

Proposal to Re-name North Davis  
Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini  
Elementary School

Janice Bridge  
869 A Street  
Davis, CA 95616

Dr John Bowes, Superintendent  
Trustees of the Davis Joint Unified School District

At the regularly scheduled Board meeting on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, during the public comment, we will request the Board place on the agenda of an upcoming Board meeting, for discussion and action, a proposal to re-name North Davis Elementary School to honor Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini.

The DJUSD School Board Policy on the Naming of Schools states:

2. Schools may be named after deceased individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the global, national, state or local community.

And provides further guidance:

In consideration of the contributions of deceased individuals, the Board shall weigh the impact of the contributions over an extended period of time from the past to the present and into the future and the degree to which name shall have ongoing meaning to the school community.

We believe Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini meets or exceeds all of the criteria. In support of the proposal we provide

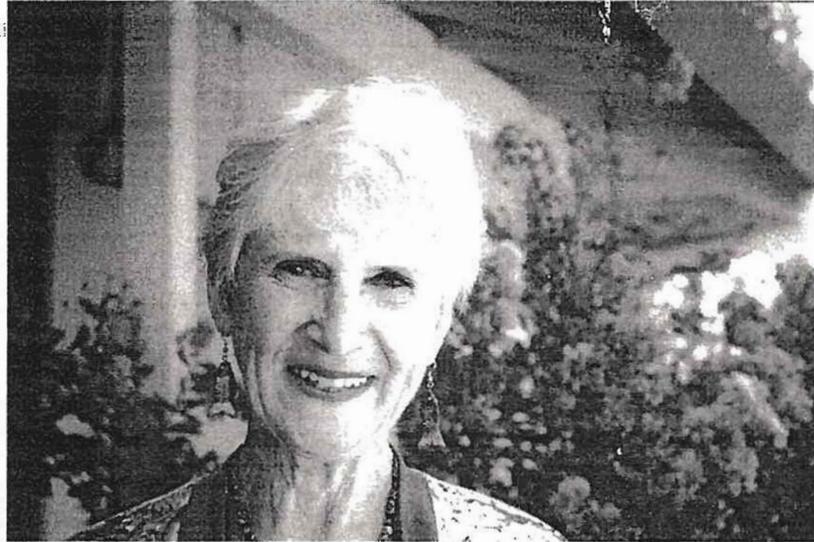
- (a) the obituary for Mary Ellen Dolcini as it appeared in the Davis Enterprise
- (b) a bullet point list of the life and contributions of Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini
- (c) an essay by former teacher Nancy Adams providing personal reflections

Re-naming North Davis Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini Elementary School will expand the contributions she made to the Davis educational family by bringing the knowledge of her respect for learning, her spirit of inclusiveness, and her unfailing generosity to the students of Davis for decades to come.

# enterprise

YOLO COUNTY NEWS

Mary Ellen Dolcini



## Obituaries

### Mary Ellen Dolcini

By Special to The Enterprise

*Sept. 14, 1926 — April 30, 2018*

Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini, a fourth generation native of Davis, died on April 30, 2018. A fighter until the very end, she was 91.

She was a member of one of Yolo County's pioneer families and was born and raised in Davis, the fourth of six children born to Valente F. Dolcini and June Plant Dolcini. She is survived by her sister Carol Bergstrom (Ron) of Lincoln, her sisters-in-law Marge Dolcini of Davis and Nancey Dolcini of Galt, 26 nieces and nephews, and many friends and colleagues from the diverse chapters of her accomplished life. Known variously as Dr. Dolcini, Mary Ellen, or simply, Aunt Dede, she will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her.

A proud alumna of Davis public schools, she graduated from Davis High School in 1944, serving as valedictorian and commencement speaker for her graduating class. She received a scholarship to UC Berkeley where she graduated with honors in 1948, receiving a degree in Latin American studies. She stayed for an additional year and earned a secondary teaching credential.

After teaching for one year at Tahoe-Truckee High School, she returned to academia where she was awarded a Master's degree in school administration from San Francisco State University along with an elementary teaching credential. She then taught for four years at Mira Vista School in Albany.

She began her long and distinguished career with the Davis Joint Unified School District when she was hired in 1954 to teach a combined fifth- and sixth-grade class at East Davis School (later Valley Oak Elementary). From there, she became the Principal of the new North Davis School (under construction in a wheat field) where she also served as the morning kindergarten teacher. She returned to East Davis School and served for five years as principal before returning to UC Berkeley where she received a doctorate in education in 1964.

Her subsequent years of service to the DJUSD included stints as principal of Emerson Jr. High School, an appointment as associate superintendent for instruction, and a final assignment at North Davis Elementary, where she served as principal for the last 10 years of her career in public education. She retired in 1990.

# Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini

September 1926 - April 30, 2018

- Lifelong Davis resident; great-grandparents came to Davisville in 1868

## **Education**

- Graduate of Davis High School, valedictorian of the Class of 1944
- Graduated UC Berkeley, 1948, BA in Latin American Studies; in 1949 earned Secondary Teaching Credential
- Earned a Master's Degree in School Administration and Elementary Teaching Credential from San Francisco State
- Completed a Doctorate in Education from UC Berkeley, 1964

## **Career in Davis Schools**

- Classroom teacher at East Davis Elementary 1954 - 56
- First Principal of North Davis Elementary 1956 - 58
- Principal of East Davis Elementary 1958 - 1963
- Principal of Emerson Junior High School 1964 - 1970
- Served on the District Administrative staff 1970 - 1980; as Associate Superintendent for Instruction 1974-1979
- Principal of North Davis 1980 - 1990

## **Local, National and International Contributions**

- Member of the US Delegation to China following Nixon's visit in 1972
- Member of the Board of Directors of the National Education Association
- Chair of the National Association of Accreditation of Teacher Education
- Marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma and Montgomery
- President of the California Teachers Association
- Selected and served as member of Yolo County Grand Jury
- Board member for International House Davis 1985-1991
- Active in USA-UN, Davis Chapter; served as President

## **Civic Awards**

- 1995 Thong H. Huynh Memorial Award - Civil Rights Advocacy
- 1995 A. G. Brinley Award for special contributions to the City of Davis
- 2016 Induction into the Davis Senior High School Hall of Fame

July 31, 2018

Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini was a homegrown girl, born and raised in Davis, California, and her entire career was spent here in Davis as a teacher first, and then as an administrator. Her heart never left Davis, which is quite amazing in itself, given her level of education and her many talents. She would have been an icon wherever she chose to be and, lucky for us, she stayed in her hometown of Davis.

Dr. Dolcini's mission in education, as I lived it while teaching at North Davis, was to maintain an inclusive atmosphere, a global community where every child was nurtured, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender or socio-economic level. As this philosophy was completely in tune with my own, I was honored to have been selected by Dr. Dolcini to teach at her school. I found it to be an environment where teachers were constantly employing multiple perspectives and questioning strategies in their teaching. It was a school where inquiring minds were treasured, and where teachers were encouraged to go beyond the textbook. We were encouraged by Dr. Dolcini to take advantage of any and all programs that would enhance our teaching and bring new ideas, different strategies, and additional knowledge to the curriculum we covered. Personally, I spent three summers at Stanford University, enhancing my knowledge of World Geography and Ancient Cultures, all the while creating new units that engaged the students in a way that is not possible when one uses only a textbook. After that work, I became the district mentor for Global Education, offering workshops in Davis and far beyond, so that other teachers and other classrooms could benefit from what Stanford had given me. I believe that every teacher at North Davis had Dr. Dolcini's encouragement in this way. In fact, she opened the door to many of these opportunities.

As a part of my curriculum, and fully embraced by Dr. Dolcini, the sixth grade presented a Model United Nations every October, on the very day of the General Assembly in New York. We even flew a United Nations flag on that day, a gift from the Ambassador from Egypt, as I recall. This day provided an opportunity to highlight the many international students who came through North Davis Elementary, and preparation for this event afforded a great chance for the rest of the students to grow in their knowledge of the world. Working together to understand global issues on an elementary level enhanced the values that Mary Ellen Dolcini held as true, and strengthened the bond of students from countries all over the world. Because of Dr. Dolcini's work with the Davis United Nations Association, and her work at the International House here in Davis, my students were given additional opportunities to grow in their knowledge and presentation skills, as they made presentations to both organizations over time.

Another highlight of teaching at North Davis was the fact that Dr. Dolcini had worked at the junior high level, and she knew how very important it was to collaborate. She also knew that a departmentalized sixth grade program would mean that each teacher could expand upon his or

her areas of particular strength, which resulted in a program that was richer and stronger than could have been possible in contained sixth grade classrooms. The additional outcome, of course, was that the sixth graders at North Davis were more prepared for junior high than students from any other school. The NDE students had already had the benefit of three or four different teachers in the sixth grade.

One of Dr. Dolcini's pet projects was something she called Mini-Courses, and they took place after lunch on Wednesdays, in the Spring, for three or four weeks. She invited any and all parents to share their talents and interests with the students, whether it be southern cooking, Japanese origami, or South American painting styles. I can't begin to remember all of the offerings the students had to choose from. With these classes, parents were empowered to be an integral part of the school community.

Because of Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini, we were a microcosm of the world, all working to encapsulate the best characteristics of a global view of life and learning. What could be more meritorious in the naming of a school today? Why not show our Davis community and nearby communities that the values of inclusivity and global awareness are even more important today than they ever have been by renaming North Davis Elementary in honor of Dr. Mary Ellen Dolcini, who dedicated her life to making the world a smaller and more inclusive place to be.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nancy Clair Adams