Envisioning a world in which every person lives with dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and peace, The Advocates for Human Rights believes that each one of us has a part to play in building respect for human rights and expanding the human rights movement. The Advocates implements international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law.

The Advocates is an independent and nonpartisan nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that investigates and exposes human rights violations; represents people seeking asylum; trains and assists human rights defenders; and uses research, education, and advocacy to engage the public, policymakers, and children in human rights work.

A diversely talented team of volunteers helps The Advocates achieve success and build broad-based constituencies in Minnesota, the United States, and around the globe.

These are challenging times at The Advocates for Human Rights. Continued assaults on migrants and punitive outcrops in asylum protections have increased the demand for our services and reduced the protections available to victims of human rights violations.

Our Refugee and Immigrant Program continues to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of immigration policy. The United States government has violated international treaty obligations and federal law in implementing its immigration policies. Even the swift and overwhelmingly negative public reaction to tearing children from their parent’s arms at the border did not result in a complete reversal of that policy. There are still families being separated and children waiting to be reunited with their parents. And our government continues its assault on asylum seekers, keeping the advocacy community off-balance with changing standards and increasingly drastic threats of future action. Thanks to our staff and volunteers we are able to serve clients in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota and find lawyers for many more in other states.

Our Women’s Human Rights Program had an amazing year in its work to make a better, safer world for women. The Advocates shared its expertise with partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Morocco, and Minnesota. We also trained advocates from 15 different countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union at the Russian Legal Training Academy for Women’s Human Rights, which held its trainings in different cities, and at the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute in Bulgaria.

The Advocates’ work to combat trafficking continued with the publication of the Safe Harbors for All Report and our protocol for labor trafficking. Our work for the United Nations on the benefits of female inclusion in the workplace culminated in another internationally acclaimed report.

The International Justice Program continued its important work to hold governments accountable for human rights abuses, taking two teams to advocate at the United Nations in Geneva. It also helped international partners in the LGBTI community build capacity with trainings and assistance in Minnesota and Russia. Finally, we are celebrating the Sankhu-Palubari Community School’s 20th anniversary this year, giving education and hope to over 350 low-income students in Nepal.

We are buoyed by the overwhelming outpouring of volunteer support for our work. People have stepped up to share their time and talents to protect human rights. Our community has come together to show that we reject hateful, punitive policies that violate international human rights standards, and that we stand with refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and people of different religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Our human rights community also suffered huge losses this year with the deaths of Arvonne Fraser, Don Fraser, Marlene Kayser, and Mary Ellingen. While we continue to mourn these losses, we celebrate the amazing impact these extraordinary people had on both human rights and our organization. (You can read more about them on pages 12 and 13.)

As we recommit ourselves to the work ahead, we know that the challenges and loss of this past year have made us stronger. We know that our community is standing with us, and that we can accomplish much together. We are grateful for the dedication and inspiration of the amazing people who share their lives with us. Together we can change the world for good.

In peace,

Robin Phillips | Executive Director
Refugee & Immigrant Rights

Legal Representation

The Advocates for Human Rights provided legal help in more than 1170 cases – including 673 cases placed with pro bono attorneys – in 2018. The Advocates helped asylum seekers, trafficking victims, and detained immigrants from more than 50 countries navigate an increasingly perilous immigration system. Attorneys represented clients before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in applications for asylum, T nonimmigrant status, and special immigrant juvenile status; in removal and bond proceedings before the immigration court and Board of Immigration Appeals, and in cases before the federal courts.

The administration’s efforts to create chaos at the southern border were felt in the north, as The Advocates continued to see children and families fleeing Central America’s northern triangle, including those who have been separated by immigration officials. For the first time in 20 years, The Advocates witnessed the large-scale transfer of arriving asylum seekers to detention centers in Minnesota. People who have managed to establish a “credible fear” of persecution from Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Venezuela, and other countries now await their removal hearings – and a chance to apply for asylum – from behind bars in Minnesota.

The Advocates continued to see record numbers of asylum seekers throughout the region. Overwhelmed non-detained immigration court dockets and new “last-in, first-out” asylum office interview schedules have meant that many clients face years of uncertainty in an ever-growing backlog. The Advocates’ Asylum Support Network (ASN) is providing a lifeline for clients who have been separated from family and are often without work authorization. A partnership between The Advocates and International Association for Refugees, ASN engages volunteers in accompanying asylum seekers as they seek safety.

Court Observation

Throughout 2018, The Advocates partnered with the University of Minnesota Law School Binger Center for New Americans and Robins Kaplan LLP to engage the public in ongoing immigration court monitoring. Since launching the project, more than 450 volunteers have documented more than 1700 immigration hearings at the Fort Snelling Immigration Court. This important human rights monitoring tool underscores the right to a fair public trial and brings transparency into what have historically been closed-door proceedings.

Somali 92

On December 7, 2017, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) attempted to deport 92 men and women to Somalia. The plane departed Louisiana for Somalia, but was grounded in Senegal where it remained on the runway for 23 hours before returning to Miami. For almost two days, the men and women sat bound and shackled in an ICE-chartered airplane. People aboard the flight reported truly horrifying conditions. Even more alarming, ICE failed to deport them before any investigation into the mistreatment could be made.

The Advocates joined colleagues at the University of Minnesota Law School’s Binger Center for New Americans, University of Miami School of Law’s Immigration Clinic, Legal Services of Broward County, Americans for Immigrant Justice, and the ACLU in seeking an injunction. When a federal judge in Miami ordered ICE to stop the deportation, provide medical care, and provide an opportunity to reopen the underlying deportation cases, the need for large-scale pro bono mobilization was clear. Working with colleagues at Americans for Immigrant Justice in Miami, The Advocates recruited pro bono attorneys from around the United States to file motions to reopen. Pro bono attorneys fought throughout 2018 to reopen cases and win protection from deportation for the men and women aboard the flight.

Labor Trafficking

The Advocates for Human Rights released new Labor Trafficking Protocol Guidelines to strengthen Minnesota’s response to labor trafficking of youth. Released in January 2019, the protocol guidelines are designed to help people and institutions respond to this serious human rights abuse and are based on information collected from over 100 professionals and trafficking experts throughout Minnesota. The guidelines grew out of earlier research by The Advocates, which identified labor trafficking as a serious human rights abuse against immigrant and other communities.

“Labor trafficking inflicts lasting physical and psychological harm on its victims, but is under-identified in Minnesota. Without dedicated efforts to improve identification of victims and provide a holistic response based on the victim’s needs, this grave abuse will continue,” said Robin Phillips, executive director of The Advocates for Human Rights. “Stopping labor trafficking can also lead to improved conditions for all workers,” she added.

The Labor Trafficking Protocol Guidelines were developed in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), which has also worked with The Advocates and other direct service providers around the state to expand help available to labor trafficked youth. MDH’s funding support was provided through a federal grant awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, and the US Department of Justice.
Volunteer Carrie Brasser

The Advocates for Human Rights develops innovative, sustainable strategies to hold governments accountable for human rights abuses and to strengthen institutions in the international justice system. The Advocates holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations, and it also participates in regional human rights mechanisms. The Advocates helps international partners build capacity and use international human rights mechanisms to improve human rights worldwide.

Spanning Generations and Continents, The Advocates’ UN Advocacy Delivers Results

The Advocates’ annual Study & Advocacy Trip to Geneva, which took place in March 2019, included a record number of countries, topics, and UN bodies. The Advocates worked side by side with human rights defenders from Albania, Cote d’Ivoire, and Russia, as well as with partners in the Colombian, Ethiopian, and Vietnamese diasporas. With the help of its volunteers, ages 17 to 83, The Advocates multiplied its presence in Geneva. The Advocates worked with the Tai Studies Center to brief the Human Rights Committee on indigenous rights for its review of Vietnam. Drawing on asylum client experiences, The Advocates briefed the same committee for its review of Eritrea. The Advocates also briefed the Committee on the death penalty, immigration, and human trafficking for the upcoming review of the United States.

The Advocates’ team met with dozens of Human Rights Council delegates and delivered oral statements to the Human Rights Council for debates on topics ranging from the death penalty in Iran to LGBTI rights in Chechnya to ethnic persecution in Ethiopia. After delivering her oral statement on Eritrea, the team’s youngest member, Olivia Leyba, earned a “That’s awesome!” from one of the ordinarily gruff UN staffers, who was delighted that a 17-year-old had addressed the Council.

Being at the UN to deliver those messages can be a life-changing event for volunteers, whatever their age. Carrie Brasser described it this way: “Every time I walked into the chambers of the Human Rights Council and saw the empty chair where the member from the United States should have been, I was reminded of how terribly lost our government is as it has abdicated its leadership on human rights. But, instead of just complaining about this to my family and friends, I was able to show the world by my presence there, and with my words, that Americans do care about human rights, and we are working to change our government’s inhumane policies. For me it was an empowering, patriotic, and deeply satisfying experience.”

Fighting for Abolition of the Death Penalty with Partners Around the World

Suzana Norlihan Ujen is an attorney whose brother sits on Malaysia’s death row. The Advocates first met Suzana two years ago at a workshop in Kuala Lumpur, where Senior Staff Attorney Amy Bergquist was training activists to conduct fact-finding interviews about conditions on death row.

Since then, The Advocates has provided Suzana and her colleagues with research and other pro bono support in their fight against the death penalty. The Advocates met Suzana again at the World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Brussels in February. “I wish I had known about this movement during my brother’s trial. Now I can tell him that all these people are supporting him and don’t want him to die. I no longer feel so alone,” she said. The hard work of Suzana and her colleagues has paid off. In March, the government of Malaysia agreed to repeal the mandatory death penalty, and the country has suspended executions.

Inspired by human rights defenders like Suzana, The Advocates has increased its work to end the death penalty worldwide. In addition to submitting reports on death penalty issues in 17 countries to the UN and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, The Advocates helped organize two workshops for the World Congress, and chairs a working group for World Day Against the Death Penalty. The Advocates also serves on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, where Amy is Vice President.

Helping International Partners Build Capacity to Fight for LGBTI Rights

“What I saw among the diligent, creative, thoughtful people we met in Moscow, both among the LGBTI community and others working for human rights, was a strong spirit of resolve and hope for a better future,” remarked volunteer Gerry Tyrrell.

Tyrrell found inspiration as part of The Advocates’ team that spent a week in Moscow in September 2018 through a Peer2Peer project between The Advocates and the Moscow Community Center for LGBT+ Initiatives (MCC). There, The Advocates provided training on human rights and building organizational capacity.

MCC is the only LGBT community center in Moscow. It operates the region’s sole LGBT shelter and provides the community with pro bono legal and mental health services as well as classes in foreign languages, computer coding, and art, among others. The Peer2Peer project focuses on improving how the two organizations use volunteers to meet the needs of their respective LGBT communities.

The Advocates also hosted an MCC team in Minnesota, providing them with trainings on fundraising, volunteer management, avoiding secondary trauma, and asylum law. MCC visited advocacy organizations and service-providers. Drawing on its experiences working with LGBT people fleeing Chechnya, MCC led a workshop to discuss ideas for making the Twin Cities more welcoming for LGBT refugees and immigrants.

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The Advocates for Human Rights works locally and internationally to make a better, safer world for women. Its expert staff and volunteers research, write, consult and train advocates on how best to hold violent offenders accountable; keep victims safe; stop sex trafficking; provide free immigration legal assistance to foreign national victims; and promote gender diversity in male-dominated industries.

Legal Training Academy on Women’s Human Rights

Throughout the past two years, The Advocates trained a cohort of women’s human rights lawyers from countries in the Former Soviet Union. Through the Legal Training Academy for Women’s Human Rights, The Advocates trained 16 Russian-speaking lawyers from 8 countries on forms of violence against women and how to use UN and European mechanisms when all domestic remedies have failed to advance women’s human rights.

“It was an honor to have helped train these courageous and talented women and men—a new generation of human rights defenders,” said Rose Park, Women’s Human Rights Program Director. “These lawyers are poised and prepared to safeguard women’s human rights in their home countries and beyond. We expect to see them leading efforts to advance women’s human rights in the years to come.”

Women’s Human Rights Training Institute

Continuing its longstanding partnership with the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF), The Advocates also trained 25 lawyers from 15 countries for the seventh round of the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute (WHRTI) in Sofia, Bulgaria. In partnership with the BGRF and Equality Now, WHRTI strives to build the capacity of young lawyers from Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union for litigation on women’s rights issues.

Advocating for Women at the United Nations

In addition to training human rights defenders around the world to use UN mechanisms to advance women’s human rights, The Advocates and local volunteers also leverage those same mechanisms. In February, The Advocates sent a team of staff and volunteers to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland to participate in a session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW was reviewing the human rights records of Colombia and Ethiopia.

At the session, volunteers Peggy Grieve, who serves on The Advocates’ board, and Professor Greta Friedemann-Sanchez of the University of Minnesota Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs, presented findings from their research in Colombia on violence against women there. The Advocates also used stories from their asylum clients to brief CEDAW on gender-based violence against women in Ethiopia. Finally, Peggy Grieve presented client stories and made recommendations during a discussion on trafficking of women and girls in the context of migration.

Safe Harbor for All

The Advocates for Human Rights worked with partners at the University of Minnesota’s Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) and Rainbow Research throughout 2018 to identify the potential impacts of policy changes on the safety, health, dignity and justice for adults involved in transactional sex, including victims of trafficking and exploitation. Based on input from 294 stakeholders from across Minnesota, the report sheds light on the harms—including lack of housing and police protection—to adults who are trafficked for sex or involved in transactional sex.

In 2017, the Minnesota legislature mandated a strategic planning process to explore the potential expansion of Minnesota’s Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Act to adults. The Legislature funded a grant to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), which awarded the project to the three-agency team. Initially passed in 2011 with leadership by The Advocates, Safe Harbor eliminated prosecution and established services for youth who sell or trade sex.

Promoting the Inclusion of Women in Male-dominated Workplaces

At the request of the United Nations Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, The Advocates examined the benefits of female inclusion in the male-dominated workplaces of the mining, oil, gas, and other extractive industries. The Advocates’ report, Promoting Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Oil, Gas and Mining Extractive Industries, was released in January 2019. The Advocates’ research demonstrated the numerous benefits that women and diversity bring to industries. These benefits include a larger talent pool for recruitment, greater profitability, improved performance, better safety records, and overall economic empowerment to women and communities. The report was well-received internationally and led to requests for The Advocates to speak on these issues to the UN Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, as well as the UN’s Expert Group on Resource Management.
The Advocates and the Sankhu-Palubari community are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Sankhu-Palubari Community School (SPCS). The school’s students and faculty are enjoying learning and teaching in a brand-new school building, built after the original building was destroyed by the Gorkha earthquake in April 2015. Together, The Advocates, its local partner Educate the Children – Nepal, and the community run the school; they serve over 350 students from pre-Kindergarten to 10th grade, the end of high school in Nepal.

The Advocates’ Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt, who oversees the school, said, “It has been inspiring to see the growth and success of the school over the years and it is needed more than ever. Although public education in Nepal is technically free and considered a right, high uniform costs and other fees make it unaffordable for many. Children whose parents cannot afford the public school fees generally become child laborers, working in agriculture or in brick-making. They are also at risk of being trafficked for sex or labor.”

SPCS was founded to provide an alternative to child labor and trafficking for poor children in the community, and it is meeting that goal. Another of the school’s original goals was to have gender parity in its student body. It is meeting that goal, too. After years of outreach and support to families, the girls who start school are staying in school and 52% of the students are now girls. The school also welcomes all children regardless of caste or ethnicity.

These diverse students receive an outstanding education. The graduates of SPCS score at the top on Nepal’s national examination and many SPCS alumni continue their education at universities with the help of scholarships. The SPCS curriculum includes education on human rights, spreading the knowledge and progressive message of human rights in Nepal.
Honoring Arvonne Fraser

On August 7, 2018 we lost a great friend and inspiration Arvonne Fraser. Arvonne inspired women's human rights activists across the globe. She encouraged multiple generations of women to find their voices to make their lives better and to improve the world. She helped develop international standards for the protection of women and was a tireless advocate on their behalf. It is hard to overstate Arvonne's impact. In addition to international human rights, she made her mark in many other arenas, including government, academia, and the nonprofit sector.

Arvonne and her husband, Don, influenced work at The Advocates for Human Rights from the very beginning. In their honor, the Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award is presented annually to an outstanding individual or organization promoting human rights. Arvonne changed the world with her warmth, intelligence, and commitment to human rights. Her legacy and spirit will live on through the many people she influenced.

Arvonne was a great leader who lived her philosophy that the world is run by those who show up. She defined community broadly and her life and legacy included women around the world. She was fearless, bold, and direct, and did not bend to those who excused violence against women as culture that should be respected. Executive Director Robin Phillips said, "Arvonne influenced me as a friend and role model. She never passed up a chance to encourage me in my role at The Advocates. She understood the challenges of being an executive director and had a unique gift of saying the right thing at the right time. I will be forever grateful for her support.”

Honoring Don Fraser

One of the founding members of The Advocates, Don Fraser, passed away on June 2, 2019, just ten months after his partner in life and work, Arvonne. Don served Minnesota and his country in the Navy in World War II, as a Minnesota State Representative, a member of the US House of Representatives, and as Mayor of Minneapolis.

He was best known as a quiet but effective champion for human rights. In his work for human rights in Congress he held hearings on human rights violations by US allies. With the information he learned, Fraser drafted legislation to reduce US aid to countries whose governments violated human rights. His leadership in prioritizing human rights changed the way the US conducted its foreign policy. After Don left Congress he was elected the Mayor of Minneapolis. He used that position to advocate for another key human right, the right to education. From the Mayor's office, Don worked to promote early childhood education in Minneapolis and around the state. He continued that work for the rest of his life.

"Don Fraser is a hero to the human rights movement," said Robin Phillips. "He dedicated his life to promoting fundamental human rights principles in every position he held. His work ranged from holding governments accountable for their human rights practices to ensuring every child was given the opportunity to succeed in school. His vision for The Advocates was to leverage volunteer resources to promote and protect human rights in Minnesota and around the world. We are proud to be part of his legacy.”
Jerry Ziertman (L) and David Kistle (R) at the Refugee and Immigrant Rights Program fall house party at Andy and Jim Rubenstein’s house

The Advocates’ Sonja Carlson (L) with young learners at the State Fair booth

Host Andy Rubenstein (L) and Jane Galbraith (R) at the RIP fall house party

Co-host Alan Goldfarb (R) and a guest at the RIP spring house party at John and Kristine Mandler’s house

Redwan Hamza, Bula Atoressa, Ambassador Ermeto Debela, and Host Kathleen Seestadt at the International Justice house party (L-R)

Paul Lee, Sharmaine Heng, Jill Garcia and The Advocates’ Sarah Brenes at the Washington, D.C. house party at Suzanne Turner’s (L-R)

The Advocates’ Jennifer Prestholdt with Debra Helsick and Lhumo Tso at the Nepal School house party (L-R)

The Advocates’ Jennifer Prestholdt with Debra Helsick and Lhumo Tso at the Nepal School house party (L-R)

Guests at the home of Mary and David Parker for the Nepal School house party

The Honorable Jacqueline Regis (L) and The Honorable Mel Dickstein (R) at the Women’s Program spring house party

Thuy Huynh, Loan Huynh, and Rachel Harmin (L-R) at the Women’s program spring house party at Linda Foreman and Mel Dickstein’s

Bob Seestadt, Ann Manning, and Linda Donaldson at the International Justice spring house party (L-R)
2018 & 2019
Human Rights Awards Dinner Sponsors*

Human Rights Leaders

- Ballard Spahr LLP
- Sam Heins and Stacey Mills

Human Rights Partners

- DORSEY & STIDENT, PLLC
- always ahead

Human Rights Defenders

- Chris Bercaw and Mary McKeilvey
  Briggs and Morgan, PA.
- Gray Plant Mooty
- Marlene and Tom Kayser
- Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier
- Sam and Char Myers

Human Rights Ambassadors

- Ballard Spahr LLP
- Sam Heins and Stacey Mills

Human Rights Defenders

- Chris Bercaw and Mary McKeilvey
  Briggs and Morgan, PA.
- Gray Plant Mooty
- Marlene and Tom Kayser
- Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier
- Sam and Char Myers

Human Rights Allies

- Cristine Almeida
- Best Buy
- Carle Brasser
- Aviva Breen
- Cargill
- Steve and Cathy Carlson
- Carolyn Chalmers and Eric Janus
- James H. Binger Center for New Americans, University of Minnesota Law School
- Jim Dorsey and Dee Gaedkeert
- Karen and Rick Evans
- Fish & Richardson PC.
- Dulce Foster and Joe Muretta
- Barbara Frey and Howard Orenstein
- Greene Espel PLLP
- Rachel Hamlin and Tom Hamlin
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
- Loan Huynh and Aydin Ozturk

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- Schwegman, Lundberg and Woessner
- Catherine Shreves and Tom Bird
- Nancy Speer
- Jean Thomson
- United Oromo Voices
- Ellen and Jim van Iwaarden
- Jane and Dobson West
- Western Bank

* Sponsors for either 2018 or 2019 or both

Statement of Financial Position
Year Ended June 30, 2018

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Expenses

| Program Services | $6,897,259 |
| Management and General | $147,197 |
| Fundraising | $125,160 |
| Total Expenses | $7,169,606 |

Liabilities

| Current Liabilities | |
| Accounts Payable | $49,226 |
| Accrued Vacation | $31,875 |
| Payroll Liabilities | $13,243 |
| Deferred Lease Incentive | $16,681 |
| Total Current Liabilities | $111,195 |
| Total Liabilities | $111,195 |

Net Assets

| Unrestricted | $187,998 |
| Temporarily Restricted | $189,132 |
| Total Net Assets | $376,130 |

Total Liabilities and Net Assets

| $496,540 | $376,130 |

Statement of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2018