

Helen Nienhueser

Helen was raised in Pennsylvania, received a BA degree from Brown University (Pembroke College) in 1957 and a Masters of Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 1985. Helen first visited Alaska in the summer of 1957 for a summer job at the Fairbanks Girl Scout camp and moved permanently to Alaska in 1959, homesteading in the far reaches of Eagle River. She has been a significant player over the past fifty years in shaping Alaska. Helen's contributions have been many and varied, as a community activist, professional planner, author and conservationist.

In 1970, she organized a successful state-wide grassroots movement to reform Alaska's abortion law, making Alaska the third state in the country (and three years before *Roe v. Wade*) to permit a woman to choose abortion in consultation with her doctor. In 1971 Helen helped establish the Alaska Center for the Environment and served as volunteer staff and as a board member for nine years. She is best known to many as coauthor of *55 Ways to the Wilderness in Southcentral Alaska*, first published in 1972. As a professional planner at the Department of Natural Resources from 1976-1994, Helen helped develop procedures for state land selections and land use planning processes that attempt to balance development and conservation with genuine public input. At the Juneau women's conference in 1996, Helen initiated the discussion that led to the formation of the Alaska Women's Network. She has served as a trustee of the Alaska Conservation Foundation for thirteen years, including chair in 2007. From 1996-2003, Helen chaired the Governor's TRAAK Board which led to better land and trail management throughout the state. On the municipal level, she served for six years on the Parks and Recreation Commission and was involved in any number of conservation and recreational issues surrounding parks in Anchorage. In 1983, as a community activist and conservationist, Helen started

advocating for a park in Midtown. It is due to her persistence and committed leadership over the next twenty-five years that the Cuddy Family Midtown Park became a reality and officially opened in August 2008.

Helen has received numerous awards over the years in recognition of her many accomplishments. She has been honored by the Governor, Legislature, the Department of Natural Resources, Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage, as a YWCA Woman of Achievement, the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame, and is an honorary lifetime member of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska.