

From the early days of high school, Kathy Bonnifield was a seeker of world experiences. Though her time at New Ulm high school afforded her with a solid education and friendships that endure to this day, she had a desire to explore beyond New Ulm's city limits.

During her time at NUHS, Kathy had the opportunity to spend a year in Turkey and became immersed in learning the language and culture. After graduating in 1990, she attended Gustavus Adolphus College where she studied geology. Following graduation, Kathy was recruited to teach English at Jilan University of Technology in China; she took on this new job with great vigor and enthusiasm.

Her teaching experience in China led Kathy to join the Peace Corp. She first served in Sri Lanka which provided her a wonderful opportunity to help those in need. During her time there she was on a bus that was bombed, the Peace Corp then made the decision to pull all their volunteers out of that area for safety reasons. Kathy was soon assigned to Nepal and worked with community members in a rural area and deeply valued the time she spent with the people there.

Upon returning to the United States, Kathy decided to focus her time and energy on fundraising for the Center for Victims of Torture and played a key role in setting up an international human rights meeting in Turkey. During her time with CVT she continued to look for ways to improve the fund development program and was always willing to lend a hand. She served as a mentor and friend to many through her time there. She went on to work as the International Program Administrator for the McKnight Foundation, where her work focused on women's economic advancement in East Africa and on land and water rights in Southeast Asia. In addition, Kathy has served as an election observer since 2004 with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Her commitment to upholding democracy holds no bounds, she's dedicated to ensuring that people have their voices heard through the opportunity to cast their ballot.

Kathy's career took a local turn as she then devoted her time to becoming an advisor and then Director of Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota. This organization's focus is on post-election audits of voting equipment. Kathy now works with an initiative of the Proteus Fund, called the Piper Fund. Her aim there has been on state judicial independence; she provides grants to state-based groups and manages contracts there. Her work with the Fund has brought her to about 30 states, where she has worked tirelessly to promote democracy from across the globe to right here at home.

From New Ulm to the far reaches of the world, Kathy continues to make a difference to many, and never shies away from a challenge in giving a voice to those who need to be heard. Her work to fight social injustice has spanned three decades and counting. Kathy sees opportunities to help and digs right in without hesitation. Her dedication to helping others has inspired countless people both near and far and illustrates the fact that it can take just one person to create a change for the better.