The Illinois chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW-IL, Inc.) established the Agent of Change Award in 1984 to be presented annually to a member who serves “as a catalyst to bring about positive societal change.” Five district directors select the annual awardee from nominations submitted from all branches, focusing on members who “have actively promoted change in the areas of education, equity, and /or public policy.”

Film critic, author and feminist activist Jan Lisa Huttner is one of only two women from AAUW Chicago Branch, Inc to receive the honor. The first was Patricia Crowley who received this prestigious award in 1989.

Huttner was selected in 2012 for her leadership on two projects that exemplify the AAUW mission: International SWAN Day and Jane Addams Day.

The work that eventually became the AAUW-IL project WITASWAN (Women in the Audience Supporting Woman Artists Now) began in 2002, after which Huttner co-founded its successor project International SWAN Day with Martha Richards (the Executive Director of WomenArts). Both projects work to support women artists in all media, emphasizing “the necessary alliance between women artists and women in the audience.”

“All forms of media, especially cinema, are powerful avenues toward cultural understanding,”AAUW-IL District 2 Director Marilyn Lawler said, presenting the award in April 2012. “Jan Lisa Huttner created a way to begin the necessary changes which will occur in this male-dominated arena. Under her direction, Jan advanced equity for women and girls through the WITASWAN ideals and the SWAN Day project.”

International SWAN Day is an annual holiday celebrated on the last Saturday of March, in honor of Women’s History Month. The event celebrates the achievements of women artists in all media. Since the first SWAN Day in 2008, more than 1,000 events have been held in countries across the world, including Argentina, Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, Romania and Uruguay.

“I am so happy that AAUW‐Illinois is recognizing Jan’s tireless work in support of women filmmakers,” said SWAN Day co-founder Martha Richards, who also serves as Executive Director of WomenArts. “Jan’s passion, energy and sheer chutzpah have been a constant source of inspiration to everyone in the SWAN movement.”

WITASWAN began in 2002, after The New York Times published Huttner’s impassioned response to an article about female success in the film industry and Hollywood’s systemic exclusion of female film directors.

“Jan has been a tireless crusader for the cause of women in film. Her award is well deserved,” said Dr. Martha M. Lauzen (Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University) in 2012.

Huttner was also recognized for her support in the effort to honor social worker and political activist Jane Addams with an official holiday. The Illinois chapter of the AAUW also supported the effort and encouraged students to lobby for the holiday to be officially recognized by the state. The state of Illinois officially declared December 10 Jane Addams Day in 2006, making her the first woman to have a commemorative day in the U.S.

In addition to her activism and work as a film critic, Huttner is the author of *Penny’s Picks: 50 Films by Women Filmmakers 2002-2011*, *Tevye's Daughters: No Laughing Matter* and *Diamond Fiddler: Laden with Happiness & Tears,* an examination of *Fiddler on the Roof*'s resonance and longevity.

Huttner was a member of AAUW Chicago for more than 25 years before relocating to Brooklyn, New York in 2012. She now devotes herself full-time to FF2 Media as Editor-in-Chief. FF2 Media supports female writers and directors by promoting their work and encouraging audience support from women moviegoers. Its employees are committed to carrying on Huttner’s passionate pursuit of supporting women in film.

“Being a filmmaker myself, FF2 has provided a platform for me to learn about other female filmmakers whilst supporting their efforts in the best way I can—as a vocal audience member,” FF2 Media Contributing Editor Katusha Jin said of the organization’s mission.

“My goal is to persuade women to use their tremendous box office power,” Huttner said. “When we choose films written and/or directed by women filmmakers, we put our money where are mouths are – and in Hollywood, those people in the backrooms who tabulate the dollars, they will notice.”

<http://films42.com/feature/AgentOfChange.asp>

<http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0810/arts_letters/swan.shtml>

<http://www.films42.com/feature/JAD09.asp>