparations for the Gala were underway. Then the pandemic hit.

Not only is the pandemic having an impact on the economic security, health, and education of women and girls, but it has impacted how AAUW branches interact and communicate. With both social distancing and sheltering in place recommended, meetings were cancelled and branches adapted. One tough decision was to cancel our annual Book Sale, which is our primary fundraiser for scholarships; another was to postpone the Gala itself.

To stay connected with our members during the pandemic, Summit College Club embraced the virtual platform Zoom and moved the programming for this year online.

Our 100th anniversary inspires us to think about why all our achievements of the past matter and how we should move forward. This is a good time to recommit ourselves to the mission of AAUW which is to advance equity for women and girls through education,



research and advocacy. It is also a time to honor the remarkable women who over the years have given their time and talent and fostered the growth of this organization through interesting programs, fundraising and social events.

Because of SCC’s commitment to gender equity, we are deeply motivated to support the education and training of young women. To date, SCC has given close to a million dollars in scholarships. How gratifying to know that SCC has made a difference in the lives of hundreds of young women. So that we don’t lose the opportunity to celebrate our 100th anniversary this year, the

program committee has scheduled two celebrations: On November 8 we will celebrate virtually, and then in the spring of 2021, we plan to celebrate in person at the Grand Summit Hotel.

Commemorating Summit College Club’s milestone is all the more special because we’re celebrating alongside the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. Summit College Club was formed just 16 days after New Jersey ratified the 19th Amendment. The message of equity for all and the struggle to secure the vote for women are relevant to the issues of equal rights today. The pandemic has brought to light all of the nation’s economic inequities, racial injustices, and discriminatory practices in voting. Most of those practices were outlawed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a landmark civil rights legislation that outlawed discriminatory voting laws and practices designed to keep black and other voters of color from the polls. Witnessing the upheaval in our lives brought on by the pandemic, we realize yet again that the battle for equality is not over.

It is our hope that looking back can be more than nostalgia for the past. It can inform our work to secure an active and thriving branch for the future.

Thank you for each and every thing you do to contribute to the life and vitality of Summit College Club.

I hope to see you all on November 8 at our virtual 100th anniversary celebration and in the spring for our in-person Gala Anniversary Brunch.

--Hedy Tukey



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# Women Take Their Seat (in Central Park)



*New York City's Central Park finally has its first statue depicting real women. Located on the park's "Literary Walk," the 14-foot tall bronze work honors Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, each of whom had roots in the Big Apple. (Both Stanton and Anthony also lived in NJ for a time--see page 3.) Stanton and Truth are seated in discussion; Anthony stands between them.*

*The work was dedicated on August 26, the centennial of the 19th Amendment. The sculptor, Meredith Bergmann, is the daughter of Ruth Jacoby; Ruth grew up in South Orange and attended Columbia High School with her lifelong friend, **Erna Hoover**.*

## *SCC Bulletin*

**Summit College Club** gathered for the first time on February 25, 1920, almost six months before the United States ratified the 19th Amendment.

This special edition of the **SCC Bulletin** celebrates the centenary of Summit College Club and the centenary of the women's rights movement.

Special thanks to the members who helped write and proofread this centenary issue: Hedy Tukey, Karen Barnes Kaplan, and Leslie Carson.

--Marylou Motto  
Editor

In 1936, **Summit College Club** proudly joined **AAUW, the American Association of University Women**. As a branch of the national AAUW, SCC funds and participates in programs of benefit to women in politics, education, and business.

One such program is AAUW's **Tech Trek**. Each year SCC selects an 8th grade girl from Union County to send to NJ Tech Trek, a week-long STEM camp. The girls learn from high school and college teachers, try their hands in a variety of scientific and mathematical fields, meet women who have scientific careers, and begin to think of themselves as scientists. **SCC** also actively supports



*Tech Trekkers at work in a lab*

AAUW's National Conference for College Women Student Leaders, a premier leadership training event for college women, and Work Smart, an initiative designed to help working women negotiate for the best possible pay and benefits.

# Early Activists in New Jersey

**Morristown** suffragist **ALISON TURNBULL HOPKINS** picketed on January 30, 1917, New Jersey Day, with more than 5,000 others at the White House.

Born in New York, **ELIZABETH CADY STANTON** lived in **Tenafly** from 1868 through '87. In **Tenafly**, with **SUSAN B. ANTHONY**, she co-founded the newspaper, *Revolution*, launched the Women's Suffrage Association, and collaborated on their three volume *History of Women's Suffrage*.

**ALICE PAUL**, born in Mt. Laurel, is deservedly famous for her leadership, activism, and pioneering civil disobedience. In 1923, Paul wrote the original Equal Rights Amendment. (In fact, when the ERA was rewritten in 1943, it was named the Alice Paul Amendment.) By 1938, Paul had enlarged her vision and founded the World Women's Party, headquartered in Switzerland. Paul never married or had children or, as far as we know, fell in love. She lived for the movement and remained an activist until she died at 92.

**DR. CLEMENCE SOPHIA HARNED LOZIER** (at right) was born and raised in **Plainfield**. An early woman physician specializing in obstetrics and surgery, she founded the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women in 1863. She served as president of the NYC Women's Suffrage Society for 13 years.



**PORTIA GAGE**, who lived in **Landis, NJ** (now **Vineland**), took 171 women and their own ballot box to vote in the 1868 election. Their votes were not counted, but the box still exists.

**CLARA LADDEY** of **Essex**, president of the New Jersey Woman's Suffrage Association, 1908-12, marched in New York City at the head of the first women's suffrage parade.



**REVEREND FLORENCE SPEARLING RANDOLPH** (at left) of **Jersey City** and then **Summit**, used her hard-won religious credentials to help expand women's rights. She founded the NJ chapter of the National Federation of Colored Women. On a trip to Africa, she adopted a daughter, Charity Zomelo, who later graduated from Summit High School and received one of Summit College Club's earliest scholarships. After completing her degree, Zomelo returned to Africa to teach. A plaque honoring Randolph now stands outside her church, Wallace Chapel, on Broad Street in Summit.

**LUCY STONE** refused to take her husband's name when she married **HENRY BROWNE BLACKWELL** in 1855. Five years earlier, Stone had organized the Women's Rights Convention in Massachusetts, her home state. In 1857, Stone moved to **Orange, NJ**, where she bought a house but refused to pay property taxes, calling them "taxation without representation" since she was not allowed to vote. Later, Stone and her husband, then living in **West Bloomfield** (now **Montclair**), launched *Woman's Journal*, a weekly newspaper.

**REVEREND ANTOINETTE BROWN BLACKWELL** of **Somerville** and then **Elizabeth**, was one of the first American women ordained a Protestant minister. Blackwell and **Lucy Stone** co-founded the **American Woman** Suffrage Association.

--Marylou Motto

References: Barbara Leap, "The Good Fight," *New Jersey Monthly*, August 2020; and (anonymous) *2020 Election Calendar: Marching to Victory in Union County*.

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# The Suffragists & the Pandemic

As I write, we are seven months into the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. One hundred and two years ago, another pandemic, the “Spanish flu,” swept the country: in *one month* alone, October, 1918, 200,000 people died.

Carrie Chapman Catt, then president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Women’s Party, was herself stricken and extremely ill. “This new affliction is bringing sorrow into many suffrage homes and is presenting a serious new obstacle in our referendum campaigns and in the Congressional and Senatorial campaigns,” she wrote in a letter. The movement was at a critical point, and it seemed as if the pandemic would thwart its momentum irreparably. Instead, the flu would end up helping the suffragists’ cause.

The country was of course fighting WWI as well as the flu. Catt’s organization aligned itself with the war effort. Millions of women served as nurses in the military or volunteered their time to roll bandages, prepare meals, pack supplies, and raise funds, selling Liberty Loans and government bonds. They also moved into roles further afield: they took up farming; they worked in factories. As they increasingly assumed jobs that traditionally belonged to men, they became wage-earners—and perhaps just as important, they became visible.

While Catt’s association was leveraging women’s war efforts, Alice Paul’s National Woman’s Party continued to be “visible” in other ways: these women picketed, were arrested, and generally made trouble and headlines. Repeatedly Paul’s powerful words pointed out the country’s hypocrisy as it fought a war for democratic ideals while a large part of the populace was still unable to vote.

In September 1918, President Wilson urged the Senate Chamber, then controlled by the Democrats, to approve the new amendment: “We have made partners of the women in this war,” he said. “Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not a partnership of privilege?” Still, the amendment was defeated the next day, falling two votes short of the necessary majority.

In her recent book, Elaine Weiss explores two reasons for the failure. Some senators were not comfortable with the idea of a federal mandate. Others, especially the powerful southern Democrats, vehemently opposed the idea of black women voting. Weiss says that the idea raised upsetting questions of racial equality, yes, but that the nay-saying senators were also motivated by the belief that black women’s votes would go overwhelmingly to the party of Lincoln (the Republicans).

Anyone at all current with the news about voting registration and requirements in the last few weeks should here experience a serious wave of *deja vu*. The parties have switched places, but the motivation has not.

Back to 1918. By mid-October, much of Congress was either sick or tending to the sick, and legislative action had ground to a near halt. The mid-term elections were approaching in November, and political activities, such as rallies and speeches, were suspended.

State suffrage efforts were hampered, too. In many places, even small public gatherings were forbidden, and lone demonstrators with banners took to the streets. In Chicago, at the annual convention of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, the general public was banned, and chairs for the attendees were set four feet apart. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the suffragists “showed their scorn of the flu germ by appearing maskless.”

Meanwhile, the nursing shortage intensified. The Red Cross reversed itself and decided that they could after all send out black nurses as part of the war effort. Allison Lange, author of a recent book on images of the movement, says that the flu became “a really important moment for gender but also for race.”

I’ll stop here, for another moment of *deja vu*.

The November 1918 election brought several new pro-suffrage lawmakers into state and national legislatures. In 1919, both houses approved women’s suffrage, setting off an intense ratification campaign. In 1920, the amendment finally entered the Constitution.

In summation, Weiss concludes that the times required great persistence; and that the suffragists succeeded in “taking disappointment and turning it into momentum. . . . These women were masters at protesting,” she writes, “but they were never just protesters. They used all the tools of democracy and learned to use the system to change the system.”

--Marylou Motto

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*Information from Alisha Haridasani Gupta’s New York Times’ column, “In Her Words,” May 4, 2020. The references are to Elaine Weiss, The Women’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote; and Allison Lange, Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women’s Suffrage Movement.*

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# Tilla Thomas, SCC Founder



Tilla Thomas was a teacher of French at Summit High School in 1920 when she and two friends started the Summit College Club. She never served as president but remained involved and active until 1980.

The pictures on this page come from *The Top*, Summit High School's yearbook in various years. The large cameo is from 1930, when the students dedicated the yearbook to her.

Tilla Thomas earned her bachelor's degree, graduating with Phi Beta Kappa honors from Case Western University in Ohio, and then a master's degree from Columbia University, NYC. She also attended Wellesley College and the Sorbonne. When she founded the Summit College Club, she had been at Summit High School for only two years.



*Our thanks to the Summit Historical Society for their help.*

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# Impressions of the International Federation of University Women, 1920, '22, '26

*by Tilla Thomas*

The first meeting of IFUW in London in 1920 was the most interesting to me. I was merely a young member of AAUW from Ohio, where my older sister, with whom I went, was an active member. The plans for it were expertly made and executed. We were made to feel most welcome at the big assemblies, at one of which Lord Gray gave a stirring address, and at the small teas at private homes.

Our chosen delegates from AAUW were outstanding educational leaders from women's colleges: Ada Comstock, dean at Smith, president of AAUW in 1921 and president of Radcliff in 1923; Virginia Gildersleeve, dean of Barnard; Aurelia Reinhardt, president of Mills, later president of AAUW from 1923-1927, when AAUW raised the \$200,000 to purchase the headquarters building in Washington; M. Carey Thomas, the dynamic second president of Bryn Mawr.

The representatives I recall from England and France were equally outstanding: Dr. Caroline Spurgeon, the first president of IFUW, who gave her acceptance speech in beautiful English and then repeated it in perfect French; Dr. Winifred Cullis, professor of Physiology in the London School of Medicine, later president of IFUW, who, during a visit in the U.S.A., spoke at our Summit College Club luncheon April 10th, 1942 on "British

Women in the War" (it was wonderful to see her again); Mill[e] Amieux, head of the École Normale Supervisor at Sèvres, who entertained my sister and me many times at her home.

In 1920 we were idealistic and optimistic, feeling sure that, if the trained, educated women of the world joined together, we could, at once, attain world peace.

*We all have to live in one world!  
I still think it can be  
a peaceful one.*

In 1922 in Paris many more women attended. The contacts were, as in London, mostly with the academic community. One evening we were invited to the Radium Institute, where a brilliant scholar gave a demonstration of some experiments. Though I understood the words, the explanations were beyond my scientific comprehension. However, a professor of physics at Barnard (I believe Miss Maltby), who spoke no French, and the speaker, who spoke no English, communicated effectively with paper and pencil, by drawing the apparatus and writing equations for each other. Science proved universal!

In 1921 this radium had been given to Mme Curie for her experiments by the women of America, and she had given it to the Institute, just as she had given radium to the world. Mrs. Meloney, a women's magazine editor, had learned in 1920 that the

Institute owned only a little more than one gram of radium which was used only for medical treatments, none for Mme Curie's experiments. We then had 20 grams in the U.S.A. Mrs. Meloney raised the \$100,000 to buy one gram and Mme Curie came to the U.S.A. to receive it in the White House on May 20th from President Harding. Before that she visited some colleges in New York [and] a meeting was held by AAUW in Carnegie Hall to honor her. Paderewski and the ambassador from Poland attended. Delegates from the leading women's colleges walked across the stage, each giving a fleur-de-lis and an American beauty rose to Mme Curie. Prizes, medals and titles were showered on her at the reception, [and] we all met that brilliant, generous and modest woman. It was thrilling!

Amsterdam, in 1926, showed how IFUW had grown. We had a crowd! We were not only guests of the academic community but of the city, showing how our influence had spread. Here the Dutch and German representatives predominated. The meetings were more formal and more structured with endless debates. We had little time for making friends from other lands.

However I feel that this international organization has broadened our understanding of world problems and led to a greater interest in international fellowships. We all have to live in one world! I still think it can be a peaceful one.

*Tilla Thomas wrote this memoir sometime after 1942.*

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# “The Glow of Tilla Thomas Lives On”

## Betty Mount

We all thought she was French. Oooo-la-la with accompanying academic credits. Although petite in stature, her passion pertaining to la perfection parisienne filled the room with her presence.

The room was her French class at Summit High School, and for a sophomore like me from Wyoming, she personified all things Gallic in good looks and continental wit. But her name, Tilla Thomas, didn't sound particularly European.

She wasn't. She came from Wellesley College in Massachusetts via Western Reserve University in Ohio, earning her Master's at Columbia in NYC. She arrived to teach French and Spanish in Summit in 1918 (the German language wasn't popular then).

But you couldn't teach much when trains roared by, because the high school building was what is now City Hall. “The hissing, bumping, whistling noise of the steam trains meant we all had to sit silent for a spell,” she used to recall, “a wretched place for a school.”

Barely two years later, the handsome red brick and stone structure facing Morris Avenue was in business, where the French teacher and the math teacher Albert J. Bartholomew—who became principal—set up long-term tenancy. “Bart” and Miss Thomas were benevolent despots whose structured study curricula were always student oriented; perceptive; unquestioned.

Possessing esthetics of her own firm language standards, she extended her junior and senior high language department by another full spectrum.

*“I set up the Student Government, the honorary Service Committee, the house and grounds committee. These students ran for office, patrolled the halls, and ushered for high school events, including football games, baseball, and Assembly. As founder and advisor, I was in attendance everywhere, so I pretty much knew who was where and doing what,” Miss Thomas said to explain her omniscience.*

During her long reign, she also seemed to know just about everyone in town. Yet she was as far from provincial as Barbara Tuchman. Devoted to *la culture français*, every other year she sojourned to Paris to study at La Sorbonne.

She always maintained an international viewpoint; she was in London for the first conference of International Federation of University Women, and at the second convening, met Marie Curie in Paris.

In 1920, Tilla rounded up a group of women college alumnae to form The Summit College Club. By 1936 she helped persuade this group to affiliate with the national American Association of Univeristy Women. Its members inaugurated fund-raisers for women's scholarships.

*“At first it was bridge parties, toy and clothing sales, and speakers, like Admiral Byrd, to raise money,” she remembered, “and in 1926 we gave our first full four-year scholarship at Mt. Holyoke to Roxanne Eberlein, who later worked with Adlai Stevenson.”*

“Hey,” I asked Miss Thomas when she was moving to Pennsylvania four years ago. “How did you get Amelia Earhart?” The lady reminded me, my

father (Commissioner of Aviation for NJ at the time) brought Miss Earhart to speak at our high school assembly. “You were sitting in the front row, right next to her husband George Putnam,” Tilla chided me.

She remembered events like that so many of us have failed to treasure. Yet hundreds of families will remember how Summit College Club's annual Book Sale helped to make further schooling possible for them. Those wishing to honor her may do so by contributing to the club's Scholarship Memorial Fund (P.O. Box 273, Summit, NJ).

Four Junes ago, after 60 continuous scholarship awards, there was a huge cake with Tilla's name on it, celebrating this community anniversary effort; honoring their oldest living charter member and first treasurer.

And who can forget the crowd that surrounded Tilla at Memorial Field in 1976—where Summit's big-bang Bicentennial Parade brought out the whole town. She had donned her Vionnet gown from Paris to ride with my husband in a tiny bright red electric car, certainly a symbol of the wave of the future . . . just as her flair for communication was *toujours avant-garde*.

Last week, well into her nineties and still loving life, Tilla Thomas died in Pennsylvania.

*No one can estimate how much studying would have been less intense, or how much competitive striving would not have occurred, had Tilla Thomas not demanded—from her many command posts—enthusiastic excellence.*

For her host of admirers, she was the only muse they needed.

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*This article appeared in the Independent Press on July 11, 1984.*

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# Tilla Thomas, A Friend

## *Jeslyn Wheelless*

In 1972 my husband Rick and I rented a lovely apartment on Elm Street in Summit. It was the first floor of an old Victorian house across from the back of Central Presbyterian Church. The old houses on that part of Elm St. were torn down later and replaced with condos.

We were so happy to find a place with large rooms, high ceilings, lots of light, a sunporch, and big backyard. What we soon found out was that the most valuable asset of the apartment was the exceptional lady, Tilla Thomas, who lived on the second floor. We were in our 20's, and quickly became fast friends with Tilla who was in her 80's. She called us her adopted grandchildren.

Tilla was the retired head of the foreign language department at Summit High School, and had lived in her apartment with her sister Amy for many years. Their brother George Thomas lived in Summit with his son George and daughter-in-law, Jean. I believe they grew up in the midwest, and I know their father was a judge.

Tilla told me about founding the Summit College Club in 1920, which made the club 52 years old at that time. I believe there were either one or two other women who founded it with her, but I do not know their names. Tilla suggested that I join the Recent Grads division of the College Club, which I did, and met my dear friend Leslie Carson at the first meeting I attended. The monthly

programs were very interesting and I remained a member for the 4 years we lived in Summit at that time.

During those years we found Tilla to always be up-to-date on the news in our country, the world, and our town. She was bright and quick, and seemed to be energetic and enthusiastic. Tilla's sense of humor was fun, and she often told me that we "kept her entertained." A source of Rick and my entertainment was Tilla's ongoing verbal battle with the owner's handyman, whom Tilla called the "unhandyman." They were both in their 80's and I believe he enjoyed purposely annoying her!

In 1976 Rick and I were blessed with the birth of our first child, Daniel, and Tilla loved him, too. Then when Daniel was 5 months old, we moved to Atlanta due to a job offer for Rick. On the day the movers arrived, we took our baby upstairs where Tilla and a babysitter looked after him. Tilla was obviously pleased to have that duty, and of course, sad to see us go.

14 months later Merrill Lynch suddenly bought Rick's firm and offered him a job in Washington. Instead Rick found a job in NYC and we moved back to Summit. We didn't move back into the house on Elm Street, but of course, renewed our friendship with Tilla. I loved to take little Daniel over for a visit. Tilla had a child's chair she would get out for him and would

give him 2 ginger snap cookies.

Tilla's sister Amy had passed away during the time we were gone, and Tilla and her brother George heard about a new idea at the time, a continuing life facility in a suburb of Philadelphia. Tilla and I were amused when we told little Daniel about her upcoming move. He looked very serious and asked, "What's going to happen to her chair?" And then, "What's going to happen to her cookies?"

We missed our dear friend when she moved, but knew it was good for her and for George. Leslie, my infant son, and I visited her there and it was a fine situation for both of them. Tilla became so popular she could eat dinner with different friends every night. George, who was 98, I think, died about a year later.

When Tilla died at 93, I was heartbroken. She was just always so alive; somehow I didn't think she would ever die. I do regret that our second son, Benjamin, 4 years younger than Dan, never had the opportunity to get to know Tilla. Daniel always remembered her and treasured the Christmas ornament she gave him.

How fortunate we were to have had such a dear friend who was quite inspirational in her enthusiasm for life and all that was around her up until the very end. She will always be close in our hearts.

*Long-time Summit resident Jeslyn Wheelless was a neighbor and friend of Tilla Thomas in the 1970s and 80s. Jeslyn graciously wrote this memoir especially for the Summit College Club.*

# Voices to Remember



*“I think if we get freedom for women, then they are probably going to do a lot of things that I wish they wouldn’t do, but it seems to me that it isn’t our business to say what they should do with it.*

*It is our business to see that they get it.”* --Alice Paul, 1885-1977, was a lifelong champion of women’s suffrage and rights. She wrote the original ERA. When she died, at 92 in 1977, the ERA had passed in Congress but was of course not yet ratified.

*“I would like to be able to take out my pocket Constitution and say that the equal citizenship stature of men and women is a fundamental tenet of our society, like free speech.”*

--Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 1933-2020, like Alice Paul, studied law and improved the lives of women with her lifelong work for equal gender rights. She served as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice from 1993 until her death in 2020.

*“If you are free, you need to free someone else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.”*

--Toni Morrison, 1931-2019, was the first American woman and the first African American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. She also discovered, edited, and helped publish other superb black writers. To Morrison racism was “a corruption and distortion” of the psyche: People who practice racism, said, are “bereft.”



*At left, Pennsylvania Avenue during Alice Paul’s first March on Washington, March 3, 1913, the day before President Wilson’s inauguration.*

*At right, Pennsylvania Avenue, January 19, 2017, the day after President Trump’s inauguration. Photography has much improved.*



# Oh, the Places We've Been!

*Some Recent Summit College Club Activities*



Summit College Club's programs include talks by scholars, writers, and politicians on topics of interest to women. The programs are advertised and free to the public. Christie Whitman spoke to us on the environment and political activism.

The annual week-long SCC Book Sale is probably the event we're best known for--and the one that has funded our annual scholarships.

Partnering with the League of Women Voters, Summit College Club has done a yearly film and discussion meeting. Recent films include *The Pieces I Am*, *Hidden Figures*, *Rosa Parks*, *Equal Means Equal*, and *The Underground Railroad*.

Our 2019 workshop for working women focused on developing a practical skill that many women lack: how to negotiate for the best possible pay and benefits.

# Oh, the Places We've Been!

## *Some Recent Summit College Club Activities*



Because of the 2020 pandemic, SCC had to cancel the annual Scholarship Reception, a group event. So the Scholarship Committee visited each winner outside her home for a formal, socially distanced presentation. Here, Carolyn Abut, Summit, receives one of five \$4,400 awards.



Some of our most memorable programs feature our own members. Above, a panel of scientist-members discussed their past or present lives in STEM--the range was astonishing! Two other recent member-led programs: Eva Jedruch, whose mother escaped from Poland during WWII (her story is now a published book), and Karen Gevirtz, professor of Women's Studies, who spoke of neglected 18th century women scientists.



All hands are on deck every spring when, in about ten days, members collect, unbox, sort, place and pile nearly 50,000 donated books into specific categories for the sale.



It's not all STEM! Programs on woman artists, performers, and composers are another theme. As a group, we've also visited museum exhibits, attended concerts and NJ's Dodge Poetry Festival, and sponsored WomanArt, an annual local art show. Above, "Fall Foliage," by past SCC president Dr. Neela Pushparaj.

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# Summit College Club: Why Now?

*Karen Kaplan*

When Tilla Thomas gathered a small group of women to form the Summit College Club in 1920, there were relatively few college-educated women in the country. In fact, there were relatively few college-educated men either – only about one per cent of the population in total. It must have been a rare pleasure to share time and views with friends who also shared a rare privilege: higher education.

Times have changed. Now, women outnumber men in both undergraduate and graduate programs in the U.S. In Summit and surrounding towns, roughly 70% of the adult population holds a four-year degree or higher. We find each other in offices and on playgrounds, at entrepreneurial workshops and on soccer sidelines (now watching our daughters as well as our sons).

Do we still need a “club” to bring educated adults together?

Answer: Definitely. Here’s why.

First, the club was formed around, and still focuses on, the value of education. After all, “College” is our middle name. SCC is known for its annual book sale, which funds college scholarships for young women in our area. Over the years, we have awarded nearly a million dollars in scholarship funds. That’s particularly important these days, because women currently hold roughly two-thirds of the outstanding college debt in the United States. If we do nothing more than help some exceptional young women minimize or avoid the

burden of educational debt, the Summit College Club is making an important contribution. And we make the necessary funds by sorting and recycling books—encouraging reading! It’s a win/win situation all round.

**AAUW MISSION**  
**AAUW advances equity**  
**for women and girls**  
**through advocacy,**  
**education, philanthropy,**  
**and research.**

Of course, we do more than that. As a branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Summit College Club members contribute to advancing equity for women and girls in all sorts of ways.

Just by paying our annual Club dues, each one of us helps enable AAUW’s work. We’re funding research that is exceptionally valuable to academic, political, and business organizations across the country. We’re funding program development, like Work Smart, that helps women negotiate for position, pay and benefits. We’re funding political action, programs for women in leadership, and ongoing awareness-raising about women’s issues and causes. Here in NJ, we contribute to the highly successful Tech Trek program, which encourages young girls to see themselves as possible future

STEM professionals. All that, with one check a year! Talk about effective!

Locally, the programs that Summit College Club supports make a difference to our community. Think of all the people who attended a lecture on a woman artist like Berthe Morisot, or a movie like *The Pieces I Am*, or the modified Work Smart workshop on negotiation – and these are just one year’s programs. Think back on the programs offered in the 99 years preceding 2019! We make a difference, right here in our area, in our celebration of lifelong learning and the exchange of ideas.

Even apart from its powerful cause, Summit College Club is relevant because of the enduring value of community. So many members value SCC because of the friends they’ve made, the events they’ve attended, the activities they’ve supported, and the acknowledgement they’ve earned from peers through their membership. Whether SCC has brought you the pleasures of a movie and dinner out, or a regular afternoon of bridge, or a book discussion group, each of us realizes a value in being part of this community.

So, as we celebrate the past 100 years of friendship and advocacy, let’s also celebrate the present. Let’s celebrate our shared creation of purpose, contribution and friendship. Let’s celebrate the differences we make—small and large, individually and collectively. And let’s work together to create the next 100 years for Summit College Club.