



# 2024 Annual Report

American Women for International Understanding

# Meet AWIU President Nancy Annick



Nearly 60 years ago, a group of visionary women set out to build an international community of women that would transcend national borders and foster friendship and goodwill among nations. That founding commitment, to build bridges of understanding and cooperation among women leaders worldwide through nonpartisan citizen diplomacy, is reflected in our mission and continues to guide everything we do.

I'm proud to share that 2024 saw several years of thoughtful and deliberate work come to fruition. Building on the foundation of our 2021 five-year strategic plan, AWIU entered 2024 ready for meaningful growth and advancement. We welcomed 27 new members, launched a Greater New York chapter, planned our upcoming delegation to India, and hired an Interim Executive Director to help us recruit our next leader. We are delighted that Rachel Unkovic will join as AWIU's Executive Director in January 2025.

Our programs continue to grow and make a real difference. In March, we hosted the sold-out *17th Annual International Women of Courage Celebration*, honoring 12 remarkable women who have demonstrated exceptional courage and strength in advocating for peace, justice and human rights. Honorary Chair Billie Jean King delivered an inspiring message to the Awardees. We supported 15 grassroots organizations around the world through micro-grants, and celebrated that program's meaningful impact at the "Women Investing in Women" gala in Chicago. There, we honored longtime member Barbara Rubio with the 2024 Bernice Behrens Founder's Award.

Our youth programs are also thriving. Over 100 students attended the Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., to learn about international STEM careers. With 14 inspiring speakers and hands-on networking, it was our most impactful symposium yet. Our Passport to the Future program expanded to 16 students, who worked with mentors on projects that deepened their understanding of global issues. We also welcomed our first Global Education Fellow.

As I reflect on this past year, I'm filled with gratitude – for our founders' vision, for the enduring friendships we've built, and for the trust that connects us across cultures. In times of global uncertainty, these personal bonds serve as powerful bridges for peace.

Thank you for standing with us and making our work possible. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the years ahead.

Nancy Annick  
2024 President, AWIU

# Our History

- 1968 AWIU begins with a focus on international learning and connection through study, symposia, and travel. An AWIU delegation of American women leaders travels to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to meet with members of the Soviet Women's Committee, the first such group to do so in decades. Dozens of delegations have since followed.
- 2008 The grants program is founded to support projects that are women-led, that have an impact beyond the immediate need, and that focus on health, education, and entrepreneurial development.
- The International Women of Courage (IWOC) program collaboration with the U.S. Department of State begins.
- 2010 The Passports to the Future program launches and connects young women, typically students or those just beginning careers in international fields, with opportunities for professional skill building, networking, and mentorship.
- 2014 The annual one-day Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., takes place for the first time. COIR brings young women and leaders in the field together for practical advice, inspiration and networking.
- 2022 AWIU receives the Gender Champion Award from the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues at the *15th Annual International Women of Courage Celebration*.



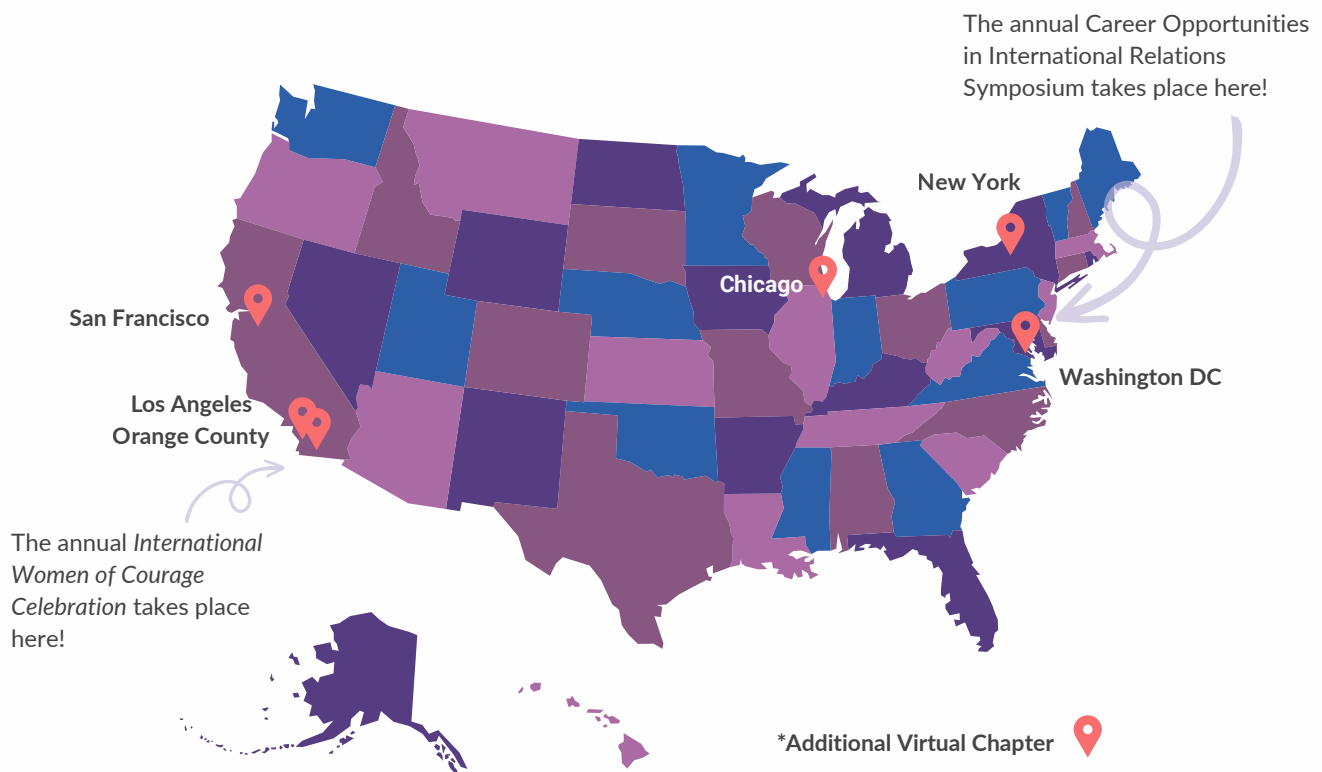
AWIU's founder, Bernice Behrens



AWIU President Martha Atherton being interviewed by journalist Christiane Amanpour during the 2002 Saudi Arabia delegation



AWIU receives the Gender Champion Award from the Office of Global Women's Issues in 2022



## Active Chapters

In 2024, AWIU continues to thrive with seven active chapters where members connect, plan events, and engage with global issues. Additional chapters are in development as interest grows across the country.

This year, chapter members have played a vital role in organizing key annual events, including the *International Women of Courage Celebration* in Los Angeles and the *Career Opportunities in International Relations Symposium* in Washington, D.C.—both of which saw strong participation and meaningful engagement.

# Mission, Vision, Values

---

## Our Mission

To build bridges of international understanding through personal exchange and collaboration.

## Our Vision

A compassionate and interconnected world with equality for all.

## Our Values

**Understanding:** Respecting, honoring, and celebrating diversity promotes mutual understanding. Leading with empathy and compassion, we embrace opportunities to engage, learn, and serve the greater good.

**Learning:** Knowledge promotes understanding. We are committed to collaborative education and approach experiences with curious and open minds.

**Community:** Personal relationships are the foundation of mutual learning. We build friendship and community locally and globally through a supportive network of women.

**Social Responsibility:** Equal access for women and girls to education, healthcare, and opportunity is essential. We believe that empowered women are highly effective communicators and problem solvers.



# 2024 Programmatic Highlights

---

In 2024, AWIU's core programs—Delegations, Passports to the Future, Career Opportunities in International Relations, Global Micro-Grants, and the *International Women of Courage Celebration*—collectively made a meaningful impact. This year alone, these initiatives:

- Engaged 128 AWIU members across programs, events, and initiatives—reflecting strong member participation and a shared commitment to AWIU's mission of fostering international understanding and supporting women globally.
- Welcomed 16 Passports—the largest cohort to date—and launched AWIU's first Global Education Fellow to support mentorship, coordination, and program growth.
- Hosted the 2024 Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., bringing together over 100 young women and men along with professionals in diplomacy, development, and global STEM careers. The event provided mentorship, networking, and concrete pathways for students entering international fields.
- Partnered with 15 grassroots grantees in 9 countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Kenya, and Tanzania. These micro-grant recipients implemented a wide range of high-impact projects—from maternity ward upgrades and farming education to library furnishing and women's health initiatives—reaching and positively impacting more than 5,000 people worldwide.
- Held the 17th Annual *International Women of Courage Celebration* in Los Angeles—a powerful and inspiring evening that honored 12 courageous women from around the world who have shown resilience, integrity, and extraordinary commitment in the face of adversity, demonstrating exceptional leadership in areas such as human rights, education, peacebuilding, and justice.
- Awarded \$86,000 in support of the 2024 IWOCs and micro-grantees, helping to further their work, amplify their voices, and sustain their momentum as changemakers.

# Delegations

Since its founding, AWIU has led 65 Delegations, visiting over 100 countries across every continent except Antarctica. These journeys have often marked historic milestones as the first group of American women to enter the country in decades: the Soviet Union in 1968, China in 1973, Saudi Arabia in 2002, and Libya in 2009. These trips exemplify AWIU's mission-driven commitment to fostering international understanding and meaningful exchange.

Delegations are designed to deepen members' understanding of the countries we visit and to promote meaningful connections between our members and women leaders in those countries. Delegation members engage with political leaders, business executives, leading women's groups, nonprofit organizations, embassies, educators, and community members. Our itineraries often include opportunities to connect with International Women of Courage honorees and micro-grant recipients. Each delegation returns with insights that are shared widely through presentations and digital communication.

In 2024, the Delegation committee focused its efforts on planning our next journey: a Delegation to India scheduled for January 2025. Working closely with the Board and broader membership, the committee has been preparing an itinerary rooted in AWIU's mission—ensuring opportunities for cultural learning, dialogue, and connection with women leaders and organizations doing impactful work across India.



2005 Iceland Delegation



2017 Guatemala Delegation

# Passport to the Future

---

AWIU's Passport to the Future program offers young women—typically students or early-career professionals under the age of 26—opportunities to gain critical skills and global perspective under the guidance of a dedicated member-mentor. By connecting the Passports with AWIU grantees and past IWOCs to produce research projects together, the program serves as a bridge for fostering cross-cultural understanding and advancing women's empowerment.

In 2024, the Passport to the Future program saw significant growth, welcoming 16 dynamic participants—the largest cohort to date. This year also marked an exciting milestone: the launch of our first-ever Global Education Fellow position. The Fellow provides direct support to both the program committee and the Passports themselves, enhancing coordination, mentorship, and learning opportunities across the board.

This expansion reflects AWIU's ongoing commitment to fostering the next generation of globally minded women leaders.



Passport to the Future participant Kylin Gao, left, with AWIU member Barbara Rubio

# Career Opportunities in International Relations

---

Since 2014, AWIU has sponsored the Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium, a one-day program in Washington, D.C., that provides young women the opportunity to engage with and learn from leaders in the field.

The 2024 Symposium focused on the theme "Women in STEM: Forging Global Impact." The event brought together an inspiring mix of over 100 high school and college students, Passports to the Future participants, women leaders from across the STEM and international affairs sectors, and local recruiters.

Through engaging panel discussions, networking sessions, and career-building workshops, attendees explored the intersection of science, technology, and global leadership—and left with new insights, connections, and inspiration to pursue careers that make a difference on a global scale.



AWIU member Amb. (ret.) Eunice Reddick



Women in Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity panel discussion

# Global Micro-Grants Program

---

Since 2008, AWIU has awarded over \$542,000 in micro-grants to international organizations and initiatives that uplift women in the areas of health, education and entrepreneurship. These small but powerful grants are designed to support short-term concrete projects that make a tangible impact in local communities.

In 2024, AWIU partnered with 15 inspiring grantees around the world, including organizations based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Kenya, and Tanzania. \$30,000 was awarded, with grants ranging from \$1000 to \$3000 each. Funded projects reflected the diversity of local needs and creativity—ranging from furnishing community libraries and providing agricultural training, to upgrading maternity wards and improving access to women’s health care. While some organizations had received AWIU support in previous years, many were first-time grantees, broadening the reach and deepening the impact of the program.

AWIU is proud to champion the leadership of women and women-led organizations around the globe, advancing meaningful change one micro-grant at a time. Read more about the global micro-grants program in the 2024 Grants Report, and see the breakdown of funds awarded in 2024 on page 11.



# International Women of Courage

Since 2008, AWIU has collaborated with the U.S. State Department to recognize women around the globe who fight for human rights and the empowerment of women and girls. AWIU hosts the *International Women of Courage (IWOC) Celebration* annually and presents grants to every State Department honoree. To date, \$522,500 has been awarded by AWIU to the IWOC honorees, including \$56,000 in 2024.

The 17th Annual IWOC Celebration was a powerful tribute to 12 extraordinary women leaders from around the world who have demonstrated unwavering courage and resilience in the face of adversity. Hosted in Los Angeles, the event honored their remarkable contributions across a wide spectrum of critical global issues—including the advancement of education, employment, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, gender equality, healthcare, housing, human rights, journalism, legal reform, peacebuilding, and youth empowerment. With moving stories of impact and determination, the evening celebrated not only the individual honorees but also the collective power of women leading change in their communities and beyond.

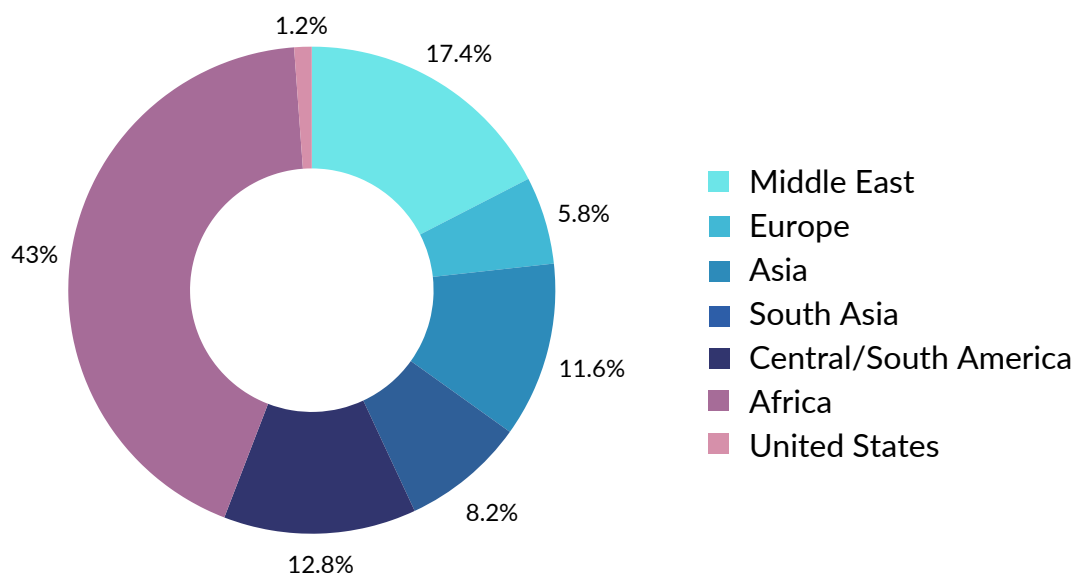


The 2024 IWOC award recipients included (left to right) Agather Atuhairu (Uganda), Benafsha Yaqoobi (Afghanistan), Fariba Balouch (Iran), Fawzia Karim Firoze (Bangladesh), Rabha El Haymar (Morocco), Volha Harbunova (Belarus), Myintzu Win (Burma), Rina Gonoi (Japan), Fatou Baldeh (The Gambia), Ajna Jusić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Fátima Corozo (Ecuador).  
Not pictured: Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello (Cuba).

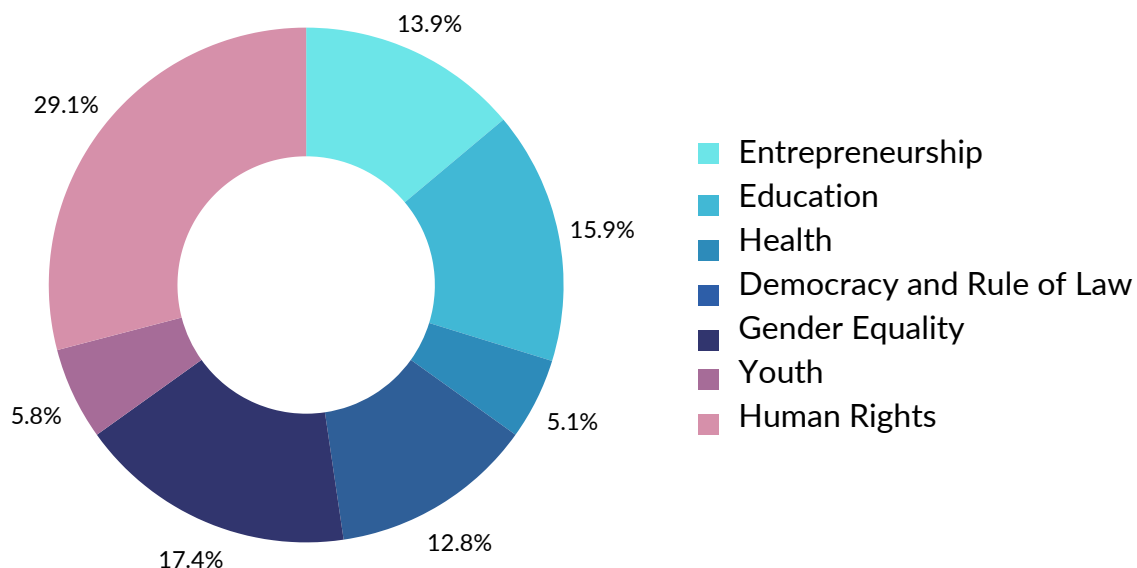
# Grants Breakdown

In 2024, AWIU distributed \$86,001 in grants, including to 15 grassroots women-led organizations, 11 International Women of Courage, and one IWOC alumna.

## Grants by Region



## Grants by Topic



# The AWIU Community

---

Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” While a small organization in terms of membership (128) and budget, AWIU’s outreach is significant and global.

Our members, based across the United States, are united by a shared commitment to AWIU’s mission, vision, and values. They represent a wide range of life experiences and professions, including doctors and diplomats, attorneys and educators, business leaders and caregivers, women just beginning their careers, and those who have already blazed a trail.

Our work is deeply enriched by the global relationships we cultivate—with one another, with grantees, the International Women of Courage, the U.S. State Department, women in the foreign service, academic institutions, and supporting companies (see Our Supporters on page 15). These connections are at the heart of all we do. Together, grounded in our shared values, we create real and lasting impact in the lives of each other, our neighbors, and our friends who span the globe.



# What People are Saying



"I came into this program with an idea of what I was going to do and upon the first meeting with my passport mentor, everything changed. Not only did I pursue my passions of social entrepreneurship further, but I also met so many wonderful and inspiring people that I otherwise would most probably not have met. That first meeting was like the bud of a flower and since then, I've had the opportunity to grow the petals of that flower as more opportunities sprang up both within the strong network of AWIU and as I engaged further with my local community."

Kelly Zhang, a Junior at Polytechnic High School and Passport participant

"AWIU's Passport to the Future program has helped me become a more well-rounded global citizen. Through a co-designed project with my partner, Melody, and Alpha Women, I've refined skills such as web design and product marketing, all in the pursuit of social entrepreneurship!"



Ryann Rodney, a Senior at Trevor Day School and Passport participant



"I love playing matchmaker, connecting people that fit together. It's like connecting live wires and making sparks happen. Just call me a mad scientist! I love the opportunity to continue to develop human virtues—patience, kindness, empathy, skillful means. I love developing ideas and bringing them to others and having others ground the ideas and making them practical enough to happen. Recruiting and mentoring Passports is a passion, this is where I was meant to be...this is where my education and training has led me."

Barbara Rubio, AWIU Member and 2024 Bernice Behrens Founder's Award recipient

# Financial Highlights

---

Balance Sheet		
Assets	2024	2023
Cash	\$62,988	\$60,117
Investments	\$790,245	\$388,504
Prepaid Expense	-	\$10,329
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$853,233</b>	<b>\$636,281</b>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Deferred Revenues	\$28,296	\$67,464
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$736,435	\$492,349
Restricted Net Assets	\$88,502	\$76,468
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$853,233</b>	<b>\$636,281</b>
Income Statement		
Revenue		
Contributions	\$164,324	\$48,671
Programs & Events	\$317,141	\$193,792
Membership	\$29,314	\$28,340
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$510,779</b>	<b>\$270,803</b>
Delegation	\$86,962	-
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$597,741</b>	<b>\$270,803</b>
Expenses		
Grants	\$86,001	\$108,450
Other Programs	\$158,943	\$87,536
Management & General	\$113,873	\$73,564
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$358,817</b>	<b>\$269,550</b>
Delegation	\$87,460	-
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$446,277</b>	<b>\$269,550</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$151,464</b>	<b>\$1,253</b>
<b>Investment/Other Income</b>	<b>\$104,655</b>	<b>\$94,884</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$256,119</b>	<b>\$96,137</b>

# Our Supporters

---

American Women for International Understanding thanks the following organizations for their support in 2024:

American University School of International Service  
The Ann Peppers Foundation  
BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse  
Bloomberg Philanthropies  
Capital Group  
Council on Foreign Relations  
Deloitte  
The Walt Disney Company  
EnCompass LLC  
The Flow World  
Forever 21  
Fulbright U.S. Student Program  
Georgetown University SFS  
Hahn & Hahn LLP  
IES Aboard  
Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies  
LNBYG, LLP  
McNicholas & McNicholas, LLP  
Oaktree Capital Management  
O'Melveny  
Paul Hastings LLP  
Payden & Rygel  
Peace Corps  
UCLA Anderson School of Management  
USAID - Humanitarian Assistance  
U.S. Bank Private Wealth Management  
United Nations Association USA Pasadena Chapter

# Board of Directors

---

Nancy McAniff Annick, *President*

Margaret Heflin Sabbag, *Immediate Past President*

Ambassador (ret.) Eunice Reddick, *Vice President*

Barbara Rubio, *Vice President*

Jane Mursener Wetzel, *Secretary*

Noelle Newton, *Treasurer*

Hanh Dao

Barbara Disko

Earlie Douglas

Magda Fehema-Sharkasi

Mary Pat Garr

Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller

Betty Houbion

Kathleen Huston

Ingrid Johnson

Chun Lin

Diane M. McGlinchey

Cynthy Moffatt

Gayle Graham Morin

Marsha Niazmand

Robin Winter Odem

Maria Emmi Schory

Joan M. Starr, Ph.D.

Janice Meagher Trojan

Carol Ann Warren

# Get in Touch

---



202-643-1196



[awiu.org](http://awiu.org)



[info@awiu.org](mailto:info@awiu.org)



1900 East Golf Road, Suite 950, Schaumburg, IL 60173



[facebook.com/AWIUOfficial](https://facebook.com/AWIUOfficial)



[@awiuofficial](https://www.instagram.com/awiuofficial)



[linkedin.com/company/american-women-for-international-understanding/](https://linkedin.com/company/american-women-for-international-understanding/)



<https://www.youtube.com/@AWIUOfficial1968>