

KARIE KIRSCHBAUM

As the community development director of Crookston, she is the Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority and the Crookston Housing Authority which includes approximately 120+ HUD homes and 65 Public Housing Units. She is responsible for the development, direction, management, and leadership of staff who manage the City's economic development, redevelopment initiatives, housing services, business development services and neighborhood preservation strategies. This includes the coordination of innovative economic development planning activities including marketing, analysis of financial assistance resources, acting as a resource to commerce and industry developers, working with public works and other departments to identify funding for projects and more.

Her career has included serving as city administrator in Mahanomen, MN, the county seat of Mahanomen Co., located on the White Earth Indian Reservation; Publisher and Editor of three papers located in three separate counties in NW Minnesota; chairing the Norman County EDA; a board member of the Norman County Planning Commission; Mayor of Gary, MN; and a board member of the Northwest Minnesota Foundation and the Northwest Minnesota Foundation.

Karie thrives on, and is known for, collaboration. Her favorite is the Gary Pines Project completed in 2018 during her time as mayor. It is a 160-acre forest owned by the City of Gary. She says it shows what happens when there is collaboration between communities and a cross-section of political initiatives, private foundations, and educational institutes – all driven to better their assigned geographical locations. This project has been well publicized throughout the state and even in national publications and broadcasts. The Pines now includes six miles of trails, animal statues placed throughout the forest trails to the delight of children, a ninja (obstacle) course, a Veteran's Memorial Shelter and a Lions Memorial Forest to continue planting the trees. Partners with the City of Gary included adult and student residents, local schools, the DNR, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, the Dekko Foundation, U of M Regional Sustainable Development, NW MN Arts Council, CURA, and the donation of time, equipment and finances by many alumni and regional residents. www.garypines.com

To address new community opportunities, she and other area alumni established Gary Cares Area Foundation in 2011 to partner with the city and non-profit clubs and/or purpose-driven groups. In 2023 Gary Cares won the Quality of Place award from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, Bemidji, MN. Gary Cares oversees grants and fundraising dollars for multiple clubs, manages the One Fund Drive for Norman County and oversees Shock & Awe Youth Philanthropy students. Under her leadership as navigator, the students have granted over \$500,000 into the county since 2011. www.GaryCares.org

In 2023 Karie was chosen as one of 16 state finalists, four from each region, for the Initiators Fellowship to represent Northwest Minnesota. Her proposal was to build a network connecting government agencies and community organizations to integrate young people and new Americans into Greater Minnesota communities.

Giving a "hand-up" is a lifelong endeavor for Karie and her [Exemption 6: PII](#). In 1997 they co-founded a non-profit in the inner city of Fontana, CA. In Kenya, they became a registered NGO in 2005. Their projects include micro-finance initiatives, the development of ranches and family farms to combat poverty, a trauma and orthopedic center, a nationally accredited sewing and tailor school, and a boy's home address the crises of homeless youth. Karie has represented their initiatives as a speaker, business consultant and liaison in countries including the Philippines, Mexico, Germany, Netherlands, N. Ireland, England, France, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, and Kenya. To their joy, what started with high school and college students expanded to the destitute, immigrants, addicts, families, women's homes, and gangs continued to grow. Their members, partners and projects now span across the U.S and in various other nations.