

The Massie Medal Award for Distinguished Achievement

By Mary Bruce H. Glaize, The Massie Medal Award Committee Chairman
The Little Garden Club of Winchester



*Margaret Bemiss, winner of the Massie Medal and GCV President Cabell West.
Photograph by Lea Shuba*

Margaret Page Bemiss, the winner of the 2009 Massie Medal for Distinguished Achievement, presents herself as she presents her work, with breathtaking fashion. She is as graceful and informative as are the contributions she has made to The Garden Club of Virginia and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Margaret Page Bemiss is a gifted scholar, writer and editor as well as being a gardener and horticulturist. As a member of the Restoration Committee, she chaired a subcommittee to investigate the re-printing of *Historic Virginia Gardens* by Dottie Williams. When the recommendation came from professionals not to reprint the 1975 work, Margaret took an enormous leap of faith and committed to write her own scholarly treatise, *Historic Virginia Gardens: Preservation Work of The Garden Club of Virginia 1975-2007*.

This documentation of The Garden Club of Virginia's Restoration Projects has been a labor of love that began in 2002. The labor was difficult and Margaret's love of the intellectual pursuit never failed. Through her perseverance, this energetic historian and writer has given a priceless gift to readers in Virginia and across the nation. Released this spring, *Historic Virginia Gardens: Preservation Work of The Garden Club of Virginia 1975-2007* has had positive reviews.

Margaret is a member of The James River Garden Club. She has served as President and shares her expertise in the areas of horticulture, garden design, beautification, restoration and history. She was the co-editor of her club's cookbook, *A Taste of Virginia*.

The City of Richmond has also benefited from her desire to preserve Virginia's natural and historical resources. While serving on the Board of Visitors of Virginia Commonwealth University, Margaret was instrumental in the restoration and preservation of historic properties in the vicinity of VCU. She worked tirelessly to preserve Monroe Park, a 7.3-acre city park located in the center of downtown Richmond, restoring it to a place friendly to the citizens. Margaret helped oversee the creation of a master plan that will ensure stewardship of the majestic landscape and architectural treasures of historic Hollywood Cemetery.

Margaret Page Bemiss has made significant contributions to the commonwealth's botanical and architectural heritage through her action, word and deed. She has served The Garden Club of Virginia with unusual dedication and distinction. She is the quintessential Virginian. We are pleased to honor her with our most prestigious award.

2009 deLacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation

By Anne Doyle, GCV Conservation and Beautification Chairman
The Garden Club of Norfolk



Suzanne Wescoat shares her joy after receiving the deLacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation. Photograph by Lea Shuba

Suzanne Wescoat, a member of The Garden Club of the Eastern Shore since 1974, was awarded the deLacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation at The Garden Club of Virginia's Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach. Attending the award ceremony were her family members and loyal friends from her club.

Suzanne has dedicated her life to preserving and protecting the Eastern Shore's natural resources, including its beautiful coastlines, fragile ecosystem and traditional, rural economy. Her involvement began in 1988 in response to real estate developers from outside the region buying up waterfront farms. Suzanne led residents of Northampton County, the southern half of Virginia's Eastern Shore, to address concerns about their community's future. Her campaign led to the formation of a non-profit organization entitled Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore (CBES), and Suzanne served tirelessly as its first president.

With her inspiration, CBES currently represents Virginia's entire Eastern Shore with over 800 members and manages working partnerships with organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, The Working Waterman's Association and the NAACP. The work of two of its committees became so significant that they were spun-off in the 1990s to become separate organizations, each receiving national recognition and funding through grants for community and sustainable development.

Her leadership continued through her election and twelve-year service to the Northampton County Board of Supervisors, where fellow Supervisors appointed her as their Chairman. In this position, she served as an advocate for responsible residential and commercial development. According to her colleague, Supervisor Richard B. Tankard, "She began her tenure as the lone voice for conservation. Her consensus building talents changed how Northampton County viewed conservation." To the Board of Supervisors' long-range plan, Suzanne included conservation easements to support marine habitat and agriculture, as well as adopting the Chesapeake Bay Act for both bay and ocean sides of the Eastern Shore's narrow peninsula. Suzanne was instrumental in the Board of Supervisors' adoption of Land Use Taxation and Agricultural/Forrestal Districts. These districts help preserve farms and forests by giving property owners a tax incentive if their land does not change its usage for ten years. Finally, she secured a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to establish the Eastern Shore Heritage Trail.

Suzanne received national recognition in 1996 when The Nature Conservancy presented her with its highest conservation honor, the Oak Leaf Award. Suzanne's inspired leadership truly exemplifies the spirit of the deLacy Gray Memorial Medal. Her dedication to conservation offers GCV members throughout Virginia a most valuable role model as they pursue the GCV's vision of *celebrating the beauty of the land, conserving the gifts of nature and challenging future generations to build on this heritage.*