

PCC's Dream Girl nominated for Grammy

She's a dreamgirl and has hung out with Burt Reynolds. What more to life is there?

For Julianne Johnson-Weiss there is a lot more to her life.

The second-year [music instructor](#) at Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus is accomplished at everything, it seems. Her most high-profile work involves playing the hardware store clerk who was a bit taken aback by one of the character's haul of burglar tools in the 1989 motion picture "Breaking In." It starred Reynolds with Casey Siemaszko and was written by the legendary John Sayles ("Wild Things" and "Eight Men Out"). Johnson-Weiss said that hanging out with Reynolds, star of "Mean Machine" and "Smokey and the Bandit," for two weeks was pretty cool.

Last April, she was in a lead role herself. Johnson-Weiss won the lead in [Stumptown Stages'](#) local production of "Dreamgirls" at the Interstate Firehouse Community Center (IFCC), 5340 N. Interstate Ave. Based on the Tony-winning play that was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film, "Dreamgirls" shows a time in American musical history when rhythm and blues blended with other styles of popular music to create a new American sound. She plays one of the main characters, Effie White.

Johnson-Weiss' impressive list of accomplishments would be great for 10 people, let alone one. Besides appearing in "Breaking In," she has starred in scores of independent films in the 1990s including "No Alibi," where she played a welfare mom who changes the course of a court trial, and portrayed a sassy nurse in the 1996 Fox sitcom "Medicine Ball." In addition, she has done voice-over singing work on commercials for Fred Meyer and Tuality Medical Center, has spent 14 years as the headline act for riverboat cruises in Louisiana, currently performs once a year on a Jazz-themed Mediterranean cruise, worked on the Broadway production of "Ain't Misbehavin'," is a minister in training and is a 2008 Grammy nominee.

Now, take a deep breath because that isn't even close to the end.

But that's Julianne Johnson-Weiss for you. She's a whirlwind of action, creativeness and frenetic energy. You can't pin her down, nor does she want to be pinned down. She's too busy helping students find their hidden talents, guiding youth choirs and encouraging inner-city youths to take a chance on their education.

"I'm not a conventional woman," she said with her trademark smile. "If I was conventional I wouldn't make it. All the experiences I have had culminate into one major event in my life – PCC – where I can utilize them to create a renaissance student where they are not afraid to follow their passion."

The passion, channeled into her singing career, resulted in her earning the distinction of being a two-time 2008 Grammy-nominated artist. She was nominated in the category of Best Contemporary Gospel for the CD and its title song "Heavenly Brother: Northwest

Gospel Project." Overall, the CD was nominated for Best Album, Best Song and Best Art Work. She collaborated with a group of artists on the CD, including Michael Allen Harrison. The duo has worked together before on a successful Jazz album titled, "[Cheek to Cheek](#)."

"It started out as a church scholarship fundraiser so that kids could go to school and we put together a concert," said Johnson-Weiss of "Heavenly Brother." "Just to be nominated, being able to put on the CD 'Grammy nominee'; I never imagined it. It has given us huge exposure."

But that doesn't even scratch the surface of her talents. The best of Julianne Johnson-Weiss is yet to come.