

MEET BVHS BOARD MEMBER

Karen Klassen Harder

Traveling to a part of the globe different than your own backyard can be thrilling. New sights, smells, sounds and tastes can overwhelm you in the best way. However, living in a new geographic location can be very different than being a tourist. Blanchard Valley Health System board member, Karen Klassen Harder has been both tourist and inhabitant in places across the globe. Though she is a seasoned world traveler, Karen always finds the road to home down Main Street in Bluffton, Ohio.

Karen is originally from the city of Kitchener in Ontario, Canada. She moved to the United States to pursue her college education. Karen then got married and set up a home in America with her husband. Though she loves the stars and stripes, Karen has created homes for her family in the African Republic of Kenya and in Bangladesh over her lifetime. In Kenya, Karen pursued her passions for teaching and education; in Bangladesh, she worked as a business consultant, sharing her knowledge and expertise of organizational behavior and strategies. Karen passed her wanderlust on to her two children. Her son now lives in South Korea as a teacher, while her daughter lives in Cambodia and works for Mennonite Central Committee, a Mennonite church relief and development organization.

Through her trips, travels and homes, Karen says she has been taught many things about world cultures and individual world views that increased her knowledge about life. "Travelling

for me is a passion," said Karen. "By taking public transport, walking in the street and eating at locally-owned restaurants I have met so many people. These people have taught me to respect those I come in contact with and to learn from them."

Bluffton, Ohio is currently Karen's home base. Bluffton's picturesque streets and friendly community members have drawn her back after her travels. Karen is a professor at Bluffton University in the business department, where she teaches organizational behavior and strategic management. "I love teaching in Bluffton. It is such a warm, comforting



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community," she said. Her husband, James, is Bluffton University's president, meaning Karen and James spend a lot of their free time interacting with students, attending university activities and visiting with alumni and friends of Bluffton.

In addition to working together at the university, the presidential couple works together as business consultants to the Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The MWC is a global organization of church leaders and members that collaborate together to make the global Mennonite

church stronger. By working together with the MWC, Karen and James simultaneously make a positive global impact with their church and act as a sounding board and puzzle solvers for large organizational problems.

Karen's involvement in the Bluffton community provides the BVHS board of trustees an essential link to the thoughts, feelings and needs of the people living there. Being connected to the pulse of Bluffton helps health system leadership make decisions that are best for both the Findlay and Bluffton communities. Karen chairs the governance and nominating committees of the board, which provides her with additional new experiences without having to book a plane ticket. "It is fascinating being a part of an organization that strives to do the right thing in a changing world. I think so highly of the leadership at BVHS. They create new ways to bring health care to all community members," she said.

Karen has led a colorful life full of global experiences, but she retains a love for Northwest Ohio. You can find her sitting on the bleachers with her husband at Bluffton

University sporting events or walking down Main Street visiting the local shops. Through her business savvy and open mind, Karen continues to further the BVHS board and the Bluffton community every day.