

Journal

Rieger honored for service to center, board

Service plays a significant and steadfast role in Karen Rieger's life.

Her volunteerism has included serving on boards and committees with varied subjects and disciplines, from education to religion and medical to music.

Among those groups is her longtime involvement and dedication to the J.D. McCarty Center.

Rieger has served for 14 years as a member of the Oklahoma Cerebral Palsy Commission, the governing board for the center. The Norman resident is stepping down from the commission but said her support and connection to the McCarty Center will continue.

"It's always a good feeling to be involved in an organization like this that's doing great work," she said.

Center officials said Rieger's influence and guidance on the commission has left a lasting impact.

"She strives for the very best for Oklahoma's children, and it has been a tremendous honor to serve with and learn from her," said Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO of the center.

Commitment to the cause

Rieger's involvement with the center began in 1999



Karen Rieger, of Norman, has served for 14 years as a member of the Oklahoma Cerebral Palsy Commission, the governing board for the McCarty Center. Rieger's service has included participating in a bike ride to benefit Camp ClapHans and shopping for patients at Christmas.



while doing pro bono work to help the center start a nonprofit foundation. Rieger is an attorney with Crowe & Dunlevy of Oklahoma City and specializes in health care law and issues affecting nonprofits.

When a position opened on the commission, she was asked if she'd fill it by the center's then-director Curt Peters.

"I thought it was a real honor to be considered," she said.

"I was more than willing to serve."

Commissioners are appointed by the governor to serve on the five-member board. Members are appointed to three-year terms and can be reappointed by the governor for an additional term.

Rieger, who is the first female to serve on the board, said some of the highlights of her service has been gaining knowledge about the programs

offered at the center and how those services help children succeed.

"It's just been great learning about the work," she said. She also was excited to be involved in the creation of Camp ClapHans, a residential summer camp at the center that serves kids with disabilities from 8 to 18 years old. The camp opened in 2013 on the center's campus.

Rieger said another highlight while serving on the commission was the opportunity to offer "long overdue" pay raises and bonuses to employees. She also enjoyed working with center administrators on budget needs and creating financial stability for the center when state aid was reduced.

Rieger said she's impressed with Kuestersteffen and her team and the passion and purpose that guides their decisions.

"The staff is just invaluable," Rieger said. "They want to make sure the center thrives."

Kuestersteffen said it was an enriching experience to work with Rieger, who has had "such a positive impact on the overall foundation and function of this hospital."

"Karen brought a quiet

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strength and intelligence to the commission and I learned so much from working with her," Kuestersteffen said. "She always handled challenging situations with grace and presented thorough and detailed solutions to issues that would arise."

Kuestersteffen said she also admires Rieger's passion for helping the patients.

"She donated her time with a smile and would routinely go above and beyond for the patients, such as participating in a bike ride to benefit the kids, shopping for them at Christmas and making routine financial donations," Kuestersteffen said.

Commissioner Joseph Steil describes Rieger as a "steady influence" on the commission and at the center.

"Karen was always very knowledgeable of JDMC and the legal aspects of any issues that might arise," Steil said. "She really cared about JDMC and the kids we were helping."

Rieger said she enjoyed working with different commissioners through the years and learning about their backgrounds and perspectives. "They've all been great," she said. "Everyone's been dedicated to the cause."

Continued service

Rieger will still be involved with the center as a board member on the J.D. McCarty Center Foundation, a nonprofit that supports programs, services and capital needs of the center.

She said she's excited



TOP: Karen Rieger and center employee Cara Taylor volunteer at Norman Conquest. **CENTER:** Center employee Jennifer Giamelle, left, receives a pin from Rieger and Commissioner Joseph Steil during an employee lunch. **BOTTOM:** Rieger and husband, Andy, serve as grand marshals during a Norman Christmas parade.



about the foundation's work to expand and enhance services at the center.

Rieger said she is grateful for her time on the commission and opportunities to serve the McCarty Center.

"It's important to society that everyone give back in ways that they're able," she said. "I just felt like it was important to me to give whatever time and talents I have to give to this organization."

Jennings to serve on board

Bruce Jennings, of Norman, is the newly appointed member of the Oklahoma Cerebral Palsy Commission.

Jennings is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and served for more than 23



years, which included tours in Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. He also taught at the Air Force Academy.

Jennings and his family moved to Oklahoma for his assignment at Tinker Air Force Base. After the Air Force, Jennings has worked as a financial adviser.

He said he is looking forward to serving on the commission.

"I hope to learn enough about how J.D. McCarty Center is already providing outstanding care for some of our most vulnerable children and their families that I might be able to add perhaps one more idea on how to improve that care," Jennings said.

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Fall, winter filled with fun events at center



2 1. Gov. Stitt meets with center employees during a visit. 2. Cole, an outpatient, checks out the activities at “Trunk or Treat.” 3. Center employee Lai Feng Qiu and her daughter pose in the photo booth. 4. Dr. Jason Fields and family attend “Trunk or Treat.”



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Fall and winter mark a myriad of activities at the J.D. McCarty Center – from a communitywide “Trunk or Treat” to many merry Christmas traditions and events for patients and staff. Here’s a look at the events.

‘Trunk or Treat’

Cold temps and wet weather didn’t scare families away from participating in the third annual “Trunk or Treat” event offered by the center, Heartland Camaros and the city of Norman’s parks and recreation department.

Activities were moved inside the center, and hundreds of families showed up to enjoy sweet treats and visit booths that were hosted by Heartland Camaros’ club members, city employees, volunteers from the center and representatives from the Cleveland County Sheriff’s office.

“Trunk or Treat” is a free event that is open to the public.

Governor visits

The patients also had a Halloween to remember when Gov. Kevin Stitt visited the center and met the kids and employees.

One of the patients served as an ambassador for the center and led the governor and his staff on a tour.

Christmas activities

The center’s Christmas

events started with the annual golf cart parade and Christmas tree lighting ceremony in early December.

The 2019 parade featured golf carts decorated in a “Sweet Christmas” theme, marching bands from Noble’s high school and middle school, the 40 et 8 miniature train and a visit from Santa.

Winners of the golf cart parade were Hospital Unit #3 in first place; the nursing department in second place; and the rehab department in third place.

The event also featured the lighting of the center’s Christmas tree by Jennii Buendia, who owns Eskimo Sno. Buendia is a longtime supporter of the center and frequently donates snow cones for center events or activities.

After the parade, guests visited the conference center for snacks.

Other Christmas activities included a door decoration contest in the center and hospital units. Winners for 2019 were the dietary department and Hospital Unit #5.

The Christmas season also brought an outpouring of generosity from the community who donate toys and other gifts to the center’s patients.

Patients also received presents during the annual 40 et 8 party hosted by the veterans organization that

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founded what is now the McCarty Center.

The event included a marvelous meal from Gaylan Oliver, Conference Center events coordinator, and his team, and entertainment was provided by Kyle Reid and The Low Swingin' Chariots.

Members of the 40 et 8, along with Santa, then gave gifts to patients. Other children who attended the party were offered gifts through the "Santa's Workshop" program that provides presents to children 12 and younger.

Other holiday season happenings for the center included a gingerbread cookie decorating contest for patients and employees and participation of patients



Our Christmas activities in 2019 included the annual golf cart parade and tree lighting ceremony, the Norman Christmas parade and visits from Santa to the patients.

and employees in the city of Norman's Christmas parade.

The center also was visited by area school choirs and carolers who came to perform for the patients. The patients also got a surprise visit from Justin Wren, a professional mixed martial artist, who dressed up as Santa and stopped by the hospital units to give gifts.



Annual donors 1

Christmastime brings an abundance of generosity from the community. Here's a few of our repeat donors:

1. The crew at Baked Bear in Norman host a toy drive each year for our patients. **2.** Sharla Bardin, center, accepts toys from an annual drive conducted by members of St. Joseph Knights of Columbus #12819. **3.** Ronnie and Carolyn Harris donate each December as a way to celebrate their anniversary. **4.** Jake, who is 8, has donated Christmas gifts to the center since he was 4 years old.



Upgrades made to playground

Songwriter's donation providing for renovations

A successful songwriter is providing a generous gift that gives patients at the McCarty Center a place to play, imagine, exercise, laugh and learn.

Songwriter Justin Tranter has donated money to fund renovations to the center's playground.

The work will result in new turf for the area and new equipment, including an adapted zip line and merry-go-round, a wheelchair accessible glider and a rolling slide.

The playground also will feature a music theme as a way to honor Tranter, who was named "Songwriter of the Year" at the 2018 BMI Pop Music Awards and has been nominated for Golden Globe and Grammy awards.

Tranter also has written hit songs for such artists as Justin Bieber, Imagine Dragons, Fall Out Boy, Linkin Park, Julia Michaels and Maroon 5.

The songwriter learned about the center through colleague, Jimmy Knehans, who is the brother of John Knehans, who works in the center's social work department.

A dedication celebration will take place in March.



Before

Renovations to the playground include new turf, an adapted zip line and merry-go-round, a wheelchair accessible glider and a rolling slide. The playground also will feature a music theme in honor of donor Justin Tranter.



Now

Patient receives donated Sooner tickets

We're so grateful to an anonymous donor who provided the center with two tickets to the University of Oklahoma's homecoming football game in the fall. The donor asked that the tickets benefit a patient, and Alvin Lam was selected for the honor.

Alvin said he was so excited to go to the game with his dad.



Calendar of events



Gutter Dance

May 14 • 6 p.m.

Sooner Bowling Center

The annual charity bowling tournament benefits Camp ClapHans.



Norman Conquest

July 11 • 7 a.m.

Center parking lot

This year marks the 25th year of the Norman Conquest, a bicycle tour hosted by the Bicycle League of Norman. The tour features a variety of routes for riders and lunch afterward.



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CAMP CLAPHANS

Get ready to blast off for fun and adventure this summer at Camp ClapHans!

You'll get to participate in horseback riding, canoeing, archery, swimming, talent shows and stargazing. You'll also get to explore new places and discover new friends!

The camp is a residential summer camp for children with disabilities and is an outreach program of the J.D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities.

ABOUT THE CAMP

Camp ClapHans is located on the McCarty Center's property at 2002 E. Robinson St. in Norman. It features two cabins, an activities building and an 11-acre lake.

COST FOR CAMP

The cost to attend a week's session at camp is \$325. Scholarships are also available.

Our program consists of four-day, three-night camp sessions. Each session begins Sunday afternoon and ends Wednesday afternoon.

To register, contact Camp Director Bobbie Hunter at 405-307-2865 or email bhunter@jdmc.org.

2020 SCHEDULE

Week 1 — June 14-17
Week 2 — June 21-24
Week 3 — June 28- July 1
Week 4 — July 12-15
Week 5 — July 19-22



DEADLINES

Registration starts Jan. 27 and applications are due March 6.

MORE INFO

Visit campclaphans.com