

## **Lois Esther Tarkanian**

Lois Esther Tarkanian was born on April 28, 1934, in Fresno, California. She was the daughter of a Navy man and moved around a lot – Fresno, Alaska, San Diego, Connecticut. Lois attended high school in Connecticut and graduated at 16 years of age. She was the first in her family to attend college, graduating from Fresno State University with a Bachelor's in Education at 19 years old. She married Jerry Tarkanian in 1955 and went on to earn a Masters in Speech Pathology and Ph.D. in Leadership and Human Behavior.

Lois held positions as a classroom teacher, speech pathologist, principal, office administrator, and college instructor. In 1969, she founded one of the first private schools for the deaf in California. Oralingua worked with children to teach them to speak using their residual hearing. This was a first – most schools taught with sign language. She moved to Las Vegas in 1973 and found that the city was at least 10 years behind other states in speech pathology. She helped start Nevada's first full inclusion program for deaf children at the preschool lab at the Community College of Southern Nevada. She also worked privately in her home with deaf and autistic children. She co-founded the Public Education Foundation and started a tutoring program for basketball athletes at UNLV – the first in the country at any university.

Lois sat on many boards including FACT - Family and Child Treatment Center for abused children; Nevada PEP – Professionals Empowering Parents; EMERGE Nevada – mentoring potential future women leaders; and the advisory committee for the Teacher Education Academy at Clark High School.

She has been honored by many organizations including Nevada Mother of the Year, Humanitarian of the Year by Catholic Charities, Silver Lily Award as Humanitarian of the Year by the March of Dimes, Nevada Woman Silver Heart Award, Las Vegas African American Award for Distinguished Service, "Sprit of Leadership" Award by the Lili Clair Foundation, Lifetime Education Achievement Award from the Public Education Foundation, "Florence Lee Jones Humanitarian" Award from the Junior League of Las Vegas, and the Leadership Award from the American Planning Association for her community experience to champion key planning initiatives such as expanding community outreach and improving neighborhoods.

In 2006, the Lois and Jerry Tarkanian Middle School opened in honor of Lois and her husband.

She was elected to the Clark County School Board in 1988; the Las Vegas City Council in 2005, serving as Mayor Pro-Tem in 2017; and the Board of Regents in 2020. She helped develop the medical district and was a strong proponent of the UNLV School of Medicine.

Lois has four children, 11 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

*Nominated by Regent Susan Brager*