

## Garden Pathways

2008 *“Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield”*

### Connie Wattenbarger



Connie Wattenbarger’s heart overflows with unending love for children and youth. She brings contagious enthusiasm, boundless energy, and exuberant zeal to her broad-based efforts to improve the conditions of the young people of Kern County.

Countless youth have benefitted from Connie’s impact on education, child guidance, protecting minors from obscenity and abuse, mentoring high school students, and lobbying legislators for social change.

First elected to the Kern High School District Board of Trustees in 1994, Connie served for twelve years on numerous committees and in key leadership roles, including president. She was elected as board alternative representative to the Kern County Committee on School District Organization and served for six years on the California School Boards Association Delegate Assembly where she took on the roles of governmental relations chair and legislative advocate. Since having retired from the board, Connie continues to co-chair the Kern County Student Leadership program, which she infuses with her passionate zest for life.

Connie’s copious community service spans many arenas, including volunteering at the Guild House to benefit the Henrietta Weill Memorial Child Guidance Clinic, founding board member of Bakersfield Citizens Opposed to Obscenity and Lewdness, past president of North High School Parent Teacher Club, and Kern High School District Parent Advisory Board. Connie was elected to the Republican Central Committee, District 33 and named California State Legislature “Woman of the Year” in 1996.

At Olive Knolls Nazarene Church, Connie has generously given of her time as board member, Christian Life Director, Women’s Ministries Director, Hospitality Team Coordinator, and Compass Chair. The Church of the Nazarene, Central California District, recognized Connie as “Christian Life Director of the Year.” As chair of the Kern Leadership Alliance empower committee, Connie supports faith-based initiatives to address the most pressing needs of Kern.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Connie received her B.S. in speech pathology from the University of Oklahoma. She began her career in public schools working with the handicapped, special needs children, and later, in a private clinic. Initially coming to Bakersfield to visit a college friend, Connie ended up sharing an apartment with her, marrying her brother, and getting a teaching position with Bakersfield City School District. A pilot, Connie loves flying to Boise to visit her precious grandchildren. She enjoys the beach, traveling to exotic destinations, interior decorating, and going to Packard shows with Don, her wonderful husband of thirty-five years. Connie’s four children, eleven grandchildren, and great-granddaughter bring her joyous delight.