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Karl T. Van Roy : Distinguished Achievement Award for Public Service

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 - [Past Recipients](#)
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2017 Distinguished Achievement Award for Public Service



Karl T. Van Roy '61

Through more than three decades in the restaurant business, Karl Van Roy '61 earned a reputation for good service.

But service was Karl's focus long before – and well after – his days as a restaurateur.

Karl served his country for two years in the U.S. Army in the 1960s. Returning to Wisconsin, he spent ten years learning the hospitality business before opening his own restaurant – the much-loved River's Bend Supper Club in Howard, Wis. – in 1974.

In the years that followed, the River's Bend gained a loyal following of families throughout northeast Wisconsin, and Karl himself earned

the recognition of the industry: He was tapped to serve as president of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, and in 1990, he was named Wisconsin Restaurateur of the Year.

Karl used his position as a businessman as a platform from which to engage deeply in his community. He became a member of the Howard Suamico Optimist Club, and during his 43 years of faithful service to that organization, he held various officer positions including president; he was later awarded a lifetime membership.

He also helped establish the N.E.W. Zoo and organize its successful "Feast With the Beasts" fundraiser. Karl served as a YMCA Partner in Youth, a member of the Brown County

Corrections Board, a charter member of the Howard Suamico Business Association, and a member of the Brown County Republican Party and the Green Bay Chamber of Commerce.

In 1998, Karl retired from the restaurant business – but not from his life of service. He successfully ran for the Wisconsin State Assembly in 2002, and served with distinction for five terms before calling it a day at the “tender” age of 75. Robin Vos, current speaker of the assembly, cited Karl for his “dignified interaction with all members and their varying viewpoints and philosophies,” an approach deeply rooted in the Norbertine commitment to dialogue and collaboration, and one sorely missed in today’s political environment.

A true servant leader, Karl Van Roy is exactly the sort of alumnus we celebrate with the St. Norbert College Distinguished Achievement Award for Public Service, which we are honored to bestow upon him.

St. Norbert College

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