

Late Chippewa Valley boss Kennedy remembered by district leaders

Kennedy was at forefront of district's safety measures

- By Nicole Tuttle For MediaNews Group
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Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Patricia Kennedy passed away on June 30. Kennedy was superintendent in the district from 1999 to 2004, serving at the forefront of implementing school security measures.

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Patricia Kennedy recently passed away. She served as superintendent of Chippewa Valley Schools from 1999 to 2004. Pictured is Kennedy at the center of a group of district school board members, parents and students at a groundbreaking.

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The Chippewa Valley Schools superintendent who pioneered uncharted territory regarding school security in the district recently died.

Shelby Township resident Patricia Kennedy, 69, died on June 30. She was the superintendent of Chippewa Valley Schools from 1999 to 2004, serving the district and pioneering policy during a particularly frightening time in the U.S. that included not only the Columbine High School school shooting, but also 9/11 and the 2001 anthrax attacks.

Current Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts said Kennedy was instrumental in implementing more safety measures in the school district.

"If you think about it, that was really uncharted territory," Roberts said. "You're faced with some national events that cause concern at a local level. She had to lead in the implementation, the start of all that to make schools more secure places."

Another challenge Kennedy faced as superintendent was changing involvement of government in the academic program, he added.

"Graduation requirements changed and different federal government initiatives caused us to change how we approached teaching and learning," Roberts said. "She was superintendent at a time of great change. That takes a great deal of skill, to really kind of lead the whole effort for change in our schools."

Kennedy died in the care of her family and hospice. She was born on Aug. 14, 1949 in Mount Clemens and married Gordon Kennedy on Aug. 17, 1985. Kennedy earned a Bachelor of Science in Education of Emotionally Disturbed Children from Western Michigan University in 1971. She then worked as a special education teacher for Mount Clemens Public Schools. In 1976 she completed her Master of Arts in Special Education from Eastern Michigan University. In 1981 Kennedy earned an Education Specialist degree in General Administration from Wayne State University. In 1986 she became the Lake Shore Public Schools director of special education and later worked as the director of human resources. Kennedy earned a Doctorate in Education from Wayne State University in 1990.

Kennedy came to Chippewa Valley Schools in the early 1990s and held various administrative posts. Roberts pointed out Kennedy's choice to work with special needs students speaks to her mission as an educator.

"I think that kind of reflects on her as a person," Roberts said. "Patti really cared deeply about everyone in the organization and especially about students. She really knew that was her purpose, to make our school district better for all students. Her background in special education served her well.

"She had a great sense of humor, a wonderful laugh, and made our district a fun place to work. I think that was important to her, I think it is good for what we do," Roberts said.

Kennedy became district superintendent in 1999, retiring from the position in 2004.

"As Chippewa Valley superintendent Patti Kennedy moved our district forward in many ways," Chippewa Valley Board of Education Treasurer George Sobah said. "She wasn't afraid to make tough decisions if it was in the best interest of our students. She led school improvement teams, strategic planning initiatives, and budget development committees. She kept the school improvement process on track and insisted on the continual improvement of curriculum and instruction for all students."

Retiring after 36 years in education in 2007, Kennedy worked part-time as adjunct faculty member at Saginaw Valley State University Macomb Campus until 2009. She is survived by her husband Gordon, sons, granddaughters, brother, niece, nephews and brother in law. Services were held on July 9 and she is entombed at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township.