

**2025 – 2026**

**CFUW ST. THOMAS  
ANNUAL REPORT**

## President's Report

Our upcoming Annual Meeting will be the last meeting I preside over as president. Those two years went fast! I was relatively new to the group when I began my term, and I have been grateful throughout for the friendly guidance of past president Diane Marcou and all on the Executive.

Our membership is growing gradually.... I guess the word gets around about the interesting speakers we hear from at each meeting. After our September icebreakers and social evening to catch up on each others' summers and meet new members, in October we heard a fascinating presentation about Artificial Intelligence (AI!) by Dr. Magdalene Ravichandran of Fanshawe College. In November we toured the beautiful and long-awaited new Barrie Family Hospice in St. Thomas. In January, we got ourselves moving after all our Christmas indulgences with Barb Kunz's Sit and Shine evening. In February we had hoped to hear from Sarah Coleman from the St. Thomas Foodbank but had to make a quick change after Sarah came down with a terrible cold that she wisely decided not to share with us. It was Black History Month, so we learned together as we did a Black History quiz, and then one of our newest members, Chantal Felix stepped forward to tell of her life between coming to Canada from Guyana as a young child and now an active member of the community in Port Stanley where she lives with her husband and three great kids. In March our own Barb Green drew on her experience as a former member of the St. Thomas branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and offered us an excellent presentation on Historical Architecture in St. Thomas and Elgin. Our final speaker for the year, in April, was Elizabeth Kusinski, a very gifted artist from Port Stanley, who talked to us about life as an artist.... and as a businessperson to make art a full-time career. I have so enjoyed learning together with you from this diverse group of speakers!

Although our formal program for the year will be over until September's meeting, I am grateful that one of our members, Bronwyn Fitz-James is making her dream of a Literary Salon a reality with the event she will host later this month. That will be a time for sharing writings or recitations or musical presentations and I am looking forward to it.

Just last week our members hosted another very successful Bridge and Euchre night, an important fundraiser for our scholarships. I am sorry to have missed it, (it conflicted with my annual Bruce Trail hike), but I was able to send a little baking along, and I am very much looking forward to being part of our next spring fundraiser, the yard sale at Rosie Rhubarb on June 13.

Thanks to all of you for our time together, the learning and the social times, and the friendships we share. I want to wish Lori Baldwin-Sands all the best as she starts her term as President, and I hope I can be as supportive to her as Diane was to me.

Nora Sanders

## Vice President's Report

It has been a wonderful opportunity to continue in the role of Vice-President for the past year.

The growth we as an organization experienced and, the warmth and hospitality extended to our community has been noted in all the work accomplished.

There has been time to reflect on successes and, time to review the changes that are required to satisfy the needs of the group.

I am mindful of all the suggestions and have adjusted programming ideas as we move forward together.

I wish to thank the executive for their work. A special thank you to Nora Sanders and her leadership for the past two years. Her dedication to defining roles and recruitment of new members has set the bar to a higher standard.

Lastly, a moment of quiet prayer to all of our members who have experienced loss and struggles this past year. It was emotional to witness the supportive environment surrounding members and their families during times of crisis. Those powerful moments solidify the strength and courage of the membership and the importance of lifting each other and supporting each other.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Baldwin-Sands

## Past President's Report 2025-26

My final responsibility in my second year as Past President is to complete the nominations for the Executive for 2026-27.

The Executive nominations are:

Past President – Nora Sanders

President – Lori Baldwin Sands

Vice President – Ellen Luft

Treasurer – Chantel Felix

Secretary – Barb Green

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Marcou

## Community Engagement Fund

The University Women's Club St. Thomas Community Engagement Fund (CEF) year has been successful in furthering our objectives of advancing education and relieving poverty in Elgin County.

The CEF fund provided \$3000 and CFUW St. Thomas provided \$600 towards the scholarship fund. This enabled us to deliver six \$600 scholarships to female secondary school graduates in Elgin County. We also donated \$500 to YWCA Keep a Roof campaign.

The 2025-2026 executive team included:

Chair: Karen Harrison, Secretary-Treasurer: Mary-Ellen Bolt, Member-at-Large: Anne Kenny. All executive team members will continue for the next term if approved and elected by the CFUW membership.

The CEF benefitted from 2 fundraising event as follows:

1. Rosy Rhubarb yard sale in Shedden on June 7, 2025
2. Annual Dessert, Bridge and Euchre fundraiser on April 27, 2026

Members of CFUW St. Thomas and our community made monetary donations to the CEF. Please note any cheques should be payable to **University Women's Club St. Thomas Community Engagement Fund**.

This year's Rosy Rhubarb yard sale in Shedden is scheduled for **June 13, 2026**.

Thanks to all St. Thomas CFUW members who continue to support CEF.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Harrison

**April 30, 2026**

## Dessert Euchre/Bridge Report

This event was held on Monday, April 27. This year the committee consisted of Suzanne Baehr, Joan Dennis, Cathy Hedley, Nancy Johnson, and myself.

Rita Morgan printed the tickets and Cathy Hedley was in charge of selling them.

There were 42 tables sold with both men and women playing. Members did a great job of donating a large variety of desserts - the table looked lovely. The card tables were laid with plates and napkins in spring colours.

This year we put numbers on the tables and drew matching numbers randomly from a basket to determine which table would go up to the dessert table when. This system worked very well.

There were 4 card prizes - mostly donated by Joan Dennis and Suzanne Baehr and put together by Joan and Nancy Johnson. There were 6 door prizes – lovely flowers donated by Canadale Nurseries at the behest of Nancy Johnson

Suzanne Baehr was in charge of the 50/50 draw and she, Maureen Jenkins, Rita Morgan and Diane Marcou were able to sell enough tickets to pay out \$500 to the winner.

Various members had signed up for different time slots to help that night. They worked diligently to get the room set up, get the desserts out to the main table, make up plates of left over dessert, and clean up.

Thanks to everyone involved!

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Green

## Membership Report 2025-2026

Membership for the 2024-2025 season was 41.

We had 49 members this season, but with the passing of one member, we now have 48 members.

We welcomed 10 new members: Debra Bagshaw, Sandra Behie, Deb Cater, Chantel Felix, Helen James, Fier Johnson, Terri Kaiser, Kathy Kewley, Ann Low and Laima Pecs.

Respectfully submitted

Jeanne Cunningham - Membership

## Archives Report

The CFUW Archives are a fascinating mix of official minutes, newspaper clippings and photographs. All document the many activities and accomplishments of this group, established in 1951 and receiving the official charter in 1952.

I have researched and printed a list of the items in the Elgin County Archives so that I am now aware of what is contained in that collection.

President Nora Sanders went through the archive material with me, and we have sorted out any duplicate material for disposal.

The items that I have been entrusted with have now been sorted chronologically, and my next steps are to see what might be already contained in the Elgin County Archives, and to ensure that there are no gaps in the historical material that I will hopefully be sending them later this year.

I will be doing a summary of the minutes from the years 2001 to 2025 over the summer to get that ready for archiving. This will follow the format from previous histories.

I have posted copies of the following under the “History of our Club” tab on the website, should any of the members wish to peruse the information.

- Original Club Charter 1952
- Highlights of our History as previously posted by original website creator
- CFUW St Thomas History – 1951 to 1964 long version
- CFUW St Thomas History – 1951 to 1976
- CFUW St Thomas History – 1976 to 2001

I have organized some of the loose photos and asked current CFUW members to help identify the date, location, event, and people pictured. I have not yet spoken to the Elgin County Archives to see if they would add these to the collection, or if the photos need to be scanned and labelled first.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maureen Jenkins

## Website Report

The CFUW website has continued to be a work-in-process over the past year. The initial headings have been organized with drop-down menus so that it is easy to find the information most relevant to the current year.

Since September 2025, our Jetpack statistics show that there have been about 1300 visits to the website (up 54% from previously), and 457 visitors (up 94%). As one might expect, the majority of viewers are from Canada, but it was interesting to see that a few were from the USA, Germany, China, Singapore and Hong Kong. The main pages viewed by visitors are the interest groups, our group contact information and the 2025-2026 program.

This year we now have a short running summary of the activity portion of our meetings, so that if a member is not able to attend, they can find out what went on. The summary also gives prospective members an idea of what our group is about. The “History of our Club” tab on the website has been updated with a copy of the original Club Charter, as well as the club history summaries that have been prepared every 25 years or so since 1951. These histories have short summaries of each year’s activities and could be of interest to old and new members alike.

If there are any suggestions from the members as to what they might find interesting or useful on the website, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maureen Jenkins

## Scholarship Report for the 2024/2025 School Year:

For the past several years our club has provided one \$500.00 for a deserving young woman graduate in each of the six secondary schools in Elgin County. In May 2025 the CEF executive suggested that we could increase the amount of our scholarships to \$600.00 and the full membership approved the increase. This increase would be reviewed to assess the possibility to maintain the new amount.

The winners for the 2024/25 school year are:

AVSS - Erin Chalmers  
CECI - Maddison DeMoor  
EESS - Maya Berlin  
PCI - Kym Vaz-Griffith  
SJHS - Nicole Williamson  
WESS- Hannah Hounsell

Unfortunately the number of letters of appreciation has fallen in the past years in spite of the best efforts by the schools. We had 3 letters this year. One woman is enrolled in Engineering, and the other 2 ladies is taking Business to become Accountants.

Respectfully submitted by: Rita Morgan

## Between the Lines Book Club

Our book club had eight books scheduled to be discussed between September and May, on the 3rd Tuesday of the said month. We will have met eight times with an anticipated last meeting, May 19 2026. There were eight 2pm meetings. The largest attendance at 2pm meetings was nine with the fewest being four.

Our books included:

Eleanore of Avignon  
Apples Never Fall  
The Art Thief  
The Life Cycle of the Common Octopus  
The Glass Maker  
The Missing Millionaire  
The No Show  
The Women

Planning for the 2026/2027 book club is in progress with some varied titles having been submitted thus far.

We would like to make two recommendations for the coming year:

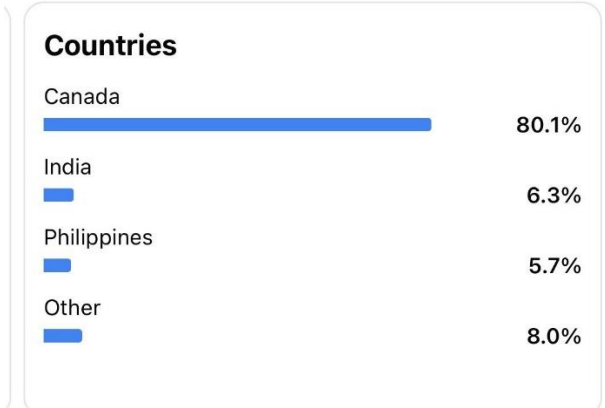
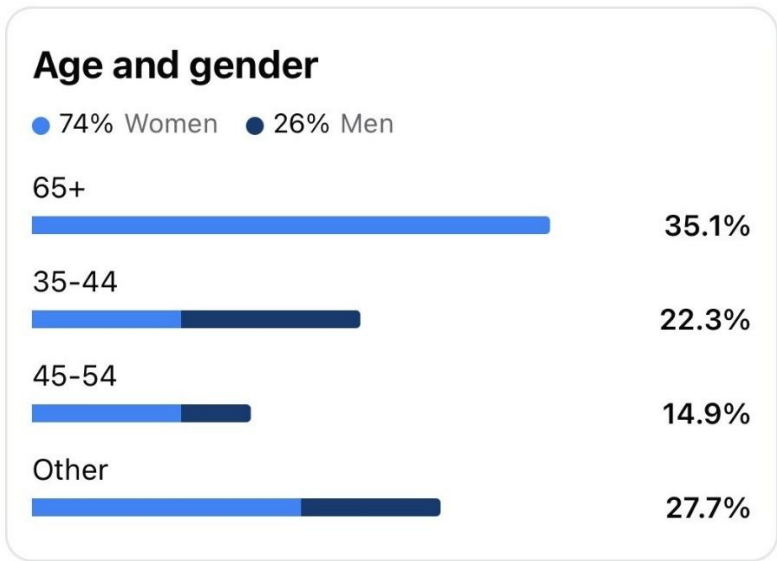
- 1) encourage more hosts to volunteer due to increased members of the book club. We could then, possibly offer two monthly meetings (afternoons/evenings) as needed, according to interest. We currently have 27 listed members.
- 2) encourage carpooling to monthly meetings by the host and/or convenor sending out a list of confirmed attendees.

Respectively submitted,  
Jennifer Schuster  
Co-convenor

## Facebook Report

Our Facebook page continues to be relatively well trafficked and has been a source of outreach for some new recent members, so I believe it continues to be of value to ensuring continued outreach and engagement for the Club.

Here are some statistics about our followers:



Respectfully submitted,

Amelia Sloan