



UNA-USA Leaders Meet the Moment in St. Louis:

Don, Michael, and Fred Represent UNA-MN at Leadership Summit



L to R: Don, Michael and Fred (Inset: Michael with organizing team.)

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) recently held its annual Leadership Summit in St. Louis, Missouri, marking the first time the flagship event has been hosted outside of Washington, D.C.

UNA-USA Minnesota President Fred Badiyan and board member Don McCormick attended. Michael Eaton, past-President and board member of our chapter and current National Council member, played a key role in organizing the event.

From November 14-16, advocates and changemakers from across the nation gathered under the theme **“Meeting the Moment – Our Moment”** to sharpen advocacy skills and shape bold solutions to global challenges.

Summit Highlights and Key Discussions

The three-day summit featured a dynamic agenda of keynote speeches, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities designed to galvanize grassroots support for a strong US role in the UN.

- **Grassroots Action:** The event emphasized the power of community and individual storytelling in creating policy change. Attendees shared their personal motivations and learned how to leverage their unique experiences to advocate for global goals.
- **Leadership and Advocacy Workshops:** Over eighteen workshops with fellow chapter leaders addressing wide ranging topics including chapter management, US role in international bodies, global food security, global health, personal influence, youth advocacy and potential influence of artificial intelligence on chapter administration.
- **Key Speakers:** Distinguished speakers included diplomats, UN officials, and local leaders. The event also notably marked the final appearance of Rachel Bowen Pittman in her official role as UNA-USA Executive Director.
- **Youth Focus:** With a significant portion of UNA-USA’s membership under 26, youth leadership was a central focus. Discussions and presentations highlighted the role of young people in sustainable development and global decision-making, featuring the current US Youth Observer to the UN, Jared Lash, and [Climate Cardinals](#) founder Sophia Kianni, who recognized the need for climate document translation in middle school and has since led transitions in over 100 languages.

A Call to Action

Against a backdrop of global crises and challenges to UN funding, the summit served as a powerful call to action for Americans to lead with purpose. Participants left motivated and ready to bring the lessons learned back to their communities to advocate for a more peaceful and prosperous world.

This message was reinforced by the video Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, prepared as he was unable to join the event, as planned. His powerful message to attendees remains incredibly relevant. UNA-USA encourages you to watch his address reflecting on the importance of local action for global change. [Click here to view Stephane’s video](#). For more information on this event and future initiatives, visit the [UNA-USA website](http://www.unamn.org).





Kudos to Liz Klages and Her Staff For a Record Turnout at the Fall 2025 Model UN

Macalester College, St. Paul, MN, again hosted our chapter's Model United Nations on 14 November, 2025; an annual activity of the United Nations Association of Minnesota. A record 701 students registered from 18 area and state high schools. A noteworthy guest was U.S. Representative Betty McCollum (MN Dist. 4), who visited with the student representatives and staff.



Liz Klages (inset). Rep. McCollum (4th from right), MUN staff and helpers.

Six students from area high schools discuss why they attended 2025's fall Model UN and what the Model UN process means to them, both now and for their futures. Here is a sample of their thoughts.

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"...we, as a generation coming together, just really working together as a group, found it so motivating because it brings a sense of compassion, and it brings a sense of advocacy."

"We all love to talk. We all love to collaborate. We all love to work together and be loud, but also [be] impactful, too."

"I think I come to Model UN mostly for the sense of community. ... I think it brings attention oftentimes to issues that maybe aren't as mainstream"

"You learn how to speak. You learn how to collaborate with people. You learn how to compromise. ... I think those are all traits that are really important and sort of missing in today's society."



L to R: Sam, Lydia, Veda and Karissa from Edina.



Sadie and Daniel from Minnetonka

Collaboration - Leadership -
Ingenuity - Communication

“I first joined Model UN because my friends mentioned it to me, and I fell in love with it. It has made me find my passions. ...It's made me find my people. It has allowed me to know that I can make a difference in this world through my voice and through who I truly am and my passions.”



Sreeja Thirukkovalur, guest speaker
UNICEF USA Midwest
Youth Representative



Rayaan Rana,
MUN Coordinator



U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum
addressing the Plenary



Liz with delegates & staff

You can read all these articles plus much more by going to the UNA-Minnesota website at: <https://www.unamn.org>

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A Brief Interview With Liz Klages, Chair of the UNA-MN Education Committee



Liz, how long have you been coordinating MUN for the UNA Minnesota chapter?

I am actually not the coordinator, but Chair of the Education committee and I oversee and facilitate the MUN conferences. The MUN Coordinator now is Rayaana Rana, a University of Minnesota student who participated in our MUN conferences while he was a student at Edina High School. I have been in my facilitator role since the Fall 2022 conference, so this is my 4th year.

What motivated you to become involved with MUN?

Stu [Ackman]! I was in the Secretary position of UNA-MN at that time and we had multiple discussions about how to revitalize the program after Covid, where we had conducted online conferences. That's when we reached out to Macalester for facilities again.

At this recent MUN at Macalester, how many students and MN high schools were involved?

701 students registered for the conference from 18 schools, from across the Metro area and as far as Bemidji.

What stood out for you as noteworthy in the most recent MUN?

The increasing passion of high school students to learn more about international issues and solving world problems in consensus with others. The expertise of those students on the Security Council was also notable. (interview continued above right.)

What supersedes the high school MUN for students? Do they go on to further involvement with the United Nations or the Association in some manner? For instance, is there a pathway for students to continue the MUN experience in college, in Minnesota UNA or other state chapters?

Many students continue to participate in Model UN activities in college. In the Metro area, a number of schools have Model UN programs: University of Minnesota, St. Thomas, Hamline, Macalester and my program at Normandale Community College. Some students do eventually work for the UN, but more often they work for NGOs associated with doing the good work of the UN, as jobs at the UN are limited. Some seek out public service through Foreign Service within the State Department or related government agencies when those opportunities are available.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATED

The UN Human Rights Day commemoration, held annually on December 10, 2025, marks the adoption of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR) in 1948. The UDHR serves as a global call to action to uphold fundamental rights for all, promoting equality, freedom, justice, and dignity through annual themes that focus on pressing human rights issues and inspiring collective efforts to build a better world.

Members of the Minnesota chapter of the United Nations Association gathered today at the Northstar Tavern in Bloomington, MN, (Dec 9, 2025) to commemorate UN Human Rights Day. The speaker for the program was M. 'Jay' Shahidi, past president of the Minnesota chapter, and long-time advocate for peace and human rights. Jay discussed the history of human rights from the origination of the concept under the 18th century BCE Babylonian Code of Hammurabi to the adoption of the UDHR by the United Nations.

For more on this gathering, refer to the Events page on the UNA-MN website at: <https://www.unamn.org/events-meetings-programs>

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.



Human Rights Day Celebration



Clockwise from top left: Jay and Don McCormick, Robert Pitner, co-host (our other host was Stu Ackman), Jay discussing the history of human rights, and a group of guests.

See us at: www.unamn.org

Notable UN/UNA-Minnesota Days

JANUARY 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1 New Year's Day	2	3
4 World Braille Day	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Martin Luther King Day	20	21	22	23	24 Intl Day of Education
25	26	27 Holocaust Remembrance Day	28 Intl Peaceful Coexistence Day	29	30	31

FEBRUARY 2026 – Black History/American Heart Month						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2nd-11th 64 th Session-Commission on Social Development	3	4 Intl Human Fraternity Day / World Cancer Day	5	6 Intl Day: Zero Tolerance / Female Genital Mutilation	7
8	9	10	11 Intl Day: Women & Girls in Science	12	13 World Radio Day	14
15	16 Presidents' Day	17	18	19	20 World Day of Social Justice	21 Intl Mother Language Day
22	23	24	25	26	27 Model UN at Macalester College-St Paul	28

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 230 chapters nationwide



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