

# Tri-Cities Women of Influence Historical Coloring Book

VOLUME 1



# INTRODUCTION

Herstory is often lost in history, but the Tri Cities has a legacy of active, passionate women who have dedicated their time and energies to improving the lives of others. This thought-provoking booklet is just the beginning of our exploration of herstories.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and Women's History Month, three organizations have collaborated to introduce you to some of these local, influential women.

The organizations are:

**Washington Township Museum of Local History (WTMLH)**  
**League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark and Union City (LWVFNUC)**  
**American Association of University Women (AAUW, Fremont Branch)**

We hope you are intrigued enough to delve further into their bios. Perhaps something in their stories will inspire you to join their ranks.

Thank you to those who helped research, write and edit the stories:  
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Contact us for further information and check out our websites.

**<https://museumoflocalhistory.org>**

**<https://fremont-ca.aauw.net>**

**<https://my.lwv.org/california/fremont-newark-union-city>**

These booklets are available FREE to the public at all of our websites in the hope that we can further the education and appreciation of women by future generations.

Please support the ongoing work to produce future volumes by purchasing printed copies at the Washington Township Museum of Local History.

Also send your nominees for future editions to us at:

**[info@museumoflocalhistory.org](mailto:info@museumoflocalhistory.org)**

Printed by Washington Township Museum of Local History

2020



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# 1 Erma Maciel Andrade

(1921-2016)

Erma was a Union City resident for more than 64 years who loved her community. She was a grassroots activist who wanted Union City to be a greener and safer place, working tirelessly to make it better in every way.



- Erma mobilized the local community and worked with the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations (PICO) to transform a local ball court that was used for drug dealing into a green park and playground. This transformation project was a key component in Union City, receiving an award in 1999, as an All American City.
- She was involved with social justice projects with the Congregations Organizing for Renewal (COR) and she worked with Union City to develop after-school programs.
- The annual Erma Andrade Leadership Award was established by COR in 2003, in recognition of her transformative leadership.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Erma embodied the essence of the power of hard work and determination in fierce community engagement.**



**ERMA  
MACIEL ANDRADE**

# 2 Winifred Bendel

(1889-1981)

As a glass-breaking, outspoken woman with informed opinions, Winifred Bendel drew fire and praise. A main driver for creating the planning policies for Washington Township, she was an organizer throughout the formation of the City of Fremont.



- Winifred co-wrote the book "History of Washington Township" in 1965.
- Active on county, district and state boards; she received numerous community service awards.
- Surprised everyone by running for and winning a seat on the first Fremont City Council (1956). Served as Vice Mayor. It was 20 years before the next woman was elected to this council.
- Winifred married Reginald Stuart and stayed engaged in local politics, although she was recalled from office (1959) due to political disagreements.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Winifred Bendel served with grace despite political opposition. Was it too much of a coincidence that the only woman on the council happened to be the only member removed from office? Find out more about this event in Fremont city records and council meeting minutes.

# WINIFRED BENDEL





# 3 Viola Blythe

(1916-2002)

Viola Blythe was one of Newark's most hard-working, behind the scenes individuals, and her legacy lives on through her daughter Debbie.



- Viola was born the ninth of eleven children, she lost her mother to childbirth and her father to desertion; Viola spent years in an orphanage before being “rescued” by her older sister. She vowed at age 9 to help the less fortunate.
- She worked for the Salvation Army for 20 years (only paid for 3) while also operating a makeshift food bank out of her home. She welcomed anyone in need.
- In 1989, the City of Newark offered Blythe an unused building. This was the official birth of the Viola Blythe Community Services Center.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Viola had an open mind and an open heart. She believed that charity begins at home and in the heart, and she was not afraid to let anyone in need into both of hers.**

# VIOLA BLYTHE



# 4 Lila Bringhurst

(1938-2016)

Lila was tireless in her devotion of time, energy and resources to heighten public awareness of local heritage and to protect it for future generations. She was an activist, a community leader, historian and philanthropist. Lila's life became a love story between a woman and her community.



- Lila wrote a weekly history column in *The Argus* and co-authored a book about the history of the Mormon pioneers who came to the area in 1846 ("Let This Be Zion").
- She was at the forefront of the preservation of Tri-City landmarks: Mission San Jose, Saint Joseph Parish Rectory, Rancho Higuera Adobe, the Timothy Rix home, and others.
- Personally funded a large sculpture by Mario Chiodo depicting a 1907 train traveling through Niles Canyon located at the intersection of Mowry Ave. and Mission Blvd.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Lila was very active in Mission San Jose Rotary, MSJ Chamber of Commerce, and in her church. Nobody's life was insignificant to Lila. She always found someone in need to whom she could give a job or help.



**LILA  
BRINGHURST**

# 5 Florence Buehler

(1913-1990)

Florence was very active in civic life in the Tri-City area before and after Fremont was incorporated. As a graduate of and lecturer on social work, she used her talents to serve the community.



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

- Florence was the first female Planning Commissioner for Alameda County.
- She was a probation officer for 5 years and later became a member of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Commission where she served for 16 years.
- Charter member of the Washington Hospital Service League and the League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark and Union City.
- Chairwoman of the Board of the Coyote Hills Aquatic Park from 1962 to 1978. Florence was instrumental in creating Coyote Hills Regional Park.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** As an active member of her church Florence was recognized as “Outstanding Woman of the Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ.” She was described as being, “ ... a cut above most of us as far as her sense of political and social responsibility and her commitment to education.”

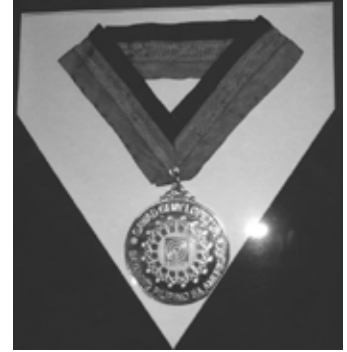


**FLORENCE BUEHLER**

# 6 Primitiva Ranoa Gador

(1919-2016)

Primitiva knew how difficult it was to be an immigrant in a new land. She embraced her Filipino heritage and was always available to help fellow Filipinos negotiate difficulties in this country and honor their heritage.



- Primitiva worked hard with her family as a sharecropper growing strawberries, then ventured into other work such as: a nurse's aide at Washington Hospital, running the peerless bus ticketing office, owning and operating an Asian food store and interpreting in the municipal court for more than 40 years.
- Established cooperative financing for Filipinos (mostly single farmworker men) to live together and advocated for Filipinos with the Fremont City Council and as the first female president of the Filipino Circle Club.
- She received the Bayaning Medal in 2001 for her work with the Filipino community.
- Primitiva taught coping skills classes for Filipino senior adults in Union City.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Primitiva was a tireless, enthusiastic and positive force in her family, in her work and in her involvement in the community.**

# PRIMITIVA RANOA GADOR





# 7 Mary Liston Griffin

(1891-1988)

Mary Griffin started out in an unceremonious way but went on to become a civic powerhouse.



- Mary was born in the living quarters at the back of the Alvarado train station where her father, Jonathon Liston, was the station master.
- Fighter for suffrage -- Mary never missed an election until her death at age 97. Her first vote was for Teddy Roosevelt for President in 1912.
- Lifetime of public service: sold Liberty Bonds in San Francisco during WWI, helped to start a youth center in Irvington during WWII, and was a founder of the Washington Township Historical Society - one of the oldest local historical groups – and served as their treasurer for 24 years. Was the President of the local Parent Teachers Association in 1944.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Everyone can learn a lesson from the life of Mary Griffin. She stepped up to claim her right to vote at her first opportunity and continued to cast her vote throughout her life. Voting is your right, use it!**



**MARY  
LISTON GRIFFIN**

# 8 Estelle Hirsch

(1884-1984)

Estelle was a pioneer of modern day Fremont. She worked alongside her husband in the general merchandise business and was a founding member of several organizations in the area.



- Estelle was a founding member of SPRSI (a Portuguese organization) in 1914 and of the first Irvington Parent Teachers Association.
- President (1943) of the Country Club of Washington Township, which spearheaded war effort activities: rolling bandages, holding blood drives, hosting monthly parties for 'the boys'. Personally accepted from Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt a national first place award in Washington DC, for these WWII volunteer activities.
- Active member of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Washington Township - awarded citizen of the year by the Irvington Business Association.
- She opened her home for catechism classes through Sisters of the Holy Family.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Estelle was a force in community affairs, church work, charity and human kindness. She worked energetically to help build and support the Irvington and Washington Township Community.**

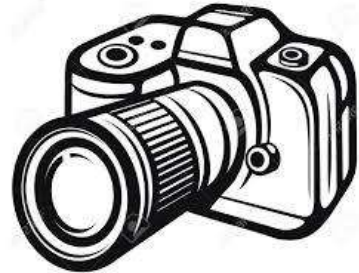
# ESTELLE HIRSCH



# 9 Julianne Howe

(1923-2011)

Julianne Howe was proud of her community. She grew up in Niles and graduated from Washington High School, was a UC Berkeley alumni and contributed to the preservation of Tri-City history through research and as the photographer for the Historical Resources Board for the City of Fremont.



- Julianne juggled family and work as the treasurer for the family business - Industrial Electric Manufacturing Company.
- Through her dedication as a founding member of Mission Peak Heritage Society and as a member of the Historical Resources Committee of Fremont, Julianne photographed and documented more than 200 historical resources in Fremont and the surrounding community.
- She was an ardent supporter of St. Joseph Parish and the convents of the Sisters of the Holy Family and the Dominican Sisters in Mission San Jose. She documented the grounds through her photographs.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Julianne was tireless and dedicated when she perfected her photography skills and documented the historical resources in the Tri-City area.

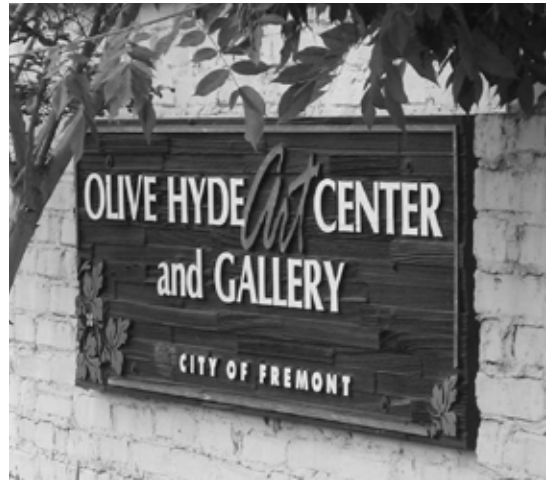


**JULIANNE HOWE**

# 10 Olive Hyde

(1886-1987)

Olive Hyde came to Mission San Jose in 1937 where, for more than 30 years, she owned and maintained residences, taught music, and supported the arts and history in the community.



- Olive founded the Mission San Jose Women's Association in 1966, a group dedicated to preserving and enhancing the unique community and character of Mission San Jose.
- As an active temperance worker, Olive took it upon herself to clean up Mission San Jose. She purchased the infamous Boulder Saloon, removed the business, and opened two new civic buildings, which, after her death, became the Olive Hyde Art Gallery and Program Center.
- She donated much of her property to the City of Fremont: the two buildings at the corner of Mission and Washington Blvds., a large lot designated for parking and open space, and another building on Mission Blvd.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Olive was determined to improve and protect Mission San Jose, even though it was not her hometown. She died at age 101 in San Francisco.**



**OLIVE HYDE**



# 11 Razia Inamdar

(1939-2010)

Razia Inamdar was an immigrant from India, who settled in Newark in 1969 with her family. They were the second Indian family residing in Newark.



**SEMAH**  
connecting you to help and hope

Safety  
Education  
Mutual Respect  
Awareness  
Hope

- Razia earned a post-graduate certificate in Early Childhood Education from Mills College while raising her family. The family moved to the middle east in the 1970s and traveled extensively.
- When Razia returned to the Tri-City area she taught Arabic, free of charge, to those who wanted to learn. In 1980, she and her sister, Nasira Sharieff, opened the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), a preschool/daycare center.
- Razia approached her work with dedication and zeal and loved her profession. She aspired to instill knowledge in the students, to support and train staff and to nurture healthy, happy, honest citizens. Razia, Nasira and all who worked at the center touched the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands of young people.
- After retirement, Razia became involved in organizations that focused on domestic violence prevention and that aided Muslim women who were experiencing abuse.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Razia was a dedicated and life-long teacher who always sought to help others and to nurture knowledge and goodness in those around her.**

# RAZIA INAMDAR



# 12 Pauline Mclvor

(1930-2008)

Pauline was active in politics, business and community life; she was one of the most popular and well-known residents in the Tri-City area. No matter what the challenge, Pauline remained dedicated to the cause.



- Pauline was born in Newark, grew up in Niles, and graduated from Washington High School in 1948. In her forties, she graduated from Cal State Hayward at the top of her class.
- Active civil servant: Pauline was the first woman president of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce in 1981, member of the Mission San Jose Rotary Club, served on the Fremont Planning Commission, worked with the Ohlone College Foundation and the Committee for the Restoration of Mission San Jose.
- Tribute from her daughter, Barbara Auer: "Pauline Mclvor had a great ability to sort things out and keep things organized, whether at the store (Mclvor's Hardware Store) or with her family. She was the store. She did everything. She was the most intelligent woman I ever met."

**THINK ABOUT IT: The combination of intelligence and energy, Pauline gave her life to her family and her community. She proved, you're never too old to study and learn!**



**PAULINE McIVOR**

# 13 Janet Pessagno

(1941-2003)

Effective women often make their impact through behind-the-scenes efforts.

Janet Pessagno was an elementary school teacher and volunteered her creativity and organizational skills to make benevolent dreams come true.



- Janet generated millions in donations to finance critical local missions of charitable organizations: orchestrated annual fundraisers for Washington Hospital Foundation, Santa Clara University Catala Club, Niles Rotary Inner Wheel, Rotary International and the Sisters of the Holy Family.
- Recognized for her impact as President and District Governor of the Fremont Inner Wheel, and as President of the Santa Clara University Catala Club, a mover and founder of the first Niles Flea Market in 1965.
- “With Janet, it was all about relationship-building” said Sister Elaine Marie Sanchez, “That’s why she was such a gift – she cared about people.”

**THINK ABOUT IT: Janet Pessagno was the embodiment of the tenet that a great cause still needs someone who can deliver. For example; it’s a great idea to support a hospital, but only if someone can figure out a way to pay for it. Pessagno did the work that made great ideas a reality. Quite a legacy to our community!**

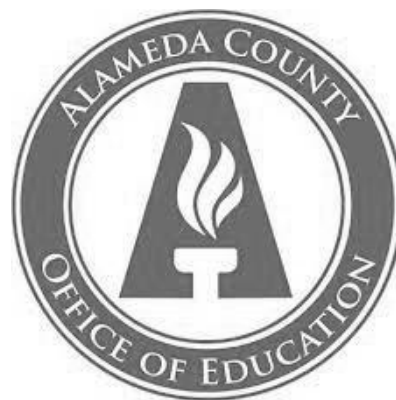
# JANET PESSAGNO



# 14 Frances Robie

(1867-1957)

Frances was born in an era when men dominated the business and political worlds. She was 44 years old when women got the right to vote. In 1912 she voted and also ran and won the seat of the Alvarado School Board.



- Frances was soon recognized as the public voice of the school district. She was the only woman on the board.
- She was the longest serving female school board trustee in Alameda County (1942) and the longest serving trustee in the county overall (1943). She resigned in 1944, after serving 32 years.
- She was the only female school trustee in Alameda County on the honor roll during her time.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Frances worked tirelessly as a trustee, she volunteered as a clerk in polling places and became a voting inspector. She was active in many community organizations. Frances was a pioneer and example of a hard working woman who made a difference in her community, all while raising a family.



**FRANCES ROBIE**



# 15 Theresa Roderick-Alderete

(1945-2013)

Born in California to humble immigrant parents from Mexico and the Philippines, Terry Roderick-Alderete dedicated herself to her native Bay Area, always striving for excellence.



CALIFORNIA  
HISPANIC  
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

- Terry was a role model as valedictorian of her Newark High School graduating class. She then completed a 29 year career with Pacific Bell.
- She was instrumental in the campaigns of many organizations to raise tens of thousands of scholarship dollars enabling disadvantaged Hispanic students to attend college: Director of the California Hispanics Chambers of Commerce, President of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Alameda County, and President of the Newark Rotary.
- After retirement, Terry combined her expertise in ethnic relations with social networking to raise awareness and appreciation of Mexican culture. She created Alderete Business Visions, a consultancy specializing in event production for Hispanic non-profits such as Dia de los Muertos (Oakland), Carnival (San Francisco), and the Mariachi Festival (San Jose).

**THINK ABOUT IT: Terry's greatest impacts to her community came after retirement. What will you do after you are "done"?**



**THERESA  
RODERICK-ALDERETE**

# 16 Mattie Rousseau

(1929-2014)

Mattie, her husband and children lived in many different locations as an Air Force family. When they arrived in Union City, Mattie got a job, met her neighbors, attended council meetings and set out to help in her community.



- Mattie gained respect from those who knew her because of her knowledge and strength to stand up for what she believed in.
- She worked on city commissions: Longest serving member of the Union City Planning Commission and seven years in the Union City Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Appointed to the Alameda County Grand Jury, a citizens watchdog group.
- Always politically active, Mattie registered voters, worked at the polls and worked on several political campaigns including those for state assembly, mayor, city council and the school board.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Mattie was diligent, dedicated, and always willing to work. She would study and read, ask questions, stand up, show up and speak out in her bold, clear voice.**

# MATTIE ROUSSEAU



# 17 Trina Marine Ruano

(1902-1986)

Trina Marine Ruano was the proud loving matriarch of generations of Ohlone Jalquin Saclan Bay Miwok and Plains Miwok. She preserved and perpetuated her culture and not only survived against all odds, she thrived.



- Trina was orphaned at a young age yet she carried on the most important traditions of resourcefulness, drive, respect for living beings, respect for the earth, and most of all pride in her heritage.
- She advocated for the rights and the recognition of the native ancestors and their history. Trina fought for the registration of tribe members with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in California, thus creating a documented record of Ohlone lineage.
- Trina was the example and the heart of her family. Daughter, Ruth Orta, says, "Mother carried all the spirit and respect for the ancestors in her everyday life."

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Throughout her life Trina maintained close relationships with other Native people, and she imbued her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren with a sense of pride in heritage, as well as a can-do spirit.



# 18 Sister Charlotte Shea

(1930-2017)

Sister Charlotte Shea did not let expectations of others impede her vision, reminding us that opportunities for excellence are often outside the expected.



- Sister Charlotte returned to Fremont in 1985, after 33 years of teaching Math and Science, to become the Development Director of the Dominican Sisters for Mission San Jose.
- She engaged city leadership, served on historical boards, and as President of the MSJ Chamber of Commerce, she implemented intuitive marketing concepts.
- Sister Charlotte, by welcoming the greater community onto the Dominican Sisters' campus, generated an income stream for the Sisters with the Olive Festival, Holiday Boutique, and offering a venue for private events.
- She made the Sisters more sustainable and their mission of serving "the young, the poor and the vulnerable" more public.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Sister Shea is hailed not only because she was an intelligent, hard working woman, but because she incorporated the community into family life for the benefit of the Tri-Cities and future generations of residents of the Dominican Sisters.**

# SISTER CHARLOTTE SHEA





# 19 Milicent Washburn Shinn

(1858-1940)

Born at the family home in Niles, Milicent used her drive and fortitude to share her knowledge and discoveries with the world.



- Milicent was awarded, in 1898, the first PhD by the Department of Pedagogy (the study of the method and practice of teaching). Hers is the first doctoral degree earned by a woman at the University of California (Berkeley), and the 11th in the university overall.
- She was editor and regular contributor to the Overland Monthly, a popular California literary magazine/journal.
- Her highly acclaimed study, "Notes on the Development of a Child", and other works on child development are still used today.
- Milicent was a suffragist who wrote many moving articles to help women gain the right to vote. She was a member of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, which later became known as the American Association of University Women.

**THINK ABOUT IT: As a journalist and educator, Milicent lived a full life – always learning, searching, challenging and creating new norms for society.**



**MILICENT  
WASHBURN SHINN**

# 20 Lida Thane

(1855-1940)

Lida was an energetic civic leader who fostered the founding of many community organizations and worked to preserve the history of Washington Township.



- Lida graduated from Mills College in 1873, and worked for the women's suffrage amendment and for the repeal of prohibition.
- Helped establish the Toyon Branch of the Children's Hospital Medical Center of the East Bay - a place that provided hope and help for needy children.
- She wrote "Notes from Niles" and other articles regarding Niles progress and its people which were published in the San Francisco Call and the Oakland Enquirer from 1890-1894.
- Lida chaired the committee that wrote the first "History of Washington Township" in 1904 and served as curator of the California History and Landmarks Committee in 1916.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Mother and daughter, Lida Thane and Laura Thane Whipple (see bio #22), were energetic civic leaders who fostered the founding of many community organizations, and worked to preserve the history of Washington Township and to better their community through service.**

# LIDA THANE



# 21 Cecilia Weed

(1912-2007)

Cecilia fought to protect parks and historic sites using a mix of charm and a fiery Irish spirit. She literally spent decades preserving the history and heritage of the Tri-City area.



- Cecilia served as President of the Washington Township Historical Society and was instrumental in creating the Museum of Local History in Fremont.
- In 1988, she was awarded the Outstanding Commissioner of the Year by the Bay Area Park and Recreation Commission.
- For more than 40 years, she played a leading role in efforts to preserve historic buildings, American Indian land rights and open space in the face of growing Silicon Valley development.
- Cecilia was named to the Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame in 2002 and received the Jefferson Award in 2006 for her tireless public service.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Mary Weed-Pickens, one of Cecilia's four children, said, "Cecilia had a fighter's spirit and was a total walking encyclopedia. Historians were always calling her to confirm information, or for information they didn't know." Now that's something to remember!**

# CECILIA WEED



# 22 Laura Thane Whipple

(1875-1966)

Laura was the energetic, dedicated, driving force for community involvement and historic preservation. She was involved in and dedicated to the betterment of her community.



- Laura chaired a Memorial Day celebration that led to a campaign to create an American Legion Post in 1921. By 1930, Laura completed a campaign to build the Niles Veterans Memorial Building.
- She stopped the demolition of Vallejo Mills which led to the preservation of the mills and creation of the park.
- She was the driving force for the establishment of the air base in Mountain View which became Moffett Naval Air Station. It housed one of the world's largest dirigibles, the "Macon" (1931) and became a military/civil airport (1943).

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Individually and as a team, Laura Thane Whipple and her mother Lida Thane (see bio #20), influenced and contributed to the improvement of Washington Township for more than 80 years. They rallied like-minded people to get the job done.



**LAURA THANE  
WHIPPLE**



# 23 Gladys Williamson

(1897-1967)

Gladys loved reporting; she lived and breathed her quest for reporting information and for finding new and interesting stories. She was especially interested in local history.



- Gladys was a reporter for the Oakland Tribune for 29 years (1934-1963). She covered all the news in Washington Township, but was especially interested in local history.
- She was known for her philosophy of humanizing the news. She did not go for sensationalism, and her motto was "Bad news is not good news."
- Gladys was called the "quarterback" in the drive to acquire for the City of Fremont the honor of being an All-American City. She traveled to Washington DC to help make the presentation to the contest's jury to win the competition for Fremont.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Gladys was a meticulous note-taker, she clipped and saved articles and photos which she kept for a book she had intended to write. Her files are available for you to enjoy at the Fremont Main Library – take the time to look her up.



**GLADYS  
WILLIAMSON**

# 24 Yoko Young

(Unknown-2013)

Yoko Young was an actor, model and Prima Ballerina (Hirose Ballet Company and Tokyo Ballet Theatre) who settled in Fremont to build her legacy in art and culture.



- Yoko, as a Japanese Cultural Ambassador to the World, secured Sister City status between Fukaya and Fremont (1993).
- Established Yoko's Dance and Performing Arts Academy (1995) - internationally acclaimed for superb instruction and earned "Best Studio in the West" in year one.
- She choreographed and performed the Nutcracker with the Fremont Symphony Orchestra (2005-2011) as the first full scale ballet performance in Fremont.
- Celebrated and Honored - December 15, 2013 was declared Yoko Young Day

**THINK ABOUT IT: Yoko's impact to the Tri-City area lives not only in the institutions she built, but in thousands of youngsters who have launched international dance careers.**

# YOKO YOUNG



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Who would you add in this book as a woman of influence? Why? Can you nominate someone from your family lore? Draw, Color, Write Have Fun!

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**THINK ABOUT IT:** We all have met or been affected by courageous, exemplary, talented women from our communities who have influenced our lives and those of others. Now is the time for you to remember and celebrate them.

