



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Press Release - August 8, 2018

## 2018 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Honorees to Be Inducted

Four remarkable women will be inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame, and one outstanding individual will receive the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice on Saturday, August 18, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. at the State Historical Building (auditorium), 600 E. Locust Street, Des Moines, Iowa.

Highlights include:

Hall of Fame awards to:

- [Dianne G. Bystrom, PhD](#) (Ames, IA)
- [Ruth R. Harkin, JD](#) (Cumming, IA)
- [Jean Y. Jew, MD](#) (Iowa City, IA)
- [Peggy A. Whitson, PhD](#) (Houston, TX--born in Beaconsfield, IA)

Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice to:

- [Janice T. Edmunds-Wells, BS, MSW](#) (Des Moines, IA)

To celebrate the honorees and their families and friends, the Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women will host a reception immediately following the ceremony in the atrium of the State Historical Building. The ceremony and reception are free and open to the public. No registration required.

The Iowa Women's Hall of Fame is held around Women's Equality Day, August 26, which commemorates the day in 1920 when American women first obtained the right to vote.

The Iowa Women's Hall of Fame is sponsored by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW). Awards will be presented to the recipients by Elizabeth Coonan, chair of the ICSW; Sherill Whisenand, chair of the 2018 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Selection Committee; and Sean Bagniewski, commissioner.

As of 2018, 176 women will have been inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame and 31 individuals will have received the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice.

**Note to editors:** Media are welcome and encouraged to attend the ceremony.

## Biographies of Honorees

**Dianne G. Bystrom, PhD** – Ames, IA/Plattsmouth, NE resident  
DOB: June 11, 1953

Dr. Dianne Bystrom has served as the director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University since 1996 and will retire in August 2018. She established Iowa State's interdisciplinary undergraduate Leadership Studies Program; taught courses on leadership, women and politics, and political campaigns; and speaks frequently to university and community organizations throughout the state and nation on women's leadership and political status.

A frequent commentator about political and women's issues for state, national and international media, her research interests have focused on (1) the styles and strategies used by female and male political candidates in their television advertising, websites and social media and (2) the coverage of women candidates and political leaders by the media.



Dr. Bystrom is a contributor, co-author or co-editor of 25 books, including "An Unprecedented Election: Media, Communication and the Electorate in the 2016 Campaign" (2018); "Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics" (2018, 2014, 2009 and 2006); "The Handbook of Political Advertising" (2017); "Media Disparity: A Gender Battleground" (2013); "Women & Executive Office: Pathways and Performance" (2013); "Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling: A Global Comparison of Women's Campaigns for Executive Office" (2010); "Legislative Women: Getting Elected, Getting Ahead" (2008); "Gender and Candidate Communication" (2004); and "Anticipating Madam President" (2003) – and has written journal articles on women and politics, youth voters and the Iowa caucus.

Her work at Iowa State was recognized with the 2016 Martin Luther King Jr. Advancing One Community Faculty/Staff Award, the 2015 Faculty/Staff Inspiration Award from the Alumni Association, and the 2014 Institutional Service Award from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She was the first recipient of the Iowa Network for Women in Higher Education's Distinguished Higher Education Leadership Award in April 2016. In August 2017, Dr. Bystrom was honored as one of seven Women of Influence by the Des Moines Business Record.

Before joining Iowa State, Bystrom worked for 17 years at the University of Oklahoma in public relations, higher education administration and political communication. She earned a B.A. in journalism in 1975 from Kearney (NE) State College, an M.A. in journalism and mass communication in 1982, and a Ph.D. in communication in 1995 from the University of Oklahoma.

After retirement, Dr. Bystrom will reside with her husband, Keith, at their lake house south of Plattsmouth, Nebraska. She plans to continue her research on women and politics and work on some consulting projects. The Bystroms have two children, Chris, an entrepreneur in New York City, and Beth, a veterinarian in Avon Lake, Ohio.

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**Ruth R. Harkin, JD** – Cumming, IA resident  
DOB: August 27, 1944

Ruth R. Harkin was born in 1944 in Vesta, Minnesota, into a family who believed in women having their own careers. Growing up, Ms. Harkin learned that "everything is possible." Her life has proved that claim.

Ms. Harkin graduated from the University of Minnesota and Catholic University Law School and then dedicated her career to one of public and private service. She was County Attorney for Story County, Iowa, from 1973 to 1979, and the first woman to hold that post. From 1979 to 1981 she became the first female to serve as the Deputy General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington D.C. While in Washington, D.C., Ms. Harkin also worked for the Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld law firm working with U.S. companies.

In 1993 President Bill Clinton chose Ms. Harkin to be President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), becoming the first female President and CEO in its history. Under her leadership OPIC increased its activity to the highest levels in the agency's history. She also served as the first female Senior Vice President at United Technologies; the first woman on the Board of Directors of Conoco Petroleum Company; and was the first woman on the Board of Directors of Bowater Company.



In 2013, Ms. Harkin led the effort to establish the Harkin Institute for Public Policy and Citizen Engagement at Drake University, helping to convene a bipartisan national advisory board and raising private funds for its educational mission. Throughout her life, she has encouraged, inspired, hired and promoted women and sought equal rights and opportunities for women in both her professional and personal fields of influence.

She is the wife of former U.S. Senator Tom Harkin. They have two daughters, Amy and Jenny, and three grandchildren.



**Jean Y. Jew, MD** – Iowa City, IA resident  
DOB: October 7, 1948

Born in Greenwood, Mississippi, Dr. Jean Jew obtained her Bachelors of Science in Biology from Newcomb College at Tulane University and earned her M.D. from the Tulane University School of Medicine. Dr. Jew moved to Iowa City to serve as a post-graduate associate when she was 24 years old in the College of Medicine at the University of Iowa, later becoming a tenured professor.

During her tenure in the University of Iowa's College of Medicine, she carried out research focusing on the brain and autonomic nervous system. She taught human anatomy, neuroscience, and neurology to medical, physical therapy, dental, graduate and other health professional students and medical residents. She also chaired and served on numerous College, University and national committees related to education, research, administration, diversity and faculty governance.

In addition to her accomplishments as a professor and researcher, Dr. Jean Jew set a precedent for girls and women in the state of Iowa to obtain fair treatment and to defend themselves against sexual and racial harassment. After a decade-long legal battle in the Federal court system against the University of Iowa and the Board of Regents starting in the 1980s, Dr. Jew faced great personal and professional consequences. But in the face of adversity, she did not give up until she won. This federal case marked a major victory not only for Dr. Jew, but for other women throughout Iowa and the United States at a time when workplace harassment was not only commonplace and accepted, but the laws on sexual harassment were virtually unwritten.

At the same time that she was enduring ongoing harassment and the subsequent legal battle, Dr. Jew also carried out extensive research, taught classes, and served as a leader for gender equity. She was a founding member of the Iowa Women's Foundation (where she remains an active member), and she served on numerous committees that provided service to both the University and women everywhere.

Her tireless work and many achievements were recognized in 1992, when the Council on the Status of Women at the University of Iowa and the Women's Resource and Action Center created the Jean Y. Jew Human Rights Award to honor those who commit themselves to the selfless work that Dr. Jew herself has. This work will not be forgotten, as she will always serve as a role-model for women, girls, and everyone else who wishes to see justice prevail.

Dr. Jew retired from the University of Iowa in 2010 and is now an Emeritus Professor at the University.

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**Peggy A. Whitson, PhD** – Houston, TX resident (originally from Beaconsfield, IA)

DOB: February 9, 1960

Dr. Peggy A. Whitson was born February 9, 1960 in Mt. Ayr, Iowa, on the family farm near Beaconsfield. She graduated from Mt. Ayr Community High School in 1978 and then went on to receive a Bachelor of Science in Biology/Chemistry from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1981 and a Doctorate in Biochemistry from Rice University in 1985. Following her work at Rice University, she began her scientific career at NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC), Houston, Texas, as a National Research Council Resident Research Associate. From there, she went on to serve as the Supervisor for the Biochemistry Research Group at KRUG International; Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Department of Human Biological Chemistry and Genetics at University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas; Adjunct Assistant Professor at Rice University in the Maybee Laboratory for Biochemical and Genetic Engineering; Research Biochemist in the Biomedical Operations and Research Branch at NASA's Johnson Space Center; Technical Monitor of the Biochemistry Research Laboratories in the Biomedical Operations and Research Branch; and Deputy Division Chief of the Medical Sciences Division at Johnson Space Center.



In April 1996, she was selected as an Astronaut Candidate and started training in August 1996. Upon completing two years of training and evaluation, she was assigned technical duties in the Astronaut Office Operations Planning Branch and served as the lead for the Crew Test Support Team in Russia from 1998 to 1999.

In 2002, with Dr. Whitson aboard, the Expedition 5 crew launched aboard the Shuttle STS 111 and docked with the International Space Station. She was named the first NASA Science Officer during her stay and conducted 21 investigations in human life sciences and microgravity sciences as well as commercial payloads. She performed one spacewalk in the Russian Orlon space suit. Completing her first flight, Dr. Whitson logged 184 days in space.

During Dr. Whitson's second six-month tour of duty aboard the International Space Station, Expedition 16, she served as the first female Commander in 2007-2008. Dr. Whitson has also performed five space walks, with a career total of 39 hours and 46 minutes.

From October 2009 to July 2012, Dr. Whitson served as Chief of the Astronaut Corps and was responsible for the mission preparation activities and on-orbit support of all International Space Station crews and their support personnel. She was also responsible for organizing the crew interface support for future heavy launch and commercially-provided transport vehicles. Dr. Whitson was the first female, nonmilitary Chief of the Astronaut Office.

Dr. Whitson's third long duration mission launched on November 17, 2016. Originally planned for six months in duration, the mission was extended, and she returned to Earth on September 3, 2017. During the mission she contributed to hundreds of experiments in biology, biotechnology, physical science and Earth science, welcomed several cargo spacecraft delivering tons of supplies and research experiments, and conducted an additional four spacewalks for maintenance and upgrades to the station. Dr. Whitson participated in four spacewalks, bringing her career total to ten, more than any other woman in the world. With a total of 665 days in space, Dr. Whitson holds the U.S. record (male and female), placing eighth on the all-time space endurance list.

Dr. Whitson is married to Clarence F. Sams, Ph.D.



**Janice T. Edmunds-Wells, BS, MSW** – Des Moines, IA resident  
(originally from Philadelphia, PA)  
DOB: September 11, 1952

Janice T. Edmunds-Wells, BS, MSW, is originally from Philadelphia. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Individual Studies in the College of Human Development from Pennsylvania State University, and her Master's Degree in Integrated Services MSW at the University of Iowa. She also completed a Public Health Certificate from the University of Iowa.

Ms. Edmunds-Wells began her work in minority health in Iowa in 1992, and in 2006, was able to codify the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health within an Omnibus Bill, serving as the Executive Officer until 2017, when the Office was eliminated from the Iowa Department of Public Health. During her time working in minority and multicultural health, she spearheaded some of the most important public health policy, research, and programming activities related to rapidly diversifying populations in the state of Iowa. Ms. Edmunds-Wells is a specialist in working with economically underserved and ethnically diverse populations, and has a particular focus on the needs of women and other at-risk individuals.

She has served in the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division on the Status of African Americans, as a program planner, and has also worked with the Urban League of Philadelphia as part of her commitment to promoting civil rights for communities of color. Ms. Edmunds-Wells has served as Adjunct Faculty at Des Moines University and at the University of Northern Iowa. She has provided extensive professional and community service to numerous state and national agencies on issues related to cross-cultural health and wellness, such as serving as Chair of the Iowa Minority Recruitment, Education, and Advocacy on Careers in Health Network and as the state and regional representative, Board member and currently member at large to the National Association of State Offices of Minority Health. Ms. Edmunds-Wells has won numerous state awards and national recognition for her outstanding contributions to promoting the well-being of diverse populations. In 2017, she was inducted into the Iowa African American Hall of Fame by the Black Cultural Center of Iowa State University.

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