

December 2015

By Erich Thurow, Chairman D200 Education Foundation

As the holidays approach and the end of the year draws closer, the District 200 Education Foundation gears up for our annual fund raiser and the presentation of the Sue Palmore Award of Excellence for 2016. It is an honor for me to announce that the recipient of the award this year is long-time resident and educational volunteer Joy Aavang.

Joy Hallam was born in England and lived there until she was a teen. She lived through the World War II bombings in London before coming to the United States for a visit. On that visit she met Irv Aavang who became her husband. For more than half a century, the Woodstock Community has been home and the place where Mrs. Aavang raised her family and became an author.

Many residents know Mrs. Aavang through her writing. She has a series of books entitled "Fly the Flag for Me," that document the personal histories of veterans from different wars as well as civilians who lived through the wars. Long time readers of The Independent may remember her monthly columns sharing many of the stories from her books.

Michelle Martin, assistant principal of Creekside Middle School, nominated Mrs. Aavang for the award and several middle school teachers wrote recommendations on her behalf based on her years of volunteer work in both Northwood and Creekside schools. Ms. Martin pointed out that she, "has been an active contributor to the NWMS Veterans' Day Assembly" for many years. "She does classroom presentations and has provided a host veterans as guest speakers." Her work there earned her the Northwood Patriot Award and recognition by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. Aavang annually volunteers to read to students during the "Love to Read Week" and she volunteers annually as a judge of the Creekside and Northwood Projects. She also helps out the sixth grade teachers by working on the grandparent project and is often a "stand-in grandparent" for a student who does not have a grandparent to interview.

In one of the letters recommending Mrs. Aavang for our award, she was described as "daring, compassionate and willing." The letter continues saying, "She cares enough to volunteer time and passes on the knowledge and life experiences that have been unique to her." Another letter, written by NWMS teacher Shelley Simonton, praises her for being "inspirational to our students" and a person who "promotes education and strength in character."

As we prepare for our February 6 event. I look forward to the opportunity to present the Sue Palmore award to Mrs. Joy Aavang. I feel certain that Mrs. Palmore would be as pleased as we on the Foundation to add her name to our past winners. We invite you to join us to support the work of the Foundation and to honor Mrs. Aavang. For questions or details about the event, please contact me at [ekthurow@owc.net](mailto:ekthurow@owc.net).