

Author's Day event recognizes local authors

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Kathryn Olson, president, American Association of University Women Colorado Springs Branch, left, and Awards Chair Mo Sigler, right, enjoy a moment with 2019 Scholarship Award recipient Sarah Teixeira. (William J. Dagendesh/Woodmen Edition)



Keynote Author Eleanor Brown, left, shares a joke with Kathryn Olson, president, American Association of University Women Colorado Springs Branch. (William J. Dagendesh/Woodmen Edition)

Three local authors have been recognized for writing excellence from a local organization that promotes female equity, life-long education and positive societal change.

Eleanor Brown, Elizabeth Fox and Susan Joy Paul were lauded for their book works during the Oct. 26 American Association of University Women Colorado Springs Branch annual Author's Day and Silent Auction breakfast fundraiser.

Held at the Colorado Springs Shrine Club, the event raised \$7,750 to fund college scholarships for women. The event provided women with an opportunity to hear authors share stories about their experiences and writing process. AAUW of Colorado President Stormy MacDonald and AAUWCS scholarship recipient Sarah Teixeira also attended the 3 1/2-hour event.

Scholarship Chair Mo Sigler said the AAUWCS has grown from awarding one \$1,000 and one \$500 scholarship in 2008 to six \$1,200 scholarships in 2018. "It's important to recognize women trying to get through college and for you to donate," Sigler told the approximately 120 guests who attended.

AAUWCS Branch President Kathryn Olson added, "Our membership has grown, particularly in the last two years. This increase helps with our scholarship fundraising."

Brown said she was inspired to write "The Light of Paris" from letters her grandmother wrote while living in Paris in the 1920s. In the book, Brown delves into the life of her grandmother who fled to Paris to find herself as a writer, and her granddaughter, a painter who, in the 1990s, is trapped in a marriage that destroyed her confidence and creativity. "My grandmother didn't live the life she wanted to live chiefly because of her gender," said Brown of her New York Times best-seller.

In her book, "We Are Going to be Lucky: A World War II Love Story in Letters," Fox provides an intimate picture of World War II in Europe and the home front. Her story focuses on two first-generation Americans separated by war told through letters written and exchanged during their separation.

While many collections of wartime correspondence present a soldier's perspective, the book preserves the dreams, fears and hopes of both people, and provides a window on a lost world and the human condition. "The letters tell the story of an ordinary couple living in an extraordinary time," Fox said.

By contrast, Paul spoke about how a dark period in her life inspired her to write. After losing a six-figure income to the 2008 recession, Paul applied for numerous jobs and endured as many rejections. Unemployed for two years and faced with possibly losing her home, Paul accepted a \$12 an-hour job in order to survive. An accomplished hiker who once scaled mountains in Ecuador, Paul found financial salvation in writing guidebooks and non-fiction.

To date, Paul has ghostwritten 27 books and has penned four books bearing her name. “Hiking Colorado Waterfalls” and “Touring Colorado Hot Springs” are staples with outdoor enthusiasts. Her “Northwest Notes” column, which appears in the Edition, is a must-read among devotees.

Paul’s story resonated with women who have endured similar experiences. Paul encouraged members to believe in themselves and remain optimistic. “Getting laid off felt like the worst thing that could have happened to me. In hindsight, it probably was the best thing,” said Paul as members clapped their hands.

AAUWCS members said they’re adding their newly-purchased books to their home library or present them as Christmas gifts. Of Paul’s hiking book, AAUWCS member Denise Farmer said, “I’m giving my book to my family who wants to hike Mount Kilimanjaro next year.”

Members also bid on coffee, gift baskets, paintings, wine and numerous other silent auction gifts. MacDonald bid on a package of greeting cards because, “I want my grandchildren to enjoy the cards’ cursive writing,” she said.

A Broncos fan basket, containing a beer glass, Nerf football and \$20 for snacks commanded attention, and Artist Kazuko Stern’s custom-framed oil painting, “The Little Ballerina,” fetched \$450.

“We received close to \$1,000.00 in donations from members unavailable to attend or not needing a thing. Members were very generous with their donations,” Olson said.

Presently, the AAUW has more than 100,000 members in 1,000 branches nationwide. The annual fundraiser is held the last Saturday in October. AAUW is non-partisan and welcomes new members.