

Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award 2017

by Lesie Leake

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The Petersburg Garden Club, long known for its role in conservation, received the Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award for their Lee Park Wildflower and Restoration Project at the Garden Club of Virginia Annual Meeting. The \$8,000 grant will be used in the conservation and rehabilitation of the 25-acre Wildflower and Bird Sanctuary in historic Lee Memorial Park and to develop demonstration gardens, herbivore enclosures and a plant rescue program. The grant guidelines will provide opportunities for local residents and students to participate in the restoration of this sensitive area within Lee Park.

The Petersburg Garden Club was founded in 1925 and joined the Garden Club of Virginia in 1932. During the 1930s, through a WPA project, PGC worked with local African-American women to establish a botanical preserve in the park. Species were identified, an herbarium collected, exquisite paintings executed by Bessie Niemeyer Marshall, specimens planted and nurtured, and more than 10 miles of paths developed. The park was closed in 1952 and the great legacy of the 1930s was nearly forgotten. In the past three decades, the PGC has once again made Lee Park the center of its activities, working hard to build on the legacy of the 1930s. The park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Established at the 2009 GCV Annual Meeting, the Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award is given to fund the implementation of a conservation project that will serve as a catalyst for community action. It is a monetary award for natural resource conservation or environmental protection within the commonwealth.

The Garden Club of Virginia Conservation and Beautification Awards Committee is honored to award the 2017 Bessie Bocock Carter Award to the Petersburg Garden Club for a worthy project that is certain to educate, enlighten and delight all who visit Lee Memorial Park in Petersburg. ❁



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