

# Diamond Alumni Award Winners



## Christina Unga

Owner, ChildRoots Centers for Young Children

As she walks through the two-story building peeking into classrooms, child care pioneer Christina Unga talks about her two loves — children and sustainability — and how her center is the result of decades of dreaming. The ChildRoots Center for Young Children in Southeast Portland is built on the promise that raising young minds can be done with sensitivity to the environment. Unga has found a niche with her approach to caring for children between the ages of six weeks and six years old. “I want this center to be a child’s home away from home and I want them to feel safe and secure,” said Unga, executive director and founder of ChildRoots. She graduated from Jefferson High School and in the mid ‘90s enrolled in PCC’s Early Childhood Education Program. In one class she designed her dream center. Aspects of that rendering are part of ChildRoots. “I was so proud that I went to PCC because of what I learned from the instructors,” she said. “They knew their stuff and I wanted to be just like them.” The waiting list to get into the school is long and it’s not unheard of for pregnant women to reserve spots months before their babies are born. Aside from the main center on SE 17th and Burnside, there are three in-home annex sites that share the same philosophy, as well as a brand new site that just opened in Northwest Portland. All told, more than 200 children flow into the centers each week.

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