



Grace Lee

September 4, 1931 - May 4, 2025

Minneapolis, MN - Grace Koom-Soon Lee, a revered community leader, social worker passed away peacefully on the morning of May 4, surrounded by her family. She was 94.

Born in Hamnam, Korea, Grace immigrated to the United States in 1953, carrying with her not only the hopes of a better life for her family, but a fierce dedication to justice, service, and the Korean immigrant community that would become her life's work. In a time when few institutions acknowledged the specific needs of Asian immigrants, Grace quietly, persistently, and boldly filled that gap.

She earned her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Minnesota at a time when Korean women-especially mothers and immigrants-were rarely seen in academic or civic leadership, while raising her family in Hibbing.

In 1989, Grace founded and was the executive director of the Korean Service Center (KSC), the first organization of its kind in the state. Beginning as a grassroots effort-often operated from her kitchen table-KSC grew under her leadership into a thriving nonprofit that provided essential services to Korean elders, refugees, and low-income families. These services included culturally competent senior programs, social services navigation, health outreach, ESL

classes, and interpretation assistance. Grace ensured that KSC became not just a resource center, but a cultural home-one that helped preserve dignity, heritage, and connection for generations of Korean Minnesotans. In 2007, she was appointed to the Minnesota Board on Aging by Governor Tim Pawlenty.

Her work helped pave the way for more inclusive policies in elder care, mental health, and immigrant support services throughout the Twin Cities. She was particularly passionate about elder care and advocated fiercely for Korean-speaking services in nursing homes and hospitals at a time when such requests were often ignored. Through working with the city and state, she even turned some unused land near the highway into a thriving garden that the seniors delighted in, and many could show off their gardening and agricultural skills they'd brought with them.

In her honor, the assisted living center at KSC is now called Grace Place.

Grace loved skiing, poetry, classical Korean music, spending time with her children and grandchildren, being out at the lake, and the changing seasons of Minnesota. Her quiet resolve and unwavering faith carried her through personal and collective challenges alike.

She is survived by her children Victor, Leonard, Marie, Michelle, her grandchildren Chess Lee, Evangelen Lee, Jason Jacoby Lee, She was preceded in death by her granddaughter, Victoria Lee.

A public celebration of Grace's life will be held at 10 am July 7 at the Korean Service Center, 630 Cedar Ave S. #B1, Minneapolis, MN 612-342-1345.

Grace K. Lee leaves behind not just a legacy of service, but a blueprint of what it means to build community. In lieu of flowers the family suggests donations to the Korean Service Center <https://www.kscmn.org/donate>

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAY 7. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Lakewood Cemetery (Minneapolis)
3600 Hennepin Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Tribute Wall

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“ I supervised Grace for her social work licensure. I was able to get to know her heart for immigrants and those who were " forgotten", for lack of a better word. Love for her family was #1 and love for humanity, a close second. Rest in peace, dear Grace...

Barb Seivert Vallecillo - December 29, 2025 at 08:57 PM