

Walla Walla Public Schools
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Eleanor Roosevelt



'The future belongs to those who
believe in the beauty of their dreams.'

Walla Walla Public Schools



Graduates of Distinction 2003

These Walla Walla Public Schools graduates
have distinguished themselves in their
communities, professions, and careers.

They continue to give of themselves to
society and bring honor to the district.



We proudly salute our...

2003 Graduates of Distinction



With the Graduates of Distinction Program, Walla Walla Public Schools wants to recognize and honor the distinguished achievements of our high school graduates. In addition, we want to pay tribute to school staff members who provided positive school experiences, and were inspirational in the lives of these graduates. Our Graduates of Distinction will serve as positive role models for current and future students. It is important for students to see how impressive their future accomplishments, both personal and professional, can be to our community and society. As we celebrate with our distinguished graduates and staff members, we also bring honor to Walla Walla Public Schools. Quality education is our past, present and future.



Irene Gonzales – Class of 1980

Dedicated Educator
Community Volunteer
Public Community Leader

One of her greatest accomplishments to date and she was a member of the team that won the silver medal for the 1996 Olympics. But that is only the beginning of her achievements. Irene is a 1980 Wa-Hi graduate who returned to be an elementary school teacher. After earning her teaching credential in 1983, Irene began her career in Pasco Public Schools. She advanced through the public education ranks to become a principal and then an education administrator in Yakima. She earned her master's degree from the University of Oregon and is completing work on both her superintendent's credentials and doctorate.

Giving back to the community, Irene has been active in the Yakima YWCA, Yakima Rotary Club, the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, the Community Center for Youth, and the Hispanic Academic Achievers Programs of Pasco and Yakima. She won the Washington State Christa McAuliffe award in 1994 and, in 2002, received a Boeing Scholarship to study in Spain. In education, she is very involved with curriculum and staff development committees and is completing a two-year program as an ESD #123 Superintendent's Advisory Committee Intern.

Irene and her husband, Kirk Hiroto, have two young children. Irene's nominators praised her professionalism and dedication to students, staff, parents, and the community. One of them summed it up by saying, "she demonstrates to students the importance of working hard and trying one's best."

Inspirational Staff Member

Gail Callahan (her second grade teacher at Washington Elementary School)



Gene Frank – Class of 1946

Retired Educator
Whitman College Graduate
Walla Walla Rotary Club Icon

After working in the bakery for six years, 1946 Wa-Hi graduate Gene Frank decided to become a teacher. With a wife and two young sons to support, he went to Whitman College to become a teacher. He graduated in 1957 and began a successful 29-year career with Walla Walla Public Schools. His first years of teaching at Prospect Point and Garrison, led to earning his master's of education from Whitman College. He went on to serve as principal for Washington, Oregon elementary schools.

Gene distinguished himself as an excellent teacher and administrator, but he also has been very involved in the Walla Walla community. Active in the United Way, Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association, and the Walla Walla Booster Club, Gene stands out in his service with the Walla Walla Rotary Club and Rotary International. Over the years, he has served as president, been chair of many different committees, and garnered honors for meritorious service. He also had the privilege of serving a one-year term as District Governor, a position held by only five Walla Wallans in 60 years.

Gene and his wife, Jean, stay active with their family, which includes four children and many grandchildren. Gene's nominators were unanimous in their appreciation of his fairness, energy and enthusiasm.

Inspirational Staff Member

Erwin Beard, deceased (his eighth grade teacher/principal)



Mark Anderson – Class of 1973

Inspirational Artist
Local Entrepreneur
Whitman College Graduate

One summer during high school, 1974 Wa-Hi graduate Mark Anderson was hired to help a local teacher with a small art foundry he was starting. Then, after graduating from Whitman College in 1978 and teaching art for several years at Walla Walla Community College, Mark started a small foundry of his own in an auto repair garage. His first client was sculptor Manuel Neri, who had met Anderson and gave

him some small pieces to cast in bronze. His small business grew substantially and 23 years later, Walla Walla Foundry has earned an international reputation in the art world.

Throughout the years, Mark has consistently given of his time to support the arts in the Walla Walla Valley. He has mentored and taught art to students of all ages. He encourages renowned artists to give lectures for Whitman classes while they are in town, and he invites students and community members to visit his foundry and learn about bronze casting. Mark also was instrumental in bringing the Smithsonian Art Train to Walla Walla to introduce a variety of art to young children and their families. In 1993, Mark received the Pete Reid Award for Young Alumni at Whitman College, and he was a Governor's Art Award recipient in 1996.

Mark and his wife, Patty, have two children. His nominators praised his leadership, energy, gentle demeanor, and wise, quiet voice.

Inspirational Staff Member

Mary Jo Geidl (his high school English teacher)

Past Graduates of Distinction Recipients

2002 Graduates of Distinction

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

2001 Graduates of Distinction

Vickie Anderson VanZandt	Class of 1972
Jeanne Parker-Miller	Class of 1969
H. Eugene Blattman	Class of 1954
Edward N. "Ned" Lange	Class of 1952
Gordon L. Jaynes	Class of 1946

2000 Graduates of Distinction

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

1999 Graduates of Distinction

James F. Aylward	Class of 1946
Karen E. Glover	Class of 1968
Eric Johnson	Class of 1968
Michael M. Murr	Class of 1969
Richard P. Neher	Class of 1949