



UNA-USA, Minnesota Chapter, Elects New Leadership Team at Annual 2026 Meeting

New President, Board Members and Executive Committee Elected



Left to Right: Stu Ackman, Anna DeWitt, Dale Snyder (Treasurer), Jay Shahidi, Bob Pitner, Don McCormick (President), Liz Klages, Andrew Lefton, Michael Eaton, Kinza Qazi (Secretary), Kare Rise, Chengyan Yue. Not pictured: Clara Ugarte Perrin (Vice President), and board members Phillip Zuidema, Geoffrey Kaweesa and Tammie Follett.

During the recent 2026 UNA-Minnesota chapter annual meeting (Saturday, February 14) a new leadership team was elected, and fond farewells and testimonials were given to the old leadership team. Elected were Don McCormick (President); Clara Ugarte Perrin (Vice President); Kinza Qazi (Secretary) and Dale Snyder (interim Treasurer). Retiring was Liz Klages, outgoing vice president, who was lauded for her role in acting as chair of the education committee and the wonderful work she has done coordinating the Model U.N. for the past several years. (See the Jan/Feb 2026 newsletter about MUN.) Kinza Qazi was elected Secretary, replacing Silvia Ontaneda-Everson. **A sincere thank you to all who previously served in leadership or board member positions. For leadership bios and a list of board members click [here](#).**

During the program Stu Ackman presented the Harold E. Stassen Award to recent past president Fred Badiyan for his many years of unstinting service to the Minnesota chapter. Stu spoke highly of Fred and his many years of service. An Inspiration Award was given to Leil Poullada who was recognized for her many years of public service and support of the United Nations, as well as the United Nations Association/Minnesota chapter. Jay Shahidi and Bob Pitner offered a tribute to the late Ambassador, Robert A. Flaten (1934-2025). The ambassador had a distinguished career as a foreign service officer and U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda. Amb. Flaten was a friend and supporter of this chapter. See his life at: <https://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/members-1/flaten/robert-a>. [Further details are on page 2.]

Also presenting was Michael Eaton, UNA National Council - North Central Region representative and UNA-USA/Minnesota chapter board member. Michael spoke on the status of the *UN Today*. After a break, there was a chapter business meeting, including the approval of January 27, 2026, board meeting minutes, the treasurer's report, Board and Officer elections, and various committee presentations. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.



For information on the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals - Go [Here](#).

Become a UNA-USA, Minnesota Chapter Member: Join a network of over 20,000 members and 180+ chapters to advocate for global engagement. Membership is \$50 annually, with options for free or reduced fees for students and those on fixed incomes. Go to: <https://unausa.org/join/membership/>. **The UN, UNA-USA, and your Minnesota Chapter need your support.**



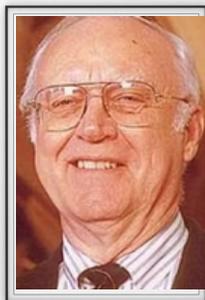


Inspiration Award Given to Leila Poullada

Ms. Leila Poullada was presented with the Minnesota chapter's Inspiration Award by UNA-Minnesota board member, Kari Rise. Ms. Poullada, who is now 102 years young, has had a full life of service to humanity. As we enter into international women's month, we reflect upon the women who have paved the way for women's equality at home and abroad. Women like Leila focus on intersectionality and equality that transcends global borders, religion, and socioeconomic barriers. Leila serves as an example of how important it is to understand women's power as advocates at all ages, and their agency to make a difference in both our local communities and around the world.



Tribute to the Late Ambassador Robert A. Flaten



Ambassador Flaten



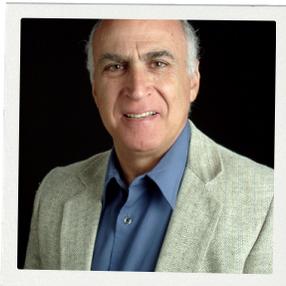
Jay



Bob

Jay Shahidi and Bob Pitner offered a tribute to the life of the late Ambassador Robert A. Flaten. Mr. Flaten served as Ambassador to Rwanda from December 1990 to November 1993. He retired from the Foreign Service in May 1994. He was Chair of the Executive Committee of the Noble Peace Prize Forum which works with the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo to honor and promote the work of recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was also a Distinguished Lecturer in Political Science at St. Olaf College, and a Minnesota Representative of the Immortal Chaplains Foundation. Amb. Flaten was also a member of the Minnesota International Center, AFSA Upper Midwest, the St. Paul - Minneapolis Committee on Foreign Relations, and Rotary International. He was an active member of UNA-USA/Minnesota for many years, serving as vice president for several terms.

Fred Badiyan Presented with Harold E. Stassen Award



Fred Badiyan, President Emeritus, 2024-2025

Thank you for your years of dedicated service, Fred

Fred Badiyan has been a member of the United Nations Association - Minnesota Chapter for 26 years, and served in many positions in both leadership and as a board member. Stuart Ackman, past president of the chapter, presented Fred with the award this year for his outstanding service to the chapter.

The Gov. Harold E. Stassen award recognizes outstanding service to international understanding and the goals of the United Nations. It was established in 2016 by the UNA-MN Board of Directors (www.unamn.org). The award was named for Harold E. Stassen (1907-2001), a former Minnesota Governor (1939-1943) and a key American delegate who helped draft and sign the United Nations Charter in 1945. It is considered the highest honor presented by the United Nations Association of Minnesota.



Change starts with you. Seriously. Every human on earth—even the most indifferent, laziest person among us—is part of the solution. Fortunately, there are some super easy things we can adopt into our routines that, if we all do it, will make a big difference. Find out about being a solution by clicking [here](#), or by going to: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/>



Ask yourself: Why is the UN important?

Because: *The United Nations is vital to humanity for maintaining international peace, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, and fostering global cooperation to solve complex challenges like climate change, poverty, and conflict. And, it has a proven record of doing so. Is it perfect? No. But, with increasing support from all of us, we can add to its growing efficiency and effectiveness. What is the alternative?*



- Help Celebrate Equality - International Women's Day- March 8, 2026

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge such a world.



Register for an IWD account [here](#)

International Women's Day (IWD) has been around for over a hundred years, as have many of the issues still impacting women's advancement. Since 1911, IWD belongs to all who care about gender equality. Celebrate women's achievements. Raise awareness about discrimination. Take action to forge gender parity. All IWD activity is valid; that's what makes IWD so inclusive. Click [here](#) for more information.

Collective action and shared ownership for driving gender parity is what makes International Women's Day impactful. Gloria Steinem, world-renowned feminist, journalist and activist reportedly [once explained](#), "The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organization, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights." So make International Women's Day your day and do what you can to truly make a positive difference for women.

Learn About World Health Day - April 7, 2026



World Health Day is an annual global observance held on April 7 that marks the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948, and highlights a designated public health priority. It is used by WHO to draw attention to a specific public health issue of global relevance. The observance serves as a reference point for governments, institutions, and health systems to examine shared health challenges. The purpose of World Health Day is to provide a globally recognized moment for examining public health priorities identified by WHO. The scope of the observance is international and applies across health systems, policy environments, and population contexts. World Health Day functions as an awareness and reference observance rather than a single standardized program implemented uniformly worldwide.

The theme for World Health Day 2026 is Global Action for Universal Health Coverage. The theme focuses on ensuring that people everywhere can access essential health services, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, without experiencing financial hardship. Universal health coverage is identified by WHO as a foundational component of effective, resilient, and equitable health systems.



Stay Current on the UN and World Affairs

Since 1999, the Better World Campaign (BWC) has been on a mission to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and the United Nations. That's because we believe American leadership and values on the global stage helps to shape a safer, stronger, more prosperous world. Launched with a bold vision — and an [historic \\$1 billion gift](#) from philanthropist Ted Turner — BWC brings together policymakers, thought leaders and regular Americans to champion the UN's lifesaving work — from peacekeeping and humanitarian response to global health and maritime security. Based in Washington, DC, we make the case every day for why a strong U.S.-UN relationship isn't just good diplomacy — it's smart, compassionate foreign policy. Click [here](#) for the BWC website and to sign up for the newsletter.

Mission of the UN Association

The mission of UNA-USA (United Nations Association of the USA) is to educate, inspire, and mobilize Americans to support the United Nations, strengthen the UN system, promote constructive US leadership in the UN, and achieve the goals outlined in the UN Charter. This includes promoting human rights, sustainable development, international peace and security, and other goals outlined in the UN Charter.

Join your Minnesota chapter at <https://unausa.org/join/membership/>





Model UN Held at Macalester College

February 27, 2026



The Model UN (MUN) is a simulation of the UN General Assembly and its other multilateral bodies where students perform delegate roles while debating topics such as gender equality, climate action, global health, and more. Each year, UNA-MN hosts fall and spring MUN conferences where students from area high schools come together to debate important, real world issues that the United Nations faces daily. The students welcomed special guest speaker Mayor Kaohly Her from St. Paul, who was elected the city's 47th, first woman and first Asian-American mayor in 2025.



Mayor Kaohly Her

Model UN Minnesota 2026 Spring Attendees



Top left, clockwise: Mayor Her and Don McCormick; Liz Klages, UNA-MN Education Chair; Mayor Her addressing the students; UNA-MN President, Mayor Her and UNA-MN staff; Don McCormick addressing the students; the Mayor with attendees.

Minnesota High Schools Participating in MUN

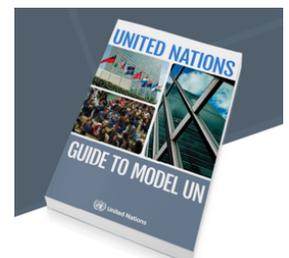
- Apple Valley High School
- Blake School
- Cambridge-Isanti High School
- Centennial High School
- Chaska High School
- Edina High School
- Great River School
- Highland Park Senior High School
- Maple Grove Senior High
- Minnetonka High School
- New Life Academy
- Open World Learning Community
- Osseo Senior High
- Park Center Senior High, IB World School
- Prior Lake High School
- St. Louis Park High School
- Wayzata High School



*You're thinking critically about diversity, and equity, and inclusion, and justice, pushing us all to be better advocates and allies to the most marginalized among us. And you're showing up as your true, authentic self, challenging the notion that diplomacy requires conformity. We need more of that in the halls of power. And that's why I'm so proud that last September, the UN General Assembly passed a historic **resolution** in support of **Model UN** programs around the world. It took us 50 years to do it. The UN is 70 years old, so this organization is not much younger than the UN.* Remarks by US Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, 13 March 2014

The "resolution" UN Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield was referring to was in August and September 2013, the UN broke tradition by launching the first-ever **official UN guide for Model UN**.

- **Purpose:** This was the first time the UN formally intervened to change the direction of MUN simulations, steering them toward "real diplomacy" as practiced in the actual chambers rather than purely competitive forensics.
- **Context:** During the 68th Session (September 2013), the UN recognized MUN's growth and began actively providing guidance to organizers to ensure accurate and authentic simulations.



To learn more about the MUN Guide, click [here](#).

Kudos to Liz Klages, Education Committee Chair; Rayann Rana, MUN Staff Assistant, and all UNA-MN members in support and attendance.



St. Anthony's Middle School - New Brighton, MN 8th Grade Students Capstone Project 2026 Aligns With the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Volunteers Needed

Help students leave a legacy aligned with the UN SDGs

Participate at your convenience
March-May
Support students asynchronously when it works for you!

How does it work?

1. Get matched with a group based on shared interests
2. Use teacher-made tools to give support when it works for you
3. Celebrate with us on June 3rd, 2026!

We Need Help With

- ✓ Brainstorming and making decisions
- ✓ Connecting with the community
- ✓ Making a meaningful impact on our community
- ✓ Celebrating!

For more information or to sign up:
[Maya Kruger](mailto:mkruger@isd282.org)
mkruger@isd282.org
[Sign up HERE](#)
 Or scan the code 

Would you like to support SAMS 8th graders in leaving a more sustainable environment in their community?

The commitment:

- Intermittent support via email (or in person if you feel like it!) from Mid-March through June 3rd
- Support could look like: helping students contact stakeholders (students can't email anyone outside of the district), helping research topics, and brainstorming decision-making, and light editing

The perks:

- A chance to connect
- An opportunity to make a difference for students AND the community
- An invite to our 8th Grade Capstone Symposium where students showcase their projects

If you wish to mentor a St. Anthony 8th grade student, scab the QR code or click on the instructor's link or email Ms. Kruger at mkruger@isd282.org.

Dear members, to see and support such UN/SDG enthusiasm is indeed to witness a hopeful future driven by our youth. Do us all a favor and provide mentorship to these youth as they engage in this important endeavor.

"If you are at all interested, but are yet unsure, go to www.unamn.org and scroll down to the story titled: **St. Anthony Middle School-New Brighton, MN Promotes UN-SDGs at Year-end Capstone Project**. My wife and I attended last year and we spoke about our enthusiasm for this project weeks afterward." - UNA-Minnesota member

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.





Notable UN/UNA-Minnesota Observances

March is Women's History Month

MARCH 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 World Wildlife Day	4	5 International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation	6	7
8 International Women's Day	9 70 th Session / Commission on the Status of Women 9 th -19 th	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Intl Day of Happiness	21 Intl Day of Forests / Intl Day-Elimination of Racial Discrimination
22 World Water Day	23 World Meteorological Day	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 Intl Day of Zero Waste	31	1	2	3	4

APRIL 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2 World Autism Awareness Day	3 Good Friday	4 Intl Day for Mine Awareness
5 Easter Sunday	6 Intl Day of Sport for Development & Peace	7 World Health Day	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 ECOSOC Youth Forum 14 th - 16 th	15 15 th UN Crime Congress 15 th - 30 th	16	17	18
19	20 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development 20 th - 24 th	21 SDG Investment Fair 20 th - 24 th	22 Intl Mother Earth Day	23	24 Intl Day of Multilateralism & Diplomacy	25 World Malaria Day
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

NEWSLETTER

Serving All Minnesotans



The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) is a registered 501c3 nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that provides educational and meaningful advocacy engagements to connect members with all aspects of the US-UN relationship.

UNA-USA has chapters in more than 46 U.S. states and territories, and over 180 chapters nationwide



JOIN US

Send your suggestions and ideas to newsletter editor at andrewl@unamn.org