

Karen Fleming bio interviewed by David Bledsoe



Karen was born December 22, 1945 in Wilmington, DE and lived there through the 2nd grade. Her father's work with DuPont required the family to move to Buffalo, NY for one year before moving to Circleville, OH, a city well known for its "Pumpkin Festival", then back to Wilmington, DE where she completed grades 5 – 11. Karen loved horses and was an avid rider. Her parents sent her to The Grier Boarding School which offers riding as a sport for her senior year of High School where she graduated in 1964.

From 1964 – 1966, Karen attended the University of Delaware "the fighting blue hens" where she majored in her favorite subject, math. Before completing her degree, she opted to enter The Delaware Hospital's clinical lab program where she was trained and worked in the Hematology lab. In the 1980's, Karen continued to further her educational goals as a part time student at Columbia State.

Karen was really into softball in high school and while living in Saudi Arabia. She enjoys tennis, hiking, rock climbing, knitting, sewing and home renovation activities. Don't ask her to play golf as it is the one sport that she simply doesn't care for.

Karen thrives on teamwork ... and as such enjoys preparing food for others to cook with her doing the cleanup. She likes most genres of music, movies and is a prolific reader. She is interested in the science and origins of various spirits and enjoys making people happy. She is a certified mixologist and is licensed to serve.

Karen became a brownie & girl scout leader serving on the girl scout council until the girls in her troop got the Gold award, comparative to an eagle boy scout. When receiving the girl scouts' prestigious national "Thanks Award", the girl scouts' executive director stated "Karen has always said that we are not here for ourselves, rather we are here for the girls".

From 1974 -1978 Karen worked for Whittaker in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. For the first 18 months, she was the warehouse manager. She then became secretary to the deputy district US Corp of Engineers. She took a career break for 4 years with the birth of her son. From 1983-2009 Karen was employed by HCCA International, the former international subsidiary of HCA. Karen chose her career path due to her commitment to healthcare and her love of overseas work. When once asked by an interviewee Karen was recruiting "why do you work for this company" she replied "I can count fewer than the number of fingers on one hand the times that I have not wanted to come to work in the past 26 years." She's proud of the company's culture in creating an environment

that encourages employees to thrive through realizing the potential that everyone brings to the table.

As a child, Karen was baptized & Confirmed in the Episcopal Church. Although she doesn't prescribe to one specific religious organization, she enjoys the study of various different religions and lives her life by the "golden rule". She says "I believe in fundamental doctrines such as "the ten commandments", but find that organized religion is simply just not my thing."

Karen met her husband Dan while on vacation in the US Virgin Islands. They were married for 27 years, and have 2 children, Kiley who lives in Charlotte, NC and Mack, who lives in Wilmington, NC. Karen is extremely proud of and amazed by her kids. "They are really good, kind and gentle with strong core ethics & values."

Karen visited our office earlier this year to see how she could best use her talents to serve. She met with several of Habitat's staff but was especially moved by what Tom had to share. She says "It is unusual that the finance guy can speak with such passion about an organization's mission." Karen enjoys working in the office a couple of mornings a week, occasional work in the warehouse and as often as possible on the build sites. She loves the interaction with staff, other volunteers and getting to know partner families. Karen finds great fulfillment in seeing the houses brought to completion and dedication days "when the house becomes a home". We appreciate Karen's excitement and her commitment to being part of Habitat for Humanity of Williamson County's inaugural Women Build which is scheduled to begin Saturday, September 25.