

Attracting Younger Members in Their Forties and Fifties

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It's a fact that the average age of all AAUW members is 72. In order for our wonderful organization to continue to be vibrant and meaningful, we must attract younger members. Why focus on women in their forties and fifties? It's a good target group if your branch members are primarily in their 60s and 70s. A gap of more than twenty-five years may not be conducive to attracting potential members who aren't interested in hanging out with people their mothers' age. Also, due to a change in circumstances, women in 40s and 50s may have some more time to pursue their passion.

The first step for recruitment is to understand your target audience. Recruiters must be passionate about what AAUW means to them. It must be obvious to everyone you meet that membership in AAUW is the best thing that ever happened to you. Effective recruiters must identify who they want to recruit and understand the characteristics of these potential members. What are their values and passions, their interests and hobbies? What might they be looking for in AAUW and what might turn them away?

Women in their forties and fifties fall into at least 4 categories and have both similar and different interests which recruiters must address in these potential members:

*Professionals without children whose main focus is on their careers. They have limited spare time outside of work and enjoy being role models. Their passion could lead them to participate in career days/mentoring for high school students or other similar AAUW programming activities.

*Working women with older children still at home who are juggling the demands of work and motherhood. They have very limited time to attend meetings, but might enjoy assisting in specific one-shot STEM projects or activities that would help their own daughters such as Start Smart or Elect Her.

*Late career women who are looking beyond their working days and starting to think about how they want to spend their free time. They may want to test out AAUW to see if we fit into their future plans.

*Early retirees who suddenly have a lot of free time. Many groups will start making overtures to involve them. It's important that AAUW gets to them FIRST.

Does your branch have programming activities that would appeal to this age group? Suggestions are:

*Mission related activities such as Career nights for high school girls, Tech Trek and Tech Savvy.

*Giving back to your community. These women have the desire to get involved. Network with other AAUWs and LWV with voter registration drives AND assist with swearing in ceremonies for new citizens. Volunteer to tutor women and children in sheltered communities. Donate to and help at the local food banks and soup kitchens. You will encounter these members to be when your branch gets involved.

*Personal growth experiences while you explore new things with like-minded women. During Black History month or Women's History Month plan to attend lectures and visit museums having special exhibits. Members and guests could attend as a group a movie of special interest to women, followed by spirited discussion at a restaurant.

*Reading is a large part of what most women enjoy, both for pleasure and for professional development. Move beyond your branch reading groups and partner with other women's organizations to sponsor book lectures and signings. Ask your co-sponsors to share the costs. By opening the event to the public you could make it a Shape the Future Event.

In all your membership recruitment efforts, please remember the membership-programming link. The branches which plan exciting mission-based activities that engage both members and potential members WILL grow.