

## **Cary Woman's Club**

### **Environment Narrative 2023**

The focus this year of the Cary Woman's Club Environment CSP has been to involve our members and local citizens to demonstrate how each person can take actions to improve the environmental quality of our community.

#### **Heritage Daffodil Rescue**

Every year in late January, our members noticed beautiful cheery petite yellow daffodils blooming along Kildaire Farm Rd. on an old home site, where they had been happy and multiplying for at least 50 years. Now that site is adjacent to the highway construction for I-540 between Cary and Holly Springs, and the daffodils were destined to be destroyed by a bulldozer without our intervention. The Cary Woman's Club Environment committee members researched the site and received permission from the owner to rescue the Heritage Daffodils prior to construction. This effort began in January 2023 when the daffodils were in full bloom. We deadheaded the 863 spent blooms (!) and placed landscape flags near the crowded clumps in order to find and dig them in the fall, after they had stored up energy during the summer for new blooms and then died back to wait for 2024.

In October 2023, several CWC and Cary Garden Club members, three students from Holly Springs High School and the sponsor of the Cary High School Environmental Club dug about 700 of the heritage daffodil bulbs. Then members of our club met on the Page Walker patio to clean and sort the bulbs and bagged them in drawstring organza bags with planting instructions to sell at our Craft Fair (33 bags of 12 bulbs @ \$5 = \$165). Additional bulbs were planted in the Page Walker Pollinator garden and the two High School gardens of our student volunteers.

To our surprise, the next month many more daffodils began to come up at the rescue site, so we dug 32 more large clumps of the tightly crowded daffodil bulbs, and enlisted volunteers to plant them in church gardens, Cary's Hillcrest cemetery, Kingswood Elementary School, Cary and Holly Springs High Schools, and along public greenways. We estimate that we rescued over 2000 bulbs and divided and planted them where they can continue to grow and naturalize in their new public locations to beautify our community! In the process we trained our members and local students how to rescue beautiful endangered plants and give them new homes in our fast-developing area.

The CWC Environment CSP partnered with the Education & Libraries CSP on this project to identify planting locations. Environment CSP members provided and helped to plant 100 of these Heritage Daffodils in highly visible areas at the Kingswood Elementary school entrance around the carpool lane. Twenty five 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and their teachers were instructed on the proper planting methods and care of the daffodils which will bloom each year at the end of winter to welcome spring at the school. A small Brown Garden Snake was also encountered during the planting giving the opportunity to teach about "residents" the students might find in the garden that are beneficial because they eat harmful insects and slugs.

600 additional rescued Heritage Daffodils were planted with school Environmental Club members at the entrances to Cary High School and Holly Springs High School.

**Volunteer hours: 316**

**Dollars: 165**

**In-Kind: 1000**

**Members: 39**

## **Educational Field Trip and Hike to Yates Mill County Park**

Because the Mountains to Sea Trail is the GFWC-NC President's Special Project we added a hike to our group tour of the historic Yates Mill County Park. The Education & Libraries and Environment CSP's partnered on this field trip to Historic Yates Mill County Park in early November 2023. 16 members attended. Yates Mill is a fully restored 1756 gristmill that is the last of 70 gristmills that once served farmers in Wake County. Yates Mill Park hosts a monthly corn grinding exhibition and sells the resulting corn meal, providing attendees with hands-on history lessons. There is also a museum with actual grist stone artifacts for both wheat and corn, which were processed at the mill daily from the late 1700's through the early 1900's. The tour was followed by an enjoyable nature hike led by the park naturalist on a beautiful fall day where we saw several types of ducks, sunning slider turtles, a hungry squirrel, and native plants from the elevated boardwalk across the lake.

A recent addition to the lake is a NCSU freshwater mussel research project in which the mussels purify the lake water so that Yates Mill is the only County Park where fishermen can safely keep and eat the bass, crappie, and catfish they catch there. The mussel research project is also aimed at learning how best to preserve and protect freshwater mussels to naturally improve water quality in other NC waterways.

**Volunteer hours: 48          Dollars:          In-Kind:          Members: 16**

## **Pollinator Garden**

We continued the maintenance of the public Page Walker Pollinator Garden, which we have managed since 2015 in partnership with the Cary Garden Club. The Cary Woman's Club and Garden Club member volunteers met early every Friday morning during the growing season of March through December to plant, water, weed, thin, deadhead, fertilize and mulch (with 35 cubic yards of compost) the more than 75 perennials and annuals in the garden. Plants range from Achillea, Agastache, Asclepias to Vernonia, Viola, and Zinnia! Our goal is to have something blooming in every month of the year, even in winter when our Asters, Blue Mistflower, American Beautyberry, and Rudbeckia have bloomed and maintain colorful purple berries and fascinating seed heads to feed the winter birds. Photos of the garden during each month throughout the year are on our CWC website. <https://carywomansclub.org/photo-album/>

Our volunteer tradition is to work in the garden early in the morning--especially during the summer to beat the heat--and then reward ourselves with an iced latte at Esteamed Coffee, a coffeeshop run by special needs adults that the club also supports, (including volunteering to deadhead and trim their beautiful huge Lacecap Hydrangea in late winter). Our goal is for the Pollinator Garden to be an educational demonstration garden in all seasons with plant labels to show how citizens can add their favorite pollinator plants to their home garden and landscape. We get numerous compliments on the garden from visitors and town staff as well as questions about the various plants, and the proper planting and care needs.

The garden is at the entrance to our regular CWC meeting place at the Page Walker Arts & History Center, a historic 1868 railroad inn where many special events, weddings, camps, art exhibitions and meetings are held each week.

During the town's two-day Lazy Daze annual craft fair in August, attended by 40,000 – 60,000 people, we also provided an exhibit adjacent to the garden. Our information table about the

garden included plant lists and photos of the plants and the pollinators (mostly bees and butterflies) enjoying the plant nectar and pollen. Our CWC volunteers staffed the exhibit for the two hot summer days. To encourage people to start their own pollinator gardens, we offered some potted versions of our plants at minimal cost. The “passalong” plants from our garden (at \$2-\$3 per plant) netted proceeds of \$172, which we will use to purchase new plants and bulbs for next year. Cary Woman’s Club members also volunteer in other Cary public gardens, including the Page-Walker Educational Herb Garden, the Cary Tree Archive, and several public school gardens.

**Volunteer Hours: 650                      Dollars: \$172                      In-Kind: 68                      Members: 11**

### **Guest Speaker: Toward Zero Waste**

Toward Zero Waste is a NC nonprofit dedicated to promoting waste-conscious living through inspiration, education and action. TZW helps individuals, families, and communities move toward zero waste by minimizing waste of all kinds, one step at a time. We also learned about Town of Cary efforts to reduce food waste at new community composting sites around the town. Leigh Williams and Megan Holler were the passionate presenters at our October club meeting!

As part of this effort, and to promote the individual actions we are encouraging, we collect used batteries and ink cartridges to be recycled at each monthly club meeting.

**Volunteer Hours: 3                      Dollars: 25                      In-Kind:                      Members: 39**

### **Environmental Symposium on Trees**

The Cary Woman’s Club voted to give one of our community grants of \$250 to help sponsor the 5-part Environmental Symposium in September with the Cary Tree Archive and Trees for the Triangle. Weekly sessions were open to the public and held in the Cary Arts Center. Speakers discussed the challenges to our air, land, water; Project Pando: collecting local seeds to grow free native trees for the community; biodiversity is essential-how to connect networks for life; idea to replace half of grass lawns (20 million acres) with plants for food webs; new technology of Carbon capture may help to decrease climate change.

CWC members volunteered to serve as ushers and Q&A facilitators at each session. Most of the sessions were free and were publicized by the town to all Cary citizens.

**Volunteer Hours: 23                      Dollars: 250                      In-Kind:                      Members: 39**