

Karen Wood is a graduate of Purdue University. She earned her B.S. degree in Early Childhood Education from the School of Consumer and Family Sciences. Karen received the Mallot Scholarship, given to the top student in the School of Consumer and Family Sciences in 1981. She graduated at the top of her class with a 6.0 GPA in 1982. Karen did not let the fact that she became legally blind at the age of eight years old get in her way. Karen was a homemaker from 1982 to 1989. She felt very strongly that it was important for her to be home with her children until they were both in school full time.

Beginning in 1989 Karen worked as a preschool teacher of primarily four and five year old children in Virginia, Indiana and Maryland. She loved every minute of it and believes that she has contributed to the well being of the world by helping to contribute to the healthy development of her young students.

Karen was forced into early retirement from teaching young

children in 2007 by the increasing loss of her vision due to retinitis pigmentosa.

Since retirement from teaching, Karen has continued to pursue her passions by getting involved in several volunteer opportunities:

Karen has Served food at the Route oNe Day Center, a resource center for homeless individuals for seven years. She grew up in difficult circumstances, there was never enough food in the house for her and her six siblings. Feeding the hungry is a passion of hers.

Karen has served on the American Council of the Blind Guide Dog User Inc. legislative and advocacy committee for two years. She is a devoted advocate for the rights of individuals who are accompanied by service dogs. She has had her guide dog, Dolly since getting her from The Seeing Eye School in 2013. She is grateful daily for the independence, confidence and safety that Dolly affords her. Karen has been a volunteer at three Maryland prisons teaching meditation and mindfulness to the inmates for three years. She believes that meditation and mindfulness are important keys to help everyone to live more peaceful, joyful and stress free lives.

Karen began cross country skiing with an all volunteer, nonprofit organization called Ski For Light in 2015. This is an organization which provides sighted guides and instruction in cross country skiing to blind and mobility impaired individuals. In 2015 She had the honor of receiving an award given to the most promising and enthusiastic first time skier. This award included a complete ski package. Karen was voted onto the board of Ski For Light in 2018. In 2019 Karen was chosen to be part of a team of two blind skiers and two guides to go to Norway to represent Ski For Light and the United States at the Ridderrinn. This is a ski race attended by people with disabilities from many countries.

In 2016 Karen was appointed by the Howard County, Md. County Executive to be on the Howard County Commission on Disability Issues. This commission has since had its name officially changed to Commission on Disabilities. She has been honored to participate in the good work of this commission regarding improving the lives of individuals with disabilities in Howard County, Md. The focus of the work of the commission has been largely on transportation, housing, employment, peer relations and education.

Karen enjoys yoga, skiing, hiking, kayaking, kick boxing, reading, gardening, meditating, playing with and walking her guide dog, dolly.