

2013-2014 President's Report

WESTMORELAND HILLS GARDEN CLUB

This year has been a very busy year for the club. It has been a pleasure, as President, to work along side such a talented group of women. Whether it be at a committee meeting, on a lunch or coffee committee or side- by- side "digging in the dirt" being this year's President has been a fun and rewarding experience. I truly believe that our club helps make Westmoreland Hills a better community.

2013-2014 Highlights:

- We applied for and won two "Keep Montgomery Beautiful Awards". The contest is a vehicle for the County to encourage those in the community to undertake landscape activities and neighborhood beautification projects that improve the overall appearance of the County. Any person or group maintaining commercial, public or community property in Montgomery County is eligible to enter. All projects were judged by the Landscape Design Council of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs. This year, WHGC entered the two public spaces we maintain the "Corner Garden" and the "Jamestown Creek Wild Plant Sanctuary". These outdoor spaces were honored under the "Community Non Professional" category where they both were recognized with the highest honor called the "Award of Excellence". Should we choose to continue to apply for these awards and win the "Award of Excellence" for 3 consecutive years (2013, 2014, 2015) we could then apply in the "sustained maintenance" category. After 5 years in this category, the organization would be given the "Golden Trowel Award" in it's 5th year (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) and then the club would retire from competition.
- Sheila Lindveit was nominated for a Perennial Bloom Award. Thank you to Paula Levy for submitting the application on our behalf. Sheila's application was chosen by District IV as their nominee to our state organization, the NCAGC. When a club nominates someone for the Perennial Bloom award, they are required to plant something in the nominee's honor. Anne Bowen and Susan Hobbs as Horticulture chairs consulted with Sheila and a "Daphne Odora" will be planted in the Corner Garden in honor of her nomination.
- A concerted effort was made to promote our club and it's activities on Big Tent, the Westmoreland Citizen's Association's web site. Notices were put on Big Tent (after negotiation with the Big Tent webmaster, Alison was granted full posting privileges) to update the neighborhood regarding the club's activities. This included news blasts regarding our "Keep Montgomery Beautiful Awards", Strathmore Mansion holiday decorating and of course promoting the Creek Clean Up and the Garden and Gourmet

Sale. The club received lots of positive feedback on these postings. Similar articles were also submitted to the District IV Newsletter, "Garden Snippets"

- Liability Insurance was purchased by the club. This line item was first placed on the budget in 2009 but was never acted on so it was removed from the budget in the fall of 2013. The discussion resumed in January when Garden and Gourmet co-chairs Anne Kiehl and Camilla David asked the Executive Committee to revisit it. As the sale draws a large crowd, there are many "opportunities" for someone to be injured. Scenarios included slipping and falling, food poisoning, severe allergic reactions and falling equipment such as tents and umbrellas. Research was done including what other clubs do at the national, state and local levels. In February, the executive board recommended that the club purchase general liability insurance from RV Nuccio and Associates at a cost of \$315/year. The membership voted to approve the board's recommendation. Liability insurance took effect on April 1, 2014
- In October 2013, the By-laws were reviewed by the executive committee and a couple of small items were noted as needing further evaluation but not significant enough to warrant a by-laws overhaul. As the year progressed concerns were voiced regarding our membership process. At the moment our by-laws require "voting" on potential members. The consensus of the Executive Board was that this process felt antiquated and should be re-evaluated. Some preliminary work was done by Anne Brooks Rudzki who reached out to District IV Presidents seeking information on how their clubs handle membership. This information should be helpful to us we continue to evaluate our procedures in conjunction with a by-laws review slated for 2014-2015.
- Our active members under the leadership of Kathy Jahn and Anne Brooks Rudzki as membership co-chairs were very successful at recruiting eight new members to the club. We started the year with 31 active members and end the year with 39. Sadly we lost one of our Honorary Members, Helen Crowder. A new member coffee was held in mid February to provide them an orientation to club membership. The feedback from new members was very positive. Anne Brooks and Kathy also did a terrific job assembling our membership booklet which includes everything a member would need to know about the year's meetings, membership responsibilities and activities.
- The overall function of WHGC, to maintain the Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek for the enjoyment of our neighbors, was overseen by the capable Maintenance Committee (Carol Fitzgerald and Puffin Travers) and Horticulture Committee (Anne Bowen and Susan Hobbs) and Jamestown Creek (Lauren Greenberger). The spring display of tulips this year was lovely. An area along the Elliott Road side of the garden adjacent to the benches was noted to have a significant erosion problem. This problem was addressed with application of landscape cloth, strategically placed rocks and boulders and some

plantings. The Jamestown Creek area was heavily infested with lesser celandine. Ianbelli was paid extra to remove the invasive plant from the creek area.

- Similarly, the club's commitment to the environment was enhanced by a highly successful Little Falls Creek Clean-up, chaired by Diane August and Peggy Holland. They worked in conjunction with Montgomery County Parks, area schools and civic groups to host an outstanding Saturday clean-up effort that makes a hike along our local creek a pleasure. The club has sponsored this yearly creek clean up since 1979. This year the creek clean up was included in a blog on the National Geographic Website! The Voice of America also sent a journalist and camera crew to the clean up. At the time of this report no follow up was available regarding any release of coverage by the VOA.
- The Garden and Gourmet Sale (36th year) co- chaired by Anne Kiehl and Camilla David proved to be another wonderful event that drew a very large crowd. The traditional perennial and annual sale did very well as did the café, gourmet food section, and the boutique. The Children's Table attracted and encouraged families to stay at the event. The end result was a nice profit. Proceeds from the sale are applied first to the maintenance of the CG and JC. Surplus income is donated to various organizations, enabling the club to support conservation and gardening efforts beyond our neighborhood.
- This year we made \$5000 worth of contributions to 15 non-profit organizations. Box tops for Education were again collected and sent to the NGAGC to support the work of the Washington Youth Garden at the National Arboretum. Thank you to Vice President, Mary Ellen Rogers for leading these efforts.
- The program year included four excellent speakers, a field trip to the National Arboretum, and a "special event" trip to Hard Bargain Farm in Accokeek, MD. Thanks to Kaki Power and Ann Swett for organizing our programs. A special thank you goes to all of our hostesses for opening their homes for our meetings and to their committee members who worked to provide the group with wonderful refreshments!
- Speaking of recipes, thank you to Amy Nadel for gathering the recipes and putting them together into a book for all of us to enjoy.
- The Strathmore Mansion decorators led by Heidi Delaney did a wonderful job transforming the Stathmore library into a festive, warm and welcoming room. They adorned the mantle, fireplace, windows, chandelier and sconces with greenery, pinecones, fruit, ribbon and birds. Next year we have been asked to decorate the outside hand railings that lead to the front door of the mansion.
- Thank you to Marna Blanchette for spear heading this year's "Special Activity" a trip to Hard Bargain Farm in Acokeek, MD on May 21st where members received a tour followed by lunch. Hard Bargain Farm is owned and operated by the Alice Ferguson

Foundation (AFF). The Club now works with the AFF on our Creek Clean up. As in the past years we have continued to support the AFF with a charitable contribution.

- Not forgetting to treat ourselves, our annual Cocktail Party was hosted at the beautiful home of Mary Ellen & David Rogers. The event was co-chaired by Lisa Sirriani and Polly Best. The food, flowers and member turn out were terrific. The weather even cooperated with the "Evening in Napa" theme.

Looking ahead:

- As discussed by the Executive Board a By-laws committee will be established for next year to review our by-laws to make sure they accurately reflect our operations while allowing flexibility.
- Continue the discussion regarding our membership procedures in hopes of making our members and guests more comfortable with the process.
- As discussed by the Executive Board in May, members continue to voice concerns regarding the storage of club property in their homes. Continue the discussion regarding renting a nearby storage unit.
- A good deal of research was done on the mechanics and costs involved in setting up a website for the club. Anna Nunez kindly offered to head the effort this year but personal circumstances did not allow her to complete this undertaking. Hopefully, she will be interested in trying again next year.
- Establishment of the Jamestown Creek Native Plant Sanctuary by our club is celebrating it's 40th anniversary in 2014. Bringing this area to the attention of our neighborhood in some special way seems warranted. One idea put forth was considering the purchase of a new sign (to be put on the Dalecarlia Drive end) as one way to commemorate the 40th anniversary.
- Continue to apply for the "Keep Montgomery Beautiful Awards". The application is very easy and brings welcome recognition to our Club for the hard work we do maintaining the Corner Garden and the Jamestown Creek Wild Plant Sanctuary.
- Consider applying for another "Perennial Bloom" Award. Another name brought up for consideration was sustaining member Diane Carberry.

A box of historical materials has been passed on to incoming President, Mary Ellen Rogers. I have also transferred all pertinent documents in my possession to Mary Ellen electronically. The Vice President/President Timeline was updated this spring. This document was originally written by Anne Kiehl in 2010 and proved to be an incredibly useful reference when organizing the club's meetings and activities for the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Newman

Outgoing President

May 2014