

# The First Winner of the Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award

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

**T**he four Richmond Garden Club of Virginia clubs have received the Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award for their project to restore the urban forest in Richmond.

Jack Carter presented the award at the Annual Meeting. As a new recruit to the James River Garden Club in the 1950s, Bessie took shovel in hand to plant trees along the old Richmond-to-Petersburg Turnpike, now Interstate 95. Bessie would be pleased with the winner of the first award in her name.

Richmond's tree canopy has seriously eroded in recent years, resulting in 500 empty tree wells downtown. Trees are enormously beneficial environmental filters of both air and water. One large shade tree is capable of capturing over 100 gallons of water during a storm event, thereby reducing run-off into the James River and downstream to the Chesapeake Bay. In addition, studies have shown that areas offering tree canopy attract more pedestrians and capital investment.

BBCCA winners Boxwood, James River, Three Chopt and Tuckahoe Garden Clubs have collaborated and made a detailed plan to work in concert with the City of Richmond's Department of Planning and Development Review. Within the next two years, the four GCV clubs will restore a very visible pedestrian gateway to downtown Richmond. Their project will serve as a model for community action to restore urban forests. In addition, the project has the potential to be used statewide as a prototype, drawing in such organizations as Friends of Urban Forestry, state universities and the Urban Forestry Commission to make sustainable improvements to Virginia's cities.

What a fitting tribute to Bessie!



*Presidents of the four Richmond GCV clubs*