



Photo by Kristen Richards

Katy KARE chapter members Betty Mehmen, Hindie Dershowitz, Tom Wilson, Norene Leuders, Emily Hegemeyer, Julia Oldham, Brenda Shaver, Sue Fagan, Karen Thornton, Elysce Garrison, Betty Watts, and Cindy Katz

# Retired Katy Educators

Katy Area Retired Educators (KARE) continues contributing to the education community with informative programs, volunteering, and scholarships

*Written by Wendy Teng and Kennan Buckner | Select photography courtesy of KARE*

**R**etirement for many Katy teachers isn't just about traveling the world or starting a new hobby. Members of KARE continue to make a difference in the rich educational community of Katy ISD. Organization president Karen Thornton says, "KARE gives former educators a way to continue to contribute their love and devotion to their former career."

## Volunteers with Heart

From scholarships, to special programs and book drives, the group volunteers their time with heart. "As a retired educator, you wonder what's next after retirement," says Thornton. "We have a new role now, outside the classroom, to help today's new teachers."

KARE does so by working with legislators on behalf of all teachers, participating in Rally Day at the State Capitol to support public educators' healthcare and pensions. They spend the day talking to state representatives about the needs of retired teachers and the Teacher Retirement System. "I am honored to be an advocate for present and future retirees," shares Thornton.

KARE has monthly meetings from September to May where, in addition to programming and event planning, they also learn more about retirement benefits from seminars sponsored by the KARE Texas chapter.

### A Lasting Impact

The group isn't limited to former teachers; any community member can join. Last year, the retired educators clocked in over 24,115 volunteer hours for the district. "Our KARE members have an amazing amount of energy and continue to make differences, just in a different way. Not behind a teachers' desk or in a school building, but in the community," Thornton says. Their volunteer activities include reading to students, mentoring, tutoring, volunteering at a hospital, school, or church, and providing service on a local board.

Their motivation and heart continues to be evident as the group grows. What began in 2000 with 16 retired teachers, quickly grew to include over 100 members. In the last seven years, the organization's membership has more than doubled to 282 members and associate members. "We give back because we truly loved our jobs," adds Thornton.

### Supporting Future Educators

Jamie Wolman, board and committee chair for community volunteer services says, "The members are interested in staying active and giving back to their community. They also have a tremendous amount of valuable knowledge, and they are able to find opportunities to volunteer through the efforts of KARE."

Every year, KARE sponsors a scholarship for Katy ISD graduating seniors who are planning to pursue a career in education. In 2015, they awarded \$1,000 scholarships to four Katy ISD seniors planning to study education.

Their very first scholarship recipient, Kourtney Faldyn, was a 2010 graduate of Taylor High School. She graduated with a degree in elementary education from Texas A&M and is now teaching in Katy ISD. Faldyn was also named the First Year Teacher of the Year at Exley Elementary for the 2014 to 2015 school year.



"Growing up in a district as wonderful as Katy, I truly wanted to give back to the community that helped raise me into the adult I am today," shares Faldyn, who was eager to return to her hometown to teach. "Katy ISD has supported my family my whole life, and coming back to serve in Katy was a huge passion of mine."

"Educators are the future, and we are committed to helping and staying connected to those students who are aspiring to have careers in education," says Thornton. "It is essential to have ambitious, encouraging, inspiring, and challenging educators." **KM**

*WENDY TENG is a freelance writer. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, blogging, volunteering, trying new restaurants, and learning about new organizations.*

### KARE Membership

Membership cost: \$50

Contact: Jamie Wolman at [wolman@consolidated.net](mailto:wolman@consolidated.net)

or Sue Fagan at [faganfarm@gmail.com](mailto:faganfarm@gmail.com)

Visit: [localunits.org/kare](http://localunits.org/kare)



KARE members attend Rally Day in Austin to support public educators' healthcare



The 2015 KARE officers are inducted into their positions