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**Nellie Yearout**  
(1923- )

*Nellie Yearout*



The steel pica ruler used by printers could well identify Nellie Yearout of Wapato as one of the new generation of American women who dared to "do something different" in their own right.

The Graphic Reproduction class she started in Wapato in 1968 was the second class west of the Mississippi and the first taught by a woman. It was the first high school Trade and Industry class of any kind taught by a woman. Like other "firsts" and "firsts for women" achieved by Yearout, results were far-reaching. Soon six women headed Graphic programs in the state.

Students loved it. They did the bulk of district printing, including school and district newspapers. Under Nellie's guidance, pupils published "Feelings", a student magazine which aired student art, poetry and opinions.

In 1978, Yearout received the "Outstanding Teacher Award" of the Washington Vocational Association-Midstate Unit. In 1980, as Executive Board chairman and state advisor for the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America, she received the National Statesman Award in Washington D.C. The award is the highest honor in the VICA program.

"I'm lucky," she claims. "I never knew girls couldn't "do" anything they wanted." Born near Wapato, she played, explored and read her way through school.

The founding editor of the first Wa-Hi newspaper and co-editor of the first Wahasian annual, Nellie was also on District Championship basketball and debate teams.

After a short college stint, she married and with her husband Jack, raised five children. "Raising my family was the most fun I ever had," she claims, but continued to find new challenges in her public life.

It began with PTA, Camp Fire and Cub Scouts and flourished through membership in the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

As the first State Junior Conservation Chairman, Yearout initiated yearly workshop to train other women for leadership roles in ecology. These were so successful that Forest Service specialists invited her to conduct tri-state workshops in Idaho and Montana in hopes that similar training would take hold there.

Adventuring into Conservation projects, she found herself active in a field that at that time saw few women.

Serving as secretary — the only woman — on the Yakima River Basin Pollution Committee was an arduous initiation. However, it ranks high in community service.

Faced with "the most highly polluted watershed in the U.S." the state committee achieved dramatic results: a reduction of 80% + of municipal contamination.

Fifteen years of state and national activities included testifying at three Senate hearings and being a State hostess for the first International Parks meeting held in the U.S.

"Not work, but fun," she grins, "How else could I breakfast with Secretary of State Udall, or float the river with my idol, Chief Justice Douglas.

In the late 60's Yearout returned to college "for fun, to learn some Spanish and take some Geology".

Lucky again. That experience led to pioneering that Graphics class in Wapato.

Yearout left teaching in 1983. First comes family, camping, bridge and traveling, then the extras: volunteer aide at the Primary school, national sorority officer and again State Environmental Action Chairman, WSFWC.

If her luck holds out, she has worlds to see and challenges to try.

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