eNEWSLETTER // STAFF

Happy Retirement, Karlene!

Karlene Swaynie retired from Irving Cares on July 10, 2020, after more than 10 years serving the Irving community. A resident of Irving since 2002, Karlene first became engaged at Irving Cares in 2011 as a food pantry volunteer. She later trained to become an intake volunteer and a volunteer case manager and in 2012, Karlene was hired as the executive administrative assistant. Former Irving Cares CEO, Teddie Story says, "As Irving Cares grew, we saw the need to add a new administrative support position so that the CEO could have more time to dedicate to fundraising, partnership building and community relations rather than clerical functions as well as lending support to the development director, program director and director of volunteers. When the [Irving Cares] Board approved a new staff position of executive administrative assistant, we did what we most often did when a position came open—we looked within. In this role, she oversaw the creation of a new client database in 2019. Karlene also processed donor donations, processed payroll and managed 401(k) contributions. She provided invaluable administrative support for the annual Irving Cares Gala, formerly known as the Great Harvest, and performed other duties to support the CEO and staff.

"We hired Karlene and never looked back. Her extensive sales background allowed her to handle our vendor list, her familiarity with the agency workings gave her the ability to know when to squeeze blood from a turnip to save us money and time, her fantastic recall of names and situations proved invaluable to supporting the many volunteers, her buoyant personality greeted each visitor with a high level of happiness, and her absolute loyalty to Irving Cares and its customers was beyond measure," Teddie continued. Current Irving Cares CEO, Kyle Taylor says, "Karlene has been a tremendous asset to Irving Cares and to me, personally. All her years of service, hard work and dedication have paid off and made Irving Cares a better organization. She came to work every day as a key cog in the Irving Cares wheel with the singular goal of turning the lives of our Irving residents around. Her dedication, knowledge and experience will be missed not just by her fellow coworkers but by many of the volunteers, donors, advocates and friends of Irving Cares, who she interacted with on a daily basis.

Karlene says what she loves most about Irving Cares is "the people, the caring and compassion of staff and volunteers." Working at Irving Cares has taught Karlene to appreciate what many people take for granted. She says, "it's eye-opening to hear a child say, 'Yay, we got milk!' upon receiving their food pantry order."



When asked what she's looking forward to most in retirement, Karlene says, "No alarm clock! I look forward to playing golf, reading and cooking meals. So many things to do around the house. I think retirement will evolve into a wonderful stress-free life after 50 years employment."

"Each nonprofit is only as strong as its staff, both volunteer and paid, and Irving Cares has a rich tradition of having some of the most dedicated people who devote their time to helping others in Irving. Karlene's time at Irving Cares has come to an end, as she retires to a life of golf, movie watching, travel and semi-fine dining. As her former boss, I often said that she was more than my right-hand man, she was the whole right side of my body. Her contributions to the sustaining success of Irving Cares cannot be underestimated. I am so happy for her and wish her the very best," says Teddie. "Karlene leaves Irving Cares a better place and she has earned her retirement. It is certainly going to take some getting used to walking in the office and not seeing her face. I want to thank her for all the hard work and dedication to this mission and team, it is truly appreciated." Kyle adds.

Karlene, we thank you for more than 10 years of service to the Irving community! Kyle says, "now go and enjoy all the things in life you worked so hard for, Karlene."