

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner



Arthur Tanderup

H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award (Non-Black)

ARTHUR “ART” TANDERUP RETIRED AS A DEDICATED EDUCATOR AND UNION REPRESENTATIVE and is driving change through social justice and political action! A retired educator and current Nebraska farmer, Mr. Tanderup is known as a pipeline fighter, water protector, Ponca corn planter, solar booster, tractor crop artist, and Washington Monument reflecting pool-wader; building bridges and leading coalitions for environmental justice, human and civil rights, and racial and social justice.

Mr. Tanderup’s father was a farmer, but his operation wasn’t big enough to support them. So, Art went to college and followed in his mother’s footsteps as a teacher. After a rewarding career as a teacher of English, journalism, and speech, library media specialist, and Nebraska State Education Association board member, he retired and became a farmer, focusing on utilizing renewable energy.

Unrelenting in advocating for his values, Art is known for bringing different groups together to join the cause – whether that be legislators, community leaders, activists and/or the school community. He uses his unique talents as an educator and farmer to both teach about human and civil rights causes and make them practical. Mr. Tanderup, who raises corn, soybeans, and rye, is one of several Nebraska farmers who advocates for renewable energy. He uses no-till farming methods to capture carbon and build soil health, soil sensors to preserve water, and solar panels provide most of the farm’s electrical energy. Mr. Tanderup declares, “This country can no longer be fossil fuel-dependent. Renewable fuels are part of the answer.”

In 2014, Mr. Tanderup joined members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota demonstrating their opposition to the proposed extension of TransCanada’s Keystone XL pipeline. They risked arrest by standing in the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool and held a sign that read, “Standing in the water could get me arrested. TransCanada pollutes drinking water & nothing happens.”

In 2016 as a Pipeline Fighter, Mr. Tanderup worked with an unlikely alliance of other landowners to form a legal and political strategy to fight the pipeline. The pipeline threatened the Ogallala aquifer and his family’s land, which also lies on the historic Ponca Trail of Tears near Neligh, Nebraska. In 2018, Mr. and Mrs. Tanderup donated 10 acres of their farm in northeast Nebraska to the Ponca tribes of Oklahoma and Nebraska. The donation allowed the tribes to continue to plant their sacred corn in Nebraska and impeded the progress of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline across the Tanderups’ farm.

In 2021, as part of a grassroots campaign to inspire voter participation in the 2021 Senate Runoff, Art drove the tractor that etched a 40-Acre Portrait of John Lewis in Georgia farmland. The crop art was displayed before the state’s closely watched election and honored the late civil rights icon. The farm sits on the original Tribal Lands of the Muscogee Creek Nation.

He continues to touch the lives of many as an NEA-Retired member dedicated to advancing equitable and quality public education and advocating for human, civil, and economic rights for all and across racial groups. Stacy Laravie, member and Historic Preservation Officer of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, writes, “Like my Grandfather Standing Bear, Art may not have known the outcome from his actions but the ripple effects generations. What we do today affects the next seven generations. I am forever humbled, grateful, and blessed that I know such a warrior and teacher.”