

Deb DeMeester receives Emmy Award

Winning an Emmy was never on Deb DeMeester's bucket list but the Director of Leadership Development for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies received the Governors Award Emmy on Oct. 7 for her volunteer work with the Convenings. The National Academy of Television Arts & Science — Upper Midwest Chapter Board of Governors Award is the most prestigious Regional Emmy Award in the Midwest chapter. It honors visionary, long-standing relationships that creatively and effectively use corporate, non-profit and broadcast resources to showcase the power of broadcasting to advance a mission or message. The Convenings is a multi-year effort to help Minnesotans talk about late-life planning and living as fully as possible until the end of life. It has involved an unprecedented collaboration among Minnesota civic leaders, health care, faith, and commercial and public media professionals.

(At right, Deb stands with members of the Bruce Kramer Collaborative board: Ev Emerson, Cathy Wurzer and Myra Rucker.)

Deb and Minnesota Public Radio Host, Cathy Wurzer, formed a non-profit, the Bruce Kramer Collaborative, in honor and memory of Dr. Bruce Kramer, a long-time friend, co-teacher and colleague of Deb's. Bruce was diagnosed with ALS at the peak of his career as a Dean at the University of St. Thomas. About six months later Cathy began a series of on-air conversations with Bruce that gained a large following and an Edward R. Murrow award. In the final year of Bruce's life, he became intentional about making sure that Deb and Cathy got to know each other by scheduling Cathy's visits on Thursdays when Deb was his caregiver. He and Cathy co-wrote *We*



Know How This Ends: Living while Dying which was published in 2015, two days after Bruce died. He encouraged a select group of colleagues to “find the ripples” that would continue after his death.

The Convenings, a collaboration between the Bruce Kramer Collaborative and Honoring Choices Minnesota, is one of those ripples. It is a statewide series of live events, broadcast and digital media projects designed to inspire and support Minnesota families as they try to talk more opening about living well and dying well.

For the Convenings Deb, a minister member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, works with Cathy to develop scripts, programs and ideas for the live events. She also developed and facilitates a leadership luncheon in each community prior to the live events for which she has created resources such as book discussion questions, adult education program suggestions, a curriculum for high school youth (in collaboration with a high school science teacher), and a reflection journal. In addition, her artwork based on Bruce and Cathy’s book provides an introduction to the value of creativity in both grieving and living well.

In 2017 surveys taken at the end of the live events show that 98 percent of the participants in Ely, Luverne, Coon Rapids, central Minnesota, Northfield and Medford were more motivated and empowered to talk with their families about living well and dying well. The coming year will include shows in Minneapolis, Duluth, Rochester and Shakopee. This effort is funded by HealthPartners, Allina Health, CentraCare Health and the George Family Foundation.