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MetroKids Staff,

4 min read

Parent You Should Know: Lauren Swartz - MetroKids

World Affairs Council of Philadelphia president and CEO wants to teach kids the world isn't such a scary place



Lauren Swartz and family | Photo courtesy of Lauren Swartz

Lauren Swartz leads the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia as president and CEO. The organization provides strategic, nonpartisan speaker programs, youth education, leadership training and unique travel opportunities worldwide.

The organization hosts heads of state, private sector leaders, international experts, Nobel Prize winners and more to advance its motto: “Democracy Demands Discourse.” The World Affairs Council provides globally minded youth education programs to nearly 3,000 students annually, including model UN programs.

Swartz also serves as the Honorary Consul of Sweden for Pennsylvania, the Swedish government’s liaison to the state. She is also a board member of the following organizations: Leadership Philadelphia, Women Against Abuse, Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Global Philadelphia Association.

What do you love the most about being a parent?

I like how much I’m constantly forced to learn. Your kids are always changing, which forces you as a parent to always be thinking ahead and to change your tactics. That ensures that I’m always growing—that and all of the hugs and kisses.

What would you say is your biggest parenting “fail?”

I think the thing I struggle with the most is priorities. How much time do I spend at work, making sure our family is safe and secure financially, and how much time do I spend at home? The hardest part can be trying to strike that balance. Also, I have to come to terms with the fact that I’m never going to be able to come home and cook a healthy, nutritious dinner every night of the week that everyone really loves and finishes.

What do you love the most about your job?

I love how different it is. I always get to meet new people and be exposed to and share different perspectives from all around the world. With my job, you have to be open. If I’m meeting someone from India or from Sweden, or interacting with a third grader or fifth grader, a lot of the same skills apply. Both of those situations—at my job that I love and in parenting

my kids whom I love—require me to constantly be open to new experiences, and that allows for a really fun, creative and enriching life.

What's one thing you hope your children learn from you and your career?

I hope they learn that the world is not such a scary place, that there is so much opportunity and so many interesting people beyond our borders, beyond their schools and beyond our neighborhood. Maybe it's interacting with immigrants all throughout Philadelphia, or maybe one day we'll get to travel internationally, but it's important to connect with different people, different ideas and different foods.

How do you believe your work is positively impacting youth in our community and beyond?

At the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, we work with 85 schools and 2,500 students. We've already touched the lives of a million students throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania and the region. We know that for many of them it's their first experience thinking about the world. It's so satisfying to get to make sure that students have access to world affairs education and global perspectives because those are the skills that they will need for the jobs of tomorrow.

FAMILY FAVORITES

Favorite Family Meal: Soup dumplings, especially the ones at Bing Bing Dim Sum in South Philly.

Favorite Dessert: Chocolate ice cream

Favorite Way to Spend a Weekend Together: Exploring Philadelphia

Favorite Vacation Spot: Indiana, Pennsylvania. We found this cabin on Airbnb during the pandemic, and we've been out there during the summer. A pond, trees and a rope swing are there.