

# Honorary Life Memberships

*From time to time, the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association honours members of the music festival community through the presentation of life memberships. This year, we're pleased to recognize the work of two outstanding former SMFA presidents.*

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## Karen McCallum



Karen was involved with Music Festival way before becoming a volunteer. She was a competitor in Piano Classes in the early 1960s. She became more involved in 1989 by accompanying a few of Joyce Olesen's Voice students and as a result was introduced to the Provincial Competition. She remembers meeting the new "Assistant to the Executive Director", Carol Donhauser in 2003. Going to Fall Conferences was enlightening and fun and the circle of musical acquaintances grew.

In 1993, Karen made a decision that would change her life. Some might consider it a mistake when she attended the year-end meeting of the Swift Current committee and accepted the position of Chair for the Hosting committee. There was a standing joke that once you are on a festival committee, you may be there for life! Well, it took 26 years but Karen was finally able to retire in 2019. Then the whole world fell apart and shut down, not due to Karen's retirement, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was the perfect time to retire," said Karen.

There were a few points of interest along this journey and if you had a couple of days, Karen could tell you many stories. In 2002-2007, Karen became President of the Swift Current Festival. Around this time, her long time festival acquaintance, Janet Loeppky, Entry Secretary, suggested that Karen should try to get on the Provincial Board. She said she couldn't possibly take on any more duties until her son graduated from Grade 12, which he did in 2005. Seeing as she didn't have an excuse anymore, by 2006, Karen was on the Provincial Board. She progressed through all the positions until 2017. In 2015, Karen was appointed to the FCMF Board of Directors as the Sask. Representative for 3 years. In Swift Current, from 2007-2015, Karen was Scholarship Chair and then returned to President in 2016-2019.

So, for many years, Karen was delighted to wear many hats, meeting other volunteers, parents, competitors, and adjudicators from across the province and the country.

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## Karen Unger



Karen Unger was involved with music festivals for almost as far back as she can remember. Walking into Bessborough Hotel still brings back memories of that nervous, excited feeling of her early competitions in Saskatoon Music Festival as a child. She remembers being in awe of those wise, all-knowing adjudicators!

When Karen started teaching piano lessons in 1994, she entered her students (and later her own children) in Naicam Music Festival and surrounding areas, and joined the Naicam Music Festival committee. She was active on that board in various roles for a little over twenty years, including terms as chair of the Scholarship Committee and also

as Festival President.

During these years Karen had the opportunity to attend some of the SMFA fall conferences, and at the 2006 conference in Watrous was nominated to join the provincial board. In fact, Karen U and Karen Mac were both nominated that same year and joined the board together! Karen Unger served a three-year term, took a two-year break when that term ended, then eagerly returned to the SMFA Board in 2011 and stayed for nine more years! She was syllabus chair for two of our syllabi and served as President of the Association from 2016 to 2018. During Karen's final two years on the Provincial Board, she served on the Board of Governors for the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals as Chair of the Governance Task Force.

Karen and her husband Brian moved to Warman in 2017, and when she finished her time with SMFA in 2020 she took a short break from festival involvement. This past September, she attended the Twin Rivers Music Festival AGM and is looking forward to being involved with a local festival once again.

Karen feels honoured to be receiving this lifetime membership to the SMFA. She is proud to be part of an organization that has such a long history of promoting and celebrating musical excellence in our province.