



AAUW McLean Area Branch 2026 STEM Essay Contest

For official use only
Entry Number: _____
Date Received: _____

Essay Theme: This essay contest is open to 7th and 8th grade students, girls and boys, in Fairfax County VA. It challenges them to discover and publicize women including **women of color (non-white)** who made a difference in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, **but who received little or no recognition for their contributions while they were alive. Strong preference is given to essays about women who are not well known even today.** Describe one woman's **(1) STEM contribution, (2) its impact, and (3) why you selected the woman who is the subject of your essay.**

Essay Guidelines:

- Essays must be no more than 500 words and include a bibliography with 3-5 sources (not part of the 500 words). Please follow the MLA style for formatting entries in the bibliography (called "Works Cited"). A good resource for MLA is <http://bit.ly/4pYdYBJ>.
- Essays will be judged for effectiveness in addressing the theme (description of the contribution, its impact, and your reason for selecting the woman), writing style (including organization, clarity, accuracy, originality in style, and word choice), and mechanics (including punctuation, grammar, spelling, and style of bibliography).
- Essays must be the student's original work. If an essay shows plagiarism or contains factual errors, it will not be eligible for an award.
- Do not include photos or graphics.
- See our "Tips" page at <https://mclean-va.aauw.net/tips-for-preparing-essay-for-aauw-mclean-area-branch-stem-essay-contest/>

Essay Submission:

- The deadline for submitting applications is Sunday, February 8, 2026, at 11:00 pm EST.** No late submissions will be accepted. Only one essay submission per student is permitted.
- Students must download the application (Word document or fillable PDF) from <https://mclean-va.aauw.net/stem-essay-contest-2026/>, and email the completed application to mcleanaauw@gmail.com. **All submissions will be acknowledged with a return email stating that a complete application has been received. Students should verify that they have received this email.**

Essay Prizes:

- First Place \$100, Honorable Mention (3 Prizes) \$25** (Winners will be notified by email.)
- The student awarded First Place must be able to attend the AAUW McLean Area Branch Event on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, to receive the award and will be invited to read his or her essay at the event.** All winners and their parents or guardians will be invited to participate.

Contestant

Last Name _____		First Name _____	
Street _____	City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
School Name _____	Grade _____	email Address _____	

Student and Parent/Guardian Permissions Required

We give the American Association of University Women (AAUW) permission to use this entry for judging and publicity purposes. We also give AAUW permission to publish photographs of the winners taken during the awards event or provided by the students in print and on the AAUW McLean Area Branch website at <http://mclean-va.aauw.net/>.

We affirm that this is the original work of this student.

Student _____	Date _____
Parent _____	Phone _____ email Address _____

NOTE: Please make a copy of these materials for your records. Essays cannot be returned to you.

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION, SEND AN EMAIL TO mcleanaauw@gmail.com. BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND SCHOOL IN ANY EMAIL.

For official use only:

Entry Number: _____

Title: _____

Essay (No more than 500 words):

For official use only:

Entry Number: _____

Works Cited