

Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent

Ted and Swanny Voneida Social Justice Leadership Award

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent is proud to present our first annual award for social justice to Dr. Theodore (Ted) and Swanny Voneida!

Ted and Swanny Voneida have been leaders for social justice work in the UU Church of Kent for many years and in recognition of their leadership in the work of social justice and dedication in living out the values of Unitarian Universalism, we have named the award in their honor, the **“Ted and Swanny Voneida Social Justice Leadership Award.”**

This award will be given annually to members or friends of the church who have shown a commitment to ending injustice and oppression through years of leadership and actions bending the arc of the Universe toward greater justice.



Ted and Swanny Voneida have exemplified social justice leadership for more than 50 years, earning local and national recognition and making a profound impact on the issues they addressed. They have been active in the UUCK Social Justice Committee and the Kent Environmental Council for decades, working on environmental issues, immigration, human rights, and anti-war activities.

In the 1970s Ted and Swanny were both involved in anti-war protests, first in Cleveland with a weekly radio show *The Other View*, then in Kent when they moved here in 1976. They were also active since the first days of the environmental movement, organizing against strip-mining in southern Ohio. With sustained effort and the support of the Ohio governor, they saw passing both state and federal legislation, receiving national television attention and a 1974 award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Ted then was invited by President Carter to Washington DC for the signing of the Federal Strip Mine Control bill, in recognition of the significant role both Ted and Swanny had in passing the legislation.

The Voneidas continued their activism in 1980s and early 90s, responding to the El Salvadoran refugee crisis. A multi-church effort in Kent, led by the UU church, provided protection and housing in local private homes for El Salvadorans who were fleeing the death squads ravaging their own county. This effort continued for more than 8 years. Ted and Swanny also continued their environmental activism into the new millennium. They supported local efforts to protect our clean water supply, as in the “Precious Water” Sunday service. They educated about the potential, and then actual, pollution caused by fracking, as the newer practice of natural gas mining in shale became prevalent in the area. They received the Environmental Activism Award at the 2018 Portage Park District Foundation’s Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner.

Recognizing a lifetime of service and success in social justice activism, we are proud to give this award, named in their honor, the **“Ted and Swanny Voneida Social Justice Leadership Award.”**

