



MN ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Unleashing education from convention

KAREN RUSTHOVEN

2017 MN CHARTER SCHOOL PIONEER AWARD

Karen Rusthoven's "pioneering" voice, spirit, and passion for educational opportunity as a matter of social justice has been an unassuming yet powerful force in Minnesota's charter school movement since its earliest days.

Karen's vision that a public school must not just be about academics, but also relationships and community building. Her vision is that schools must focus on educating the whole person – mind, body and will, is embodied in the founding principles and practices of Community of Peace Academy which she founded in 1995 and served as school director until 2012.

One only had to walk through the doors of the Academy to know that peace and peace building were underlying principles of the school.

In a Women's Press interview, Karen said; *"Peace is a virtue, an ethical principle that transcends all of our racial, cultural and religious differences. There is not a group of people that does not value honesty, justice, loyalty, love and hope."*

Karen's commitment and belief that schools can be communities of peace has been forged and strengthened by, and through, her own life experiences, including at one time being a single mother of two adopted African-American children, and her professional work, including 16 years as a person of the Lutheran faith serving as a teacher and administrator of a Catholic school.

Karen has stated that: *"I founded Peace Academy to prove there's a better model of public education that serves immigrant students and economically disadvantaged families better."* The charter school law provided her the opportunity to create a school based on her beliefs, vision and passion.

She has described that vision in this way; "Schools need to be caring communities where people feel welcomed and are able to take risks safely so they can learn and grow." In a 2004 U.S. Department of Education publication on Successful Charter Schools a parent of a student at the Academy said: "... this school is a peaceful environment where children feel secure and comfortable to learn."

Karen Rusthoven you are a **Minnesota Charter School Pioneer** who has *"Unleashed Education from Convention"* by creating and modeling a peaceful school environment where children, no matter their race, culture, language or creed feel secure and comfortable to learn and achieve their dreams.