



Racial and Social Justice Award 2015

Each year, the Alaska Conference United Methodist Women honor individuals or organizations whose efforts to overcome the barriers of racism, prejudice or injustice have made an impact in our communities. This year's award recipient is **Susan Smalley**. Susie, as she is called, was honored October 10th at the Annual Gathering of Alaska United Methodist Women held at North Star Bible Camp in Willow, Alaska.

Susie moved with her husband Hal from Oregon to Alaska 45 years ago to teach in a Yup'ik village along the Kuskokwim River. Making their home in Kenai in the 1970s, both taught in local schools. Now retired, Susie lists her occupation simply as, "volunteer". However, her volunteer work is not at all simple!

With prayer, time, energy and gifts Susie Smalley supports many state and local agencies and services that carry messages of love and inclusiveness through acts of peace and justice in the Kenai Peninsula area and beyond. She says, "*United Methodist Women was where all the fragments of what I was doing in my volunteer life came together. Social action from a faith basis made so much sense!*"

Some of Susie's efforts in advocating for Racial and Social Justice include, and are certainly not limited to past and present work with:

Commission on Status and Role of Women (COSROW), a ministry that addresses gender discrimination and sexism within church structure, raises awareness of women's issues and opportunities, educates church leaders and seminarians on sexual ethics and policies, supports victims/survivors of sexual harassment or abuse, and develops guidelines for inclusive and expansive language.

Central Peninsula Hospital, where Susie is a cancer care volunteer and offers herself as a "healing touch minister", using an energy-based therapeutic approach of hand massage to healing and wellness. **American Cancer Society**. Selected in 2006 as a "Celebration Ambassador" Susie represented our community at an American Cancer Society Action Network event in Washington, D.C. Celebration ambassadors are community leaders, cancer survivors, caregivers, health professionals, cancer researchers and volunteers who believe defeating cancer will require courageous policy decisions by officials at all levels of government. **Relay for Life**, where annually, Susie promotes and participates in this peninsula-wide fundraiser which moneys go toward American Cancer Society research, education, advocacy and service programs.

Kairos Prison Ministry, an ecumenical lay movement that addresses the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women and children, to their families and those who work in the prison environment. **Wildwood Correctional Facility**, where three days a week Susie leads a knitting class with incarcerated women. This is more than knitting, but an opportunity for genuine woman to woman sharing and support.

Campaign to Support Alaska Senate Bill 1 - Smoke Free Workplace. Susie has been helping develop the bill which was introduced in January 2015.

Kenai Alternative High School Breakfast Program. This community-sponsored feeding program has been going on for quite some time. Several times a week, Susie and others cook a hot meal for students of the high school. In 2005, with other area churches, Susie's home church, Soldotna United Methodist, was awarded the Kenai Peninsula School District's, "Golden Apple Award," which is bestowed to School District employees, volunteers and community organizations that go to extra lengths to support and advance education.

She has held many positions of church and United Methodist Women leadership, including being the Safe Sanctuary Resource Person for the Alaska Conference United Methodist Church and is involved in Sexual Ethics Training for the conference. She is a Poll worker, Food Bank Volunteer, Letter to the Editor writer, United Methodist Women's Division Director (8 years), and former United Methodist Women conference officer. With all Susie Smalley's involvements in promoting equality and justice, aren't we all benefitted by her enthusiastic, natural approach to advocating and supporting others?