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# Daughters of the American Revolution Community Service Awards Honors Two Local Women

By Jennifer Crooks



**T**he [Sacajawea Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution \(DAR\)](#) is one of the oldest women's organizations in Thurston County. Made up of the descendants of Revolutionary War patriots who helped in any way to achieve

American independence, the DAR is a non-profit, non-partisan women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children. The local chapter was founded in 1905 and chose its name to honor [Sacajawea](#), the female member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1803-1805.

One activity the Chapter does is to honor people who have contributed to the community. Later this year, they will give the Daughters of the American Revolution Community Service Award to two Thurston County women. The Community Service Award is designed to recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding unpaid, voluntary achievements in cultural, educational, humanitarian, patriotic, historical, citizenship, or environmental conservation endeavors.

Recipients do not need to be DAR members, but their outstanding achievements must have taken place within five years of the award being given, and the award cannot be given posthumously or more than once. All awards are recommended at the chapter or state level and approved by the Washington State DAR Community Service Awards committee.



*Alicia Elliott, founder of West Central Park (1919 Harrison Avenue), is one of this year's recipients of the DAR Community Service Award. Photo credit: Shirley Stirling*

This year, the Sacajawea Chapter is honoring Alicia Elliott and Ann Olson, two women who have contributed much to Thurston County communities.

Local businesswoman and entrepreneur Alicia Elliott has been a resident of Olympia since 1991. Through her business and community activities, she has worked to improve the quality of life in Westside Olympia. One of her main projects is the [West Central Park](#), the corner between Harrison Avenue, Cushing Street, and

Division Street on Olympia's Westside. It had been a vacant lot since 1997 that had fallen into disrepair. Using her inheritance, she purchased the land and built a park next to what later became her business, the [Marie Bed and Breakfast](#) (123 Cushing Street NW.) She has since deeded the land to a nonprofit organization, the West Central Park Project, and, until recently, served as board president. They now have a paid staff person for this concern.

The park has become a community gathering place with native and vegetable gardens. It has hosted the [West Olympia Farmers' Market](#), summer movies, and community events, as well as volunteer work days. Alicia has built a commercial building to expand economic development around the park and improve quality of life in the neighborhood. Currently the locale is home to [Phoebe's Pastry Cafe on Division](#), [The Park Side Cafe](#), and [Food Truck Court](#).

In addition, in 2014 Elliott purchased a 1.84-acre wooded parcel at the end of Dickson Avenue NE in West Olympia. The site had been slated for townhouse development, but is the location of Olympia's only blue heron colony's nesting site (a rookery/heronry). The extra human activity would likely force the birds to leave. The nesting site, high up in the trees, has been home to the birds for more than 30-40 years according to local residents. Although not endangered, the graceful, crane-like blue herons are a well-loved sight in the West Bay area.

Later she purchased an adjacent 2.73 acres that encompass Schneider Creek and West Bay Woods to serve as a wider wildlife corridor. In 2016, the City of Olympia bought the



*Alicia Elliott owns Marie Bed and Breakfast near West Central Park. Photo credit: Shirley Stirling*

property and some additional property as parkland. The [Olympia Coalition for Ecosystems Preservation](#) has dedicated thousands of hours restoring the habitat.

The other recipient of the Community Service Award is Ann Olson, a member of the Sacajawea chapter of the DAR for over 30 years. She is currently serving as the chaplain, but has also held the positions of registrar and parliamentarian. Coming to Olympia in 1971, Olson was a leader in the [Parent-Teacher Association](#) when her children were young, becoming state president and national vice-president.

Olson was a founding member of the [Olympia Genealogical Society](#) and has served in all board positions, including president. She currently organizes and teaches a [beginning genealogy course](#) at the [Olympia Timberland Library](#). This year Olson received the Washington State Genealogical Society's President's Award for Outstanding Achievement.



*Ann Olson is also receiving the DAR Community Service Award this year. Photo credit: Shirley Stirling*

Olson is presently president of [Olympia Chapter No. 4 of the Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington](#), a position she has held for four years. She regularly acts as a docent at the [Crosby House Museum](#) (702 Deschutes Way, Tumwater), which is operated by the Olympia Chapter. In addition, Ann Olson is treasurer and historian of the [Governor's Mansion Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization that furnishes and maintains the State Governor's Mansion.

She has recently led efforts to preserve the mansion's history and documents at the Washington State Archives. Since the mid-1970s, Olson has been a docent at the mansion, which holds regular free [public tours](#). For 17 years, she led [tours](#) of the Capitol to people of all ages, including school classes. She also serves on the board of the Olympia Historical

Society/Bigelow House Museum. One of her projects there is serving on the committee for the [Holiday Tour of Historic Homes](#) as well as a docent on the tours for the last several years. This year, nine homes will be open for visitors on the afternoon of December 2, 2018.

Alicia Elliott and Ann Olson will receive their awards at the Annual Sacajawea Chapter Holiday Luncheon at [River's Edge Restaurant](#), Tumwater Golf Course (611 Tumwater Valley Drive SE) on December 1, 2018. This is an appropriate way to honor two outstanding women who have added so much to our community.