

WASHINGTON SQUARE: WHERE PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER IS A COMMUNITY AFFAIR'

As you walk down the main corridor southward from the Main Desk to Building F you will approach a pleasant seating (and hobby) area that is known to some as Washington Square, so called in honor of the remarkable lady who presides over activities there with grace and dignity. Her name is Carmen Washington, and on every available table top, wall or any other surface you can see the fruit of her labors—completed and sometimes framed and hanging jigsaw puzzles.

After completing Tuskegee Institute on a full basketball scholarship, Carmen pursued a career as a Physical Education teacher and coach. Her F1 apartment has a wall full of Teacher of the Year plaques and proclamations attesting to the effectiveness of her near half century of working with young people in her home town of Tampa, FL, her adopted home of Elizabeth, New Jersey, and Houston, where she ultimately moved to be with her entire family and teach in HISD.

She took up jigsaws in 1982 as a relaxant and has become so skilled that she can put together a 1000-piece puzzle in a day or two. She loves the thought processes involved: sorting out the multiple pieces borders first, then specific images, colors, and shapes and then starting to put them together with one eye on the picture (what it will look like finished) and the other on her goal of transforming a jumbled mass of tiny pieces into a coherent whole. Neighbors join her at work adding to the fun and sociable aspects, and have begun framing the finished works so that their community “living room” looks like an eclectic art gallery.