

**Elyse Danckers is being honored by  
AAUW Waukegan Area Branch**

Elyse Danckers well represents the theme of “Educate, Enlighten, and Empower.” She leads Waukegan to College (W2C), an organization she helped found over ten years ago. Elyse’s passion to see young people reach their potential led her to work with Lake County United to improve educational opportunities for students in Waukegan. By listening to community concerns, Elyse and a team formed the organization that guides young people to realize their full academic potential; it educates students and their parents about the path to college, and it empowers the students to prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college.

Parent education about the path to college has been a cornerstone of the programming from the beginning. W2C leaders realized the importance of parental engagement and the lack of understanding of the US educational system among Waukegan parents, which made it difficult for students to access college opportunities.

W2C has developed over the years, and today it claims 69 college graduates and 170 young people currently pursuing their goals of a college education. Elyse became the first Executive Director of W2C, and her organizational skills eventually brought together a skilled professional staff and more than 100 volunteer tutors and mentors. She and her group have felt deeply blessed by the opportunity to help Waukegan students have a brighter future through a post-secondary education, like those in neighboring, better-resourced communities.

The work of W2C brings hope to an impoverished community. Lake County benefits from W2C and from the work of Elyse and her organization.