

Laura Swanson: Building Friendships, Nurturing Future Volunteers

Laura Swanson is the president of the Naperville Junior Woman's Club. She began volunteering in her 20s and now instills the importance of giving back with her daughters.

- By [Mary Ann Lopez](#)
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Back when Laura Swanson was living and working in Chicago, she had a lucrative job with a Wall Street firm, but she didn't feel that much satisfaction from her work.

What did give her satisfaction was volunteering. In her 20s, while living in the city, she began to volunteer with a number of organizations and charities near her Lincoln Park home.

"I felt there was more I needed to do," Swanson said.

Swanson is the president of the [Naperville Junior Woman's Club](#). She's been involved with the organization since 2008 and on the board most of that time. Her involvement with the club is a continuation of her desire to give back and help, which started with those first volunteer activities.

After one of her children graduated from [Safety Town](#), and after hearing one of the club's volunteers speak at the end of the program, Swanson said she was moved enough to get involved.

Just watching what the volunteers did to help children learn about being safe, whether through fire, electrical or bus safety, Swanson said she appreciated the hands-on education children were getting. After attending a meeting and having her questions answered she joined.

One of the causes the club has chosen to support through its community involvement project is [DuPage PADS](#). The club has committed to supporting the nonprofit for two years.

The [Naperville Junior Woman's Club](#) fundraises and volunteers with DuPage Pads serving lunch at its Wheaton location, she said. It also supports other local nonprofits such as [Loaves & Fishes](#) and [Families Helping Families](#). Along with those local groups it continues to support Safety Town, which the group brought to Naperville in 1978. The club continues to support it through fundraising and volunteering.

Swanson enjoys giving back at DuPage PADS and has brought her children with on occasions to help out.

"Knowing that the average age in DuPage County of a homeless child is 8 years old, that is what drives me," Swanson said, adding that it is satisfying to know that a child was able to eat a meal because of something the club members did.

Swanson also instills a sense of giving back with her children, she said. In lieu of birthday presents her children collect books, which they donate. In the past her children have donated the books to [Wayside Cross Ministries](#). This year the books will be given to [Mutual Ground](#).

Watching their mother give back to the community, Swanson said her youngest daughters Katie, 7, and Sara, 9, are also searching for their own ways to give back and she encourages their selfless actions.

Over the weekend, in honor of Earth Day, one of her daughters suggested they clean up a park and afterward have a picnic. Even though it was a little cold, they did the work and celebrated with a picnic.

“It’s important for my kids to give back to their community,” she said. “It teaches them to be more accepting.”

Swanson not only gives back through the Naperville Junior Woman’s Club, but she is also on the [Indian Prairie School District 204 Project Arrow PTA](#) and has helped start a (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) STEM group at her daughters’ school, [Brooks Elementary School](#), which with her help will hold its first science fair next year.

Juggling all of the projects isn’t too difficult and she spends time in the evenings after the girls have gone to bed doing work, she said.

Though she is very involved in a number of groups, the Naperville Junior Woman’s Club gets the majority of her attention. The group is always seeking new members, and has helped build great friendships among its members, she said.

“More than anything it is about building the friendship, the female bonds,” she said. “We do so many things for our children, this club is about being able to be with girlfriends and to be a woman and get involved in causes. I’ve seen a lot of friendships grow.”

The Naperville Junior Woman’s Club will hold a new member meeting on May 14 at 7:30 p.m. at [Quigley’s](#). To learn more about the Naperville Junior Woman’s Club visit the [website](#).

*About this column: Naper Settlement is proud to sponsor the Wonderful Wednesday column. The people profiled every Wednesday carry on a tradition spanning more than 180 years of residents working to improve the community. You can learn more about the wonderful people from the past at Naper Settlement (www.napersettlement.museum). Every week Naperville Patch puts the spotlight on a Naperville resident who is doing wonderful things. Residents are encouraged to nominate someone they believe deserves the honor. Send nominations to Local Editor Mary Ann Lopez at maryl@patch.com, be sure to reference Wonderful Wednesday.***Related Topics:**[Laura Swanson](#), [Naperville Junior Woman's Club](#), [Volunteering](#), and [Wonderful Wednesday](#)