

NAMING OF DISTRICT FACILITIES
RUBY DUNCAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On October 16, 2008, the School Name Committee considered recommendations of new school names for approval. It has been recommended that an elementary school be named for Ruby Duncan.

Ruby Duncan was born in 1932. Orphaned before her fourth birthday, Ruby was raised by relatives in Tallulah, Louisiana, and learned to support herself by picking cotton. She was able to attend school part-time until the ninth grade when circumstances required her to quit and work 80 hours a week as a waitress and barmaid.

Seeking a better life, Ruby came to Clark County in 1952. She quickly became aware of the need for services to assist women and children facing poverty. Through her advocacy and dedication, Ruby Duncan led the fight to establish the Operation Life Community Development Corporation in 1972. Operation Life was one of the nation's most effective anti-poverty programs in the 1970s and 1980s, and was the first federally funded community development corporation in America that was organized, controlled, and operated by low-income women.

As the director of Operation Life, Ms. Duncan's first mission was to launch a campaign for nutritional awareness. Organizing door-to-door walks, conducting workshops and demonstrations, holding teach-ins and eat-ins, litigating, and lobbying, she is credited for leading the fight for Nevada's underfed children. Within three years of her effort to raise awareness of this issue, Nevada implemented the Women and Infant Children's Nutrition Program, and a Food Stamp Program. Additionally, more than 10,000 free lunches per day were served through the Clark County District's system-wide hot lunch program. Ruby Duncan and her advocacy became so well known that in 1977 President Jimmy Carter invited her to the White House to discuss how to improve national jobs programs.

Since that time and through her continued efforts to raise awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged in Clark County, Ms. Duncan and her supporters have established a medical clinic, a library, a daycare center for working mothers, and a job-training program in west Las Vegas. Due to health concerns, Ms. Duncan retired from her leadership position with Operation Life in 1990. However, her advocacy for children and the underprivileged remained steadfast.

Ms. Duncan has received numerous local and national awards for her dedication to fair and equal treatment of women and children. In 2008, she won the Margaret Chase Smith Award from the National Association of Secretaries of State. The award is presented to candidates who show "political courage and selfless action in the realm of public service."

It is recommended that if a school is to be named to honor Ruby Duncan, that the school be named the Ruby Duncan Elementary School.

Discussion and possible action on approval to name a school the Ruby Duncan Elementary School is recommended.