

Playhouse Great Friend to Families Award

Name of Nominee:

Karen James
1574 Hattie Hill Road
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karenjames@skybest.com

Nominator:

Marianne Ferlazzo, Secretary, SGDDS Board
1340 Hattie Hill Road
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Names of other people who support this nomination:

Sugar Grove Developmental Day School (SGDDS) Board
Laurie Percival-Oates, Chair
Pat Birdsong
Mary Vivona
Alice Moody
Kim & Eddie Aldridge
Danny & Amie Platt
Amy Shelton
Betty Boyd

Former SGDDS Board Members:

Hunter Wall
Stephanie Whitworth

The staff of SGDDS – see attached list.

Names of organizations where Karen has volunteered:

1. Sugar Grove Developmental Day School (SGDDS) – a 5 star day care center serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers in Western Watauga County
 - Currently serves as Treasurer and grant-writer.
 - Created and maintains organization’s website.
 - Mentored past and present center director and staff.
 - Obtained numerous grants, donations and loans that have helped the school survive and thrive.
2. St. Elizabeth Catholic Church
 - Provided music for church services and contributed to parish newsletter.
 - Active in the Hispanic ministry, and helped to establish El Centro, a Saturday night social center for the Hispanic community.
 - Represented St. Elizabeth in a number of forums and advocated for increased outreach to Hispanic families in Watauga County.
3. Provided weekly computer classes on a volunteer basis in her home for children in the neighborhood who did not have access to computers.
4. High Country Amigos – an organization whose mission is to improve the lives of the Latino community in Watauga and Ashe counties
 - Helped raise approximately \$25,000 to assist an 18 year-old Latino girl with leukemia whose family had no health insurance.
 - Wrote a grant and obtained funding for a \$50,000 a year, renewable for 5 years, to help establish a Latino Outreach Center/Clearinghouse in Watauga County.
 - Arranged for Caldwell Community College to offer courses in Practical Spanish for people working with Latinos.
 - Elected Treasurer to the Regional Board and mentored several Latinos and taught them accounting.
 - Maintained the organization’s website.
5. Ivette Rubino Fund –
 - Helped establish a fund to assist Ivette Rubino, an ASU student who was diagnosed with cancer and did not have health insurance.
6. Appalachian Cultural Museum
 - Served as docent.
7. Mountainhome Music (MHM) – an organization dedicated to building community through the arts.
 - Established MHM as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.
 - Currently serves as Treasurer and maintains the organization’s website.
8. Cove Creek Preservation and Development (CCP&D)
 - Computerized CCP&D’s financial records.
 - Served as board member and Treasurer.
 - Maintained the organization’s website.
 - Handled publicity for the first Doc Watson Appreciation Day in 1998 , Farm Heritage Days and the Sugar Grove Music Fest.

How long has the nominee served families in the High Country?

For nearly a decade, Karen James has served families by volunteering at a number of organizations.

NOMINATION STATEMENT

I met Karen James three years ago, and during the very first conversation we had, she asked me to consider joining the board of the board of the Sugar Grove Developmental Day School (SGDDS). Since joining the board of SGDDS, I have learned what an amazing, multi-talented, and gifted woman Karen is! She has been an asset to many non-profit organizations serving families in the High County, assisting in a number of capacities including public relations, bookkeeping, grant-writing, fund-raising, creating websites, advocating for new programs, and expanding cultural experiences for families.

Karen humbly describes herself as a “professional volunteer.” Here’s how others have tried to describe this remarkable woman:

From Hunter Wall, past SGDDS Director and board member, “She has been a constant pillar in our school... I have told her many times that I have never met a retired person who works harder than a non-retiree.”

From Stephanie Whitworth, parent and past SGDDS board Vice-President: “What an amazing contributor to our community and particularly to anything related to supporting children and their families.”

From Amy Shelton, CCP&D board member and SGDDS advisory board member: “She is one of the kindest and most caring people I know and we are so honored by the gift of her time and talent. She is a key element to the success of the daycare (and CCP&D).”

From Kim and Eddie Aldridge, parents and SGDDS board members: “We are so blessed to have Karen James with us. The world needs more Karen James.”

From Laurie Percival-Oates, SGDDS board Chair; “She calls on all who work with her to do our very best, and to reach into her, work with her and be inspired by her.”

SGDDS staff are very fond of Karen and are so thankful for her almost daily presence and help at the school. Karen has been a mentor and teacher to the staff of SGDDS, and works closely with them weekly so that required childcare standards are met. She has helped staff learn how to use a special software program designed for child care providers, and how to handle the accounting and payroll. Karen worked hard to obtain the necessary funding for needed improvements to the school building last year, including new windows and a ramp. She helped coordinate a new food program that started up in December, providing nutritious snacks and lunches for the children.

In addition to Karen’s vast knowledge of every aspect of how to start and grow successful non-profit organizations, she is treasured by many for her quiet, calm and caring manner. This nomination and the recognition that comes with it, will help many to express appreciation for a person who has been so very giving and generous with her time and talents.