

Honoring she-roes



On March 7, while people around the world prepared to celebrate International Women's Day the next day, members of the local community gathered in Gaiser Student Center to honor five women's contributions to Southwest Washington at the 2019 Iris Awards.

Guests enjoyed refreshments and light fare provided by Beaches Restaurant as they celebrated the honorees. Ceremonies began with a greeting from Clark College President Bob Knight, after which the evening was turned over to emcee Colleen Boccia, chief marketing officer of Columbia Credit Union. Boccia introduced speeches by both the honorees and their nominators.

This year's Iris Award recipients were:

- Ann Fischer, founder of the Healthy Equitable Living Project
- Stacey Graham, president of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington
- Maureen Montague, executive director of Columbia Springs
- Rekah Strong, executive director of Educational Opportunities for Children and Families
- Lynn Valenter, vice chancellor for finance and operations at Washington State University Vancouver

This annual ceremony has a long tradition in this community. The event began in 1985 as a photography exhibit during Women's History Week, which later developed into a larger awards program and ceremony known as the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards with the same core mission: honoring the women of Southwest Washington for their outstanding contributions in the categories of public, private, philanthropic, and civic service.

Ann Fischer



Ann Fischer and Diane Irby

The evening got off to an emotional start when Diane Irby took to the podium to describe her experience being a client of the Healthy Equitable Living Project, which Ann Fischer runs and founded.

“The pantry has fed my body quite well,” she said. “But the pure unselfish love [Ann] provided me has fed my soul and my heart and was something I didn’t even know I was starving for.

“The pantry keeps me alive,” Irby continued, facing Fischer directly, “but you make me want to *stay* alive.”

Fischer embraced Irby before beginning her own remarks, which centered on the work that HELP does providing food to families in need at 14 different schools. She spoke about the importance of not just providing people with food and assistance, but doing so in a way that allows them choice and dignity, mentioning how HELP sets up its food pantry so that clients can “shop”

for the groceries they prefer instead of receiving a pre-made box. Fischer also thanked the many volunteers and partners that support HELP, including Clark College nursing students who volunteered to provide clients with education on hygiene and first aid.

Fischer also made clear that it was not just the clients who benefited from HELP, but she herself found inspiration and motivation from the work. "The biggest gift you can give yourself is helping other people," she said.

Stacey Graham



Stacey Graham and Debra Hentz

The next honoree of the evening was Stacey Graham, president of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington. Before coming to HSSW, Graham had a long career that encompassed work in the Oregon State Legislature,

national public relations and advertising agencies, the United Way of Columbia-Willamette, and First Independent Bank. When she joined HSSW in 2013, she was charged with raising the level of awareness and visibility of the Humane Society in the local community and animal welfare industry; and dramatically increasing the save rate of the animals in care. Under her leadership, HSSW launched a five-year, \$6 million capital campaign. In 2018, HSSW was named the Best Nonprofit in Clark County.

"I've been a volunteer with HSSW for 20 years," said nominator Debra Hentz. "One thing you see with people at humane societies is they say, 'We want to focus on the animals.' Stacey really focused on the people and building them up."

Graham admitted that she wasn't a born animal-lover. "I didn't grow up with animals," she said. "The first time I walked into the kennels, I was scared to death—that's how I learned I was afraid of dogs. But I walked those kennels every day, and I learned to love dogs."

Graham noted that caring about animals is part of caring about humanity, and noted that HSSW donated pet food to pantries like Ann Fischer's. "We know how much animals mean to people," she said. "We know they will give food to their animals before they feed themselves. So we're hanging in there with you."

Maureen Montague



Maureen Montague and Heidi Johnson Bixby

The next award presented was the H-RoC Iris Award, a special category created in 2017 to honor women in the community who have promoted civil discourse, teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation. H-RoC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed female leaders in Southwest Washington, sponsors this annual award.

H-RoC member (and 2016 Iris Award recipient) Heidi Johnson Bixby introduced honoree Maureen Montague. Montague currently serves as the executive director of Columbia Springs, an environmental education nonprofit and protected urban natural area on the Old Evergreen Highway in Vancouver. Previous to this position, she was the co-founder and eventual executive director of

North Bank Artists.

Johnson Bixby described Montague as “the first to raise her hand to volunteer” and someone with a gift for collaboration and community-building.

Like most of the night’s honorees, Montague said she learned the value of community service from her family. She recalled watching her grandmother sewing a quilt with fellow church members to donate to a recently widowed woman to keep her warm during the winter, and feeling “the kindness of that good deed in my heart.”

“Community service, to me, means collective kindness,” she said. “These things add up. ... I’m blessed to live in Clark County, where so many people seem to understand this.”

Rekah Strong



Jada Rupley and Rekah Strong

The next honoree of the night was also nominated by a former honoree. Jada Rupley, 2004 Women of Achievement Award recipient, introduced Rekah Strong by noting that they currently served together on the Clark College Board of Trustees. She praised Strong for her dedication to the community, saying, "Thank you for being a gentle teacher, thank you for being a fierce advocate, and thank you for changing our community."

Strong is executive director of Educational Opportunities for Children and Families. Prior to that position, she served in leadership roles at the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and at Clark County. Along with her work on the Clark College Board of Trustees, she serves on Clark County's Developmental Disability Advisory Board and is a former board member of We Reign Youth Foundation and Southwest Washington Chapter Red Cross.

Strong spoke about her experiences as a young child attending political events with her grandmother and mother, drawing with crayons and not entirely understanding why she was there, but even so learning the importance of public engagement. "What my grandmother was doing for me was pouring into me, and creating a template for me that would come full circle in my life," she said.

Strong also noted a theme that arose from her experiences: "Small yesses can have huge outcomes." As examples, she offered the time she said yes

to an employee who needed to bring her baby to work, which led to a program that served a dozen employees and became a model for other workplaces. Another “small yes” was agreeing to speak at an open forum about Clark County’s system of governance, which in turn led to her becoming part of the work group that changed the county’s Freeholder process and expanded the Clark County Council.

Strong also recounted providing her own children with crayons as she took them to public meetings—and how, years later, her daughter would volunteer to visit the State Capitol to advocate for others.

“You never know the ultimate outcome of modeling for others, of pouring into other people, and all those small yesses,” she said.

Lynn Valenter



Lynn Valenter and Renee Bartocci

The final honoree of the night was Lynn Valenter, vice chancellor for finance and operations at Washington State University Vancouver.

Valenter, who began her career at WSUV more than 20 years ago, now leads a range of functions including budget and accounting, capital planning, facilities operations, human resources, public safety, and dining services.

Valenter was introduced by WSUV Chief of Staff Renee Bartocci, who expressed her appreciation for her colleague's work ethic and enthusiasm. "She's there to be a partner, to bounce ideas off of, and to ask the hard questions," Bartocci said. "And she's really good at it."

Valenter thanked her family for supporting her work—both in her career and as a volunteer—acknowledging the difficulty women face when they try to manage the obligations of their families with those of their workplaces and communities. "For many, many years, the daily prayer was for balance," she said. Even so, she said the balancing act was worth it.

"I believe each of us finds satisfaction when we make a difference," she said. "That can be in your family, in your work, and in your community."

To view more photos from the event visit our [Flickr page](#).

Recipients of the 2019 Iris Awards Announced



Iris Awards will be presented to (left to right) Ann Fischer, Stacey Graham, Rekah Strong, Lynn Valenter, and Maureen Montague (H-ROC Iris Award).

Five women representing exceptional leadership, philanthropy and community service are the winners of the 2019 Iris Awards, honoring women of achievement in Southwest Washington. They will be recognized at an awards reception on Thursday, March 7.

Awards

will be presented to Ann Fischer, founder of the Healthy Equitable Living Project; Stacey Graham, president of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington; Rekah Strong, executive director of Educational Opportunities for Children and Families; and Lynn Valenter, vice chancellor for finance and operations at Washington State University Vancouver. H-RoC, a non-partisan

political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed female leaders in Southwest Washington, has chosen Columbia Springs Executive Director Maureen Montague for the Iris Award they sponsor.

The award ceremony takes place in Gaiser Student Center on Clark College's main campus. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the ceremony begins at 6:00 p.m. The event is open to the public and tickets are on sale through the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce at <https://www.vancouverusa.com/events/details/2019-iris-awards-reception-18904>. The cost is \$35 per person. A table sponsorship, which includes eight tickets, can be purchased for \$310. Seating is limited.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (360) 991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013, by February 26.

About the Iris Awards

The Iris Awards follow in the tradition of the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards, which began in 1985 at Clark College. In

2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards, still celebrated on or around International Women's Day (March 8) and with the same core mission: honoring the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in Southwest Washington and beyond.

This year's awards are sponsored by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, the *Vancouver Business Journal*, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, and H-RoC.

The 2019 Iris Award Honorees

Ann Fischer



Ann Fischer

Ann Fischer is the founder of the Healthy Equitable Living Project (HELP), a food pantry located at the First Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. HELP was launched in 2013, when the Vancouver Health Department asked if the church could assist local

schools in serving families who were experiencing food insecurity. Fischer began by soliciting donations from neighborhood grocery stores to help five families. Over the past six years, HELP has expanded to serve between 50 and 60 families from 14 different schools.

Through the food pantry, Fischer makes sure people are not only fed, but fed well. Fischer hand-selects many of the products that the pantry offers, with a focus on high-quality, nutritious, and organic foods. It is not unusual for Fischer to remember individual patrons' specific dietary needs, from vegan to gluten-free. She also created the pantry's Breakfast Club, where families are served a hot breakfast while they wait to shop, giving them a chance to build community and friendships.

Fischer has a long record of service in the community, ranging from supporting her local church to organizing fundraisers for children's organizations. For 25 years, she ran an antique shop called Turnabout that offered assistance to people who were transitioning their living situations.

Stacey Graham



Stacey Graham

Stacey Graham has served as president of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington (HSSW) since 2013. Graham's career spans 40 years leading for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Her wide-ranging work experience includes positions in the Oregon Legislature and Oregon Governor's Office, as well as key roles in public relations and advertising agencies, the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, and the Vancouver-based First Independent Bank.

Graham joined the HSSW team charged with creating a sustainable and effective business model; raising the level of awareness and visibility of the Humane Society in the local community and animal welfare industry; and dramatically increasing the save rate of the animals in care. Under her leadership, HSSW launched a five-year, \$6 million capital campaign. In 2018, HSSW was named the Best Nonprofit in Clark County.

Graham's community service includes serving as city council president in her hometown of Stayton,

Oregon; on the boards of the Clark County YWCA, The Historic Trust, the Lighthouse Community Credit Union, Nonprofit Network of Southwest Washington, Metropolitan Family Service, Northwest Pilot Project, Portland Radio Project and H-RoC; and on the Empower Women + Girls steering committee. Graham has helped develop strategic plans for many local nonprofits, including North County Community Food Bank, Vancouver Symphony, Partners in Careers, Clark County Arts Commission and Pink Lemonade.

Rekah Strong



Rekah Strong

Rekah Strong is a highly accomplished public and non-profit executive. She currently serves as the executive director for Educational Opportunities for Children and Families (EOCF), the largest early learning organization in Southwest Washington.

Prior to this position, Strong served as chief of operations and equity officer for the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and chief diversity and inclusion

officer for Clark County.

Earlier in her career, Strong spent more than a decade working for the State of Oregon to improve outcomes for children and families in Oregon's child welfare system.

Strong has a long record of public service and community involvement in Southwest Washington. During her tenure with Clark County, she helped lay the initial framework and push for the Clark County Freeholder process and expansion of the Clark County Council. More recently, she was reappointed by Governor Jay Inslee to serve as a Clark College trustee and actively advocates for education. She was also recently selected as the newest board member of Clark County's Developmental Disability Advisory Board, and has served on the boards of We Reign Youth Foundation and Southwest Washington Chapter Red Cross.

A Clark College alumna, Strong earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and master's degree in Social Work from Portland State University. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Social Work Research.

Lynn Valenter



Lynn Valenter

As the vice chancellor for finance and operations at Washington State University Vancouver, Lynn Valenter leads a range of functions including budget and accounting, capital planning, dining services, facilities operations, human resources and public safety. She began her career at WSU Vancouver more than 20 years ago, holding roles as facilities and auxiliary services manager and director of finance and operations before being named as vice chancellor in 2015. Valenter has been instrumental in increasing WSU Vancouver's public engagement and service during an important period in the campus's growth.

Valenter's engaged, enthusiastic, and equitable leadership style has been of service to both the university and the local community. As an active member of Empower, she supports initiatives that help local girls and women, and she is a frequent volunteer with Winter Hospitality Overflow, an organization that helps people in need during the winter months. Her board service includes Camas Civil Service, Institute for Metropolitan Studies at Portland State University, Columbia Credit Union, H-RoC, Greater Portland Inc., and the Columbia River Economic Development Council. In 2016, Valenter was honored by the *Portland Business Journal* as a part of their Women of Influence in the nonprofit category.

Maureen Montague



Maureen Montague

It is no exaggeration to say that Maureen Montague has been involved in the Southwest Washington region her entire life. A graduate of Hudson's Bay High School, she returned to Vancouver after earning her bachelor's degree from Lewis and Clark College in Portland and began working for Janus Youth Programs, serving at-risk youth in a shelter setting.

After leaving her job to become a stay-at-home mother, Montague remained deeply involved in her community. A visual artist and a published writer, she volunteered at local arts nonprofits and was a founding member of North Bank Artists. These activities gave her experience with grant-writing and collaborating with partner organizations on events, skills that would become useful in her developing career. Additionally, her writing skills led her to be recruited to serve on the digital team for President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign.

In 2013, Montague was hired as the executive director of North Bank Artists, where she organized the Vancouver Arts District with community partners. In 2016, she was named the executive director of Columbia Springs, an environmental education nonprofit and protected urban natural area on the Old Evergreen Highway in Vancouver. Her work is focused on financial sustainability, program development, and improvement of all community services.

Nominations open for 2019 Iris Awards



Nominations are now being accepted for the 2019 Iris Awards, which honor outstanding women in Southwest Washington. The winners will be announced at the end of January, and the recipients will be honored at a

reception and ceremony on Wednesday, March 7, 2019, from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. in Clark College's Gaiser Student Center. Tickets will go on sale in January.

Award criteria and nominations forms are available at www.clark.edu/cc/irisawards. Nominations must be received by January 11, 2019. A list of past award recipients can be found

at <http://www.clark.edu/campus-life/arts-events/iris/iris-awar>

d-honorees.php.

The Iris Awards follow in the tradition of the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards, which began in 1985 at Clark College. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards, still celebrated on or around International Women's Day (March 8) and with the same core mission: honoring the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in Southwest Washington and beyond.

One Iris Award recipient may be selected in each of four areas: service in the public sector; service in the private sector; philanthropic leadership; and leadership in the promotion of civil discourse, teamwork, collaboration and cooperation. This last category is a new addition to the Iris Awards, sponsored by H-RoC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed women leaders in Southwest Washington.

Anyone may submit a nomination, and more than one person can fill out a nomination form or provide letters of recommendation for the same nominee.

This year's awards are sponsored by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, the *Vancouver Business Journal*, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, and H-RoC.

Four outstanding women, one inspirational evening



Nan Henriksen at the 2018 Iris Awards.

On March 8, while people around the world celebrated International Women's Day, members of the local community gathered in Gaiser Student Center to honor four women's contributions to Southwest Washington at the 2018 Iris Awards.

Guests enjoyed refreshments and light fare provided by Beaches Restaurant as they celebrated the honorees. Ceremonies began with a greeting from Clark College President Bob Knight, after which the evening was turned over to emcee Kelly Love, public and community affairs representative at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center. Love introduced speeches by both the honorees and their nominators.

This year's Iris Award recipients were:

- Julie Bocanegra of Columbia Credit Union
- Juliana Marler of the Port of Vancouver
- Nancy Retsinas of the Retsinas Collaborative Law Center
- Nan Henriksen, former Mayor of Camas and chair of the

Clark County Board of Freeholders

This annual ceremony has a long tradition in this community. The event began in 1985 as a photography exhibit during Women's History Week, which later developed into a larger awards program and ceremony known as the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards with the same core mission: honoring the women of Southwest Washington for their outstanding contributions in the categories of public, private, philanthropic, and civic service.

The 2018 Iris Award Recipients

Julie Bocanegra



Julie Bocanegra accepts her 2018 Iris Award from John Deeder.

The first honoree to take the stage was Julie Bocanegra, Vice President and Branch Manager for Columbia Credit Union, where she began her career as a teller in 1994. Since 2012, she has also served on the Evergreen School District Board of Directors, where she has been instrumental in leading the district's student equity and technology learning initiatives. She is also the former Board Chair of the Battle Ground Chamber of Commerce and is the former Board President for Evergreen Little League, along with many other volunteer

commitments.

“She will volunteer till the cows come home because she wants this to be the best community in the world,” said recently retired Evergreen superintendent John Deeder, who nominated Bocanegra for the award and introduced her during the ceremony. “And because of people like Julie, I believe that it is.”

Bocanegra smiled as she took the podium, noting that this night reminded her of her first job as a teenager, sorting and packing flower bulbs and tubers, including those of irises. As a teenager, she said, she would never have imagined that one day she would be receiving an award named after that flower for her contributions to the community.

Bocanegra went on to describe her life’s unexpected trajectory, from a recent high school graduate trying to find her purpose to a bank teller to her current leadership position. Similarly, she recounted how a decision to coach her son’s Little League team led to greater and greater volunteer roles within her community, often focused around youth and education.

“What we want for our own children, we have to want for every child in our community,” she said.

Julianna Marler



Julianna Marler, *right*

accepts her 2018 Iris Award
from Lisa Lowe.

Next, an award was presented to Julianna Marler, the CEO of the Port of Vancouver USA. Marler is the first female CEO in the port's 105-year history and one of just a handful of female port CEOs in the United States. In addition to her leadership role at the port, Marler serves on the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Great Portland Inc. Board of Directors, American Association of Port Authorities Board of Directors, and the Washington State University Vancouver Advisory Council.

"She has given women at the port a sense of pride and let them know that they can rise into position of leadership there," said Lisa Lowe of the law firm Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt in introducing Marler. (Lowe was herself a 2013 Iris Award honoree.) "She applies a sense of humor to things that is intelligent and not always respectful—which is probably why I like her."

Marler began her remarks by traveling back in time even farther than Bocanegra did. "Fifty years ago today, on March 8, 1968, my parents—who are here with me tonight—immigrated to the United States," she noted. "They left Hungary because they wanted a better life and education for their children."

Marler noted that the port is an important source of jobs and commerce in the region, and expressed pride in its vital place in Southwest Washington's economy. "Fifty year ago today, my parents came to this country to provide a better future for their children, and today I get to be part of creating a better future for others," she said.

Nancy Retsinas



Nancy Retsinas at the 2018 Iris Awards.

Nancy Retsinas was also introduced by a former Iris Award recipient, Lisa Schauer of PointNorth Consulting.

“Nancy has transformed the legal profession, aligning her practice to her values,” said Schauer.

Retsinas is a collaborative lawyer and family law mediator in Washington and Oregon, in private practice since 1991. She is co-founder and executive director of the Two River Institute for Dispute Resolution, a nonprofit educational organization. Retsinas currently serves as Northwest regional chair of the Global Collaborative Law Council, board treasurer of the Collaborative Professionals of Washington, board president for Cappella Romana Choral Ensemble, and board director for the Children’s Center.

Retsinas began her remarks by noting that she, like both Bocanegra and Marler, had attended Clark herself, and so “this place has always felt like home to me, so it’s really special to be receiving this award here.”

She went on to describe the arc of her career, which began in courtrooms doing traditional, adversarial law. “To swoop into court to defend the innocent or maligned—that felt pretty good,” Retsinas said, but added that eventually she became uncomfortable with this model of legal practice and “set out to find my superpower, so to speak.”

Through working with nonprofits, Retsinas said, she began to realize her purpose: to change the culture of conflict resolution in Southwest Washington. And, she added, she discovered that “true power lies in finding your purpose and expressing it to the world.”

Retsinas said that her current work at the Retsinas Collaborative Law Center, which she founded in 2015, allows her to do just that. And she offered this advice to young women in the audience: “Trust your gut, discover your own superpowers, harness them for good, and achieve your purpose.”

Nan Henriksen



Nan Henriksen accepts the 2018 Iris Legacy Award from Judie Stanton.

The final honoree of the evening, Nan Henriksen, was no stranger to awards ceremonies. Indeed, she had received a Women of Achievement Award (the original name of the Iris Awards) in 1995, and tonight was receiving the Legacy Award, bestowed on a previous awardee who has continued to make significant contributions to her community. Henriksen certainly qualifies: The former Camas mayor recently came out of retirement to lead the Clark County Freeholder Board formed to create the county’s first home-rule charter.

“She hasn’t slowed down a bit, probably because she gets up

every day at 5:15,” said her friend Judie Stanton, herself the 2017 Legacy Award recipient. “She gets a *lot* done.”

Henriksen received the award with grace and humor, noting that she’d tried to force herself to start writing an inspirational speech for the evening, but instead became intimidated by the task and “ate my weight in popcorn and played solitaire on my phone for two hours.” Henriksen then pointed out the larger moral of that story: “Those of us working out in the community, we do the things we do in spite of these fears of inadequacy, not because we don’t have them.”

Henriksen also noted that people can contribute to the community in many different ways. While Henriksen is probably most known for her work in leading Camas through a difficult economic transition as one of its major employers began to shut down, she said that one of the accomplishments she is most proud of is becoming a foster grandmother to a girl who went on to successfully enter college.

“You can do it on a bigger scale or on a smaller scale,” she said. “What’s important is that you decide, ‘If I care enough and I’m brave enough, I can make a difference.’”

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. To see more photos from this event, visit our Flickr album.

This article was updated March 29, 2018, to correct Lisa Schauer’s current position and to include a link for more photos.

Iris Awards announced



Four women representing exceptional leadership, philanthropy and community service are the winners of the 2018 Iris Awards, honoring women of achievement in Southwest Washington. They will be honored at an awards reception on Thursday, March 8.

Awards will be presented to Julie Bocanegra, Vice President for Columbia Credit Union, and Julianna Marler, CEO of the Port of Vancouver. H-ROC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed female leaders in Southwest Washington, has chosen Nancy Retsinas of the Retsinas Collaborative Law Center for the Iris Award they sponsor. Last year, the Iris Awards added a new category, the Legacy Award, for previous winners who have continued to be leaders in Southwest Washington. This year's winner is Nan Henriksen, the former mayor of Camas who also served as the chair of the Board of Freeholders in Clark County that helped write the county's home-rule charter.

The award ceremony takes place in Gaiser Student Center on Clark College's main campus. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the ceremony begins at 6:00 p.m. The event is open to the public and tickets are on sale through the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce at <http://www.vancouverusa.com/events/details/2018-iris-awards-reception-15961>. The cost is \$35 per person. A table sponsorship, which includes eight tickets, can be purchased

for \$310. Seating is limited.

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This year's awards are sponsored by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, the *Vancouver Business Journal*, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, and H-RoC. The Iris Award winners will be featured in the Vancouver Business Journal's 2018 "Women in Business" directory, the only Portland/Vancouver metro area directory of businesses that are owned, directed or managed by women.

2017 Iris Award Recipients

Julie Bocanegra



Julie Bocanegra

Beyond her full-time work as a Vice President/Branch Manager for Columbia Credit Union, Bocanegra serves on the Evergreen School District Board of Directors. Professionally, Bocanegra's passion for teamwork and approachable leadership style have grown in influence since joining Columbia CU as a teller in 1994. Most recently, in addition to managing one of the credit union's busiest branches, she was tapped to create and teach curriculum for key organization-wide training initiatives for Columbia CU, Washington State's ninth-largest credit union and Clark County's largest holder of deposits.

Appointed in 2012, elected the following year, and then re-elected again in 2017, Bocanegra has served as Vice Chair and then Chair of the Evergreen School District Board of Directors, the fifth-largest school district in Washington State. Bocanegra has been instrumental in leading the district's student equity and technology learning initiatives. Under her leadership, the district eliminated student user fees for athletics, opened elementary school Community Resource Centers, and moved to a 1:1 technology curriculum.

Bocanegra is a former Board Chair of the Battle Ground Chamber of Commerce, and has served in a variety of leadership capacities, including Board President, for the Evergreen Little League.

Juliana Marler



Juliana Marler

Juliana Marler is the CEO of the Port of Vancouver USA. She has provided steady leadership during a time of tremendous growth and change at the port. Prior to becoming CEO in January 2017, she was the port's Chief Financial and Administrative Officer. She is the first female CEO in the port's history and one of just a handful of female port CEOs in the United States.

The Port of Vancouver USA and its tenants provide 3,200 jobs in the community and generate \$2.9 billion in annual economic benefit. Marler has been a key leader at the port as it has partnered with the City of Vancouver and private developers to transform the city's downtown and waterfront into a destination. She has also partnered with sister ports in Clark County and beyond to spur additional economic development and job growth across the region.

Marler currently serves on the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Greater Portland Inc. Board of Directors, American Association of Port Authorities Board of Directors, and the Washington State University Vancouver Advisory Council.

Nancy Retsinas



Nancy Retsinas

Nancy Retsinas is a collaborative lawyer and family law mediator in Washington and Oregon, in private practice since 1991. In 2015, she established Retsinas Collaborative Law Center to align her values to her legal work. She now commits her practice to non-court dispute resolution, and finds her collaborative approach to problem-solving results in better long-term outcomes for her clients and their families.

Co-founder and executive director of the Two Rivers Institute for Dispute Resolution, Retsinas leads and trains in a non-profit educational organization formed to deliver innovative collaborative law and legal team-building training for family law professionals across disciplines (legal, mental health, financial). The Institute also provides a valuable resource for families looking for well-trained collaborative professionals in the Vancouver/Portland Metropolitan area so the public can find professionals who are committed to peaceful problem-solving. Retsinas has been training legal professionals in client-centered dispute resolution methods since 2008. She is a contributing author to *Washington Practice Manual – Family Law*, a West Publication (2016), and *Building a Successful Collaborative Law Practice*, an American Bar Association publication (2018).

Retsinas has always been an active champion and a hands-on volunteer for the Southwest Washington community. When Retsinas joins an organization, her commitment to empowerment, her natural ability to facilitate a dialogue, and her consensus-building approach make her an essential leader.

Her current nonprofit leadership roles include: Regional Chair, Northwest Region, Global Collaborative Law Council; Board Treasurer, Collaborative Professionals of Washington; Board President for Cappella Romana Choral Ensemble; and Board Director for the Children's Center.

Nan Henriksen



Nan Henriksen

Nan Henriksen has had a profound effect on Southwest Washington. Not only has she improved the community, she has helped shape it—most significantly as the first woman elected mayor of Camas from 1983 to 1992, and later as the chair of the Board of Freeholders, which drafted the county home-rule charter. Henriksen is widely praised in the community for her ability to be calm and thoughtful in her approach to difficult problems.

Recently, National Public Radio interviewed Henriksen about her role in helping Camas prepare for the day when the Georgia Pacific paper mill would no longer be the primary economic driver in the city. Her work is largely credited with Camas

becoming a model for other cities as they had to transition away from traditional industries. She had a vision for diversifying the economy and paved the way for high-tech companies like WaferTech, Underwriter Laboratories, and Linear Technology to locate in Camas.

Henriksen came out of retirement to run for and then lead the 15-member Freeholder Board that was charged with writing Clark County's first home-rule charter. Despite diverse opinions and needs, Henriksen helped the group find common ground and presented a final plan that was approved by voters in 2014.

Along the way, Henriksen has been awarded the Clark County First Citizen Award (2015), Statesman of the Year by Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce (2014), and Camas Political Leader of the Century in 2006. She was first named a Woman of Achievement, which was the original name of the Iris Awards, in 1995.

Nominations open for Iris Awards

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2018 Iris Awards, which honor outstanding women in Southwest Washington. The winners will be announced at the end of January, and the recipients will be honored at a reception and ceremony on Wednesday, March 8, 2018, from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. in Clark College's Gaiser Student Center. Tickets will go on sale in January.

Award criteria and nominations forms are available at www.clark.edu/cc/irisawards. Nominations must be received by January 12, 2018. A list of past award recipients can be found at <http://www.clark.edu/campus-life/arts-events/iris/iris-award-honorees.php>.

The Iris Awards follow in the tradition of the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards, which began in 1985 at Clark College. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards, still celebrated on or around International Women's Day (March 8) and with the same core mission: honoring the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in Southwest Washington and beyond.

One Iris Award recipient may be selected in each of four areas: service in the public sector; service in the private sector; philanthropic leadership; and leadership in the promotion of civil discourse, teamwork, collaboration and cooperation. This last category is a new addition to the Iris Awards, sponsored by H-RoC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed women leaders in Southwest Washington.



Anyone may submit a nomination, and more than one person can fill out a nomination form or provide letters of recommendation for the same nominee.

This year's awards are sponsored by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, the *Vancouver Business Journal*, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, and H-RoC.

Honoring women leaders



Honorees with their nominators, *left to right*: Jody Campbell, Rhona Sen Hoss, Temple Lentz, Jim Mains, Deena Pierott, Paul Speer, Carolyn N. Long, Lisa Schauer, Judie Stanton, and Jane Johnson.

On March 8, while people around the world celebrated International Women's Day, members of the local community gathered in Gaiser Student Center to honor five women's contributions to Southwest Washington at the 2017 Iris Awards.

Guests enjoyed refreshments and light fare provided by Beaches Restaurant as they celebrated the honorees. Ceremonies began with greetings from Clark College Chief Information Officer Chato Hazelbaker and President Bob Knight, after which the evening was turned over to emcee Renee Newman, who introduced speeches by both the honorees and their nominators.



Emcee Renee Newman,
welcoming Iris Award
attendees

This year's Iris Award recipients were:

- Jody Campbell of *The Columbian*
- Temple Lentz of Cascade Sotheby's International Realty and High Five Media
- Deena Pierott of iUrban Teen and Mosaic Blueprint
- Carolyn N. Long of Washington State University Vancouver
- Judie Stanton of the League of Women Voters of Clark County

This annual ceremony has a long tradition in this community. The event began in 1985 as a photography exhibit during Women's History Week, which later developed into a larger awards program and ceremony known as the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards with the same core mission: honoring the women of Southwest Washington for their outstanding contributions in the categories of public, private, and philanthropic service.

The 2017 Iris Award Recipients

Jody Campbell

The first honoree to take the stage was Jody Campbell, who

joined *The Columbian* at 21 years old and is now the newspaper's co-owner, editorial board member, and director of community partnerships. As director, Campbell supports hundreds of nonprofit organizations in Southwest Washington by providing a platform for promotion and exposure of their important work in the community.

"In my role as *The Columbian's* Community Partnerships Director, I'm able to give back on a different level," said Campbell, as she was presented with her award. "This includes having the unique opportunity to give away money every year to local nonprofits through advertising partnerships. The programs we offer provide the support necessary for them to thrive in Southwest Washington."

Campbell's generous spirit extends beyond her work at *The Columbian*. Along with her friend, Rhona Sen Hoss—a previous Iris Award honoree who presented Campbell with her award at the ceremony—Campbell co-founded Pink Power, an annual fundraising event that helped build the Kearney Breast Care Center at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center.

Temple Lentz

Next, an award was presented to community advocate and marketing professional Temple Lentz. In her decade-plus of living in Southwest Washington, Lentz has made a sizeable impact on the region.

Lentz is a business director for Cascade Sotheby's International Realty, as well as a partner and director of content and communications for High Five Media, a political and marketing consulting firm. High Five Media produces the popular live talk show, "Hello Vancouver!" which Lentz co-created and hosts on a regular basis.

From her former days as the anonymous blogger behind the satirical website *The Daily 'Couve* to the current host of "Hello Vancouver!" Lentz has long shown herself to be a

champion—and sometimes good-humored critic—of all things Vancouver, said High Five Media partner Jim Mains, who presented Lentz with her award.

In her previous role as executive director of the Parks Foundation of Clark County, Lentz facilitated close to \$1 million in grants and donations for local parks and recreation programs over a year and a half period, according to Mains.

Lentz's love of Vancouver shone through as she received her award.

"When I got here [to Vancouver], I finally felt like I was home. ... There are good people here who work together to make a difference," Lentz said. "I am endlessly impressed by our community, and I am impressed by the dedication of the people here to make their home a better place. Not just for now, but for generations to come."

Deena Pierott



Deena Pierott delivered a special message to her granddaughter Leila

Next on stage was Deena Pierott, the founder and executive director of iUrban Teen, a nationally recognized program providing career-focused education and mentoring to underrepresented teens. Pierott is also the president and CEO of Mosaic Blueprint, a boutique consulting firm specializing

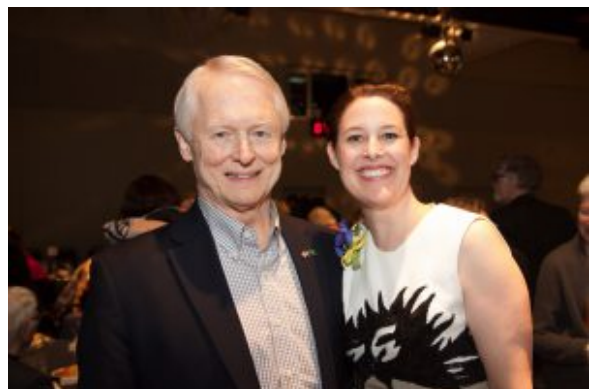
in recruiting, multicultural communications, and equity and inclusion training.

“For me to work in diversity, equity, and inclusion work was a natural—that was my calling,” said Pierott as she received her award. “And with iUrban Teen, making sure that these youth, who don’t usually have access to information or jobs, making sure that they are exposed to these opportunities and they are given every opportunity like everyone else, that they’re being included—to me, that’s success.”

While Pierott’s work has been recognized by many organizations, from *Ebony Magazine* to the White House, she had never received an award in her hometown, and she expressed how meaningful it was to have her family attend the Iris Awards ceremony. As Pierott spoke of her family, she invited her young granddaughter, Leila, to the stage and spoke directly to her.

“In honor of International Women’s Day, Leila, I have a message for you,” she said. “I hope that one day you will recognize what this honor is for your grandmother, and that you will recognize the path that I am laying out in front of you. We are the dream of our ancestors. We’re standing on their shoulders. And it’s our responsibility to honor them by moving forward in life with grace, purpose and integrity.”

Dr. Carolyn N. Long



Dr. Carolyn Long with former

Washington Secretary of
State, Sam Reed

A new addition to the 2017 ceremony was the Iris H-RoC award, presented to Washington State University Vancouver political science professor Dr. Carolyn N. Long. This award category honors women in the community who have promoted civil discourse, teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation. H-RoC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of women leaders in Southwest Washington, sponsored this award.

"We're proud to be recognizing tonight the contributions of a pioneer, a champion, and an advocate for civil discourse," said H-RoC member and previous Iris Award honoree Lisa Schauer as she introduced Dr. Long.

Recently, Dr. Long was named the Sam Reed Distinguished Professor in Civic Education and Public Civility. In 2015, she helped launch the Initiative for Public Deliberation, a program sponsored by WSUV and the Thomas S. Foley Institute that brings together the community to foster discussions on difficult issues.

"I want to thank you for this award, but I actually think my receiving it is less important than what the award actually represents. And what it represents is a community identifying the issues of incivility in our politics and how damaging that can be to our political culture."

Dr. Long said she sees a way through political rancor and encouraged attendees to have conversations with and listen to one another, especially when holding differing viewpoints.

Judie Stanton

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of the second annual Iris Legacy Award to Judie Stanton. This award category honors a previous Iris or Women of Achievement award recipient

whose continued leadership remains an enduring inspiration for others. Stanton was first honored in 2002 as a Woman of Achievement for her leadership as a Clark County Commissioner.

Currently, Stanton is the co-chair of the League of Women Voters of Clark County, where she runs board meetings, provides direction and oversight, and represents Clark County at various regional levels within the organization. In 2014, Stanton was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to the state of Washington's Commission on Judicial Conduct.

"It has been my good fortune to be a member of many boards and organizations over the years," said Stanton as she spoke about her community service work. "I've learned from every experience. [Being a member of the League of Women Voters] provides a great education in civics, civility, and the value of inclusiveness. I would encourage all of you to take advantage of learning experiences available through your involvement with boards and organizations."

For more information about the Iris Awards, visit clark.edu/cc/irisawards.

View photos from the event on our Flickr page.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Recipients of the 2017 Iris Awards announced



Temple Lentz, Deena Pierott, and Jody Campbell are recipients of the 2017 Iris Awards.

Five women will be honored at the 2017 Iris Awards, honoring women of achievement in Southwest Washington. They will receive the awards at a ceremony held March 8 at Clark College.

Three Iris Awards for exceptional leadership, philanthropy and community service will be presented to Deena Pierott, founder of the nonprofit iUrban Teen and president of Mosaic Blueprint; Temple Lentz, host of the "Hello Vancouver!" talk show and former Parks Foundation executive director; and Jody Campbell, director of community partnerships for *The Columbian* newspaper.

Dr. Carolyn Long is the recipient of a new award category, sponsored by H-RoC, a non-partisan political action committee dedicated to the advancement of elected and appointed female leaders in Southwest Washington, to honor a woman in the community who has promoted civil discourse, teamwork,

collaboration and cooperation. Additionally, the second annual Legacy Award will be presented to Judie Stanton, co-chair of the League of Women Voters of Clark County. Stanton was first honored in 2002 for her service as a county commissioner. The Legacy Award is presented to a former Iris Award or Women of Achievement recipient whose continued leadership remains an enduring inspiration for others.

The event is open to the public and tickets are on sale through the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce at <http://www.vancouverusa.com/events/details/2017-iris-awards-reception-13714>. The cost is \$35 per person. A table sponsorship, which includes eight tickets, can be purchased for \$310. Seating is limited.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (360) 991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013, by February 26.

About the Iris Awards

The Iris Awards follow in the tradition of the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards, which began in 1985 at Clark College. In 2012, the event was reintroduced as the Iris Awards, still celebrated on or around International Women's Day (March 8) and with the same core mission: honoring the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in Southwest Washington and beyond.

This year's awards are sponsored by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, the Vancouver Business Journal, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, and H-RoC. The Iris Award winners will be featured in the Vancouver Business Journal's 2017 "Women in Business" directory, the only

Portland/Vancouver metro area directory of businesses that are owned, directed or managed by women.

2017 Iris Award Recipients

Deena Pierott



Deena Pierott

A passion for inclusion and equal opportunity drives Deena Pierott's work in both the private and public sectors. As the founder and executive director of iUrban Teen, a nationally recognized program providing career-focused education and mentoring to underrepresented teens, Pierott helps expose science, technology, engineering, arts and math careers to young men of color and aims to create an employment pipeline of diverse talent into technology fields. Since the organization was founded in 2011 in Portland, Oregon, iUrban Teen has served over 4,000 youth and expanded to five states.

Pierott is also the president and CEO of Mosaic Blueprint, a boutique consulting firm located in Vancouver, Washington. The company specializes in recruiting and on-boarding; multi-cultural communications; equity and inclusion training; and event planning. For the past seven years, Pierott has been the chief organizer of the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast at Clark College.

Pierott's achievements have been widely recognized. In 2013, she was honored by the White House as a Champion of Change for Technology. Her other recognitions include: Washington State African American Achievement Award (2017), AKA Global Impact Award (2016), Ebony Magazine Power 100 List (2013), Business Journal Orchid Award (2013), and MED Week Minority Business of the Year (2010).

Temple Lentz



Temple Lentz

Community advocate, fundraising and marketing professional, and political consultant Temple Lentz has made a sizable impact on Southwest Washington during her 10 years of residency. As the former executive director of the Parks Foundation of Clark County, an agency that administers donations and gifts for local parks and recreation programs, Lentz was instrumental in facilitating more than \$750,000 in grants and donations to support projects throughout Clark County. Showing her interest in good governance, Lentz was elected as a Clark County Freeholder in 2013; in that position, she helped write and pass a new county charter.

Lentz is also a partner and director of content and communications for High Five Media, a political and marketing consulting firm. High Five Media also produces "Hello Vancouver!" a live talk show about Vancouver and Clark County

that Lentz conceived and co-created, and which she hosts regularly in Downtown Vancouver. Through the show, she provides an important spotlight for local causes and organizations.

Early in 2017, Lentz joined Cascade Sotheby's International Realty as business director.

In addition to her professional efforts, Lentz is an active volunteer, having served as board member for Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, Arts of Clark County, Leadership Clark County, and KXRW Radio.

Jody Campbell



Jody Campbell

Jody Campbell joined *The Columbian* newspaper at 21 years old. Three decades later, she is now a co-owner, sits on the editorial board, and spearheads *The Columbian's* community giving efforts. As the director of community partnerships, Campbell has been instrumental in supporting nonprofit organizations in Southwest Washington through advertising sponsorships and public service announcements. Each year, Campbell manages the advertising portfolios for hundreds of nonprofits that work for diverse causes, including: breast cancer research, hunger and homelessness, affordable housing, social justice, education, and women's rights. Through

community partnerships with *The Columbian*, nonprofit groups are able to promote their programs and fundraising efforts more effectively.

Campbell is a board member of the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington and the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce and a member of Empower Women + Girls, a giving circle of more than 50 local women that uses member donations to award grants to organizations working towards gender equality. She also co-founded Pink Power, an annual fundraising event that helped build the Kearney Breast Care Center at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver, Washington, which provides digital mammography and medical care services for breast cancer.

2017 Iris H-ROC Award: Dr. Carolyn Long



Dr. Carolyn
Long

Washington State University Vancouver political science professor Dr. Carolyn Long has an extensive history in the field of civics and promoting civil discourse. She received bachelor's degrees in political science and in rhetoric and communication from the University of Oregon and a Ph.D. in political science from Rutgers University. Dr. Long's research interests focus on American institutions, public law, and American public policy, and she was recently named as the Sam

Reed Distinguished Professor in Civic Education and Public Civility.

In 2015, Dr. Long helped launch the Initiative for Public Deliberation, a program sponsored by WSUV and the Thom

as S. Foley Institute that brings together students, faculty, and community members with different opinions and perspectives for small-group discussions. Participants learn listening skills, practice facilitating conversations, and enhance understanding of complex policy issues. The ultimate goal of the program is to strengthen democratic government by replacing partisanship with collaborative problem-solving.

In addition to her academic work, Dr. Long is a regular speaker and panelist for local organizations such as the Rotary Club, CREDC Clark County, and H-RoC. Dr. Long's recent topics of discussion have included local economic forecasting, intergovernmental relations, and an examination of incivility in the 2016 elections.

2017 Iris Legacy Award: Judie Stanton



Judie Stanton

Judie Stanton is the co-chair of the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Clark County. Formed in 1920, LWV is a non-partisan civic organization that encourages active participation of all citizens in government and influences public policy through

education and advocacy. As co-chair, Stanton runs board meetings, provides direction and oversight, and represents Clark County at the local, state, and national levels within the organization. Stanton was instrumental in leading discussions for a Washington state study on climate change and supporting the national LWV “Get Out the Vote” initiative. She is recognized within the Clark County community for providing consistent, thoughtful, and balanced leadership.

Stanton also serves as a member of the state of Washington’s Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC), an appointment she was granted by Governor Jay Inslee in 2014. The CJC oversees the process of all complaints and discipline of judicial officers in the state of Washington.

Stanton received a Women in Achievement award in 2002 for her leadership and commitment to community involvement as a Clark County Commissioner. Through her ongoing contributions to the region, Stanton continues make an invaluable impact on Southwest Washington.

The ripple effect



Renee Newman returned as this year's program emcee.

On March 9, community members gathered in Gaiser Student Center to celebrate three outstanding women for their dedication to Southwest Washington. The 2016 Iris Awards ceremony honored Vancouver City Councilmember Anne McEnerny-Ogle; Katherine Garrett, the Housing First Program Director at Lincoln Place; and Heidi M. Johnson Bixby, owner of Johnson Bixby & Associates.

This annual recognition of Southwest Washington women has a long tradition in this community. The event began in 1985 at Clark College as a photography exhibit during Women's History Week. Over the years, it developed into a larger awards program and ceremony called the Southwest Washington Women of Achievement Awards. In 2012, the Iris Awards were introduced with the same focus as previous events: celebrating the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in the community.

The 2016 Iris Award Recipients

Katherine Garrett



Katherine Garrett, left, with her nominator, Vancouver's Downtown Association Executive Director Lee Rafferty.

The first woman to be honored during the evening was longtime advocate for the homeless Katherine Garrett, who recently moved from the Vancouver nonprofit Share to the housing program Lincoln Place. During her 14 years at Share—nine of which were spent leading the Share House and Share Outreach programs—Garrett helped transform the organization into one of the major voices for the homeless in Clark County. In her new leadership position at Lincoln Place, a permanent supportive housing program for chronically homeless individuals, she serves as the Housing First Program Director.

Garrett has served as both a strong advocate for the homeless in Clark County and as a liaison between that population and the local business community, working with the Safety Committee of Vancouver's Downtown Association to help resolve concerns. As the issue of homelessness has gained prominence in recent months, Garrett has been at the forefront of helping city leaders and others understand the issues and make good policy decisions.

“Fourteen years ago, I was given the tremendous opportunity to make a difference each day in the lives of those who are hungry, homeless, and in need of a hand up,” said Garrett as she thanked all those who have supported her throughout her career. “If my work has somehow made people’s lives a little better, then I feel it’s been a success. I would be extremely happy if the outcome of receiving this wonderful award was that others are inspired to make a difference in the lives of the hungry and the homeless of our community. Just one positive action can have a ripple effect.”

Anne McEnerny-Ogle



Anne McEnerny-Ogle, *left*, with her nominator and fellow Councilmember Jack Burkman.

Second to be recognized was Vancouver City Councilmember Anne McEnerny-Ogle, who came to the Vancouver City Council after a 30-year career as an educator during which she received the Milken Foundation Educator Award and was chosen as Oregon Math Teacher of the Year. She serves on a diverse number of boards and is an active volunteer in a number of organizations in Southwest Washington.

Beyond her work on the City Council, which includes the role of Mayor Pro Tem, McEnerny-Ogle is the Chair of the C-Tran Board of Directors, a member of the Regional Transportation

Council Board of Directors, and the Vice-Chair of the Clark County Historical Museum. McEnerny-Ogle also serves as Chair for the Fort Vancouver District for the Boy Scouts of America.

As her nomination stated, there are very few volunteer organizations in Southwest Washington that have not benefitted from McEnerny-Ogle's energy, enthusiasm, and leadership, though she has frequently focused on issues particularly important to women and underrepresented groups. She has worked with the League of Women Voters to help educate the community on important issues and elections, and on the Community Military Appreciation Committee in support of veterans and their families. She is a Leadership Clark County graduate and alumni award winner.

"It's incredible to look out into the audience into the eyes of so many people who work tirelessly for their community," stated McEnerny-Ogle as she took the stage to accept her award. "Women's lives today represent a rainbow of opportunities. Sometimes we clearly understand where we are going, and sometimes we are in the middle of something we never expected.

I deeply appreciate this award and your acknowledgment of my work. I'm having a lot of fun. I am so blessed."

Heidi Johnson Bixby



Heidi Johnson Bixby, *left*,
with her nominator and last

year's Iris Award winner
Lisa Schauer.

Heidi Johnson Bixby was the final honoree of the evening, receiving an award in a brand-new category. The new Iris Legacy Award recognizes the many women who have continued to make a difference in our community and create a lasting legacy since receiving their initial Iris or Woman of Achievement award. Since 1985, the Iris and Women of Achievement awards have been bestowed on more than 200 women in Southwest Washington.

Bixby is owner of Johnson Bixby & Associates, a comprehensive financial planning firm with locations in Vancouver and Longview. She received a Women of Achievement award in 2004 for her community involvement and business leadership. Beyond her success as a business owner, Bixby serves the community in a variety of roles. She is currently chairs the Board of Directors for Columbia Springs, which provides over 5,000 kids and adults annually with the opportunity to get outdoors and to learn more about the natural world.

Bixby also supports ARC of Southwest Washington, where she and her team have made gift-wrapping of donated items an annual tradition. She is the treasurer for H-RoC and Global Sojourns Giving Circle. Other organizations Bixby supports with her time and resources include Vancouver's Downtown Association, Community Home Health & Hospice, Identity Clark County, the Nonprofit Network of Southwest Washington, the Clark County Skills Center, and Children's Center. In addition to her involvement in the community and business accomplishments, Bixby is a world traveler and photographer who has visited more than 30 countries.

"It's incredible to be the first recipient of this award. It means a lot to me because I do what I love," said Bixby as she received the Legacy Award. "I've lived in Vancouver for nearly 40 years. To me, it is more than where I live. It is my

family. It is a piece of me. And I wholeheartedly love giving back. If I can inspire and pass on even a fraction of what has been passed down to me, I'll be happy to keep the ripple effect going."

New sponsor and new award

Also new this year was the addition of H-RoC as a sponsor of the Iris Awards. H-RoC was formed in mid-2011 as an independent, non-partisan political action committee specifically to advance women leaders in Southwest Washington. Following this mission, H-RoC announced the addition of another new Iris Award category for 2017 that will honor women who currently serve or have served in public office.

Nominations for the 2017 Iris Awards will open this fall. Anyone may nominate a woman making a difference in one of four areas: service in the public sector, service in the private sector, philanthropic leadership, and service in public office. Up to four Iris Awards may be presented annually. One recipient may be selected in each of four areas. Anyone may submit a nomination. More than one person may submit a nomination for the same nominee or provide letters of recommendation.

For more information about the Iris Awards, visit clark.edu/cc/irisawards.

View photos from the event on our Flickr page.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Honoring Three Women ... and Three Decades



Three outstanding women working in different fields, but with a similar commitment to improving the lives of others in Southwest Washington, are the winners of the 2015 Iris Awards, honoring women of achievement in Southwest Washington.

The awards will be presented to Lisa Schauer, Senior Vice President for Business Development at Mackay Sposito; Lori Pulliam, Director of Transition at the Washington State School for the Blind; and Victoria Bradford, owner of Comfort Interiors and a member of the Evergreen Public Schools Board of Directors.

Schauer, Pulliam, and Bradford will be honored on March 5, 2015 in Clark College's Gaiser Student Center. Following a 5 p.m. reception, the awards ceremony will begin at 6 p.m.

Tickets are on sale through the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce at www.vancouverusa.com. The cost is \$35 per person; a table sponsorship, which includes six tickets, can be purchased for \$250. Seating is limited.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013, by February 27.

The Iris Awards are a continuation of a tradition of honoring women in Southwest Washington that began in 1985 with a photography exhibit at Clark College. Over the years, the annual event has developed into an official awards ceremony, with a nomination process open to all members of the local community.

The Iris Awards are supported by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation, Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce and the *Vancouver Business Journal*, which publishes the “Women in Business” directory, the only Portland/Vancouver metro area directory of businesses that are owned, directed or managed by women. The Iris Award winners will be featured in the 2015 “Women in Business” directory.

The 2015 Iris Award Recipients

Lisa Schauer



Lisa Schauer, *standing*, goes over spreadsheets at MacKay Sposito.

Lisa Schauer is a Senior Vice President for Business Development at MacKay Sposito. She was the first female partner in the regional engineering consulting firm. As a member of the firm’s Board of Directors and Executive Committee, she is currently responsible for strategically positioning the firm’s business development and marketing

efforts. Schauer is well known throughout MacKay Sposito and in the industry for her commitment to people and mentoring, including launching the company's Veteran's Council, in 2013 to recognize and support veterans.

Schauer is equally well known through her involvement in the community. She is on the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Children's Center and was a Founding Board Director and is currently the Chair of H-RoC Political Action Committee, a non-partisan group formed to advance women leaders in Southwest Washington. She has served on many other boards and leadership positions.

Lori Pulliam



Lori Pullman working with a member of the LIFT program.

Lori Pulliam has been teaching at the Washington State School for the Blind for 32 years, and currently manages the residential department which provides residential services and education to our middle and high school students, and the LIFTT program, which teaches young adults with visual impairment skills of independent living. Throughout these 32 years she has taught students with deaf-blindness, worked with students from WSSB who were taking classes in the local public schools, taught career education and worked with students in community based work experience placements.

Lori has helped develop programs to improve employment

prospects for blind students. She was part of a team that developed the Youth Employment Solutions (YES), a summer career education and work experience program for students with visual impairment. She has been a long time staff member for a summer course for public school educators. Lori has served on boards and commissions in the state. Currently she is serving on the Disability Transition Task Force. Locally she is a member of the Fort Vancouver Lions Club and has given her time to coaching soccer and participating in efforts like the Walk and Knock Food Drive.

Victoria Bradford



Victoria in her interior design shop, Comfort Interiors.

Victoria Bradford is the owner of Comfort Interiors. She bought the interior design business in 2000, and under Bradford's ownership, the company has won awards in both the Vancouver Parade of Homes and the Portland Street of Dreams. She is also one of the founders of Pomeroy Equitable Solutions, a company created to give businesses the opportunity to partner with schools to fund needed programs.

Beyond her full-time duties as a business owner, Bradford has served on the Evergreen Public Schools Board of Directors for the past 15 years. Bradford has served four times as Board President and Vice President, as well as the legislative

representative and federal liaison for both the EPS District and the Washington State School Directors Association. The Evergreen Public School District is the fourth-largest school district in the state, and the third-largest employer in Clark County, with more than 27,000 students and an annual budget of over \$240 million. She has been a leader during highs and lows in the district, from the budget cuts of the late 2000s to the opening or remodeling of 15 schools. A signature achievement was her instrumental role in researching and establishing Henrietta Lacks (HeLa) High, a bioscience and healthcare high school, in the district. Bradford is also a founder of the Quality Schools Coalition of SW Washington.

Bradford is a member of the Vancouver Downtown Association. She is on the Development Committee at The Fort Vancouver National Trust and has parlayed her love of ballroom dancing into best dance honors at the Trust's 2012 Dancing with the Local Stars competition.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley