

The Distinguished Alumni Award

of

Northern Michigan University

IS PRESENTED TO

Dr. Karen Reese '63, '66, '76

In recognition of her strong belief in the importance of student development and for creating an educational environment where all students have the opportunity for success both inside and outside the classroom.

The fifth of seven children, Dr. Reese was born and raised in Manistique, Michigan. She was blessed with parents who were hard working, caring and family-centered. She always felt that the gentle guidance and solid values of her parents served her well in her profession and as a parent herself.

Karen initially did not consider attending college and probably would not have enrolled were it not for the scholarships she received. She completed her undergraduate studies with high honors and depended upon her own financial resources to fund her education. She graduated in 1963 with a degree in Secondary Education.

She taught in the Marquette Public Schools for two and a half years, but resigned when she and her husband Duncan decided to start a family. While she was awaiting the arrival of her first child, she was offered a Resident Director position at NMU. That position launched a professional career that continued at Northern Michigan University without interruption for another 35 years.

Always one to stretch her capabilities and challenge herself, by 1986, Dean of Students, Karen Reese was revisiting her goal of returning to the classroom to pursue a doctoral degree. A promotion early the next year to Associate Vice President of Student Life, nearly derailed her plans. It was only through a collaboration between Northern and Western Michigan University that she was able to continue to work full time and also realize her educational dream. She earned her doctorate from WMU in 1992.

In 1993, she became interim Vice President for Student Affairs and was named to the position permanently in 1995. She served in this capacity until her retirement in 2000. As a Student Affairs administrator, one program she is extremely proud to have had a role in creating is the Student Leader Fellowship Program that began with a Kellogg grant that she co-authored more than twenty years ago.

Retirement did not slow Karen down. In 2001 she was honored locally as the recipient of the ATHENA award, for her leadership and volunteerism in the community. She is very active in her church and community, serving on the Bay Cliff Board and on the NMU Foundation Board of Trustees. With her sisters, she shares in the care of her mother, who still lives in the southern Upper Peninsula.

For a woman who always said that her professional life was not her highest priority – her relationship with her husband and her family came first – Dr. Reese has had remarkable professional achievements. Dr. Karen Reese is a fine example of an alumna who took advantage of opportunities to excel and who made a difference in the lives of many young people. It is with great pride that we bestow this honor upon her.

Presented this 1st day of October, 2011, Marquette, Michigan.

Kristine Day '94
President, NMU Alumni Association

Leslie E. Wong
President, Northern Michigan University