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## THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### *Florence Wager named as Clark County's 2009 First Citizen*

(Vancouver, WA – April 28, 2009) The Community Foundation for Southwest Washington announced today that Florence Wager has been selected as Clark County's First Citizen for 2009. The First Citizen Award recognizes a Clark County resident who has modeled exemplary citizenship through their actions and service to the community. Recipients of the Award, presented since 1939, are selected by a volunteer committee of community leaders and past award recipients. The honor will be awarded on Wednesday, June 10, 2009 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at an event to be held at the Hilton Vancouver Washington.

Florence Wager has had tremendous influence on the landscape of Clark County and the City of Vancouver. Her successful advocacy for new parks, community centers, trails, health and fitness over the past 20 years has resulted in a remarkable number of community assets and programs.

A sampling of her accomplishments include:

- **Renovation of Esther Short Park.** Florence Co-Chaired the Community Design Committee that planned the renovation of Esther Short Park.
- **Parks Legacy Program.** Florence was a leading proponent for an aggressive construction timeline called the Parks Legacy Program that resulted in 22 new community and neighborhood parks in east Vancouver.
- **Greater Clark Parks District.** Florence co-chaired the Metropolitan Parks District measures with Scott Horenstein. Thanks to their multi-year effort, our community will

have 35 parks completed by 2012 including dozens of sports fields, trails, play areas, and picnic facilities.

- **Expansion of State funding for parks.** In 2007, Florence worked closely with Representative Bill Fromhold to successfully lobby for expanded funding (\$60 million/biennium to \$100 million/biennium) for state parks.
- **Creation of the 2006 County-wide Trail and Bikeway Plan.** Florence chaired the task force that created a master plan for 250 miles of regional bikeways and trails in the next 15 to 20 years.
- **Chelatchie Rail-Trail Project** Florence helped secure \$2 million in state funding to plan and construct the first phase of the rail-trail from Battle Ground's downtown to Battle Ground State Park
- **Firstenburg Community Center and renovated Marshall Community Center.** Florence Co-Chaired with Alex Veliko the citizen committee that created the Firstenburg Community Center. Florence also served twice as the Co-Chair of the Parks Commission.
- **Successful advocacy for a healthy and fit Clark County.** Through a \$2.3 million federal grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Numerous other achievements as a community board member and volunteer.**

Florence also co-chaired the local STEPS to a Healthier Clark County team and was one of seven nationwide awarded the designation by the CDC of "Community Hero."

"Florence is driven by an unprecedented level of personal volunteerism, citizenship and stewardship which she has diligently provided as a gift to our community over two decades in the community in which she was born and raised. The facilities and programs she championed are having huge, positive impact on our community, but perhaps her greatest legacy is the inspiration she provides to others around her. She is an informed, energetic, respected and effective citizen activist," says David Judd, former Parks Director.

*Below is a sampling of supporters' comments in letters of endorsement.*

"I have the highest regards for Florence as a positive and effective community leader. It is to this community's great benefit that she came home to retire 20 years ago. Florence has

energized many programs and projects that help create a healthy and vibrant community,” Brian Baird, Member of Congress.

“She has provided the citizen leadership and advocacy to produce an amazing array of programs and assets for our community, and during this time, she has not received a dime for the thousands of hours she has dedicated to our community,” Senator Craig Pridemore.

Florence has been the most enthusiastic and galvanizing force behind our system of parks of anyone in our community. She is polite but forceful, practical and persuasive, and not motivated by politics or business, but simply by a desire to provide a better environment for our children and families,” Scott Horenstein.

**About the First Citizen Awards Event:**

The event will begin at 4:00 p.m. with a reception in Florence Wager's honor. The formal awards program will be held at 5:00 p.m. Regents Bank is the presenting sponsor in partnership with The Community Foundation and *The Columbian*. Hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and beverages will be served. Tickets are \$35 per person and can be reserved by contacting the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce at 360-694-2588 or online at [www.vancouverusa.com](http://www.vancouverusa.com)

**About the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington:**

The Community Foundation for Southwest Washington was founded in 1984 by a group of concerned citizens, for the purpose of improving the quality of life through philanthropy. Since the Foundation's inception, more than \$84 million has been infused back into our community. More than 230 individuals, families, and local organizations have established charitable funds with the Foundation, awarding scholarships, gifts and grants nationally and throughout Clark, Cowlitz and Skamania Counties. The Community Foundation is a publicly supported philanthropic institution organized to channel gifts from individual and corporate donors to a variety of charitable organizations, locally and nationwide. It is governed by a local board of private citizens who represent the needs and well being of the community.

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