

Tracking the Mink: the Story of Gene White

The fiber arts pieces in this window were made using a mink coat formerly owned by a remarkable woman, Gene White. After a long and adventuresome life, she died on Whidbey Island last year at the age of 99. Her friends found a disintegrating mink coat among her belongings and gifted it to Peninsula Fiber Artists for artful recycling.

After earning a Master's degree in nutrition in the 1940s, Gene worked in school nutrition programs in her home state of Ohio before moving to California in the 1960s. There, she ultimately became the state's Director of Child Nutrition, overseeing state and federal programs that served daily meals to more than 2.5 million children.

In the 1980s, a trip to Tunisia changed the trajectory of her life. She saw how feeding children with locally produced food benefits the entire community. This insight inspired her to found the annual Global Child Nutrition Forum, and then the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), which works with local partners in multiple countries to deliver sustainable and nutritious school meal programs. She became such a passionate leader that Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack called her "one of child welfare's most fierce advocates".

After moving to Whidbey in 1987, Gene actively continued this work, assisting local food banks and helping schools develop wellness policies to promote student health. Active well into her 90s, she only stepped down from her leadership role in GCNF in 2018.

Donations to support school meal programs can be made at:
gcnf.org/give