



William Jay Svendsgaard

April 23, 1939 - August 31, 2025

William (Bill) Jay Svendsgaard, 86, peacefully passed away on August 31 surrounded by his family.

Bill was born to Charles and Marie on April 23, 1939, and grew up on his family's dairy farm near Mavie, Minnesota. Upon graduating from Goodridge High School, Bill was an International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) delegate to Switzerland and went on to earn undergraduate and masters degrees in elementary education from Bemidji State University.

Bill had a deep passion for art and experiential learning that he shared with others throughout his life. He taught fourth grade and was later a principal in Montevideo, where he met his wife Aljean. They were married in 1965. Bill later became a professor of education at the University of Minnesota-Morris, directed the Individualized Prescribed Instruction (IPI) curriculum in Montevideo, and volunteered with Aljean in the Peace Corps in Brazil. Bill later served as a University of Minnesota 4-H Youth Educator for 26 years, inspiring and mentoring thousands of Hennepin County youth to make a positive change in their community and world.

After his retirement in 2002, Bill continued to share his love of art by teaching and volunteering with youth and adults in service organizations and prisons. His lifelong creative and caring leadership was recognized nationally in 2020

when he was inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame.

Bill is survived by his wife, Aljean, of 60 years and family, friends, and colleagues. He was preceded in death by his parents Charles and Marie (Wayne) Svendsgaard; siblings Dale Svendsgaard, Karen Thygeson, and Kathy Vathauer; brothers-in-law, Orrin Scholberg, Floyd Fredrickson, and DuWayn Thygeson; and sister-in-law, Jan Svendgaard.

Celebration of Life: 11 am on Friday, September 12, 2025 at Westwood Lutheran Church in St. Louis Park with visitation from 10-11 am. To livestream Bill's service, please visit: <https://www.westwood.church/watch-funeral>. Contributions in memory of Bill may be made to Minnesota 4-H at <https://makingagift.umn.edu/give/fund.html?id=SUPPORT4H> or the Hennepin County 4-H Legacy Fund at: <https://makingagift.umn.edu/give/fund.html?id=21945>.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **12.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Westwood Lutheran Church
9001 Cedar Lake Road South
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Celebration of Life

SEP **12.** 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Westwood Lutheran Church
9001 Cedar Lake Road South
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Tribute Wall

SA

“ I'm sorry sorry to have missed this! I met Bill in 2018 while working for BCBS and enjoyed his company so much throughout the years! We crossed paths every Fall during Open Season and then again in the Spring at various NARFE conferences. He was always a bright spot during those busy days and I still treasure a hand painted vase he gave me a few years ago. My condolences to Bill's family - he is missed!

Sarah - October 23, 2025 at 08:19 PM

II

“ Bill was the best man at my first marriage. He was such a wonderful person and I'm sorry that we lost touch. We enjoyed so many good times with Bill and Aljean while in Morris and I extend my deepest sympathy to her. May she be surrounded by all those who love her at this time of loss. Ingrid Ingle

Ingrid Ingle - September 09, 2025 at 03:24 PM

JR

“ Bill was a distinguished Extension colleague working with the 4-H program. His art education gifts brought new and creative outlets and energy to the clubs and youth with whom he worked. His experiential learning approach was extremely effective in reaching underserved youth in urban areas when 4-H expanded into the cities. He was also a lover of history and the "spark" that motivated many of his colleagues to document, preserve and share career milestones and experiences. We will miss his smile and positive outlook!

Juanita Reed-Boniface

Juanita Reed-Boniface - September 05, 2025 at 10:31 AM