

2018 Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board Awards

Awards will be presented at the Wheaton/Kensington Chamber of Commerce annual gala

AWARDEES

Outstanding Citizen of the Year

Recognizes a resident who has made an outstanding contribution to their community

Dan Thompson, Co-Chair, Wheaton Arts Parade & Festival

Dan Thompson has been a resident of Wheaton since 2003. He currently represents residents on the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee and is a member of the M-NCPPC Urban Parks Advisory Group. Dan had a 29-year career with the federal government working primarily on international environmental cooperation. At the NOAA National Weather Service, he was a policy advisor for the Chief Operating Officer and served as the Director of the Office of International Activities. Prior to NOAA, he spent 18 years as an international program manager for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) where he developed environmental programs in various countries. He started his federal service in 1987 working for US Senator Barbara A. Mikulski. Previous to that, Dan was an actor, director, and acting teacher.

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee had a desire for a Fall event to complement the Taste of Wheaton which occurs in early June. The idea of a parade was floated (no pun intended), but due to budget and staffing constraints, the Wheaton Urban District could not take this on. When Dan retired, he committed to spend his first year of retirement to make a parade happen.

Soon the parade became much more than a 'walk' around Wheaton. He joined forces with Jim Epstein, a local artist and skilled events organizer and soon the two were spending long hours, drumming up support for the first annual Wheaton Arts Parade and Festival. Not knowing how this would turn out and how much backing this kind of event would really have, they began strategically networking and through their excitement and dedication began weaving together support different strands of the community: school, business, civic association, government and nonprofit.

By the end, the 2017 parade and festival attracted more than 50 artists, art groups, community organizations and businesses who paraded up Georgia Avenue to the festival near the Wheaton Veterans Urban Park and thousands of spectators. The festival included more than 35 artists and arts organizations displaying and selling their work in a tented exhibition area. In addition, community organizations and government departments promoted their art-related programs. Throughout the day, there was continuous entertainment on two stages including music, dance and readings. The festival also had a film tent and panel discussions with local filmmakers. A food court offered food from some of Wheaton's favorite restaurants.

The Wheaton Arts Parade & Festival was not just about the DAY. Leading up to it, Dan organized a series of workshops to help artists and non-artists create art that could be carried, pushed, pulled or worn. Workshops helped folks come up with songs, dance, costumes that could be performed or worn as a group or alone with family or neighbors. He raised public and private funds for the parade

so it could be offered for free for those artists that wanted to showcase their art. He secured over 35 sponsors. He engaged Einstein High School Arts Academy who made the Parade part of their capstone project for the year. He even engaged Westfield Mall who donated the space for the “Arts Factory”, a space the Wheaton Arts Parade continues to utilize for the creation and storage of their floats. And after the parade, some of the floats were on exhibit at the Mall for all to see.

Because of the 2017 parade success, a 2018 parade and arts festival is being planned. The idea is that the parade will become an annual community event. On this day, Dan reminded everybody that we can all be an artist. But perhaps most importantly, that when all facets of a community come together, good wholesome things can happen...and we can have fun.

Outstanding Civic Association/Organization of the Year

Recognizes a civic group or nonprofit that has made a significant achievement to their community in Mid-county.

Glenmont Forest Neighbors Civic Association (GFNCA)

Nominee’s Affiliation/Title (if any): **MJ Jardaneh, President and Board of Directors**
info@gnca.org

Glenmont Forest Neighbors Civic Association (GFNCA) is a non-profit organization established in 2009 out of concerns about deteriorating infrastructure; abandoned and neglected homes; increasing amounts of litter, illegal dumping, and graffiti in the neighborhood; depressed and unheard community issues by county leadership; and a rapidly disappearing green canopy. These concerns blossomed into efforts to improve the overall quality of life in the neighborhood and build a cohesive community to reduce anonymity among neighbors. GFNCA has over 1200 households within its boundaries, and several hundred neighbors on the electronic contact list. The association’s efforts today continue to focus on environmental health, pedestrian and vehicular safety, and community building, in addition to staying abreast of plans to redevelop downtown Wheaton and the greater Glenmont area. GFNCA has taken a leadership role in unifying the Wheaton North community at large, representing approximately 3200 households

In 2017, the GFNCA saw a marked growth in their involvement with the diverse community it serves. the neighborhood has members from a diverse population - diversity of culture, ethnic and religious backgrounds and they have members from all over the world representing people of all age groups. Several of the projects they planned, developed, and fulfilled helped bring together the community and have had a significant impact on increasing communication.

Their year began with a clean-up of the Judson Road median, which included the participation of several neighborhood children. They next developed, planned, and executed an event in cooperation with the Montgomery Housing Partnership called Blooming the Neighborhood. This included providing planters (which had the community logo stenciled onto it), potting soil, plants, and other materials to neighbors, so that they could create large planters to place on the front of their properties as a way to demonstrate neighborhood pride. The GFNCA, in coordination with Grandview Opportunity Circle, planned and executed an annual community-wide block party. Several County and State agencies attended and provided party attendees with useful information from how

to dispose of household waste properly, to life-saving tips from the fire department as well as food and family fun activities. It was a well-received and well-attended success! Additionally, the civic association continues to advocate on behalf of the community to develop a walkable and safe neighborhood, collaborating with the County's DGS to establish a new neighborhood park and continue to coordinate with various county departments to maintain and improve the neighborhood infrastructure.

In addition to these events, board members of the GFNCA conceived and built a float representing the neighborhood. The theme of the float was reflective of the Blooming the Neighborhood event and was proudly pulled up the parade route on Georgia Avenue in the very first Wheaton Arts Parade & Festival. Another float will be designed and entered this year with input from our neighbors.

The GFNCA works diligently to represent the neighborhood to those agencies that serve the myriad residents of Glenmont Forest. This is done through regular attendance at meetings with several County and State agencies. These meetings have allowed for the GFNCA to develop robust working relationships with those agencies. These relationships have helped ensure quicker response times and resolution to area concerns, which serves as a perfect demonstration of how a community organization and public service agencies can work well together. Examples on an ongoing basis include MCDOT, SHA, GreenStreets, Wheaton Urban District, MoCo Police, DGS and others.

In addition to all the community events and meetings, the civic association was busy with applying for, and being awarded, a grant to fund and to develop additional outreach efforts including community workshops addressing common community concerns and the installation of multiple lend-a-book libraries in the neighborhood. They currently have scheduled a Meet the Candidates Forum for all seven (7) County Executive candidates for May 22 and are also planning their annual block party. The GFNCA board participated in a national NeighborWorks conference, and was able to bring back information and skills acquired there that have been incorporated into current plans for activities to be held in 2018. GFNCA is a community group that is excited about the upcoming year, using the lessons learned in 2017 as a guide to bring improved events to the neighborhood.