

# Camas resident recognized as 'Woman of Achievement'

□ Debra Jenkins is a professor at Clark College

By Heather Acheson  
*Post-Record staff*

A Camas woman described as having a heart and mind for teaching is among eight "2009 Women of Achievement."

Debra Jenkins is currently a professor of early childhood education and psychology at Clark College, where she has served as the chairwoman of the early childhood education department. At Clark, she is a member of the Cultural Pluralism Committee and the Early Childhood Education Advisory Board. She also serves on the Washington State University Diversity Advisory Board and on the board of directors of Oregon's I Have a Dream Foundation.

As a Women of Achievement, she and the other recipients will be honored during a luncheon Monday, March 23, at 11:30 a.m., at the Vancouver Hilton. Jenkins said receiving the award was a bit of a shock.

"I didn't believe it at first," she said. "And then I cried."

"I felt numb because I do what I do because I love what I do, not for an award," she added.

Born in Portland, Jenkins was adopted when she was just 6 months old by Ruby and Hosea Stewart. She attended Monroe High School, and later earned an associate's degree in early childhood education from Clark College. She then received her bachelor's and master's degrees in human development from Pacific Oaks College in California.

She has taught at Pacific Oaks College and North Portland Bible College.

"I loved the gift of learning," she said of her decision to follow a career path in education. "I wanted to be a part of sharing that gift with other people."

Jenkins said among the major influences in her life have been her mother and father who taught her and her siblings "the value of who we were and how to

be an African American." Her grandmother imparted upon her the concept that knowledge and experience should be shared with others.

"I hope I'm making her proud," she said of her grandmother. "It's something I've always

strived to do." According to one of Jenkins' nominators, she "believes in embracing the ability to communicate across communities. She makes an effort to not only be understood by others, but to understand."

At Clark, Jenkins introduced a diversity class called "reflective practices," which teaches students to recognize how they get along with other people.

She is also part of the group "Teaching Umoja," a 15-year commitment to examine the ethnic identity, bicultural, cross-cultural, and tri-literacy development of children of color and improve the quality of education and life for children and families of color.

"The bulk of what I do has to do with social justice," Jenkins said. "What really inspires me is being able to see that 'aha' moment in people who may not have understood systemic injustice and suddenly do."

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Debra Jenkins

# Jenkins

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Jenkins, 48, and her husband of 27 years, Chris, have four grown children: Christal, Christopher, Christian and Christina. Previously of Vancouver, she has lived in Camas since 2002.

Other 2009 Women of Achievement are Bobbi Casanova, program manager for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Human Services Council; Jane Cote, associate professor of accounting and academic director for the Washington State University-Vancouver business school; Jeanne Firstenburg, executive vice president and chief operating officer of First Independent Bank; Addison Jacobs, director of public affairs for the Port of Vancouver; Terry Murphy, interior designer and co-owner of Design Showroom; Carol Parker Walsh, CEO of ParkerWalsh

Consulting; and Deb Wallace, Washington state representative.

Clark College women's programs director Pat Watne created the Women of Achievement celebration in 1984. Since that time, 200 women have been recognized for their courage, strength and determination, and outstanding community contributions. Today, the event is co-sponsored by Clark College and the YWCA Clark County.

Cost to attend the 2009 Women of Achievement and Young Women of Achievement luncheon is \$35 per person, or \$350 for a table of 10.

The event will be hosted by Laurel Porter, a television news anchorwoman at NewsChannel 8.

To make reservations, call 906-4301 or visit [www.ywcaclarkcounty.org](http://www.ywcaclarkcounty.org).