

2014-2015 President's Report

WESTMORELAND HILLS GARDEN CLUB

It has been another worthwhile and successful year for the Westmoreland Hills Garden Club. I am especially proud that the WHGC took a bold leap this year in updating its bylaws to reflect modern sensibilities as to a more inclusive membership process. It has been a pleasure, as President, to work among such a talented group of women.

2014-2015 Highlights:

- We applied for and again 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; projects are judged by the Landscape Design Council of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs. 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 its 5th year (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) and then the club would retire from competition.
- A concerted effort was made to promote our club and its 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 last year) to update the neighborhood regarding the club's activities. The club

received increased visibility from these postings. Similar articles were also submitted to the District IV Newsletter, "Garden Snippets" and "A Capital Gardener".

- The club voted to secure a storage unit. Members were storing WHGC items and the time had come to put club-owned property into a secure location with access to those who would need the items.
- Our showcase and award-winning Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek areas are overseen by three committees: the capable Maintenance Committee (Carol Fitzgerald and Paula Levy), Horticulture Committee (Anne Bowen and Anne Kiehl) and Jamestown Creek (Jill Lucas). We celebrated the 40th Anniversary of our maintenance of Jamestown Creek with a new sign at the corner of Dalecarlia and Jamestown and reoriented and refreshed the original sign. A photo of the Creek was used for the cover of this year's directory. The spring display of tulips in the Corner Garden this year was lovely despite the ravages of our increasing rabbit population. The Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek area was heavily infested with the aggressive lesser celandine invasive. Ianbelli was paid extra to remove the invasive plant from the garden and creek area. A sprinkler part was replaced. Jamestown Creek committee is in search of native plants strong enough to survive in the curb area despite winter weather and salt. No detail was overlooked to keep these areas as functional and beautiful as possible for our neighborhood to enjoy.
- The Little Falls Creek Clean-up was chaired by Diane August and Babs Mersereau. The effort was successful despite once again falling during the Montgomery County spring break. After a two-year hiatus due to the calendar, they expect next year's date to fall outside the holiday. This will help in recruiting school groups and scouts again. They worked in conjunction with Montgomery County Parks and the Alice Ferguson Foundation 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. The Conservation Committee also sponsored January's informative and enjoyable program from the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

- Eileen Sherman and Diana Sherbacow, Membership Chairs, were charged with assembling and maintaining our Membership Directory. They emailed the directory to members in early August, which was a crucial move forward as members are more mobile and don't always have the directory with them when they need it. They introduced four new members to the club. We started the year with 35 active members; one member went inactive mid-year and four were added to bring total membership to 38. A new member orientation coffee was held in February but another is needed for our late-year new members. The Executive Board feels strongly that this is an important step in the membership process. Sadly we lost one of our dear Sustainer members, Gaby Jeppe. Our donation to the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail was made in her honor.
- The Garden and Gourmet Sale (37th year) co- chaired by Anne Brooks Rudzki, Puffin Travers and Peggy Holland 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 to 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 non-profit organizations. Boxtops 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 Past President, Alison Newman for leading these efforts.

- The program year included four excellent speakers, a Blooming Minute by Anne Kiehl and a field trip to Sugarloaf Mountain. Thanks to Kaki Power and Amy Nadel for organizing our programs. This year, we shifted the responsibility for scheduling hostesses and committees to the Vice President. The Program Committee is now in charge of the special activity/field trip for the club. 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!
- Thank you to Tricia Pickard for gathering the recipes and putting them together into a book for all of us to enjoy. It seemed as though members were not submitting their
- Susan Hobbs was chairwoman for the Strathmore holiday decorating with help from Marna Blanchette. They did a wonderful job transforming the Strathmore Mansion railings with fresh greenery donated by American Plant.
- Our annual Cocktail Party was hosted at the beautiful home of Amy Nadel and Andrew Smith. The event was co-chaired by Margarita Egan and Eileen Sherman. They and their committee received many compliments on the food and décor. We enjoyed a member turn out and the evening was just terrific. The theme this year was "Farm to Table".

Looking ahead:

- Continue to press for notebooks in each committee and provide an opportunity for incoming/outgoing committee chairs and officers to transition.
- Last year, a good deal of research was done on the mechanics and costs involved in setting up a website for the club. This position was advertised on the Membership Survey but did not receive a volunteer.

- The 60th anniversary of the Club is approaching in 2016. Diane Manning will lead the club's celebratory year. Suggestions to mark the occasion include labeling many of the plants in the Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek for the edification of those who frequent the areas and a 60th Anniversary dinner with historical displays.
- 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. Due dates are being rethought from the District perspective and will be provided to the presidents at the June District IV meeting. Names brought up for consideration are sustaining member Diane Carberry and active member Barbara Whalen.

A box of historical materials has been passed on to incoming President, Kathy Jahn. I have also transferred all pertinent documents by email to Kathy. The Vice President/President/Past President Timeline was updated this spring to reflect changing responsibilities. This document was originally written by Anne Kiehl in 2010 and proved to be an incredibly useful reference for the officers, not only in terms of duties and responsibilities, but for organizing the club's activities for the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Rogers

Outgoing President

May 2015