

A BUSINESS PERSON'S HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE • 1990 TAX REPORT • WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR MOB?

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FOR SUCCESSFUL KANSAS CITIANS

## PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

Ten Kansas Citians Who

Are Making a Difference

Two of our honorees: School principal  
Phyllis Washington and CEO Henry Bloch



## PHYLLIS WASHINGTON MAKES THE GRADE

When Phyllis Washington became principal of E.F. Swinney Elementary School seven years ago, she spent a lot of time sitting in classrooms, evaluating teachers' performances and rapport with students. If these classroom observations did not endear the new principal to her staff, they did help Washington, then a fifteen-year veteran educator, map out her strategy for updating the curriculum and improving the teaching strategies. When she began to incorporate those changes at the school, including reassigning teachers to new classes and grade levels, some staff members were hostile. The teachers' union dubbed her the "tyrant of Swinney."

Times have changed, but not completely. Washington still has a hands-on approach to running her school and is still not afraid to buck tradition. She still drops in on the present staff, a cohesive, tightly knit team that was hand-picked by Washington five years ago when Swinney became one of the first magnet schools in the Kansas City school district's court-ordered desegregation plan.

But now, after seven years on the job, the 41-year-old Washington is considered a pioneer, an innovator who is helping create one of the best elementary schools in the **EDUCATOR** Kansas City area — and the nation.

Swinney was honored this year by the U.S. Department of Education as one of the top elementary schools in the country. It was one of the few urban schools honored.

Swinney won partly because its students performed well above — ten to thirty-three points above — the national norm on the all-important Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

The test scores were a major factor, but so were the school's approaches in teaching its multi-racial, multi-cultural student body, 50 percent of whom come from families that have low enough incomes to qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. As an "applied-learning" magnet, Swinney offers students a wealth of hands-on experiences in the classroom and outside. Students plant gardens to study horticulture, establish classroom businesses for economics lessons, and publish mini-newspapers as part of the writing curriculum. One year, students figured the date of the 100th day of school, and each brought in 100 of some object — paper clips or pennies.

Other organizations have recognized Swinney's innovative and successful approach to education. The city's Rotary Club honored the school, and Washington was one of twelve Missouri principals recognized by the state association of elementary school principals. Closer to home, the Westport community granted her its "Paper Plate" award for making Westport a better place to live.

"We gained credibility because of the awards," Washington says, "and we became better established. But we know who we are and what we stand for. And that's just as important."

*Phyllis Washington*



*Newcomer Marsha Murphy*

## THEY CAME OUT OF NOWHERE

Marsha Murphy did it to Bill Waris. Bill Carpenter did it to Barbara Potts. Brice Harris hopes to do it to Richard King, Emanuel Cleaver, Joanne Collins, *et al.*

In Jackson County, the state of Kansas, Independence, Kansas

## POLITICIAN

City, and all around the nation, newcomers are whipping incumbents at the polls.

This "down with the incumbents" movement is cyclical, brought about mostly by "pocketbook issues," says Bill Hoch, a local political analyst. Right now, voters are looking around and deciding that anyone — *anyone* — can do a better job running the government than the folks who are running it now.

In fact, Brice Harris's fresh face — he's never held elective office before — is one reason he appealed to the so-called Monday Morning Group of local executives who are supporting him in the mayoral election.

With world tensions and domestic economic problems continuing to mount, newcomers likely will keep incumbents looking over their shoulders.

"I don't think incumbents will breathe a sigh of relief any time soon," Hoch says.