



Hello everyone, I'm Karen Davis O'Hara. I've been in Northern California for 35 years, but spent my first 18 years in Alaska, growing up on my grandparents' homestead on Longmere Lake on the Kenai Peninsula. I have an older brother and a younger sister. My mom was a surgical nurse and my dad was a construction worker, educator, and eventually served in state government. While working for the state Transportation commission, appointed by Sarah Palin, he was briefly in charge of the famous "Bridge to Nowhere."

In high school I was a competitive swimmer, member of student council and active in extracurricular activities around leadership, such as Girls' State and State Student Government conferences. Combining the two was fun – I always had friends at our away swim meets; my teammates referred to me as "the diplomat."

After high school I attended UC Davis for degrees in Psychology and Human Development. I got very interested in psychophysiological research and rolled right into a Ph.D. program at Davis in Human Development, with a focus on physiology of emotion regulation and its effect on physical and emotional health.

I began as a professor of Child Development at Sacramento State in 2000, gradually moving into administration from Department Chair to Associate Dean of the College of Education. During that time I began my biggest Human Development project – raising my two awesome kids. Below are their pictures along with one of our furry friends.



My kids are my favorite people... they are passionate about social justice and equity for all people; this is a value I instilled in them from a very early age, which my father and mother instilled in me through our close relationships with Native Alaskan communities.

In 2022 we moved from Davis to Grass Valley on a whim, and a year later I was appointed the Executive Dean of the Nevada County campus of Sierra College, which was the dream job I didn't know I wanted. I now oversee the beautiful 105-acre campus and work with a crew of faculty and staff who are passionate about student success.



They inspire me every day to be a better person and to do more to promote equity and access for all students.





Beyond education and my family, I am passionate about studying history. Here is a picture I took of the Pantheon in Rome. I was able to take my children to Italy for 2 weeks in 2019, just before the pandemic hit. I am currently reading the history of Jerusalem and learning so much about the history of religion and the history of the divisions we see in religion today.



I am also passionate about my Finnish heritage. My father and I had the opportunity to travel to Finland to visit his mother's family and to explore our family's deep roots there. My Finnish Grandmother Sylvia was one of my favorite people and my daughter Aily is named after her sister (a fairly common name in Finland and Estonia).



In 2019 I had the opportunity to travel to Shenyang in northeast China to work on development of an International Child Development program. However, the program never made it into reality due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



In my current role I continue to develop programs, working to provide access to education for underserved students, as well as helping to develop a workforce suiting the needs of the communities in Nevada County.

I'm looking forward to getting to know you and making connections and learning from everyone!