

***Leadership has always been a pivotal role in Judy's life and work. From raising her six children to her work in education, politics and volunteerism, Judy has exhibited exceptional leadership for 35+ years.***

Judy Olson Duhamel was appointed to the State Board of Education in 1972, on which she served until 1983. The State Board of Education was a life-changing activity! Serving on the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) was another mind expander. As a board member of NASBE, she visited other states and countries to discuss the rights and wrongs of public education with peers from other places.

She supervised the Adult Education/Community Education/Public Information office for the Rapid City Schools. She served for 18 years in this position, directly reporting to four Superintendents. One day an official from the State Department of Education paid a visit to request that Olson Duhamel organize a program for the homeless. This request fit the Every Child Matters philosophy that drove her work. Childcare and transportation can be barriers to education. Olsen Duhamel was appointed to the Presidential Scholarship commission by President Bill Clinton, an opportunity to select outstanding scholars from each state.

In 1988 Olson Duhamel ran for the State Senate and won, serving four exciting years advocating for education. During this time, the first Early Childhood position was established in state government. Olson Duhamel was the Senate appointee on a committee that traveled statewide to assess quality standards in daycares.

Taking early retirement from the Rapid City Schools led Olson Duhamel to another job as chair of the South Dakota Democratic Party, a position she held for eight years. While facing the challenge of building political balance in South Dakota, she was honored to learn, listen, represent good people, and accept the personal challenges of varied ideas.

Education drove Olson Duhamel's involvement in politics, and education still drives the volunteer work that consumes nearly every day of her life. She serves on the Mayor's Early Learning Task Force as well as serving on the City Community Block Grants Committee at this time and faces the challenges of determining wise use of COVID funds; She also currently serves on the Adult Day Center of the Black Hills Board, the only such organization in the area that provides a critical service to caregivers. She also dedicates herself to Starting Strong: Rapid City's premier preschool program, continue to consume her heart, soul, and time. These efforts are intentionally dedicated to promoting "communities of excellence."

