

Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield

Katie Werdel



Katie Werdel has a heart for children and serving others. She has a passion for the arts, students, and loves promoting the rich culture Bakersfield has to offer. Her father, Ray Dezember, always taught her that wherever she is planted: bloom. Katie very much does so as she inspires others with her unending

enthusiasm to bring people together and further a positive cause.

Inspired by her parents, Katie values volunteerism and helping those in need. Katie's first memories of volunteering began with time spent with her mother, Joan Dezember, at the Volunteer Center of Bakersfield.

Katie has been an advisor to the Jim Burke Education Foundation's Dream Builder's team since the program's inception; a role she loves because of the time spent with Bakersfield's future leaders. For the past eighteen years, she has served on the board of the Jim Burke Education Foundation. Additionally, she serves on the Grimm Family Education Foundation Advisory Council, the Ellen Baker Tracy Guild, which supports efforts at the Kern County Museum, and the Catherine McAuley Society, which supports the Friends of Mercy Foundation. Katie is on the Blue Ribbon steering committee which provides additional funding for education and programs at the Bakersfield Museum of Art. She was also a planning partner for the Bakersfield Centennial Celebration and the Kern Veteran's Memorial Unveiling. During her time on the Bakersfield Museum of Art board, she was the founding chair of ArtMix and the co-chair of the museum's 60th Anniversary Celebration: Driven by Art. Previous board service also includes Bakersfield Museum of Art, Bakersfield Community House, and Kern County Museum Foundation.

Katie was born and raised in Bakersfield, graduating from West High School. She is an alumna of Whittier College, where she received her BA and MA. Adding to her educational diversity, she graduated from The French Culinary Institute with a degree in French Culinary Arts and French and Germanic Bread Baking. For eleven years, Katie taught in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District before 'retiring' to start her family. Having met her husband Tim in kindergarten, she has been married to him for almost ten years. Katie considers herself lucky enough to have married into the Werdel family, who, as natives of Bakersfield and wonderful volunteers in their own right, model the heart of service each day. She and Tim have one son, Cooper, who is the light of their lives. Katie has three amazing siblings, and, of course, their 'enhancements': sister and brothers-in-law; as well as, fifteen nieces and nephews who are doing their part also to serve the communities in which they live.

The family lost their beloved father, Ray, last year; who, Katie remembers, always reminded her so justly, "that every day was just another day in paradise!" Katie's own statement, "Bakersfield has given me so much: some of the best friends I could ever imagine, a family that supports me and a place that is filled with the most giving hearts of any community. You would be hard pressed to find a better place to live than Bakersfield," reflects her love of Bakersfield and pride in being part of our community she serves so heartily.