



March 31, 2008 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



Karen Eriksen Ranka Class of 1960

Karen Eriksen Ranka, Wyandotte Roosevelt Class of 1960, has been a tireless volunteer for organizations and causes that support health, the arts, the environment and women's causes.

A review of her activities at Roosevelt demonstrates her early involvement in a variety of activities - W.A.A.C. (World As A Community) Class, Wy-News, Senior Annual, Journalism, Quill and Scroll, Future Nurses and the Ski Club. After graduation from Roosevelt, Karen earned a B.S. in Education from Eastern Michigan University and completed graduate courses at William and Mary. Karen taught history at Carlson High School and English in Brazil.

A resident of Grosse Ile for 30 years, Karen is involved in many philanthropic endeavors in the downriver community. In 1988 she co-founded the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's downriver "Light the Night Charity Fundraiser Walk". She remains actively involved in making this and many of the Society's other annual events very successful. She also co-chaired the Franconi Leukemia fundraiser, the Downriver Women for Children's Hospital fundraiser and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's "Hunt for a Cure" fundraiser.

Because she is committed to the mission to find a cure for leukemia and other blood-related cancers, Karen has served on the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Board of Trustees for six terms and recruits many volunteers to aid in this work. In 2002, Karen received the President's Award from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America.

Karen also serves on the Board of the Downriver Council for the Arts, which promotes the visual and performing arts. She co-chaired the Arts Council's "Tahiti Night" fundraiser and served as a committee member for the organization's Salute to Excellence.

In support of environmental issues, Karen also works with Michigan Ducks Unlimited, Detroit River Chapter, of which she is a founding member. That volunteer work is focused on preserving the Detroit River and local wetlands.

Karen is active in many church organizations and is a member of the American Association of University Women and Soroptomist International of Trenton, which has honored her as the Woman of Distinction of 2000. In 2008, Karen was named the Women's History/Community Honoree by the Grosse Ile Women's History/Community Organization.

Karen and her husband Bob have three sons, two daughters-in-law, and one grandson. She and her husband were recognized for their community involvement as the 2006 Salute to Excellence Honorees Downriver.