



de Lacy Gray Award for Conservation

by Lesie Leake

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The Garden Club of Virginia awarded the 2017 de Lacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation to Heidi James of the Lynchburg Garden Club at the Annual Meeting in Fredericksburg on May 17.

Many cities have a hidden gem, and Lynchburg's is Heidi James. A long-time member of the Lynchburg Garden Club, she is recognized for many achievements, most central, her unrelenting passion for and tireless pursuit of historical preservation and conservation.

Chief among these accomplishments is the removal of a derelict iron bridge from the James River. The bridge was swept loose and into the river during a flood in 1985 where it remained, rusting and collecting debris, for 25 years. Removing the bridge would be expensive, difficult and dangerous. In 2011, engineers working on an unrelated project cleared vegetation and built a temporary road between the James River and railroad tracks. Heidi James and the Lynchburg Garden Club leapt into action, seizing the opportunity to combine efforts. They involved city, state and Liberty University officials. The unsightly, dangerous bridge was removed and the banks and view shed of the James River vastly improved.

Heidi held numerous positions in local and statewide organizations. She served as chairman and executive director of the Lynchburg Historical Foundation, past president of the Lynchburg Garden Club, and the historian for Garden Club of Virginia. She wrote a history of the GCV's Conservation and Beautification Committee and contributed a well-researched article on the John Tradescant stained glass window, GCV's gift to Oxford University, to the *Journal*.

First awarded in 1965, this memorial to de Lacy Thompson Gray was created by the Dolley Madison Garden Club. It is presented to an individual member or a member club of the Garden Club of Virginia in recognition of outstanding effort to further the knowledge of our natural resources and to encourage their wise use.

In recognition of her continuous conservation efforts and dedication to the Garden Club of Virginia, the Conservation and Beautification Awards Committee is proud to add Heidi James to the exemplary list of winners of the de Lacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation. 🌸



Heidi James, with husband, Blitz, and son, John.