



***DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR - 2023***

**TOM MULLEN**

**1969-2012**

They Lit the Way



DISTINGUISHED  
EDUCATOR

Tom grew up in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and attended the University of Wisconsin – LaCrosse, receiving a B.A. in Art Education in 1964. He met his wife Judy in LaCrosse and they were married in 1964, later having a son, Michael. Tom began his education career teaching elementary art in 1964. After several years teaching elementary art in Platteville, WI, and LaCrosse, WI, he returned to the UW- LaCrosse and received his Master's in Audio-Visual Education in 1969.

He came to Albert Lea as the Audio-Visual Coordinator for the school district in 1969. At a time when “audio-visual” basically meant a record player and overhead projector in a classroom, he helped usher teachers and students through the 1970's (reel to reel tapes, films and filmstrips, cassette tapes and color photography), the 1980's (VCRs, camcorders, DVDs, and computers with floppy disc drives), and the 1990's (computers, computer networking, and digital equipment).

His duties fluctuated over the years and were innumerable. There was no average work day, a usual day mostly involved taking care of the biggest problems that arose. His most visible roles were at large presentations, concerts and sporting events where you would see him setting up and running the recording and sound systems as well as in establishing the school district's public access television station. Behind the scenes, he was always busy making sure teachers had the proper working equipment and instructional AV materials that they needed. Going the extra mile to make sure everything turned out right was his trademark.

He enjoyed spending time with students, introducing them to the technology of the time and teaching them how to plan, organize, and produce art and media content. He taught students about photography, videography, audio production, and other special projects. Tom was named Albert Lea Teacher of the Year in 1992. With changes in technology, he eventually returned full time to the classroom, teaching elementary art at Lakeview Elementary from 1995 until his retirement in 1999.