



MichiganWomenForward



Katherine G. Heideman

(1910 - 2003)

Inducted: 2000 Locale: Hancock Era: Contemporary

Area(s) of Achievement: Education

Katherine G. Heideman has been credited as the "force majeure" in Hancock and throughout Houghton County, Michigan. Her legacy can be traced to the development of special education and vocational-training programs, the environment, heightened tourism, cultural endeavors, and to the initiation of campaigns for the construction of public buildings. Heideman was the first female superintendent of the Houghton County Schools in 1958 and subsequently the first superintendent of the Copper Country Intermediate School District (three counties) before retiring in 1976.

When Heideman became the superintendent of the Houghton County Schools in 1958, there were only two employees on the school district staff and a \$10,000 budget. When she retired in 1976, there were 89 district employees and a \$1.25 million budget, with the district expanding from covering one county to three.

During an era of modest educational programs and few women in the workplace, Heideman became a visionary for all women to model. As superintendent, in 1974, she succeeded in having a law passed in Michigan, HB 5013 (known as the Heideman Bill), allowing intermediate school districts to own and operate schools for people with disabilities. She developed programs to educate and train pre-school people with disabilities, people with severe mental disabilities, trainable and educable persons, and those in need of speech therapy. She also created programs for people with emotional disabilities, for the deaf, for those with visual disabilities, and for those with multiple disabilities. These programs, in turn, created employment opportunities for social workers and therapists.

Heideman was the driving force on the Hancock City Council (first elected in 1982) and served on most major city committees and commissions. Her accomplishments include building a new high school, hospital, fire station, public works garage, community arts center, and community waterfront parks. She helped to introduce a new national park and authored a local ordinance preventing toxic or nuclear waste from being deposited in Hancock.