

## Distinguished Alumni award 1999

### **Kevin Kobishop**

1969 Accounting

Wyndom Hotels, VP Food and Beverage

While a student, Kevin was already demonstrating his leadership abilities by serving as Secretary, Vice President and President of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association's La Crosse Chapter, and was instrumental in bringing their scholarship to the Foundation. It now provides three \$500 scholarships to deserving students of the food industry.

After graduating from WWTC, Kevin began an exciting, upward bound career, initially with the Holiday Inn in several management positions, then onto the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse as Director of Food and Beverage until 1985, when he went into the private restaurant business for two years. He resumed his hotel career in 1987 by rejoining the Radisson Hotels in Lexington, Kentucky as their Director of Catering. In 1988, he returned to Wisconsin, this time with Wyndham Hotels as their opening Director of Food and Beverage for their Milwaukee Center Hotel. He was promoted to General Manager of the new Wyndham Garden Hotel in Brookfield, Wisconsin in 1990, and then transferred to another of their hotels in Indianapolis in 1991 where he received the General Manager of the Year Award. In 1993, he moved his family yet once again after being promoted to corporate Vice President of Food and Beverage in Dallas, Texas and continues in that capacity today.

Active in his community, Kevin finds time to chair his church's Youth Ministry Council, teaches Sunday school, and is on the Education and Building Committees. He is also involved with Riding Unlimited, a therapeutic horsemanship program for people with disabilities. He and his wife, Vicky, are active supporters of their high school's wrestling and swimming team's booster club. Kent Obert says about Kevin..."He is first and foremost a family man, with their welfare coming first, in spite of his exceptional career ladder that has meant a move every two to three years." He and Vicky have four children, two in college in Dallas, and two who will be graduating high school next year. They share a love of horses and own two that they ride whenever possible. This outstanding alumnus is a great cook (I wonder where he developed that skill?!!) and says he wishes he had more time for it (so does his wife!)

**Karen (Rochelt) Long**

1984 Early Childhood Education

YMCA, Child Care Director

Karen feels she is fortunate to be working in a career field she truly enjoys-with children. She has a natural affinity for this college beyond having been a student because her mother, Pat Rochelt, is a long-time WWTC communication instructor!

After graduation, Karen was a stay-at-home mom two years then worked in retail and was the business manager for three years. She says, "While I gained valuable experience in business, I decided to go back to the field I was trained in and loved" and began teaching at La Crosse Day Care Centers for minimum wage, but says she was never happier. In 1990 she joined La Crosse's YMCA as its Child Care Director - a newly created position-and was given a \$ 32,000 budget to work with; her 1999 budget is \$389,000, due in part to her own initiative authoring several successful grants to support the Y's child care programs.

The growth and success of this program demonstrates Karen's outstanding leadership and organizational abilities, as well as her concern for the welfare of the children of this community. She developed the "Surround Care Program" that is housed in individual schools, designed around working parent's schedules. Children can attend before or after school and never have to leave the building. In the time Karen has coordinated this program, it has grown from 17 children on two sites, to 476 children and 11 sites.

She developed the "Kids Gym," where parents who come to the Y can bring their children while they participate in Y activities. The program began in 1992 with 260 children per month and today it has had as high as 1,773 children each month.

In 1998 she developed a center to serve children under the age of five. The infant/toddler center opened in September with a capacity of 50 and ever since, has been completely filled with many children.

She developed the YMCA's Child Abuse Prevention program in 1993 and presents this training to new Y staff monthly and also at WWTC, where she also teaches adult classes in the child care field.

Karen's interest and concern for children has led her to many community service activities including, among many others, serving on WWTC's Child Care and Development and Referral Program, serving special needs children by coordinating the Surround Care program with the Lutheran Hospital's Birth to 21 Program and the Visiting Nurses Association. She also obtained funding to create the Presbyterian Church's "Kids Unlimited," a scholarship program for deserving families on W-2. Karen's love of children has also led her to become an emergency foster parent.

She has received national certification from the National Association of Child Care Professionals, and was awarded state and national Child Care Excellence Awards for her contributions and exemplary work in her profession.