

***In Memoriam - Mary Swain
American Association of University Women (AAUW)***

The AAUW Portsmouth Branch celebrates the life and memory of our long time friend and member, Mary Martin Swain. Mary, age 80, passed away Sat. Nov. 7, 2020. She was born on June 24, 1940. A memorial service will be held at a later date. She was survived by her husband of 53 years, Robert Swain, 2 sons, 4 grandsons and 2 great grandchildren.

Born in Maui, Hawaii, Mary graduated from Bradley University, Illinois, and taught middle- and high-school English for eight years. She spent more than twenty years of her professional life working for the Social Security Administration. As a Coast Guard wife, Mary moved wherever her husband, Captain Robert Swain, was stationed, always reaching out to help local organizations.

Mary joined AAUW on July 1, 1968 and continued to be an active, engaged, committed member for 52 years. Prior to moving to Portsmouth, she was an active member of and served as Treasurer of the Vienna, VA Branch. Mary was co-president of the Portsmouth branch in 2007-2009 and again in 2011-2013.

She founded the Portsmouth AAUW Book Group on September 20, 2001. Mary actively facilitated many spirited book discussions until shortly before her death. She preferred fiction and especially disliked any book that had won a Booker Prize!

Mary served as AAUW of Virginia's AAUW Funds Chair 2010-11 and 2011-12. She also was the Portsmouth Branch AAUW Funds representative for several years through 2020. Many of us looked forward to the theatre outings to Thomas Nelson Community College that she organized to raise funds for AAUW.

In other activities, Mary was an active member of the Green Meadow Point Garden Club in Chesapeake and the Cedar Point Garden Club in Portsmouth. She was a Chesapeake Master Gardener for over a decade and took pleasure in assisting callers to the help desk to deal with insects and learn about native plants to enhance their yards and gardens. In addition, Mary was a member of the Herb Society and lectured widely on related topics.

Mary was nominated and accepted into the Students Club in 2004 and served as Treasurer in both the 2006-07 and 07-08 Students Club seasons. The Students Club (founded in 1896) is an organization of women interested in researching and presenting historical and current topics. Her fellow Students Club members respected her sense of humor, her conscientiousness, her generosity and her willingness to share her life experiences as they related to the subjects the group investigated over the years.