



WELCOME

- >> Walla Walla Public Schools' Graduates of Distinction program provides an avenue for recognizing high school graduates of Walla Walla Public Schools.
- >> These outstanding graduates have distinguished themselves in their communities and professions. This award also provides a platform to honor Walla Walla Public Schools staff members who were the most inspirational in their lives.

2021-2022

**>> GRADUATES OF DISTINCTION <<
PROGRAM**





RUSS COLOMBO

-Class of 1974

*Baker Boyer Bank executive leader &
enthusiastic community volunteer*

» After graduating from Walla Walla High School, Russ spent several years working a variety of jobs before being accepted to attend Washington State University in 1978. A friend encouraged him to apply for a summer job at Baker Boyer Bank that year and, as they say, the rest is history.

Russ began as a messenger and mail-room clerk and quickly moved on to the Proof Department. He took business classes at Walla Walla Community College and was inspired to pursue his goals. His career at Baker Boyer Bank spanned four decades and included numerous promotions. He ended his 43-year career at BBB as Senior Vice President and Chief Credit Officer, in charge of a \$300 million portfolio. Russ currently serves on the BBB Board of Directors and still is a member of several bank committees.

One of his nominators described him as “a consummate professional with excellent communication skills, who was a firm believer in passing knowledge forward.” Another described him as “well respected in the Walla Walla business community for his understanding of

what drives business.”

He is equally well respected in the Walla Walla community for volunteering with organizations such as Hospice, the Lillie Rice Center, Walla Walla Public Schools’ Citizens for Schools and Walla Walla Community College Business Curriculum Advisory Board. But much of his volunteering is behind the scenes, helping out if he sees someone struggling or in need. According to his nominators, these attributes are what make him such a valuable asset for the community.

Russ’s nomination was spearheaded by Baker Boyer Bank colleague Jodi Venneri, with help from Scott Abajian, Megan Clubb and Darin Harvey.

His most inspirational staff person was Gus Siedler, his Walla Walla High School history teacher. Russ said Mr. Siedler was a respected and enthusiastic teacher who made him feel valued as a person.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL STAFF MEMBER:

GUS SIEDLER, <<
Wa-Hi History Teacher



DEBORAH UNDERWOOD

-Class of 1979

An accomplished children's book author with over 60 titles to her credit

» Upon graduation from Walla Walla High School, Deborah attended and graduated from Pomona College in 1983. She moved to San Francisco after college to begin her next life adventure. As a young woman, she worked at several temporary jobs, while submitting stories and puzzles to magazines to supplement her income. One of her nominators remembers her as “a delightful, creative young woman who lived life to the fullest.”

She began writing picture books after the birth of her niece and, today, she is an accomplished author with more than 60 books to her credit. As a young child, Deborah wanted to be an astronaut, then a singer, then a writer. Today, she writes children's books and sings in a choir. “I guess two out of three's not bad,” she says on her website.

Several of her books have spent time on the New York Times' Best Seller list. She co-wrote a series with Whoopi Goldberg called “Sugarplum Ballerinas,” celebrating children of color in dance. As a writer, she is

known for engaging children and the adults in their lives. “She encourages reading with thoughtful, challenging ideas,” says a nominator.

When she's not writing, she studies voice, tends her new pandemic garden, and visits schools and libraries to share her craft. She is described in her nomination as a “staunch supporter of independent book stores and the value they bring to communities.”

Deborah's nomination was organized by Janie Millgard, with help from bookstore owner Luan Stauss and former neighbor Punkey Adams.

Her most inspirational staff person was her eighth grade English teacher Christine Schaefer, the daughter of Wa-Hi English teacher Lola Whitner (another of her favorites). Deborah credits Christine with fostering her love of reading, Shakespeare and theater.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL STAFF MEMBER:

CHRISTINE SCHAEFER, <<

8th Grade English Teacher



MARK THOMPSON

-Class of 1970

Lifelong advocate for youth sports and respected insurance expert

» Sports and coaching have been mainstays of Mark Thompson's entire life. After graduating from Whitman College in 1975, he spent the next five years coaching at collegiate and high school levels, then returned to his hometown to take the helm of a family business, McDonald-Zaring Insurance.

One of his nominators said Mark "found sports to be a great vehicle for young people to learn real-life lessons, overcome obstacles and take responsibility for outcomes." He coached decades of Walla Walla High School football teams and also shared his love of sports with Little League and YMCA/AAU teams.

Another nominator praised Mark as "a wonderful example of someone who gives back to the community." He was on the board of the Christian Aid Center for 15 years and still helps, along with family and friends, by making and serving dinner once a month. He's been active on boards for the YMCA and Blue Mountain Community Foundation, and found time to work on several school district committees over the years.

While still working at the insurance company, Mark and several partners formed a consulting company focused on risk management and litigation. As the face of M.T. Consulting, Mark has traveled around the country consulting with businesses and schools, as well as training others to present the programs he developed. He has also donated countless hours providing professional development training to many local nonprofits.

Mark's nomination was spearheaded by Gary Mires, with help from John Carter, Darcy Weisner and Marc Yonts.

His most inspirational staff person is Walla Walla High School Biology teacher Bill McCorkle. Mark says Mr. McCorkle held him accountable and helped him realize his potential. He credits Mr. McCorkle for teaching him how to take notes, which proved invaluable during his time at Whitman College.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL STAFF MEMBER:

BILL MCCORKLE, <<
Wa-Hi Biology Teacher



J.P. "JACK" FREDRICKSON

-Class of 1952

*Nationally acclaimed real estate
appraiser and dedicated volunteer*

>> Community and professional service were hallmarks of the life of Jack Fredrickson, who passed away in March of 2017. The first chapter of his service was Newberg, Oregon. He settled there after graduating from Washington State College and serving two-years in the U.S. Army while stationed in Korea. Jack started a family, managed farms, served on the local school board and began his lifetime of community service as a Rotarian, while in Newberg.

In 1976, he moved back to his hometown and co-founded Associated Appraisers of Walla Walla, continuing his vested involvement in the real estate profession. He served on many local and state appraisal commissions and societies over the years. In 2015, he was one of only three individuals to earn a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Appraisal Institute, which is the nation's largest professional association of real estate appraisers. He was also appointed by former Governor Gary Locke to an eight-year term on the state Real Estate Appraiser Commission.

Jack's community service flourished in Walla Walla. He served on the Walla

Walla Sweet Onion Commission, and was a long-standing member of the Whitman College Farm Committee and County Open Space Advisory Committee. He continued to be an active and involved Rotarian and, for 25 years, headed the WSU golf team tournament at Walla Walla Country Club.

One of his nominators and a longtime friend said, "the dedication he provided to his profession and community could best be described by the Rotary motto: Service above Self."

Michael Fredrickson initiated his father's nomination, with help from John Reese and Thomas Thompson.

Jack's most inspirational person was Don Monahan, YMCA director and head of the Hi-Y group. Although not a staff member, Don was very inspirational to a lot of Walla Walla High School students at the time, according to members of the Fredrickson family.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL STAFF MEMBER:

DON MONAHAN, <<

YMCA Director & Head of the Hi-Y Group

>> GRADUATES OF DISTINCTION << AWARD RECIPIENTS 1999-2022

AWARD YEAR	RECIPIENT'S NAME	GRAD YEAR
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1999

1999	James F. Aylward	1946
1999	Richard P. Neher	1949
1999	Karen E. Glover	1968
1999	Dr. Eric Johnson.....	1968
1999	Michael Murr	1969

2000

2000	Gordon S. Riess.....	1944
2000	Dr. William C. Dement.....	1947
2000	Wilber Pribilsky	1951
2000	Philip N. Lane, Jr.....	1962
2000	Bruce T. Bjerke.....	1968

2001

2001	Gordon L. Jaynes.....	1946
2001	Ned Lange	1952
2001	Eugene Blattman	1954
2001	Jeanne Parker Miller	1969
2001	Vickie Anderson-VanZandt.....	1972

2002

2002	Charlotte Wirth	1944
2002	Robert I. Brunton.....	1953
2002	James K. Hayner	1968

2003

2003	Gene Frank	1946
2003	Mark Anderson	1973
2003	Irene Gonzales.....	1980

2004

2004	Harold R. Frank.....	1941
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AWARD YEAR	RECIPIENT'S NAME	GRAD YEAR
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2004	Ned Shafer.....	1961
2004	Jeffrey Frank Ray.....	1978

2005

2005	Gerwyn A. Jones.....	1928
2005	Dr. George Cole Williams Jr.....	1947
2005	Michael Maiden.....	1968

2006

2006	Val Jensen.....	1947
2006	Dr. Stephen Hayner	1966
2006	AnnRene Joseph	1973

2007

2007	Dr. Neil V. Follett	1944
2007	Barbara D. Johnson	1967

2008

2008	Claro E. Bergevin.....	1941
2008	Gretchen Miller Kafoury	1959
2008	John E. "Jack" Pelo.....	1974

2009

2009	R.F. "Dick" Monahan	1958
2009	Daniel DeSiga.....	1967
2009	Greg Ralston Pepin.....	1968
2009	Dr. Philip Phillips	1975

2010

2010	Richard K. Knuth, Ph.D.....	1969
2010	Mary Jane Towner-Glaser	1971
2010	Tim Donaldson.....	1979

» GRADUATES OF DISTINCTION << AWARD RECIPIENTS 1999-2022

AWARD YEAR	RECIPIENT'S NAME	GRAD YEAR	AWARD YEAR	RECIPIENT'S NAME	GRAD YEAR
2011			2017		
2011	Edward Aliverti	1950	2017	Bruce Hunt	1974
2011	Lt. Gen. Robert D. Beckel	1955	2017	Jeanne Eggart Helfer	1977
2011	Larry B. Siegel	1969	2017	Richard D. Simon, Jr, M.D.	1968
2011	Drew M. Bledsoe.....	1990	2018		
2012			2018	Terry Atchison	1966
2012	John P. Folsom.....	1962	2018	Dr. Randall Kenneth Barton	1971
2012	Jill A. Largent, M.D.....	1968	2018	Dr. Elizabeth MacDonald	1995
2012	Megan Ferguson Clubb	1974	2019		
2013			2019	Peggy Blize Needham	1982
2013	Carol Minnick Santa.....	1962	2019	Scott Krivoshein	1983
2013	Dan Reid	1974	2019	Mary Lux Stumph.....	1983
2013	Craig Nelson	1981	2019	Dr. Tony Billingsley	1993
2014			2020		
2014	Thomas L. Copeland.....	1942	2020	NO PROGRAM DUE TO COVID-19	
2014	Daniel J. Hess.....	1968	2021		
2014	Paul H. Schneidmiller.....	1970	2021	Garth Lindsey.....	1962
2014	David Wagner	1993	2021	Elizabeth "Libby" Frazier	1973
2015			2021	Kathy Covey.....	1973
2015	Judy Chamberlain Holloway	1962	2021	Judith Huntington	1964
2015	Richard "Dick" Moeller	1963	2021	Mike Monahan	1960
2015	Carol M. Barker.....	1974	2021	Dr. Allison Bingham.....	1977
2016			2022		
2016	Gary Hanson	1976	2022	Russ Colombo	1974
2016	Mark Kajita	1987	2022	Deborah Underwood.....	1979
2016	Jerry Zahl.....	1962	2022	Mark Thompson	1970
			2022	J.P. "Jack" Frederickson.....	1952



**Walla Walla
Public Schools**

» 2021-2022 «