

Kramp earns 2016 Distinguished Citizen honor

By Mike Courson

Karen Kramp has done a lot of things in Ellinwood but she had never been to a Rotary Valentine's Day Banquet. Last February her friend, Ed Schlochtermeyer, told her he had been invited to the banquet by Richard Kimple, and that he could bring a friend. Little did she know that was just a ploy to get her to the banquet where she was named 2016 Rotary Distinguished Citizen.

"I had no idea what it was about," Kramp said. "I thought I was going with my friend. I had no idea what they were doing. I was pretty naïve."

Prior to announcing this year's winner, Kimple went down the list of each of the previous winners. He then began dropping clues about the 2016 winner.

"They said 'she was widowed at a young age with three teenage children,'" Kramp said. "I still didn't know it was me. I was thinking to myself, 'Wow, somebody else had that happen to them?'"

"Then a little bit later they said she married a man with seven children. I thought, 'Oh my gosh, they're talking about me.' I was embarrassed because I thought other people were more deserving of this. I'm just a follower. I'm not a leader, exactly. But if I see something that needs done, I try to

help."

Kramp's resume in Ellinwood is an impressive one. A resident of Ellinwood since 1957, Kramp was not only a busy mother but chose to be active in the community for decades.

"In looking at the extensive list of community service she was involved in, it became more obvious as you looked through it that she was most representative of Rotary's motto of 'Service above self,'" said a previous Distinguished Citizen. "That criteria, that whole body of work over many years, she's Distinguished herself among our citizens to be recognized."

Kramp was born to Curtis and Alma Brensing Spangenberg of Hudson in 1938 and stayed in the area, graduating from Hudson High School in 1956. After graduation she attended the Salt City Business School in Hutchinson.

She married Leland Gatton in 1957. The couple had three children and lived on a farm 10 miles outside of Ellinwood. Her children always attended Ellinwood schools.

Leland died in 1978, leaving Karen alone with three teenage children. She later began working at People's State Bank in Ellinwood, and that's where she met her second

husband, Roger Kramp. Roger and Karen married on March 3, 1984 and remained married until Roger's death in July 2000.

Several of Kramp's children made a surprise stop at the Wolf Hotel near the conclusion of Thursday's banquet. Mike Gatton, Pat and Sharon Gatton, Tom and Jolene Snell, and Kevin and Julie Kramp were all on hand to congratulate Karen on her award.

"I didn't know they were going to be there," Karen said. "I should have picked up on clues but I just had other things on my mind, I guess."

Kramp was selected largely because of her extensive list of community service. Some of that service includes: member of the Ellinwood Hospital Auxiliary for more than a dozen years; helps prepare the Hospital Auxiliary Fall Luncheon each year; helps decorate Ellinwood District Hospital for Christmas and puts seasonal decorations on patients' doors; and bakes and donates baked goods for the Hospital Auxiliary gift table during the month of December.

Kramp was also active in many clubs. She was a secretary and treasurer of the Heritage Club; was a member of Twilight Stitchers Quilt Club for at least 15 years, and is still

a board member for RSVP.

Kramp has been a ready volunteer at her church. She's been a member of the St. Joseph Church and Altar Society for more than 30 years. She's been a church sacristan for at least 20 years, and a church greeter for at least 25 years. She has counted weekend collections monthly for more than three decades, sells grocery certificates and scripts for St. Joseph School, and has helped put together a quilt for the Altar Society Raffle for at least 15 years.

One of Kramp's favorite activities is giving back to the community. She helps at the Ellinwood Food Bank several times a year and has been delivering Meals on Wheels for nearly 20 years.

"In 1997 we were living on a farm four miles north of town," she said. "We were thinking about moving to town and that's one of the things I always wanted to do. That's when I started doing that. I just really enjoyed it. It's just a wonderful thing for people. It keeps them in their homes longer."

Kramp has also volunteered at the Beta Sigma Phi Mu Kappa brat stand each After Harvest Festival. She may have to change her plans this summer but she does not mind.



Mike Westerman, the 2015 Rotary Distinguished Citizen of the Year, gives a plaque to Karen Kramp, the 2016 honoree of the award. (photo by Mike Courson)

"I always help with my sorority brat stand during the After Harvest Festival," she said. "It doesn't sound like I'll be able to do it this year. I don't think I've ever been in a parade before."

Each year, Ellinwood Rotary takes nominations for its Distinguished Citizen award.

A secret committee of previous winners and Rotarians reviews those nominations in selecting a winner. If there is no consensus candidate in a given year, the committee may review past nominees or has the option to not select a winner.

After Harvest Festival Parade Themes

- 1992 - Echoes of Yesteryear
- 1993 - Planning on Progress
- 1994 - Trails West Brought the Best
- 1995 - From the Deutschland to the Heartland
- 1996 - Celebrate! The Santa Fe Trail 175 Years
- 1997 - Portrait of a Town: Ellinwood Celebrating 175 Years
- 1998 - Family Fun on the Plains
- 1999 - A Century in Review
- 2000 - Merging Tradition with Technology
- 2001 - Celebrate 2001 with Family, Friends and Fun
- 2002 - Celebrate the Sights and Sounds of Freedom
- 2003 - Sewing in Seeds of Freedom and Friendship
- 2004 - Ellinwood: the City of Golden Wheat
- 2005 - Celebrating Family and Friends
- 2006 - Moments to Remember
- 2007 - Ellinwood: Gateway to Scenic Byways
- 2008 - Heroes in our Midst
- 2009 - It's Showtime!
- 2010 - Going Green...Hear the Echo
- 2011 - Kansas 150... Beyond the Yellow Brick Road
- 2012 - Celebrate Ellinwood! 140 Years 1872-2012
- 2013 - Home is Where our Story Begins
- 2014 - We Put the Heart in Heartland
- 2015 - Hometown Heroes
- 2016 - Service Above Self

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