

2016 - 2017 President's Report

WESTMORELAND HILLS GARDEN CLUB

It has been a very worthwhile and successful year for the Westmoreland Hills Garden Club. It has been a pleasure, as President, to work with such a talented group of women. We have celebrated our 60th anniversary year through: interesting programs, a flower arrangement workshop, a joint meeting with two local garden clubs to hear a nationally-known speaker, and a field trip to two Frederick County garden jewels.

2016-2017 Highlights:

- We applied for and won at the NCAGC District IV level the "Publication Certificate of Merit" for our *60th Anniversary Directory*. By winning this certificate, we will now compete at the national level. We also received two more certificates, the first being in appreciation for our monetary contributions to NCAGC projects, such as Fern Valley at the Arboretum. The second Certificate was in appreciation of our "Arbor Service." As an aside, the "Keep Montgomery Beautiful Awards" heretofore sponsored by the County, which we have won for many years for our maintenance of Jamestown Creek and the Corner Garden, have been discontinued.
- Our showcase neighborhood projects, the Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek areas are overseen by three committees: the Maintenance Committee (Tricia Pickard and Anne Boyden); Corner Garden (formerly "Horticulture") (Camilla David and Jody McGovern); and Jamestown Creek (Anne Kiehl and Julie Raffensperger). These three committees met to better coordinate and define the duties of each committee, and wrote up these points to be able to pass them on to future committees.
- Corner Garden and Maintenance advised the Club that damage is continuing to the Elliott Street side of the Corner Garden from rain water runoff. They created a plan using small boulders and native plants, and procured estimates from landscapers to solve the problem. Because the projected cost of the project exceeded the Maintenance Budget, the Club voted to expend the funds necessary for this project, but before any work was contracted or begun, the County stepped forward to take on the project and pay for it out of County funds. This will be a great benefit for the integrity of the

project, and the County's Department of Environmental Protection will be responsible for building and maintaining it, not the Club.

- The Club's commitment to the environment was also exemplified by the successful Little Falls Creek Clean Up chaired by Eileen Sherman and Diana Sherbacow on April 1st. Volunteers collected 40 bags of trash! We worked in conjunction with Montgomery County Parks and the Alice Ferguson Foundation to host the event which helps keep our creek a local treasure. The Club has sponsored this yearly creek clean up since 1979. The Conservation Committee also sponsored January's speaker who gave a very thoughtful presentation on the Anacostia River.
- The Garden and Gourmet Sale (39th year), co-chaired by Polly Best, Betsy Turley and Jill Lucas, proved to be another wonderful event that brought in the neighborhood. There was the usual friendly, outgoing and supportive atmosphere at the Garden, and our neighbors really appreciated it. The traditional perennial and annual sale did very well as did the café, gourmet food section and boutique. The Children's Table attracted and encouraged families to stay at the event. The end result was a nice profit of more than \$10,000. 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.
- These donations will not be made in May this year, however. For the first time, these donations will be deferred, and not distributed until December, 2017. The need for this change came about in the September meeting when reviewing the proposed budget for 2016-17. It was apparent that our cash reserves have been dropping several thousand dollars over the last few years, due to an increase in fixed expenses. A Finance Committee was created, composed mostly of former Treasurers, to assess the situation and make recommendations as to the best way to improve our financial standing. The Finance Committee met twice and recommended at the February Meeting that our Club is in sound fiscal standing, but to better gauge how much money we should donate, it is best to wait until after the Fall, which will allow for the previous year's books to be closed and the profit or loss for that year determined. Based on these results, contribution amounts will be put forth to

membership in October, voted on in November, and distributed in December. The current excess amount in our Reserve will be spent down over time, most likely over the next four to six years.

- Boxtops for Education were again collected and sent to the NGAGC to support the work of the Washington Youth Garden at the National Arboretum. Our past President, Kathy Jahn, lead these efforts.
- Our 60th Anniversary dinner replaced the annual Cocktail Party, and was hosted at the home of Julie and Paul Raffenspurger on September 25th. The event was chaired by Diane Manning, and as a treat, the meal was catered by C & C Caterers. We enjoyed a turnout of 57 guests, 34 being active members and sustainers. The weather allowed for a wonderful evening, spent mostly outside on the patio with a lovely fireplace and lively music. Paula Levy created an amazing presentation of photos of the membership over the last 10 years, which played alongside a slide show of the first 50 years. A peach-colored rose was given to each of the members as a favor.
- The program year included: four excellent speakers; two Blooming Minutes; a joint meeting with the Sumner Garden Club and the Chevy Chase Garden Club, hearing a nationally-known writer of landscape history; and a field trip to two amazing and different gardens in Frederick County. One of the programs particularly well-received was a flower arranging workshop at the Little House. Lunch was served, which made the spacing tight. If membership wants another workshop, it would be better to have a snack instead, for simplicity and spacing. Mary Ellen Rogers and Lisa Sirianni did an outstanding job of organizing our programs and our special activities, aided at times by Paperless Post which proved to be a handy tool for our group. The hostesses and their committee members worked hard all year to provide the group with lovely home settings and delicious refreshments!
- Margarita Egan gathered recipes from the lunch and coffees. We have not had enough recipes collected over the past several years for a book, so we may want to think of discontinuing this endeavor in its present format.
- The Strathmore Mansion decorators were Lindy Walsh with assistance from Marna Blanchette. They did a wonderful job

transforming the Strathmore railings with large, festive bows. We contacted the District IV Committee Chair for decorating to request a change of venue, and were given an inside double doorway to decorate. The club who did this before gave us the decorations they used which will be placed in our storage unit. They also gave us photos of how it looked when finished, which will be passed on to the next Strathmore chair.

Looking ahead:

- We will continue to press for final reports and notebooks from each committee to provide an opportunity for incoming/outgoing chairs and officers to better transition.
- We are currently working on a website for the club, with a public section and a private section that we expect to become operational this summer. We will need a webmaster to do the maintenance and updating.
- We should consider applying for a "Perennial Bloom" award. The due date should be given out at the District IV meeting. Names brought up for consideration are member Diane Carberry, who passed away this year, and active member Barbara Whalen. Marna Blachette would be the best person to gather all the pertinent information about Dianne, and Anne Bowen might be willing to do the same for Barbara Whalen.
- After discussion over several years, we are going to move forward with scanning many of our historical files. Kathy Jahn has volunteered to do this project as Historian.
- Members have suggested that we should promote our club not only through the NCAGC Snippets, Big Tent and Westmoreland Citizens Association blog, and that we could even try for recognition through local and national magazines. I am looking into this idea, but have not gotten too far at this point. The idea is that we should brag a bit that we've won awards for the Corner Garden and Jamestown Creek, and that the funding comes through G&G. We should also share that we make donations to other charitable

organizations. The idea behind this is not for self-congratulations, but to increase awareness of the viability of garden clubs at a local and national level, and, importantly, to draw in more members. Having a website will go far in communicating with these entities and achieving these goals.

- The Membership Committee will be trying diligently to reach out in the neighborhood to bring in more members. While we currently have room for about ten new members, we realize it may take a while to rebuild. We want to continue to encourage and make the inactive members feel welcome as well, so that they will want to become active members again.
- I personally would like to see our membership become more involved in District IV projects, and will be trying to think of ways to attract them to those meetings and activities.

I have transferred electronically all pertinent documents in my possession to incoming President, Ann Swett. The Vice President/President Timeline is included. Anne Kiehl wrote the original document in 2010 and while it has proved to be an incredibly useful reference when organizing the club's meetings and activities for the year, it needs some updating, which I will be doing.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaki Power

Outgoing President

June 2017