

Karen Suzuki Okabe

December 23, 1947 ~ September 19, 2024

Karen Suzuki Okabe (76) of Salt Lake City, UT passed away peacefully on September 19, 2024 with her children beside her. She was born in Chicago, IL to John and Marianne Suzuki on December 23, 1947. She was a long-time resident of Salt Lake City, but remained a Chicagoan at heart.

Karen graduated from Von Steuben High School, received a BA from Northeastern Illinois University and a MPA from Brigham Young University.

Karen had a distinguished career as a proud public servant for over 30 years. She held appointed positions at the city, county and state level, working in both Democrat and Republican administrations. She was also an adjunct professor at Westminster University, Brigham Young University and the University of Utah. Her last public service position was Deputy Mayor for Salt Lake County from 2004 to 2008. She received numerous awards for her service including Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce Pathfinder and Distinguished Alumna of the Brigham Young University Marriott School of Business.

Karen believed in the power of public service and effective management. She once said, “a powerful dynamic is unleashed when employees are empowered and given a choice in the workplace. When managers and employees collaborate, a synergism is created which can raise the quality of work to unprecedented levels.” Karen saw value in each employee, and will be remembered for her leadership skills, professional successes and contributions.

With her infectious personality exuding warmth and hospitality, Karen sought to connect with others, showing kindness to all. Her many passions spanned from food to art to animals.

Karen lived a big life, travelling near and far. She was a wonderful mother, wife, friend, and mentor. She will be deeply missed.

Karen was preceded in death by her parents, loving husband Rick, and her beloved furry four-legged kids. She is survived by her children, Todd and Brooke (Gregg), grandson Alex, sister Marsha (Robert), sisters-in-law Elaine (Darrell), Jan (Mark) and many dear nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will be held from 5-7:30 pm on November 8th, 2024 at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts Marcia and John Price Museum Building at the University of Utah.

Those who wish to honor Karen, please consider making a donation in Karen’s memory to the Salt Lake County Animal Shelter (https://cbo.io/bidapp/index.php?slug=slcoasdonations) or Best Friends Animal Society (https://www.bestfriends.org).