



Debi Robertson Hammond Class of 2025

Debi graduated from Las Plumas High School (LPHS) in 1991 as an outstanding student and a three-sport athlete. She took over the number one position on the varsity tennis team as a sophomore and was undefeated as a senior and was named All Eastern Athletic League for three years. She was the starting guard on the varsity basketball team for three years and was a triple jumper on the track team. After receiving the Most Valuable Player award in basketball, she was named the Las Plumas Athlete of the Year as a senior.

Debi served as a class officer in her junior and senior years and was Spirit Commissioner as a sophomore, planning assemblies, rallies, and mentoring students.

Outside of school, Debi was an active member of the Calvary Baptist Church, taught tennis to kids who could not afford lessons, and worked at Taco Bell.

Upon graduation from LPHS, Debi attended Butte College (BC), where she was number one on the tennis team both years and named all-conference and All-American in her second year. She graduated with honors with a 3.79 GPA and membership on the Dean's List. While at BC, she became the first student manager at Taco Bell.

After graduating from Butte College, Debi attended Western Kentucky University on a full athletic scholarship, playing Division One tennis and studying advertising and public relations. She later transferred to San Jose State, earning academic honors and her BS degree in advertising with a minor in marketing.

Debi's professional career began in 1996 as an account supervisor at Kodiak Communications, Inc. She then held senior marketing positions at a dot-com start-up, a luxury appliance manufacturing company, and a full-service advertising agency based in Southern California. During the year 2000, she was a project manager at MediaZing, Inc. in Sacramento.

In 2001, Debi founded Merlot Marketing, Inc. in Sacramento, an award-winning national marketing agency that was named one of the fastest-growing companies in the Sacramento region. Merlot Marketing specializes in branding, advertising, public relations, social media, and creative design. She continues to serve her company as CEO.

Throughout her career, Debi has been recognized in business and marketing, most notably being honored as one of the Sacramento Business Journal's top **40 Under 40 Business Professionals** and a **Woman Who Means Business**, as well as being named **PR Person of the Year** by the Sacramento Public Relations Association. In 2022, Merlot Marketing was named **Influential Agency of the Year** by the Public Relations Society of America.

Other business honors included the Woman of the Way Award, National Association of Women's Business Owners, and Woman-owned Small Business of the Year, Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout her career, Debi has been deeply devoted to community service in Sacramento and in Oroville. She has returned to Oroville to support, rebrand, and promote the partnership between the Oroville Chamber of Commerce and South Feather Water and Power Agency, along with many local businesses.

Her volunteer work in the Sacramento Area includes setting aside time for young people or those looking to change careers, mentoring, guiding, and offering her assistance. She has spoken on marketing and *motivation at Sac State, UCD, and Drexel University, and is a devoted supporter of Sacramento Advocates for Girls Empowerment (SAGE).*

A quote from Debi, I wasn't aware of the incredible business community thriving here. Coming back years later to collaborate with and showcase these talented professionals and businesses, and helping to tell their stories, was an unforgettable experience. From custom videos for OEA, Metal Works, and Roplast to sharing their stories in local, regional, and national media, I was continually impressed by the region's talent and business acumen. It was an absolute joy to work with so many talented and successful locals and give back to the community that shaped me.

Debi and her husband, Chuck, have a son and a daughter and make their home in Big Timber, Montana.

