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INSPIRING WOMEN

Highlights Issue 2023

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Through My Lens

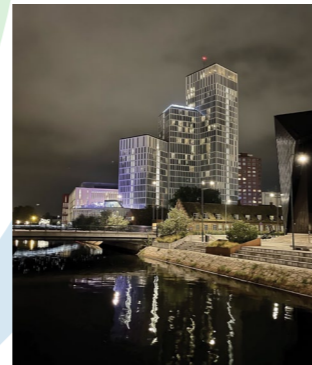
This compilation feature focuses on the current issue's theme with a photo and short caption from multiple contributors. For this issue, we are highlighting the Foundation Night Gala at the FAWCO Biennial Conference 2023.



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Who best to tell us about the best places to visit in a new city than those who live there?



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The Target Program

Amanda Drollinger, AWC Central Scotland, 2023-2025 Target Program Chair introduces us to Awesome Blossoms, the 2023-2025 FAWCO Target Project.



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We wish to thank the following companies who advertised in this issue.

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- TASIS
- Janet Darrow Real Estate
- The Pajama Company
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Here at *Inspiring Women Magazine* we do our very best to bring you inspirational stories about the lives of FAWCO women from around the world. I hope you'll agree that 2023 was a bumper year in this regard.

2023 was a year of transition for me personally and for *Inspiring Women*. My family life changed dramatically with the sudden loss of both my parents and the addition of their 10-year-old dog to our family. At the same time, I was honored to be asked to take over the role of Editor when Liz MacNiven decided it was time to step down to enjoy retirement and spend more time with her family. Over the previous 6 years, Liz, along with Elsie Bose, and their growing support team nursed and nourished *Inspiring Women* from a creative concept to the professional publication it is today. With Liz's departure, the team was reorganized and expanded. We now have a well-balanced team to support the creation of *Inspiring Women*. During the year we brought you issues focused on maturing with gusto, facing and thriving through change, all things fashion, and embracing culture. We profiled 32 women and had over 25 members contribute to our features. Twenty-nine different FAWCO clubs from all FAWCO regions and FAUSA were represented. We even profiled our first couple. We continued to shine a spotlight on FAWCO clubs and their cities. We introduced our readers to four member authors and their books. We celebrated our readers by making contributions to FAWCO's Target Project, Awesome Blossoms, in the name of each issue's Inspired Reader. We continued to work on our goal of increasing the quality and quantity of photos which we believe help tell the stories we are sharing.

At the FAWCO Conference in Bratislava we enjoyed meeting FAWCO members and learning from you what you want us to focus on moving forward. We also made connections with many club leaders helping us to find the inspiring women we bring to you in each issue. It was difficult to choose which profiles and features to include in this issue of *Inspiring Women Highlights*. While we only have space to include one profile and feature from each issue, every

a note from the editor



woman we profiled or asked to write a feature article added depth and inspiration to our magazine and we thank them all. Remember, you can always go back to catch any of the issues you may have missed or reread the ones you loved at the FAWCO website. There you will find all our issues going back to the very first one in 2017.

We spent the end of 2023 planning our second Inspiring Women Live! event. Created around the women in our September 2023 issue, *Women Talking About Fashion*, the two-hour, interactive Zoom event held on February 28, 2024 included keynote speakers and breakout sessions on topics as varied as the fashion industry, sustainability – both in the industry and in our clothing choices, inclusivity, sewing, personal style and closet organization.

We look forward to sharing more about FAWCO's Inspiring Women in our 2024 issues and focusing on *Democracy, Women Working With Words, Entrepreneurship and the Family Connection*.

We hope you enjoy this brief look back over the past year and you will join us on our journey in 2024!

Best wishes!
Michele

Inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org

introducing this issue

Change is a big agitator to our comfort zones. Like many agitators, the temporary discomfort of change gives way to the new normal and if you are wired right, it helps you grow and makes you better.

Entering 2023 the *Inspiring Women* Team knew we would be losing our terrific editor, Liz MacNiven. Liz and I started this magazine together and nurtured it through the first five years. Like a small child in development, we knew we needed supportive experts to aid us in its evolution and we brought on some of the best that FAWCO has to the team. The result was a sea change in the look and content of the magazine and helped to foster growth of the *Inspiring Women* "brand". Without Liz, who knows where we would have ended up but happily, we have a dynamic, talented, and exciting team moving the magazine forward. The resulting product speaks for itself.

In February 2023 we started with a look into *Maturity*, profiling women who have pulled the rug out from under the preconceived notions of moving forward in our years.

The May issue was a final good-bye to Liz and official hello to the new organization and the new team members. It revisited some of the profilees from previous issues and introduced us to FAWCO's new President.

September was a personal favorite. *Women and Fashion* was about so much more than clothes. First and foremost, it highlighted glorious FAWCO women with fantastic talent and drive. Women with a passion to design, with a desire to make fashion accessible and inclusive and prodding an industry to accept its responsibilities to its workers and the planet.

November 2023 was the perfect way to end our year of Change. *Embracing Cultures* was the perfect theme. Women whose lives put them in unfamiliar places and situations from where they could have easily retreated but chose to stay, grow, and flourish.

As I write this, we are on the eve of launching our first issue of 2024, *Women and Democracy*, also an ode in many ways to change. I hope that you have enjoyed every issue and learned something from the women in them. Recognizing inspiring women throughout our clubs and introducing them to our readers reinforces to me that women changing the world will only make it better.

Elsie
Founder

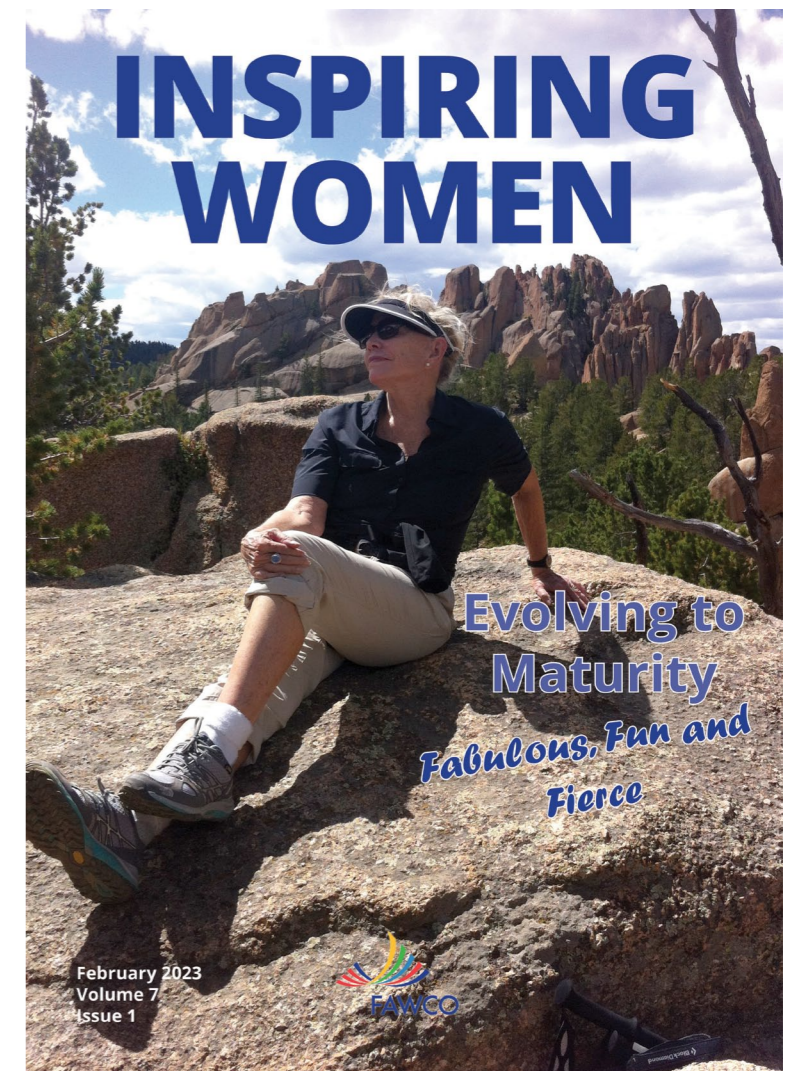
Women Embracing Maturity

FAWCO's and FAUSA's world of women is expansive in geography, experiences, and age. In 2021 and 2022, we looked at the younger generation. In this issue we wanted to celebrate those who had reached a certain point in their life and either chose, or were forced, to make a pivot. It was no surprise that we found an abundance of women who had stories to tell related to the topic. Because, as we learned, moving on in years doesn't mean that these women are giving up their seats at the table.

Women Embracing Maturity celebrated and elevated women who were taking on "the next phase" of their lives in a specific way and loving it. How they were achieving new dreams, reaching goals and remaining relevant. These women are embracing maturity and are shining examples of how living a fulfilling and rewarding life doesn't stop at a set age.

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Bloom and Blossom Where You're Planted!

Georgia Regnault, a member of AWC The Hague, came to the Netherlands for "one year." Fifty plus years on, her life and career have been full of caring, compassion and FAWCO.



Georgia Regnault

I lived for 21 years in the same house in a suburb of Providence, Rhode Island and went for 12 years to Lincoln School, a Quaker girls school. I was the youngest of four siblings, two brothers and a sister. We made yearly a road trip as this family of six, including two cross-country summer trips in 1953 and 1954. That instilled in me a love of travel. I studied at Mount Holyoke College – a women's college in western Massachusetts. Almost all my life, I have played tennis and field hockey. I never attended a camp (although probably would have loved it, as I love being around people).

I came to the Netherlands in 1965 for one year, but after meeting my (future) husband in June 1966, it seemed I was destined to live abroad. Besides meeting Peter Regnault, the wedding of Princess Beatrix to Claus van Amsberg in March 1966 was a highlight for a young lady from Rhode Island.

Keys to the future begin with education

One cannot live almost 80 years without having several defining moments, but I guess the overriding one has been my education, especially my elementary and high school. I learned at a relatively young age that I could do anything and had the right to do anything: never to be put down because I was female! This sort of education really allows a girl to realize her potential. My parents believed in the importance of education and that their two daughters were just as important

Georgia with the badge of her knighthood in 2016



At the end of the FAWCO symposium "Stand up Against Human Trafficking", the mayor of The Hague, Jozias van Aartsen, was happy to announce that His Royal Highness King Willem-Alexander had appointed Georgia Regnault as Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau.





Georgia and husband Peter in 2015 (left)

George signing the deed of the AWC clubhouse (below)

Involvement with American Women's Clubs

I married an Americanophile, who originally wanted to emigrate to the USA. When we didn't, but moved to Germany with Royal Dutch Shell instead, Peter was extremely supportive and encouraging with my activities with the AWC of Hamburg.

Challenges along the way

Public speaking and writing! I have held many offices in college, in the three AWCs and also as FAWCO President, but I still get nervous when I have to speak in public, especially if I don't do it regularly. The second challenge was writing. I was a math major in college and not very good in linguistics.



to educate as their two sons. They sent my sister and me to Europe between our junior and senior years, because they felt that was part of our education.

Other defining moments in my life

Making the decision to marry a Dutchman (rather innocently I might add); then living the rest of my life outside of the USA and having a son, Philippe, in 1970, and two more children followed, Lara in 1973 and Alexander in 1978.

I have been actively involved in AWCs since 1967 (Hamburg, The Hague and Curaçao) and in FAWCO since 1982, ultimately becoming President of AWC The Hague (1982-1984 and 1994-1995) after having served in several financial positions, FAWCO President, FAWCO Treasurer (1985-1987 and 1995-1997) and The FAWCO Foundation Treasurer (2006-2008). Now in "retirement," I seem to be the archivist for three different organizations.

And a royal honor!

I received the Dutch royal honor of Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau on October 9, 2016 at the end of the FAWCO Symposium "Stand Up Against Human Trafficking." The grade of Knight is awarded for outstanding personal achievements and special merits for society. Six weeks later my husband passed away; it was an autumn of intense happiness and grief.

Forty years ago, I had to write the President's page in the AWC The Hague magazine every month. I remember not wanting it to be only thank-yous to her, and her and her, but something with a bit more grit or story to tell. I painstakingly finished my first and said to my husband, "Oh, gosh - one down, nine more to go!" And when re-elected for a second term, not usually the case in The Hague back then, back to the writing table for 10 more articles!! Sometimes, I even wrote in the Dutch tradition of poetry; it seemed to come more easily from my pen!

And now:

I haven't quite overcome my nervousness of public speaking, especially when out of practice, but I do write every two months for a local glossy magazine for the expats/internationals living in my neighborhood. Still look at the blank computer screen and have trouble with the first sentence, but I love interviewing people and the research that goes into my articles.

Helping people, and the importance of friends

Helping people feel at home, both as a professional relocation consultant and active fifty-year member of AWCs. Learned from my mom as a child about the importance of entertaining and helping friends; when I married my Dutchman, he felt quite the same about the importance of maintaining friendships and helping people. It helped that he was a genuine Americanophile and our house was always open.

In terms of myself, I measure my success and achievements by my happiness in developing them. Sometimes it is an ego trip in the sense that

Georgia's entire family was on hand for daughter Lara's wedding.

my work still helps me to develop and learn, but I hope that, at the same time, it benefits others.

Embrace or resist maturity?

I think I embrace it, but also feel sad yet grateful every morning that I wake up. I became a widow in 2016 at the age of 73 after a long battle for my husband with a devastating Parkinsonism/MSA. One piece of advice I received after his passing was that "You will get used to the fact that you won't get used to it." These words still comfort me today, as his death was probably the last most defining moment of my life.

My mother, sister and one brother all passed away at the age of 76, so I consider myself lucky that I am still on this earth, active and as happy as I can be without a partner to share the ups and downs. I ache when I see friends go through illness problems with themselves or their loved ones. I ache when I see the world around us seem to be collapsing. I ache when I meet young Ukrainian women who have fled to the Netherlands and especially a large group in my neighborhood, whom I try to help. And I ache when there is no partner in my home to reflect about these things and comfort me.



PIANO GIRL PLAYBOOK

notes on a musical life.



ROBIN
MELOY
GOLDSBY

In My Own Words - When I'm Sixty-Four

feature

Author Robin Meloy Goldsby is also a Steinway Artist and popular solo piano recording artist with over 200 million streams on the Pandora platform in the USA.



Robin Meloy Goldsby
Photo by Sascha Christopher.

Another song lyric comes true. I shouldn't be surprised that sixty-four sneaked up on me, but since I've spent most of the last three decades assuming I'm still thirty-two, the idea that I'm a year away from taking my musician union pension seems a little extreme. In honor of this milestone, I've composed a list of sixty-four discoveries I've made in the last year.

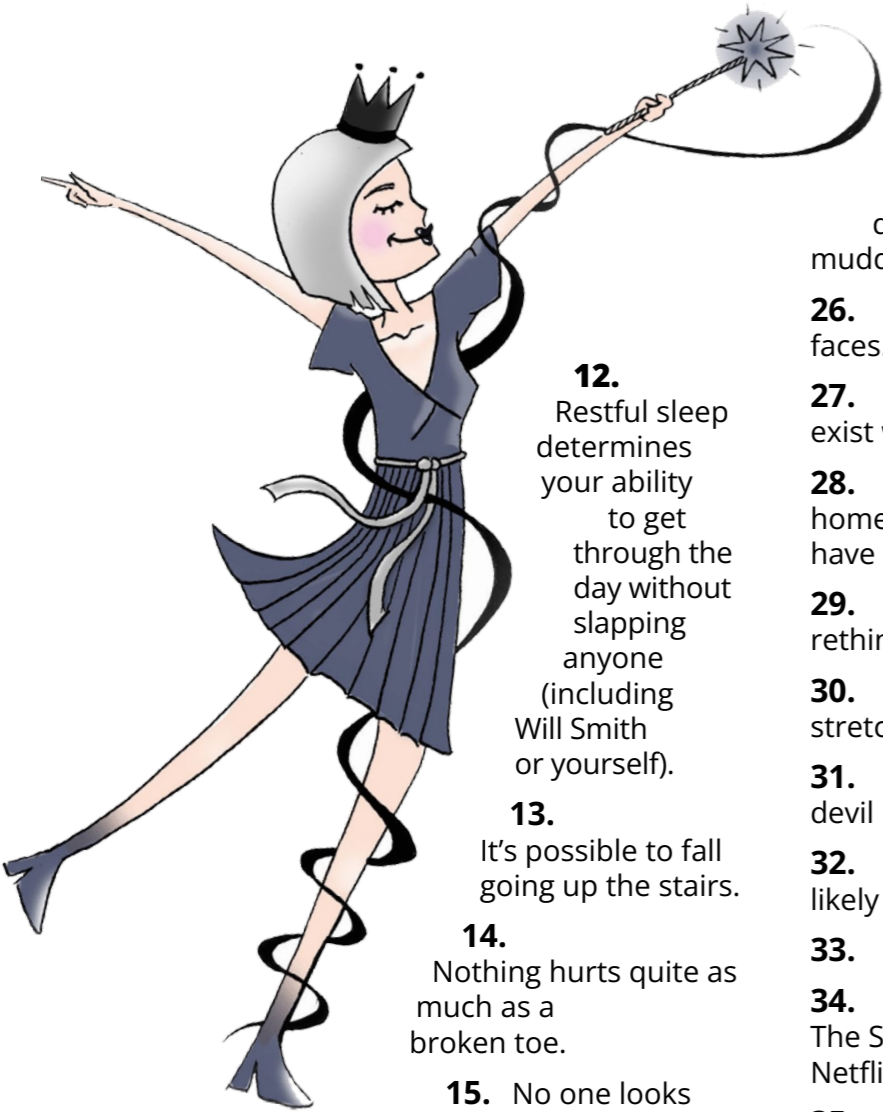
1. Inanimate objects (such as plastic wrap, coat hangers and electrical cables) are capable of attack.
2. There are more idiots in the world than one would hope.
3. There are more kind people in the world than one would expect.
4. Your breasts get bigger as you age, but so does everything else.
5. Underwear costs more than shoes.

The cover of
Robin's latest
book
Illustrated by
Julia Goldsby

6. Lingerie salespeople will try to convince you to buy a smaller size bra for "comfort and support." Don't listen to them or you will end up with

underwire-induced rib fractures, especially if you spend a lot of time sitting on a piano bench.

7. Spanx (the 21st Century girdle) make you feel (and look) like a human sausage.
8. A good marriage depends on trust but relies heavily on laughter.
9. Nothing beats tomato soup and grilled cheese (even if it's vegan).
10. Jackie O had it right. Big black sunglasses are the ultimate fashion accessory.
11. Reciting the details of a complicated Will Smith movie plot will put your partner into a stupor.



12. Restful sleep determines your ability to get through the day without slapping anyone (including Will Smith or yourself).

13. It's possible to fall going up the stairs.

14. Nothing hurts quite as much as a broken toe.

15. No one looks good when their feet hurt.

16. Hunger and bloat are flip sides of the same coin.

17. Your kids will either leave home at age eighteen or live in your basement until they're forty. Either way, you'll be worried.

18. No one looks good in beaded fringe. Except maybe Tina Turner or the drag queen Kim Chi, but you're not them.

19. You probably don't need two cars. You might not even need one.

20. Autumn leaves might be pretty, but they can also make you sad.

21. Autumn leaves, once they drift by your window and land on your front steps, are slippery (see #13).

22. The ocean never loses its appeal, even if you suffer from fear of fish.

23. Your own kids are now older than you are (in your head).

24. Your doctors all look like they're fifteen.

25. Some of your kids' friends are now doctors and lawyers, which is disconcerting because you remember their muddy hands and chocolate-smearing faces.

26. You really miss those chocolate-smearing faces.

27. Your children work in fields that didn't exist when you were their age.

28. One activity a day is plenty. Dinner at home does not count as an activity, unless you have guests.

29. Embrace positive change, even if it means rethinking your pronouns.

30. You can never have too many pairs of stretchy black pants.

31. Fruit flies were sent to this earth by the devil herself.

32. If you think you see a big mouse, it is likely a rat.

33. Women leaders are better for the world.

34. As much as you might hope it to be so, The Squid Games is not the heartwarming Netflix sequel to My Octopus Teacher.

35. Privilege breeds arrogance. Arrogance leads to indifference; indifference destroys the planet.

36. A compassionate person always wins, even when she loses.

37. If you must get dressed up, wear pajamas with bling.

38. No one looks good in plaid, except maybe a very buff logger, and you're not good with a chainsaw. Yet.

39. Pick one vetted charity organization and support it any way you can. If you don't have cash, donate time, and create awareness.

40. Be nice to restaurant service people. Tip well. You want these people on your side.



41. Visit your friends whenever you can. They (or you) might not be around forever.

42. Fruit flies will be around forever.

43. Turn off the TV or the computer. Read a book, even a trashy one.

44. Magnesium and Vitamin D supplements solve all kinds of problems.

45. Go for a walk, even if it's raining and you forgot your umbrella.

46. Keep your eyes on your own paper.

47. Maintain an anti-clutter policy on your kitchen counter.

48. Have your piano tuned.

49. Black patent oxfords look hip with just about any outfit.

50. Tell people you love how much you love them. Often.

51. Buy local.

52. Go to a concert.

53. Support your local non-chain restaurant.

54. Always avoid the Balkan platter unless it's the specialty of your local restaurant.

55. If you're freaked out by the climate crisis, stop buying factory-farmed animal products and anything packaged in plastic (see #1).

56. Ask for help when you need it.

57. Help others when you can.

58. Dance, especially if someone is watching.

59. Be aware that the "advanced beginner's course" is likely more advanced than beginner.

60. Learn to love root vegetables and naps.

61. Carole F. Baskin is probably guilty of feeding her husband to the tigers.

62. Laugh, cry, craugh.

63. Every day is your best day. Ready, steady, go.

64. Remember that intermission is over. It's the second act of your life, sister. Onward.

"When I'm Sixty-Four" was originally published on www.robingoldsby.com in November 2021. She celebrated her 65th birthday in 2022 and is still embracing positive change, wearing black patent oxfords, and searching for a bra that fits.

Robin is the author of *Piano Girl; Waltz of the Asparagus People: The Further Adventures of Piano Girl; Rhythm: A Novel and Manhattan Road Trip, a collection of short stories about (what else?) musicians*. New from Backbeat Books – *Piano Girl Playbook: Notes on a Musical Life*.

Robin has performed numerous benefit concerts for FAWCO clubs and enjoys contributing to the fundraising efforts of her FAWCO sisters.



All illustrations are by Julia Goldsby.

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Goodbyes and New Beginnings

Our May issue focused on *Goodbyes and New Beginnings*. The *Inspiring Women* team was evolving as we said thank you to Liz MacNiven, Editor since the magazine's inception, and welcomed a new Editor, Michele Hendrikse Du Bois, and team members Connie Phlipot (Features Coordinator), Cristin Middlebrooks (Profile Coordinator) and Hollis Vaughen (Marketing Manager). The FAWCO and The FAWCO Foundation boards were also changing with elections being held at the Biennial Conference in Bratislava. We looked back at some of Liz's favorite profiles and features over the years, and did a follow-up on those women.

We also introduced our readers to the new *Inspiring Women* team and FAWCO's and The Foundation's new presidents.

Since change is a constant in life, we included features about embracing change. This issue also took us on a tour of Aberdeen, Scotland, introduced FAWCO's newest club IWC Moldova and shared FAWCO and FAUSA members' photo interpretations of the theme of *Goodbyes and New Beginnings*.



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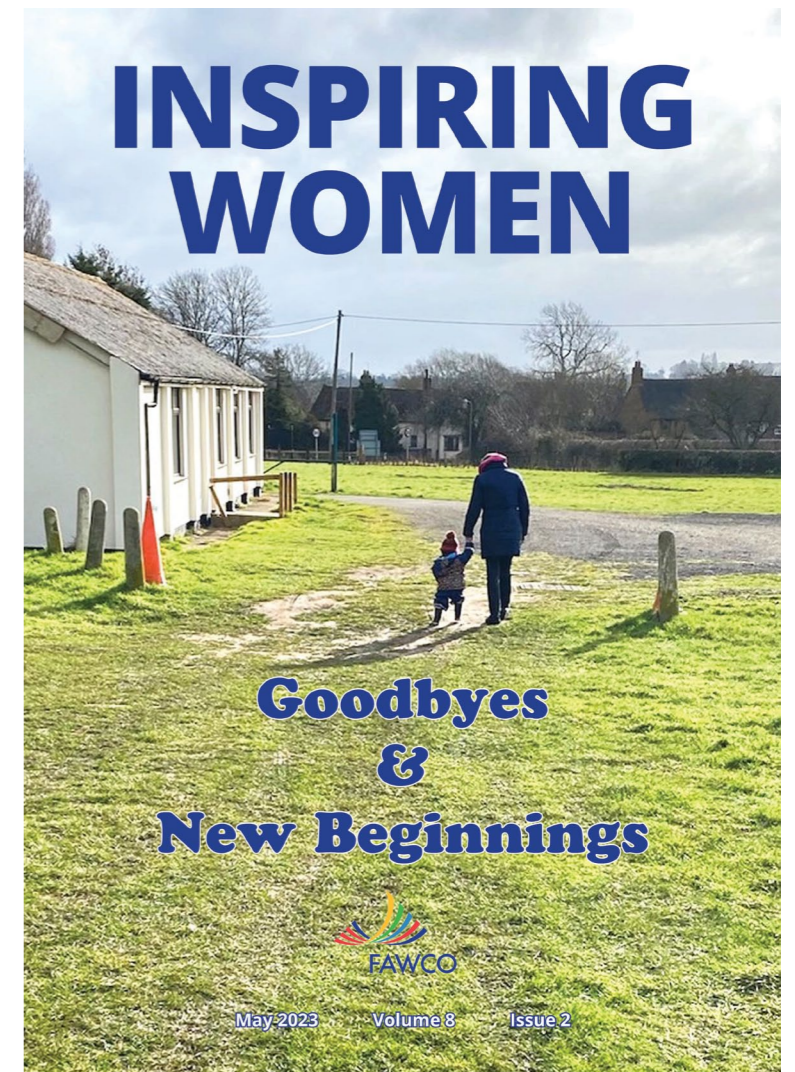


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- The Existential Traveller



Moving FAWCO into a Post-COVID-19 World

Ann Marie Morrow, AWC Finland, tells us about herself and her "new beginning" as FAWCO's incoming President.



Ann Marie

We moved around a lot when I was younger, mostly within upstate New York. I remember enjoying moving to new places, starting new schools and getting to know new people. Changing high schools was perhaps more challenging than changing a school when I was younger, but I was always on board for another adventure. I even went to three different universities, but managed to graduate a year early. I was somehow in a hurry, taking extra classes, working, volunteering, and, of course, partying too. My Finnish husband and I met at university in the US. I never imagined that I'd live so long in one place as I have now. I've been in Finland for more than 20 years; I came for one year and continue to "renew my contract" each year.

A defining moment in my life was when I was a freshman at university. I spent a lot of time with my three-year old cousin, who was getting cancer treatment. She and her family were staying at a nearby Ronald McDonald House, and I would stay there on Fridays as well (Pizza Fridays!) Meeting all the families and children going through such battles for life and death was a real perspective wakeup call for an 18-year-old. The wisdom and grace of the children and their families was humbling. It really shaped my outlook and perspective on what is important in life. I realized how short and fragile life is.

I don't want to waste my time doing things that don't matter and I try to spend my time in a way that I won't

Winter wonderland in Finland





Ann Marie with family on Bourbon Street, 2016

regret. There is an old adage that when someone is dying, no one regrets not having worked more. They wish they had spent more time with family and friends. Living in Finland has given me that possibility. Life is a lot slower here. When I first arrived, I couldn't imagine what anyone would do with four weeks of vacation! Now I know, and we have enjoyed amazing family trips together most every year.

Getting involved with FAWCO

My first taste of FAWCO connections happened in Stockholm at a Regional I attended there in September 2012 while I was president of AWC Finland. It was exciting being around other women who were living such similar lives. We swapped stories and bonded over shared experiences of Nordic life.

A standout memory was on the Sunday walking tour of the old town, *Gamla Stan*. We were in an ideal spot along the waterfront on this foggy morning, enjoying the iconic view of the Stockholm City Hall, when a local member from China asked if we'd like to try an impromptu Tai Chi session. I can still feel the

mist on my face and see the peace and glow on everyone's faces as we stretched and moved as one. Amazing experiences like this seem to happen whenever FAWCO friends gather.

I helped organize a Regional in Helsinki in April 2017, during Finland's 100-year anniversary of independence, while I was FAWCO Region 2 Coordinator. We hosted and met FAWCO members from seven different countries – connections that led somehow to my being asked to serve as 1st VP Communications. This was an unexpected new beginning for me, and I'm glad I was open to new challenges.

I have learned so much and gained so much from all my work and time on the FAWCO board since March 2019. Our first board served during the beginning of COVID-19. What a time of upheaval, isolation and turmoil. The women on that board in 2019–2021 were kind, smart, caring and resilient, and after working with colleagues like that, I only wanted to continue being around that inspiring energy. Many of us stayed on for the 2021–2023 board and I'm grateful for the time I get to be around and learn from all of them.

Saying goodbye to those who move off the board is bittersweet. You get so used to being in regular contact via WhatsApp or email that it feels like you've lost a friend for a while when jobs change. But, FAWCO being what it is, luckily we still get to see each other on various teams and at in-person meetings. How fabulous it was to see Rozanne in Belgium this past November and to bump into Shweta at sunset at the top of the MAS building in Antwerp! I haven't tested it much yet, due to COVID-19 restrictions the past years, but it really feels like the FAWCO family will welcome you wherever you go. I love seeing pictures of people I now know meeting up for coffee in Paris, a museum tour in New York or wine in London! A worldwide circle of friendly connections.

As I look forward to the next board term, I imagine helping support this dynamic organization into a post-COVID-19 world by building on the strengths we have, bridging the virtual with in-person meetings and becoming

stronger with diversity and inclusiveness, helping to make FAWCO a place where members will feel empowered and have agency and a sense of belonging.

“Goodbyes and New Beginnings”

Of all the people and situations you have said goodbye to in your life, tell us about two that you miss the most. Why is that?

I don't think I'm alone in sometimes missing the person I thought I was going to be. I never imagined I would live in a foreign country, let alone one so close to the Arctic Circle. I often tell the story of how I didn't want to date anyone from Canada – just in case – as I didn't want to live anywhere cold. I somehow skipped that geography class where they talked about Finland.

I do miss not having my own family or circle of friends from childhood around me. It has been tough at times. Luckily I really like my kids, husband and dog, and we have carved out a life

2012 Regional meeting group photo in Stockholm





that was unexpected, but one that ticks all the boxes. Plus, did I mention vacations are long and lovely in the Nordics?! I continually check in with myself and make sure that I'm trying to make the most of my time. I've had family members and friends pass away too young. These are goodbyes one is never prepared for or gets used to.

I look around me and think - what would I want to do with my time if it were limited? And guess what? All our time here on earth is limited! If I live to 90, perhaps I'll have eaten too much chocolate, not worked enough, cleaned enough or made enough money. But, one never knows. I'm not a hedonist, but I have tried to gauge my choices along these lines of making the most of today. I have a quote in Finnish on my fridge - it says "*Tämä päivä on aina täällä, huomien ei koskaan.*" There are many popular versions of it, but it roughly translates to, "Today is always here, tomorrow never comes." In other words, a new beginning is always here.



This page
Ann Marie in Bali with monkey on her shoulder in 2017
(above)

Ann Marie in the Haaga Rhododendron Park, Helsinki (right)

Page 23
FAWCO Board 2019 (top)

2022 Luxembourg Conference, Region 2 (bottom)

Secrets

Summer Village

Saskia E. Akyil



Inspiring Reads: Secrets of a Summer Village

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Saskia E. Akyil began her art by keeping a journal and writing letters to her friends, pen pals, cousins and grandparents. Since moving to Germany with her husband in 2005, she hasn't been able to use her "very useful degree" in Teaching English as a Second Language. As a hobby, she writes stories and articles, does metal-smithing and feeds her husband and three sons. In pursuit of a new career, she is now studying towards a MSc in epidemiology. She hopes that one day she can combine her interest in writing and science.



When she doesn't get a place in a Mexican study abroad program, Rachel anticipates another summer behind the counter of a coffee shop until an unexpected opportunity to spend a month with a family in Turkey drastically changes the course of her summer. In a summer village on the western coast of Turkey, you'll meet Rachel, who doesn't know what she wants; Aylin, who

doesn't know if she wants the one who wants her; and Leyla, who knows who she wants, but doesn't know if she'll get him. Love and romance are secret pleasures in the summer village, which only make them more exciting.

Can coffee grounds tell your future? Will fate bring you to your soul mate thousands of miles from home? Would the evil eye dare stop two souls on their paths to each other? Travel with Rachel on her journey far from the comforts of home, to a place that will captivate her and leave her changed forever.

Secrets of a Summer Village is a novel in which modern, middle-class Turkish culture is seen through the eyes of an American teenager. In the coming-of-age story, Rachel learns that many aspects of Turkish culture are different from her own, but that family, friendship and love are universal.



What was your inspiration for the book?

My husband's stories were my inspiration for the book. His parents have a summer house on the Aegean coast of Turkey and, like the characters in the book, he spent his summers there. I can already hear you asking – no, I did not meet him on an exchange program and the story is not autobiographical.

How long did it take you to write the book?

From start to finish, including all edits, it took me about two years. I started writing this book when my second son was six weeks old, and he was a few years old by the time I completed the book. I mostly wrote in the evenings, after the children had gone to bed.

What kind of research do you do, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a book?

I didn't do dedicated research prior to starting to write. I had already experienced many weeks visiting my husband's summer village, and had been hearing his stories about it for eight years before I started to write. While writing, I did research as appropriate.

What is the most important thing you want readers to take away from your book?

I'd like them to get a taste of secular Turkish culture and traditions from the book. News media provide a very different picture of Muslim-majority countries than the reality lived by many people, and vacationing in a country is not the same as spending time there with locals.

When did you start writing?

I started writing as soon as I learned how to write. I believe I wrote my first book when I was in first or second grade. It was about Cabbage Patch Kids.

What's your favorite under-appreciated novel?

My favorite novel is *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver. I don't think it's underappreciated, but it

may have somewhat fallen off the radar. Is *The Little Prince* a novel? If so, that's also my favorite novel. Fortunately, it's not underappreciated, either. I haven't answered your question, have I? I am incredibly picky when it comes to novels, so I tend to read more non-fiction books.

What is your favorite childhood book?

As a child, I loved *Anne of Green Gables*. As for my favorite children's book now, I would

say that it's too hard to pick. Children's books are often much better than books intended for adults because they are more straightforward, more succinct, and are usually unpretentious. My favorite picture books are possibly *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler and *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers.

What are you reading now?

I most recently finished reading *What My Bones Know* by Stephanie Foo and can absolutely recommend it.

If you could tell your younger writing-self anything, what would it be?

To join a writing group because it helps immensely on many levels, from improving writing through workshopping to providing a community – writing can be a very isolating activity.

What's next for you? Are you working on anything new you'd like to share with our readers?

I'm not actively writing fiction at the moment, though I do have one more published work – a children's picture book about the winter solstice called *Moonflower and the Solstice Dance*, which is available in four languages – English, Turkish, German and Swedish. I also have a completed manuscript that I may publish one day, and I have a partially-written manuscript that I have shelved for now, but hope to get back to one day.



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Books presented in the Inspiring Reads feature are available for purchase via the FAWCO website in the Books by Members or Books by Clubs sections. Enjoy!



The Target Program: The Essence of Inspiration to Change the World

Amanda Drollinger, AWC Central Scotland, 2023-2025 Target Program Chair introduces us to Awesome Blossoms, the 2023-2025 FAWCO Target Project, Peninah Nthenya Musyimi, Target Protect representative and Executive Director of Safe Spaces and Allan C'oredo, Target Protect Awesome Blossoms Project Manager.



From left to right: Amanda Drollinger, Peninah Nthenya Musyimi and Allan C'oredo

The FAWCO Target Program embodies the essence of Inspiration to change the world for good. It focuses in sequence on each of FAWCO's four Global Issues pillars: Environment, Human Rights, Education, and Health. Target Program 5 Environment - Our Natural Environment: Empowering Women and Girls to Ensure a Sustainable Future with the work of our selected Target Project Awesome Blossoms Safe Space is seeking to inspire all FAWCO members to take Climate Action for a more sustainable future for all.

Head teacher at Our Lady of Mercy, Esther Mawia, planting seedlings at Awesome Blossoms Farm 1

What is The Target Project Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces?

Awesome Blossoms is a community-based project from the Safe Spaces organization, created by Mrs. Peninah Nthenya Musyimi. This project features hydroponic (organic, water-efficient) urban farms that grow food to support nutrition and through sale of excess food crops, fund girls' education and empowerment programs. The 75 local women entrepreneurs and Safe Spaces in partnership with three primary schools located in the Mathare slum area of Nairobi will share the work and benefits of the hydroponic farms. The women entrepreneurs will set up their own businesses with the support of Financial Literacy training supplied by Trinity Credit through the support of Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces to provide a better future for themselves and their families. Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces has four important partnerships for each farm: the local community in the form of the women entrepreneurs; the schools which provide the secure location and clean water needed to home the hydroponic farms; Hydroponics Africa, the supplier of the equipment and nutrients needed to minimize the water needed to grow the crops; and Trinity Credit for the Financial Literacy training critical to the entrepreneurs successfully forming their own sustainable businesses.



Page 30
Nutrients eliminate the need for soil and reduce the amount of water used to grow the crops.

Above
Allan C'oredo, Awesome Blossoms project manager, planting in the hydroponic tubing



Who is Peninah Nthenya Musyimi?

Founder/Director Peninah Nthenya Musyimi is the first woman from Nairobi's slums to work her way through university to qualify as a lawyer. She realized that a systematic, integrated approach is needed to address root causes of poverty and violence. In 2008, she returned to the slums to establish Safe Spaces, an organization whose aim is to help the girls of the Mathare, Eastland Slums to save their own lives through education and vocational training programs. The programs include education, basketball and life skills training, computer literacy, reproductive health education and resources, peer education, afterschool programs, and Awesome Blossoms.



Peninah's Story:

Many FAWCO club members had the opportunity to hear Peninah's story from her in November 2023. Ayuska Motha and Dr. Peg Spitzer had a special session to record her oral history for an upcoming book. This is an excerpt from their transcript to give a flavor of her background and inspiration for change:

"PNM: I grew up in the Mathare slums. ... I lived in the slums for 20 years. As a young girl, I grew up in really harsh conditions – no clean running water, no toilets, poor infrastructure, and small houses (10 by 10 homes that were built of paper, mud and old iron sheets that do not keep out the rain most of the time.) My family was so poor that we would starve most of the time. Neither of my parents went to school and my dad had been brought up traditionally, especially in the attitude of keeping girls at home ... I thought that there must be a different life somewhere else because, just across from the slums, there was a road that divides middle-class areas from the Mathare slums. In the middle-class area, there are stone houses and people are a bit well off. They can afford basic needs as opposed to us who are just confined and in the slums with nothing"

Motha, A. and Spitzer, P. (November 8, 2023). Peninah Nthenya Musyimi. *In the Feminist Paradigm Shifters Oral History Project*, 24 pages. Unpublished. Contact: ayuska.motha@gmail.com or Peg.Spitzer@stonybrook.edu

Page 32
Launch Party with the Safe Spaces - Awesome Blossoms team, community leaders, and the 75 entrepreneurs

Below
Allan C'oredo, Peninah Nthenya Musyimi, David Makori, (Community Elder) and Mediatic Isenye (headteacher at Hope Children's Home) at the Launch Party holding the community agreement for Awesome Blossoms

How is the Target Project going so far?

With the first FAWCO funding in June 2023 Farm 1 was established and the first financial literacy events were held with Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces entrepreneurs and Trinity Credit. The women entrepreneurs attended the educational workshop with Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces staff including Peninah Nthenya Musyimi Executive Director of Safe Spaces and Allan C'oredo Awesome Blossoms Project Manager and the staff of Trinity Credit. The women received training in budgeting and micro finance. They received certificates from Trinity Credit and established a relationship with the micro finance company that might enable them to further develop their own businesses and financial independence in the future.

This partnership is with Our Lady of Mercy Shauri Moyo Primary School. Our Lady of Mercy Shauri Moyo Primary School was established in 1929 as a government school for African children in Nairobi. The school faces the many

challenges of the location with overcrowding and limited resources. The school is an important institution in the community, providing education to over 950 girls from diverse backgrounds. Awesome Blossoms Safe Spaces is working to increase nutrition uptake and environmental knowledge through their hydroponic farms. The Awesome Blossoms farm at Our Lady of Mercy Shauri Moyo PS will produce fresh, organic vegetables that are used in school lunch programs to promote healthy eating habits and provide access to nutritious produce. The organization also will provide nutrition and environmental education to schools, teaching about the benefits of healthy eating and sustainable farming practices.

The first planting took place in October 2023 with harvests every 45 days in rotation for continual fresh produce. Awesome Blossoms is the FAWCO Target Project March 2023 - March 2025 and over the two year period aims to build 3 farms in the grounds of three different schools



and support 75 new women entrepreneurs to develop their own micro business within these three farms. The fresh produce will support the improved nutrition of the children and families and excess crops sold to pay for educational programs for the women and children of Safe Spaces.

What is Peninah's inspiration to take action?

You might wonder what can lead a person to develop programs and strategies like these. In conversations with Peninah Nthenya Musyimi virtually and in person at the 2023 Region 4 and 5 meetings, she shared her experience growing up in Mathare.

The conditions and her own aspirations for a life with enough food to eat every day motivated her. The conversations she had with herself led her to education and education led her down the long road to help others to help themselves out of the same situation through education.

She isn't trying to prescribe a road to follow or that any particular part of the situation is the problem but to enable each person the possibility of pursuing their own dreams for the future through their own hard work. In short her past inspired her and perhaps if we each reflect on our own past we can find our own ways to inspire others.

Almost all of the members of the FAWCO and The FAWCO Foundation boards had the opportunity to meet Peninah and Allan in person along with around a hundred FAWCO club members at the regional and club meetings held in November 2023. The FAWCO website has a couple of their reactions to the inspirational experience. With those at the Region 5 meeting in Hamburg trying their hand at planting spinach in the same way they are planted in the Awesome Blossom Safe Spaces Hydroponic Farm in Mathare, Kenya.



LAUNCH is the Target Program Sponsor. This sponsorship supports education and awareness for Target 5.0 Environment.

Page 34
Wendy Leyland, AWC London, FAWCO Foundation Treasurer (left) and Mary Stange, AWC Bogotá, FAUSA, FAWCO Foundation VP of Communications (right) with Allan in the middle

This page
Jackson Njane, Managing Director of Trinity Credit; Cecilia Baati, Awesome Blossoms entrepreneur and Peninah Nthenya Musyimi, Executive Director of Safe Spaces awarding certificates for the Financial Literacy training course (above)

Farm plantings (right)





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Women Talking About Fashion

For our fashion issue we wanted to examine the who, what and why of clothes. It is a world of creativity, color, and cloth. The elements that go into a garment and the process that gets it from the sketch pad to the shop floor is fascinating. And that's just the beginning of the story.

We were looking for women with interesting stories to tell about their experiences in the world of fashion-designers, influencers, stylists, models, marketers, entrepreneurs and retailers.

In addition to all the fabulously talented women profiled and featured, we had a special section on FAWCO's Foundation Night at the Biennial Conference in Bratislava. We shared photos of just a few of the many creative outfits worn by attendees and the beautiful and colorful designer clothing presented during the fashion show at dinner. This issue also became the theme of our second Inspiring Women Live! event held on February 28, 2024. We invited our Women Talking About Fashion contributors to participate in this exciting and educational 2-hour online interactive event.

We wish to thank the following companies who advertised in this issue.

- TASIS LAUNCH
- London Realty
- London & Capital
- Janet Darrow Real Estate
- The Pajama Company



A Love Affair with Fabric

Samira Allali, AIWC Casablanca, shares how her passion for fabric led to a career in fashion design.



Samira Allali

I grew up in a boarding school in Casablanca in a very lovely neighborhood. I was there with my seven brothers and sisters while my father and mother were living in the countryside an hour from the big city. My father was a farmer who owned a lot of land, and I used to go there during weekends and holidays. These visits to the fields had a tremendous impact on me. COLORS! There were colors everywhere, and it was stunning! I could observe wildflowers, plants, birds and fruits. I really loved my connection with nature and all its beauty - not only colors, but also geometric forms, smells, textures and sensations. I can say that those feelings have stayed with me until now. I wasn't aware of it back then, but what I saw during my tours in the pastures really shaped my vision, style and taste. There I developed my love for fashion and haute couture.

After turning 18, I wanted to learn English, discover a new culture and find another "way of being". For someone fascinated with English manners, cups of tea and rock and roll, there was only one city to visit - London! I stayed there for six months, and it was the farthest and longest time I had ever been away from my relatives. It was a wonderful experience.

After my adventures in London, I came back to live with my two sisters in Casablanca's downtown.

Caftan made by Samira and showcased in a Los Angeles fashion show





Examples of Samira's mule designs (above)

Page 41
On the runway with Samira and one of her beautiful caftan creations

I worked in sales and had a decent life. At that time, I was interested in fashion, but I was not involved in it whatsoever.

In 1992, I got married and moved into an upscale apartment in a very chic area. I also started to go back and forth to Montreal, where I bought clothes and sold them back in Morocco. I soon opened a boutique called Milord, which was designed for men.

A few years later, my little family and I moved to Montreal, Canada. There, I discovered the wonderful world of textiles. I fell so hard for it that I started buying and selling fabric to women who wanted to transform them into Moroccan traditional clothes. As I was getting more and more into that domain, my expertise got better, and my interest and curiosity grew.

After six years in Montreal, I went back to my hometown and started to dive deeper and deeper into the fashion world. Presently, I juggle between being a mother, a housewife, an entrepreneur, a businesswoman and an artist. It is quite arduous, but I compensate with a good night's sleep!

Tell us about your earliest experience with fashion.

The first piece I made on my own came about by accident. It was *Eid al-Adha* or the "Feast of the Sacrifice," which is a Muslim celebration that consists of sacrificing a sheep and giving half of it to the needy. I was selling textiles to make "caftans," traditional Moroccan gowns. I sold the caftan cloth to a client who needed to make one for her niece who was about to get married. Close to the wedding date, the client contacted me, desperate, because she had been unable to find someone to make the caftan. For me, it was now or never, so I took the opportunity and went for it. It was both a success and a blast. She loved it! I did too. That was 2010.

I now create traditional Moroccan outfits that could be Westernized. I hand make them for women who wish to have a beautiful ensemble for a special occasion or for everyday life. I also create pieces that would be exhibited in parades (in London, Casablanca, Montreal, Los Angeles and Doha) or else sold.

What does "fashion" mean to you?

The timeless Coco Chanel once said: "Fashion fades, only style remains the same. If a woman is poorly dressed, you notice her dress. If a woman is impeccably dressed, you notice the woman."

To be fashionable or in touch is to wear what we love, what fits us well, what embellishes us and what unifies us. It is about being comfortable in our skin – with who we are and being free in our movements. It means to be who we are and who we desire to be simultaneously. It's also sharing a message that has a significant intent, toward a cause, a culture or a tradition. A word to ourselves and to others. However, it's mainly about staying authentic to the self, because if we wear something for the trend's purpose, and we are not convinced of it, it will be seen, and it won't be positively eye-catching.

Applying "fashion" to my work means keeping it fresh, elegant, and, above all else, fitting my client. To me, she will be the one defining fashion. But don't get me wrong, in order to stay in tune and young I do look at famous creations and new trends.

What three items belong in every woman's wardrobe and why?

High-quality shoes and a high-end purse are must-haves in every woman's wardrobe. Those two items shape and give the tone to your outfit. You can wear the most luxurious dress with an uncomely pair of shoes, and your attire will be screaming to death.

Another component that a woman should have in her wardrobe is a black *djellaba*. I encourage occidental women to try and maybe to adopt it. A *djellaba* (see picture on page 43) is a long type of dress that can be worn on every occasion in Morocco. It's delicate, light, comfy, embellishes any woman's body and, if paired with beautiful shoes or slippers (picture left), will make any heart melt and give an undeniable confidence and allure.

How can a person be both fashionable and still make good choices for the environment?

It is all about research and willingness. Looking for environmentally friendly material and fabric may help. Take the time to find material that is not made under catastrophic conditions such

as animals' suffering and torture, children's exploitation or human exploitation *per se*. It's really going beyond wearing what's beautiful and stylish to choosing a more conscious wearing that can only start within one's deep self. Nowadays, a lot of brands promote their responsibility toward the environment. Thus, looking for less damaging textiles and brands that adopt ethical manners is the way to go. Also, brands that are not mindful toward their actions will not display transparency of information relating to the production process. This is the first sign to look for. Numerous brands make the necessary effort to keep the world a happy place, such as Mango, H&M Conscious, Levi's, Veja, Brava fabrics. Buying local products is another way to reduce our negative output. Many companies have started to produce their own brand to be sold locally.

Fashion magazines tend to market to one demographic. In a perfect world how would you like to see fashion marketed?

Fashion magazines tend to have that strict image about ideal beauty for both men and women, but it is starting to migrate toward a



more realistic and inclusive one. In a perfect world, I would certainly encourage that change, so we can see trends that are not restricted to "ideal criteria" but emphasize the sensuality, elegance and well-being of everyone.

What advice would you give to a woman who wants to dress well, desires quality clothing, but must remain on a budget?

Let's begin by focusing on recycling: Visit thrift shops. It is unbelievable all the treasures you can find there. You will also find items with history, heritage and sometimes one-of-a-kind pieces, which is invaluable. In addition, a lot of big names are going into the second-hand market. For instance, in 2021, H&M opened another segment, H&M Rewear. There are also apps such as Vinted where people sell their own clothes. It is also important to look at the clothes you already have. We all have those outfits in our wardrobe that we no longer wear but are unable to give away. Use some creativity to give them a rebirth, maybe some cutting, or give them to a professional to see what he or she could do.

If you want to stay on budget but still want to look fabulous, invest in shoes or bags that will give an edge to your outfit and allow you to keep the other elements discreet. Also, never buy a cheap dress or shirt because it will show.

Finally, you can come visit me, we will find some tremendous compromises, simply because I love what I do, and I love to make other women bold and sublime.

How does what you do in fashion matter in the world?

I put the accent on local work and Moroccan art craft, a talented field that deserves to be widely recognized. Since I do not produce on a large scale and work on custom-made basis, I have a tiny environmental footprint.

Moreover, I work a lot with word of mouth. Some craftsmen recommend other ones to me and they in turn recommend others and so on. This contributes to building the economy and increasing jobs in Morocco, a country that is still developing. However, I also contribute to globalization since my textiles can come from Italy, India, or Türkiye. By mixing overseas material with local talent, I create crossbreeding that promotes Moroccan culture along with

other nation's beauty, and that demonstrates the fact that togetherness and unity can be reached without losing individuality.

If someone gave you \$500, what would you do with it?

I would start by exchanging it into dirhams because, you know, I benefit from the conversion and then I will simply give it back. Nowadays, we are so focused on our busy lives that we forget the beautiful feeling that occurs within us when we think about others (someone who is not related to us in any way). So, I will give some to a cause that matters to me, some to the needy in my city, and keep 10% of it for myself – only as a lucky charm.

What's your favorite beauty tip?

It all starts within me. I try to have healthy habits, including exercising, mindful eating, keeping the heart soft and light, and sound sleep patterns. I cannot stress that last one enough. I am not a big makeup girl, but I do believe a lot in hydration (water, cream, sunscreen, cleansing, facials) to take considerate care of my skin. Pampering your body (oil massages, exfoliation, and letting the toxins out with sauna sessions) will show your inner and outer beauty. As I mentioned in the beginning, I believe nature is, most of the time, all we need.

What is something you love now that you never could have imagined you would like in the past?

Soccer! My husband was a huge fan of football. He used to watch matches on TV and then yelled throughout each game. I was really confused about it and did not understand his fondness for the game. Life can be very unpredictable; I started to go with my younger son to his soccer games. He inherited that passion from his father. Game after game, I felt such a growing fire within myself for football that I started to play with my son. Now, I even watch games with him. Funny, isn't it?

Page 43

Two of Samira's beautiful creations (top left and right)

Doha's fashion show (bottom left)

Black djellaba made and worn by Samira (bottom right)



Joan Taugher
Guest

Monica Jubayli
AWC Lebanon



Desert chic!



Dress right dress!

Lorraine De Bock
AWC Brussels

feature

Through My Lens



"Through My Lens" is a compilation feature with a photo and short caption from multiple contributors.

For this "Through My Lens" feature, we are highlighting the Foundation Night Gala at the FAWCO Biennial Conference 2023.

"What is Old is New Again" Foundation Night Gala Member Fashions

For Foundation Night, conference participants and guests were encouraged to wear their favorite sartorial "blasts from the past" (shown on the next five pages).

Dressed in a sparkling array of vintage regalia, members showed off some of their cherished outfits - some "au courant" enough to wear today!

Kanika
Holloway
AWC
Antwerp

Unique, and fun!

13 A

FILM NEGATIVE

13

Ann
De Simoni
AIWC Genoa

Rozanne
Van Rie
AWC Antwerp

Patricia Jentz
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Cynthia Holden
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The 60's Flower
Power attire!

"It's a
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Cheongsam chic!

FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

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14

FILM NEGATIVE

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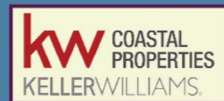
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by **KAREN
MABON**

ISSUE 4

November 2023

Women Embracing Culture

FAWCO clubs are rich with members from different countries and cultures. Sharing our diverse backgrounds brings so much to our club experiences and activities. One of the reasons many of us join FAWCO clubs is to engage with others and elevate our understanding and enjoyment of other heritages, cultures and traditions.

For our *Women Embracing Culture* issue we wanted to look at women who keep their "home culture" alive in their adopted country, had fully immersed themselves into a new culture or, found a unique way to blend new and old. We were not surprised when all the women (and in this issue, a man) shared their stories of blending multiple cultures into their lives and living more fulfilling lives because of it. We also highlighted women sharing their cherished cultures and expertise.

This issue also included our first couple profile as we put a spotlight on Sue and Murry Frick collaborating to support the philanthropic goals of both FAWCO and FAUSA.

We wish to thank the following
companies who advertised in
this issue.

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Tharien's Art



Sharing Cultural Experiences Together

Sue and Murray Frick, FAUSA and AWC Brussels, share their journey from college sweethearts to FAUSA fundraising power couple.



Murray & Sue Frick

Sue: I grew up in a Chicago suburb. Family and music were always very important to me. I began piano lessons in third grade and sang in choirs throughout my childhood. I also enjoyed dancing and gymnastics, competing on my high school's first gymnastics team during my senior year.

I attended Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education. I was active in Greek life and became a rep for the Panhellenic association. Murray and I met during my freshman year. We grew closer on a choir tour and the rest is history. We married in St Charles, Missouri, in 1977 and I became a music teacher. I eventually taught every level from pre-school to college and worked for six years at a music distribution company. I then received my Master's in Music Education from Southern Missouri State and continued teaching while we raised a family with three beautiful girls!

In 2006, we moved to Brussels, Belgium, to serve the International Protestant Church in Brussels. I joined the AWC Brussels in January 2007 and became involved with various activities. The Brussels club had more than 750 members when I joined and between classes, Christmas Market responsibilities, working on committees and later the head of reception, I was very busy.

In 2016, I became president for two years and spent another year on the board. In 2017,

**Sue and Murray
sightseeing in
Doha, Qatar.**



Murray and I attended my first FAWCO Conference in Mumbai. In 2019, we attended the FAWCO Conference in Edinburgh. Scotland has always held a special place in our hearts and before moving to Brussels, we had been Regents for Clan Douglas in Wyoming, New York, and later for Western Europe. On the first night at the Edinburgh Conference, Murray recited the poem *Address to a Haggis*.

We repatriated to the United States in June 2019, to northwest Missouri. In May 2020, we bought our present home in Osage Beach, Missouri, but I did not move there full-time until Christmas. For seven months, Murray served as an interim pastor in another northwest Missouri church and I lived by myself. We saw each other bi-weekly. My FAWCO club gave me the gift of a 5-year membership in FAUSA and I became very involved.

In the summer of 2021, I was asked to be the Philanthropy Director for FAUSA. With my work through churches in Philanthropy and Mission, this seemed a good fit. FAUSA's major fundraiser is the gala held at the annual FAUSA Getaway. The event includes a silent and live auction, a quilt raffle, and a special "raise the thermometer" donation activity. Since I was in charge of the auctions I asked Murray to be the auctioneer for our live auction in Santa Fe in 2022. He was very successful and was asked to return in 2023. I am happy to report that with his excellent auctioneering

Edinburgh:
Addressing the haggis at the FAWCO Biennial Conference (top)

AWC Brussels attendees (bottom)



Sue at the Finestere, Spain (the end of the Camino)

Murray playing with Jefferson City Band



skills and the wonderful live auction items donated by our members, we raised almost \$20,000 from just the live auction. In June 2023, my title was changed to 3rd VP Philanthropy and I was recently re-elected to serve another two-year term.

Murray: Growing up I was very active in Scouts, music (band, orchestra, and jazz band), speech and debate, and theater

technical design. While in high school, I took sports pictures for a local newspaper.

I also attended Culver-Stockton College, majoring in Music and Religion/Philosophy. I was active in Greek life and music, and I served a student church after my freshman year. Sue and I spent our summers working together at a sleep-away camp in the Berkshires (Massachusetts). I started my career at St. Charles Christian Church working with youth, education and directing a traveling choir.

I've spent my career as a pastor, serving congregations in Missouri, Iowa, Wyoming, and New York before being asked to serve in Belgium. We gave away or sold our possessions when we moved to Belgium, so when it came time to repatriate, we could go almost anywhere. Our choice was determined by our eldest daughter (and grandchildren) living in St. Louis, as our other daughters are an international teacher (currently in Bogotá, Colombia) and a PhD student at Auburn University.

What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to your new country?

Murray: Very minimal preparation. There was barely three months between initial contact and arrival in Belgium. I did read up a little on Belgium and had a bit of





Belgian culture: beer & *frites* (truly Belgian, not “French”) (left)

Co-officiating at a wedding in Romania (bottom)

Sue: I arrived the second week of October, almost two months after Murray, and felt very apprehensive about the entire situation. Our shipment had already arrived when I came and Murray had already put our minimal amount of furniture in place. I will never forget my first Monday when Murray “challenged” me to take the tram down to the local grocery (Carrefour) and hardware store (Brico) to pick up a few items. The bit of French that I thought I remembered disappeared from my mind as I tried to talk to a salesperson to find furniture floor pads. He gave up on me, and when I turned around, we were standing right in front of them! Happy to say, I did a bit better buying groceries!

What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?

Murray: Belgians are shy. It is very rare to be invited into someone’s home. Even engaged couples will sometimes stand



Murray: I love all that makes Belgium what it is: history, art, culture, food, beer, and chocolate. The pace of life, the people (who are reserved, but delightful once you get to know them). It is all a joy, which is why I now hold dual citizenship.

What is the most unusual cultural tradition you have encountered?

Sue: On the whole, local Belgians are very private, and although they will greet you on the street, they usually will not invite you into their homes.

Murray: Culture clubs and the importance of *frites* (“French” fries).

What cultural traditions from Belgium did you take with you when you returned to America?

Both: A Belgian attitude and appreciation for food - excellent quality, slow meals, good company. We tend to live to a Belgian schedule, even in the States.

German from my graduate school days (“kinda” like Dutch). Mostly it was a “hope and pray” move.

Sue: As Murray said, we did very little preparation and I was very nervous about our move to a country where English was not the main language. I studied French from fifth grade up to my senior year in high school, but that was 35 years ago! We did a bit of research and found some information about the American Women’s Club in Brussels, which I planned to check out!

Tell us about your arrival. For example: What was your initial reaction? What was the first thing you did? How do you recall feeling that first week? Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?

Murray: I arrived in Belgium several months before Sue. The congregation I was to serve was very supportive and tried to help deal with all the “stuff.” I was fortunate that my secretary was a total whiz at helping me establish bank accounts, open utilities, etc. I would not have made the transition without her!



outside waiting on a date rather than enter a house. Also, Belgians have VERY specific ideas about Americans, based in large part on our TV shows.

How did you embrace the local culture in Brussels? Is there something about that culture that makes you happy?

Sue: I love Belgium and found myself very comfortable taking public transport, going out to lunch with friends, taking cooking classes, and traveling around both Brussels and a majority of Europe in our thirteen years there. Pastors who are recognized by the government are considered civil servants and we enjoyed having Belgian medical insurance soon after we arrived. This summer I had back surgery in Belgium because the insurance and medical care is so excellent there. In fact, I have been seeing a doctor in Belgium for almost ten years.



Preparing Beloved Bundles for Project Beloved (top)

Summer camp counselors in the Berkshires (bottom)

In your travels, what was your favorite culture you encountered? Why?

Both: Almost all of them. Each and every one was an absolute delight. We visited 48 countries on six continents while “abroad” and each held something special, something we didn’t expect and are richer for having experienced.

What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?

Both: Start local, grow from there. Get to know your area WELL before worrying about where else to go. Community, area, region, country, international. Don’t focus on the “big to-do’s,” spend time where the locals go. Eat local food. Drink local wine. Try to blend in. You’ll know you have succeeded when someone stops you to ask for directions!

Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.

Sue: I walked the Camino de Santiago from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France to Compostela, Spain, for my 60th birthday by myself while my husband was on sabbatical in Scotland and the Netherlands.

Murray: I have won an international theater design award, been active as a football (soccer) referee, served as a crisis response chaplain for the ATF, and served as Regent for Clan Douglas. I also teach Scottish country dancing, play ceilidh music and play in a jazz band.

Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?

Sue: This is a difficult question as every place has its own special charm. I loved traveling by car across Croatia and Slovenia; the mountains and the hillsides are definitely beautiful. We have traveled to Scotland several times and I love the diversity of that country.

Murray: The tiny island of Iona holds a special place in my heart. It sits off the west coast of the Isle of Mull in the Scottish Hebrides. It

was where the Celtic Christian tradition began when, in 563 AD, the Irish monk, St. Columba, arrived with a handful of followers. He built his first Celtic church and established a monastic community on the island from which he set about spreading the Christian faith to most of pagan Scotland, northern England, and eventually throughout much of Europe. This seat of learning and center for Christian worship has become a place of pilgrimage for me.

What’s your favorite cultural tradition?

Sue: Family, friends and holiday. While living in Belgium, a group of friends met for several years at Thanksgiving and other holidays, creating a special “family” situation.

Murray: Big family holiday gatherings with our family, when possible, with our “now family” wherever we happen to be. We introduced “Advent Open House” to the somewhat suspicious Belgians! Decorations, food, chaos – bring it on!



Tharien

Tharien’s Art is a boutique art studio in Antwerp, Belgium, specializing in hand-painted greeting cards, prints and paintings.

Painting with a Purpose

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Browse the collections on the website – www.thariensart.com – now to find a special piece of art.

Proceeds from all sales go to Hope for Girls and Women Tanzania to support the tertiary education of the girls at the safe houses.

Special announcement: Tharien’s Art will be supporting the Target Program Environment 2022-2025 with a number special offers. More details will be provided in the next newsletter.



Welcome Delegates and Guests to the 2024 Interim Meeting in Porto.

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24 Hours in ... Malmö!

Who best to tell us about the best places to visit in a new city than those who live there? AIC Malmö president Kirstin Kriz takes us on a whistle-stop tour of Malmö.



Our club was founded by Lisa (Richter) Fagerberg in November 1997 as the American Women's Club (AWC) Malmö, its name until June 2021, when it was changed to AIC Malmö to be more inclusive and reflect the current demographics of the club membership. The purpose of the association is to bring together Americans and other international expats for companionship, support and friendship. We currently have approximately 170 members, mainly living in the Malmö/Lund area of southern Sweden. Approximately 72% of the club membership are American citizens and 28% are international expats.

The club hosts monthly activities, holiday and special events. The monthly activities include a book group, a baby and toddler group, lunches in Lund, and meetings with a speaker or a group event such as bowling, boating or mini-golf. Larger club events are usually focused on holidays, including a Halloween Trick-or-Treat party for children, Thanksgiving potluck dinner, an end-of-year *Glögg* party for adults, St. Patrick's Day dinner at an Irish pub, Easter egg hunting for kids, Mother's Day brunch, and of course our annual Independence Day barbeque and picnic.



Malmö at night

About Malmö and Sweden in general ...

Malmö is a coastal city in southern Sweden with approximately 330,000 inhabitants. It is connected to Copenhagen, Denmark by the beautiful Öresund bridge. Twenty kilometers north of Malmö lies Lund University, one of the oldest universities in Europe. The city of Lund has a population of approximately 100,000.

Malmö has a very young population with approximately 48% of the population under the age of 35. It is also a culturally diverse city, representing 179 different nationalities and more than 150 different languages. More than half the population (54%) was born outside of Sweden or has at least one foreign-born parent. Most of the foreign-born population comes from the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Denmark, Poland and Syria. Malmö is one of Sweden's fastest growing cities with young people from all over Sweden and abroad moving to live and work at tech companies and start-ups in the city. Malmö is seen as an advantageous location for companies since it is closely connected to continental Europe and office space is cheaper than in Stockholm.

A Day in Malmö

Start the day well ...

A traditional breakfast is a smorgasbord of cold treats, typically: bread or flatbread topped with either cheese, sliced ham or salmon, cucumber or jam. Boiled eggs, cold herring or caviar might be included. People also eat yogurt or fermented yogurt with oats or cereal. Delicious pastries such as cinnamon rolls, Danishes with vanilla cream and other sweetened pastry breads with jams or marzipan are also offered for breakfast. Of course, none of this is enjoyed without a good cup of strong coffee with milk!



Danish pastries



Best pick for breakfast

Systrar & Bröder (Sisters & Brothers)
Östra Rönneholmsvägen 26
Website: <https://systrarbroder.se/>



The best way to see central Malmö ...

Take a one-hour boat tour with a guide through the city's waterways and little canals. This will give a unique perspective of the city. The AIC rented boats on the Malmö canal in May and it was a very popular activity.

Website: <https://www.stomma.com/sv-se/malmo/batsightseeing/rundan/>

From the boat dock take a short walk through the picturesque *Kungsparken* (King's park) to Malmö castle (*Malmöhus*). The fortress is from the 16th century and was traditionally one of the most important strongholds of Denmark before the area became Swedish in 1720. Today, the castle houses southern Sweden's largest museum with exhibitions on history, nature, maritime matters and art.

Website: <https://malmo.se/Uppleva-och-gora/Konst-och-museer/Malmo-museum.html>

After visiting the castle, walk to the newly built western harbor and exclusive residential area of *Västra Hamnen*. Here you will have a beautiful view over the Öresund between Malmö and Copenhagen, as well as the Öresund bridge. You will also view Malmö's tallest skyscraper, Turning Torso, 190 meters high (54 floors) with a 90° twist from base to top. During the summer the 53rd and 54th floors are open to the public. *Västra Hamnen* is a wonderful area to swim, grab a lunch or drink, and even enjoy some delicious ice cream.

Website: <https://visitskane.com/classic-attractions/turning-torso>



Climate...

The summers are mild with comfortable temperatures (around 70°F or 21°C) and partly cloudy skies. The winter is long, windy and rainy with temperatures just above freezing. The best time to visit Malmö is between June and August, the warmest months with the most sunshine. The days are long with approximately 15.5 – 18.5 hours of daylight. The late-evening light at that time of year is absolutely stunning.

Time for lunch ...



Saluhall

It is not uncommon for people to go out for lunch during the work days when most restaurants offer a "dagens" or daily menu at a special low price (10-15 USD or 110-165 SEK). The daily menu often includes salad bar, bread & butter and water (in addition to the main dish). Since restaurants offer only a limited number of dishes during lunch, the food is served quickly. It's a great way to experience the local cuisine at a fraction of the dinner price. The AIC has a monthly Lund lunch group for members working in Lund, where we meet at a different restaurant for networking and good food.

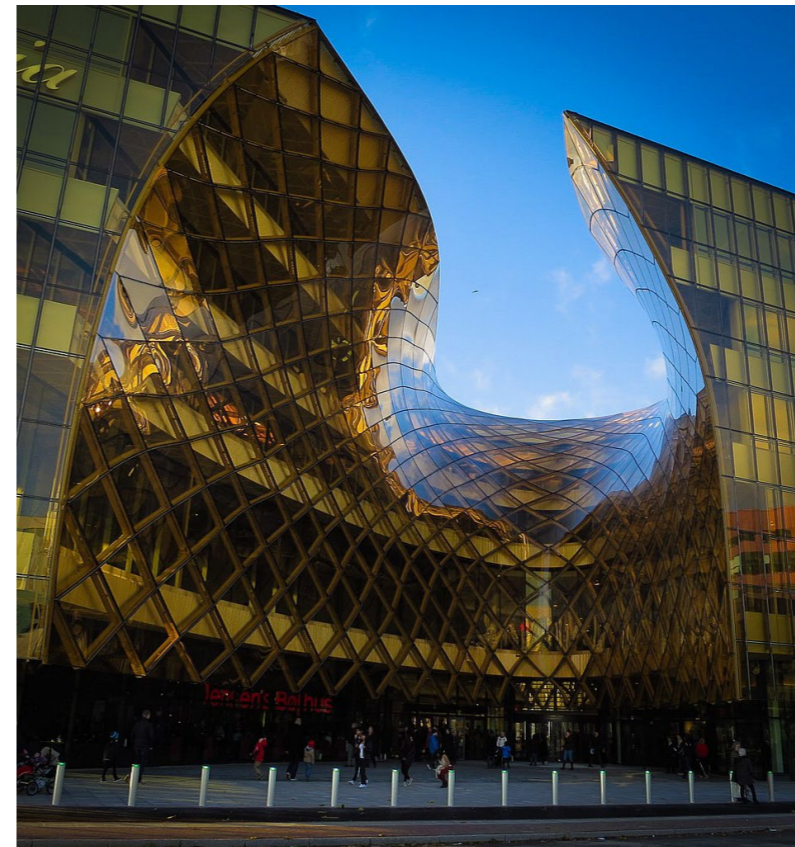
Malmö *Saluhall* is an indoor food market, offering a unique foodie environment combining traditional and innovative culinary trends. Originally an old train warehouse, it has been renovated and transformed into a top foodie destination for hungry lunch and dinner guests.

Website: <https://www.malmosaluhall.se/alla-handlare/?hcat=restauranger-cafeer>



Afternoon activities ...

Malmö has wonderful street art, which visitors can explore all year round. You can find hidden murals while walking around the city, especially in the neighborhoods of *Davidshall* and Malmö's Modern Art Museum. Website: <https://www.modernamuseet.se/malmo/sv/>



Emporia Shopping Mall

Or ... Afternoon shopping, anyone?

Emporia is one of Scandinavia's largest shopping malls, located next to the Hyllie train station, the last train station in Sweden before the Öresund bridge. With almost 200 shops and restaurants and distinct modern architecture, it is a place where one can easily spend an afternoon of shopping.

Website: <https://emporia.steenstrom.se/>

However, if one is looking for something a little more quaint or provincial, the cobblestone pedestrian street that starts at *Stortorget* (the Main Square) and runs through Gustav Adolf Square to *Triangeln*, is a great way to spend an afternoon of shopping. There one can find smaller shops including Grandpa, APLACE or *Designorget* selling Swedish or Scandinavian design products. The home design shop Småland AB is a favorite with a unique mixture of home décor, plants, fashion and café.

Website: <https://www.absmaland.com/en>

Stortorget



Lilla Torg (the Small Square) is a great place for locals to enjoy a drink after work or grab something to eat, especially when the sun is shining. Located in *Gamla Stan* (Old Town), *Lilla Torg* and *Stortorget* are picturesque squares surrounded by restaurants, small cafés and old buildings. The AIC holds its monthly meetings at the Noble House Hotel located in the Old Town. Website: <https://malmo.se/Uppleva-och-gora/Arkitektur-och-kulturarv/Malmos-historia/Platser-och-byggnader/Malmos-torg/Lilla-torg.html>



Lilla Torg

View from the Sky Bar



Dinner recommendations? Night on the town ...

The Sky Bar on top of Malmö Live, located next to the central station, is a rooftop restaurant and bar offering a Nordic kitchen with locally produced seasonal ingredients. Locals and visitors can enjoy the panoramic views of the city and the ocean while eating or sipping a delicious cocktail at the bar.

Website: <https://skybarmalmolive.se/>

Alternatively Klang Market restaurant, located near the Malmö canal, offers a twist to traditional Mediterranean food. Dinner there is a festive experience with sophisticated cocktails and tapas-like dishes. AIC Malmö held its 25th Anniversary Party at this restaurant last October. Website: <https://klangmarket.se/klangmeny/>

AIC's 25th Anniversary Party

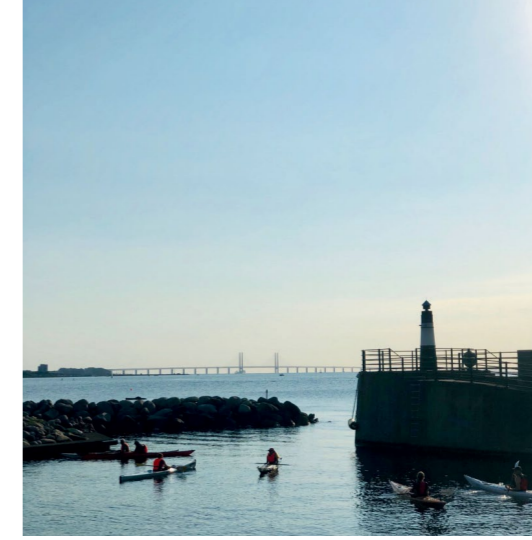


Yes, there are many great places for dinner, drinks, and more drinks from whiskey dens. Malmö Live is also an event center and the concert hall is home to the Malmö Symphony Orchestra featuring concerts throughout the year. In the summer, you can listen to live music and a DJ most weekends at the open-air rooftop. Website: <https://malmolive.se/>

The Malmö Live event center from the water, artwork *Free Flow* by sculptor Eva Hild



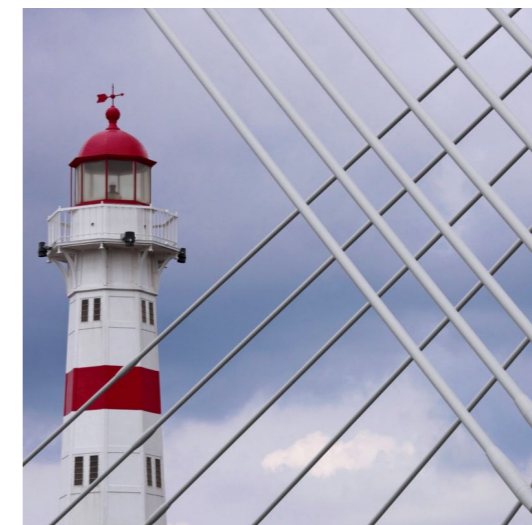
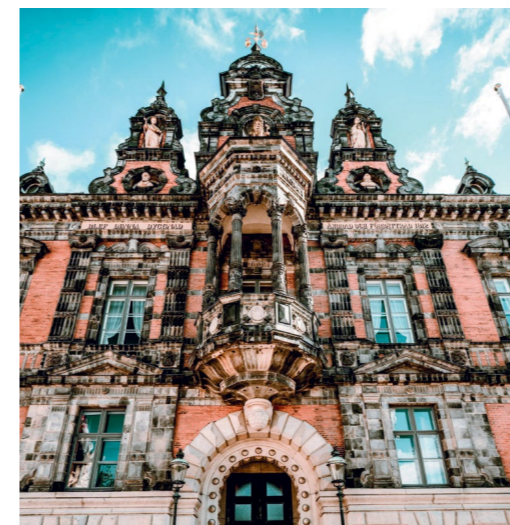
The city of Malmö hosts a music festival every August celebrating the city's art, music, food and cultural scenes. It's a family-friendly, week-long event. The AIC often arranges an event for club members to meet to try the yummy festival food while enjoying the free music concerts. Website: <https://www.malmofestivalen.se/english>



The Malmö Festival began in 1985 and, with 1.4 million visits every year, it is the largest festival in a city environment in Scandinavia.



The Öresund bridge to Copenhagen in the early morning



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- to build strong support networks for its American and international membership;
- to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide;
- to advocate for the rights of US citizens overseas; and
- to mobilize the skills of its membership in support of global initiatives for education, the environment, health and human rights.

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Photographs are integral to our magazine.

We end each issue with a full page photograph that offers a unique perspective on its theme. The photo can be provocative, amusing, entertaining and/or a photo that you think says "That's Inspired!" for each issue.

Please contact: inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org

Our photo-centric feature "Through My Lens" is a compilation of photos and short captions in keeping with the issue's theme.

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