

NEWS OF
VIRGINIA BEACH
AND YOUR
NEIGHBORHOOD

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THE VIRGINIA BEACH
Beacon

The city maintains 156 miles of divided roadways, whose medians feature 495 acres of grass, 35 acres of landscaped beds, 8,874 trees and 27,188 shrubs.



BEAUTIFUL ARRANGEMENT Suzie Duckworth, president of the Council of Garden Clubs of Virginia Beach, and Mary Hall, who served as council president from 1975-77, arrange flowers for the Neptune Festival Seniors Ball. The garden club is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS OF VIRGINIA BEACH

PERENNIAL BEAUTIES

The 50-year-old mission is simple, yet profound — improve and beautify the area with gardening.

By MARY REID BARROW
Correspondent
and BARBARA J. WOERNER
Staff Photographer

Flowers brighten the landscape, trees lend shade and greenery to the city and median strips, and public places are a sight for motorist's sore eyes, thanks to the Council of Garden Clubs of Virginia Beach.

For half a century, the council and its garden club members have worked to make Virginia Beach a more beautiful place to live. The group, one of the city's oldest institutions, celebrated its long success last week at a gala 50th anniversary luncheon at the Cavalier Golf & Yacht Club.

City officials, civic leaders, local florists and others turned out to honor the council, which got off the ground in July 1950 with a goal of "improving and beautifying" the area, said Helen Anderson, council president from 1957-59. She was among 14 past presidents at the luncheon and as one of the early leaders, read the council history at the event.



DIANE HINSON, from left, and KAY HINSON, members of the Council of Garden Clubs of Virginia Beach, share creativity and a laugh while arranging flowers.

The council's charter members were the Bay Colony, Point, Cavalier, Linkhorn Park, Princess Anne and Virginia Beach garden clubs. They banded together when Virginia Beach was still a small oceanfront resort surrounded by the farming community of Princess Anne County, Anderson noted.

Today, 48 garden clubs are

members of the council. Over the years, the group grew as county and city became one and subdivisions emerged from farmland. Residents in many of those new neighborhoods formed garden clubs to beautify their landscapes and streetscapes, which sprang from corn, wheat and soybean fields.

It was those neighborhood



MEMBERS OF the Council worked together on flower arrangements for the Neptune Festival Senior Ball, among other projects.

WHAT THEY'VE DONE

Some significant projects of the Council of Garden Clubs of Virginia Beach:

1950s

- Landscaped 47 blocks of **Atlantic Avenue**
- Landscaped the **Virginia Beach Convention Center (The Dome)**
- Initiated planting 5,000 **dogwood trees** throughout be city

1960s

- Began the **Crepe Myrtle Trail** along General Booth Boulevard and First Colonial Road
- Began beautification (of **Virginia Beach General Hospital** grounds)

1970s

- Established **Red Wing Park Gardens**, colonial garden at the **Municipal center** and herb garden at **Francis Land house**
- Began distributing pine seedlings to all third-graders on **Arbor Day**
- Landscaped many public places such as **United Way Family Center, Norwegian Lady Plaza, Great Neck Library and Northampton Boulevard**

1980s

- Donated funds and volunteers to **Virginia Marine Science Museum**
- Planted 24,000 day lilies at **Kempsville Library**
- Worked to preserve **Francis Land House** as a historic site

1990s

- Landscaped the **Judicial Center**
- Designed and donated 60 table arrangements to the Empty Bowls fund-raiser for the **Tidewater Food Bank**
- Purchased a corner cupboard for the **Francis Land House**



JOANNE MILLER was president of the Council of Garden Clubs of Virginia Beach from 1985 to 1987.

garden clubs working through the council that helped push the fast-growing city government toward also recognizing the importance of aesthetics, said Randy Jackson, extension horticulturist with the city.

"They have had an impact on getting the city to take beautification very seriously," Jackson explained.

He said the council's HANDS Program, begun about 30 years ago, was a significant factor in creating a climate for beautification. The HANDS (Home and Neighborhood Development Sponsor) Program is a project of the Sears Roebuck Foundation, which provides seed money for garden club projects. The Virginia Beach Beautification Commission also adds \$300 to the kitty, and the council has \$800 to award.

Individual member clubs compete for the prize money to help pay for landscaping projects, such as their neighborhood entrance, park or



A SIGN near the Cavalier Hotel on Atlantic Avenue honors the council's efforts in developing the 47 blocks of the street.

school. Over the years, Jackson has judged many of the annual competitions.

"They really set the tone for the city's beautification efforts," he said.

By working with the Virginia Beach Landscape Services Division, the council also gives more bounce to the ounce to many of their projects. In some cases, the council pays for plants and the City plants them.

"They offered to partner with the city and that had an impact, too," Jackson said.

City Arborist Roger Huff agreed that the HANDS Program is one of the council's major successes, and he added that landscaping at neighborhood entrances is the visible result.

"There are very few neighborhoods that don't have landscaping," Huff said.

As a tree person, Huff also appreciates the council's Arbor Day project. Since the 1970s each year every third-grade student in Virginia Beach receives a tree seedling to take home and plant on Arbor Day.

The council also was one of the civic groups that worked hard over two decades ago to get the city to approve the city arborist position that he holds, Huff said.

"I've had more fun working with these ladies," he added. "There's more energy out there.

They are a super bunch to work with."

One of the group's first projects in the early 1950s was a mammoth one. Working with the state transportation department, the council landscaped the scrubby, sandy tract that was the old Norfolk and Southern Railroad right of way. Now known as the feeder road median, the strip runs for 47 blocks along Atlantic Avenue, from the Cavalier Hotel to Fort Story. The project took 21/2 years of planning and \$15,000 to complete.

Since then, the council has undertaken projects large and small, from providing table decorations for the Neptune Festival's senior citizens' ball, to landscaping medians on Independence Boulevard. The council makes monetary gifts, too. Beneficiaries include the Virginia Marine Science Museum and the Francis Land House as well as a lucky youngster who receives a scholarship to the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs' Nature Camp each year.

The group also was a leader in the environmental movement, sponsoring a clean-up of all of Princess Anne County in the 1950s and working to have the city and county designated as a Bird Sanctuary. The council also has participated in dune grass plantings and has supported curbside recycling.

The list of contributions - both money and otherwise - goes on and on. And the council is not planning on resting on its laurels anytime soon, said president Suzie Duckworth.

Two major projects, re-landscaping the Thoroughgood House and planting wildflowers in the median strips of Ferrell Parkway and Princess Anne Road, will introduce the second half of the century for the Virginia Beach Council of

WHO THEY ARE

The following are members of the Virginia Beach Council of Garden Clubs:

Neighborhood garden clubs:

Alanton-Baycliff, Aragona, Bay Colony, Birdneck Point, Brittany Points, Broad Bay, Broad Bay Point Greens, Cape Henry Shores, Cavalier, Chelsea-Green Hill, Chesapeake Colony, Church Point, Colonial Oaks-Lake Trant,

Fairfield, Fox Run, Great Neck Meadows, Great Neck Point, Junior Virginia Beach, Kings Forest, King's Grant, Lago Mar, Lake Smith Terrace, Larkspur, Laurel Cove, Linkhorn Park, Linlier, Little Neck, Lynnhaven Colony,

Middle Plantation, Pembroke Meadows, Point O'Woods Princess Awe, Princess Anne Hills, Princess Anne Plaza, Quail Point Cove, Red Mill Farm, Stratford Chase, Thalia Garden, Thoroughgood, Virginia Beach and Witchduck garden clubs.

Other member clubs:

Country Gardeners Guild, Creative Gardeners of Tidewater, Garden Club of Greater Kempsville, Garden Club of Pembroke Manor, Gardeners' Guild, May Farm Garden Club of Kingston and Town & Country Garden Club of Lake Shores.

Join them: Visit the council's web site: groups.gohamptonroads.com/gardenclubcouncil, or e-mail the council at GardenClubCouncil@email.com or call council president Suzie Duckworth at 363-1050.

Garden Clubs and its efforts to make Virginia Beach a more beautiful place.

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