

Esther Nelson's Biography

I am writing to nominate Esther Nelson for Bozeman BPW's Woman of Achievement award for 2011. Esther is a very active and amazing 85 year old woman, including a 37 year member of Bozeman BPW. She was our President from 1976-77. She actively manages her ten acre Park in northwest Bozeman, where she lives and is the landlord for many modular, affordable housing units.

She has been involved in the education field throughout her career by being a role model for women in school administration, developing home economics courses back in the days when this was a desired field of study by women, and being an active business woman herself. Back in 1943 she was brought to Bozeman when hired by the Montana Department of Public Instruction to work at MSU to set up home economics courses in high schools all over Montana. By 1950 she had made a name for herself in education administration, so she was hired as the Director of Business Services for the Bozeman School System, and was named the District Clerk for the School Board. She remained in this position for 32 years. By 1962 when the rural schools of the Gallatin Valley consolidated with the Bozeman School District, she developed the first school bus system in Bozeman. She became so knowledgeable about business services for school districts that she expanded statewide, forming the Montana Association of School Business Officials; developed the manuals, procedures and standards for certification for school business directors; and volunteered to develop and teach summer school courses at MSU in School Business Management for educators from around the State, which she did for sixteen years. Bozeman's current School District head, Kirk Miller, was one of her students. She received awards for Pupil Transportation Person of the Year and for developing the Montana School Business Officials organization from the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Even today, she researches and hand types a periodic newsletter about the education issues being dealt with in the Montana Legislature for the members of the Big Sky Retired Educators, so that she and the members can advocate for a high quality education system in Montana.

Esther has also been active on many other community boards of directors over the years including the Pioneer Museum, Montana Blue Cross Blue Shield, Caring Foundation for Children, Bozeman Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Council, and the Friends of MontanaPBS. So her field of education has expanded out to historical Gallatin Valley, health care for adults and children, public safety, and public television.

Over the past twenty years she has been proactive in the investigation and remedial actions for the Bozeman Solvent Site, a Super Fund Site which started from a dry cleaning establishment in Buttrey's Shopping Center. The plume of ground water pollution impacted hundreds of people in northwest Bozeman, including her own Park, and her family members.

Esther has led a full life as a business woman, volunteer and benefactor for many community activities and in the field of education for the State of Montana. She is very deserving to be recognized as Bozeman BPW's Woman of Achievement.

Pat Simmons
Bozeman BPW 30 year member