

Member Spotlight: Keitha Bryson

Keitha Bryson was the oldest of three children born to Boyd and Mardelle Bryson. She and her sister Linda were born in Idaho where her parents attended the University of Idaho. After Linda was born the family moved to St. Louis, Missouri where her father was enrolled in the Washington University dental school program.

As a young child Keitha wanted to know why she had such an unusual name. The family who lived upstairs above the Brysons in married student housing were Keith and Sue Herrick. The Herricks had a baby girl before Boyd and Mardelle's daughter was born. The Herricks named their daughter Keitha Sue Herrick. When the family upstairs moved and the new baby was born, Boyd and Mardelle decided to name their first child Keitha Sue.

When Keitha's father finished dental school in St. Louis the family moved to Boise, Idaho where her father set up his dental practice. Her mother worked for Mountain Bell Telephone Company when the girls were both in school. When Keitha and Linda were in junior high school their brother Mike was born.

Keitha attended Boise schools and played violin from 4th -12th grades. All City Orchestra concerts were a favorite event each year. The high school orchestra also played for the drama department's musical productions.

Keitha graduated from Capital High school in 1970 and enrolled at Boise State University for the following year to study theater arts. During her junior year in college the department held a winter theater festival. A visiting professor from Central Washington University gave such an interesting workshop that Keitha decided to move to Ellensburg, Washington to continue her education. The students who lived above her in an apartment were all special education majors. Working with those friends and special needs children became the new focus. Keitha graduated from Central with a bachelor's degree in education and special education endorsement. Field experience during college was in several different locations. Selah – September Experience, Echo Glen Juvenile Detention Center – Practicum, and Student Teaching – Woodside School, Highline School District. Keitha graduated from Central and was hired to teach in Highline Public Schools where she spent 36 years in both special education and general education. One of her special needs students became her foster daughter for five years. Keitha retired in 2014.

In 2014 Keitha joined a Quality of Work Life in Education team to address students and educators at risk. Washington State has the highest youth suicide rate in the nation. Not many know that educators are also committing suicide. In the past two years seven Washington educators have committed suicide. Keitha is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, Beta Beta chapter, and the legislative liaison for the excellence in education committee. Keitha is also part of the legislative committee for the Washington State School Retirees Association and visits legislators each session about pension policy. Keitha has been chapter president for both her Delta Kappa Gamma and Washington State School Retirees groups. Keitha also teaches a non-partisan civics engagement class. "I don't know how you vote, and you don't know how I vote, but I'm certain that we all have common things that we would like to have our elected

officials address.” The class includes knowing who your elected officials are, how they vote on issues that matter to you, and which bills they sponsor.

This spring Keitha moved to Tumwater about a week before Governor Inslee issued the stay at home order. The new house is 3.0 miles from the Capitol Building in Olympia. Retirement just got easier! Keitha has been a member of the League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County for three years.

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