

# 2018 Community Involvement Awards

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## *Claudia Swendseid; Female Outstanding Volunteer Award*

Like many adult volunteers Claudia Swendseid grew up in a family where volunteering was a way of life. The daughter of missionary parents, Claudia and her three sisters lived in Japan where the volunteer culture was very different from the United States. Lutheran missionaries alongside Japanese Christians successfully introduced a number of social services, including support for pregnant Japanese and their bi-racial children and developmental programs for disabled individuals in Japan. These became opportunities for Claudia's family to volunteer. It was in this context that Claudia's passion for advocating for people in society who do not have support and availability to resources was born. Volunteering became an extension of her faith and a way of life.



From early days of volunteering in a reading program in Northeast Minneapolis as a Junior High School student, Claudia's volunteer resume' has expanded and diversified to include Trinity Lutheran Church where she has served on the Finance Committee/Stewardship Team, as an assisting minister, and as an adult education facilitator. She has also served as an advisor for the Ed-Ro Family Foundation, a mentor in the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis mentor program, an executive sponsor for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Employee Diversity Action Council, a mentor in the Concordia College Alumni Mentor Program, a mentor and committee volunteer at the Minnesota Women's Economic Roundtable, and a Board member and Finance Committee chair at the Hospitality Center for Chinese.

When Claudia was Senior Vice President for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and looking for an opportunity to serve on a local non-profit board of directors she found a place at Solid Ground. According to Executive Director Trisha Kaufmann, Claudia was just what they were looking for, a person with both business acumen and dedication to social justice. During her tenure at Solid Ground she served on the Marketing Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the Executive Committee. After one year on the board she was elected Vice Chair and two years later was elected Board Chair. She retired from the board in 2016 after serving the maximum time allowed. She continues to serve on the Community Engagement Committee and as a tutor in the K-8 tutoring program. She is often greeted by her kindergarten buddy by being tackled with a big hug for his favorite tutor!

Claudia is an enthusiastic advocate for volunteerism and is grateful for the opportunity to promote volunteering. For new volunteers, she recommends focusing on something you are passionate about because it will be most rewarding, energizing and fun – you will stick with it. Volunteers provide skills and resources that help make the world a better place for people, animals, the environment and more. They also act as good role models for young people and other adults. But the best part, according to Claudia, is by serving directly you see positive change first-hand. Claudia is hopeful that, through the collective efforts of those committed to social justice, including the dedication of volunteers who provide services and advocate for those in need, she might see a day when “people who are impoverished by laws and social structures that unfairly imprison them are finally released to achieve their full potential.”

Whether she is seated on a board, lobbying legislators to change policies to help eliminate poverty, marching in protest, or tutoring a child, Claudia Swendseid is dedicated to volunteering. Her dedication and scope of volunteerism with Solid Ground and throughout the community have helped and continue to help make the world a better place by walking alongside those who need support to build a better future for themselves and their families. As she says, “Who wouldn't want to do that?”

