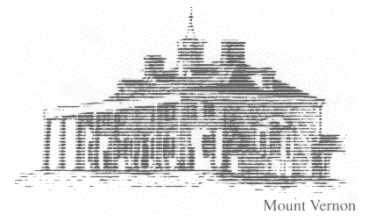




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## 2023 Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Awards

### Supervisor Dan Storck Joint with Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisor Penny Gross

September 12, 2023

Each year, the Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Awards honor individual residents, organizations or businesses, and County employees who advance or support the County's environmental goals and policies. The honorees dedicate personal time and expertise beyond their normal civic, fiscal or professional responsibilities and they consistently demonstrate leadership as role models for others.

In 2023, six awardees were named by the Environmental Quality Advisory Council on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. Together, these honorees have devoted countless hours to the improvement of the natural environment in the County through public advocacy, volunteerism, the implementation of programs and sustainability strategies, and mentorship.

Therefore, today, I would like to recognize the six winners of the 2023 Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Awards.

The County Employee category included three winners. They are:

**Hugh Whitehead**, an Urban Forester with the Urban Forest Management Division. In 2016, Mr. Whitehead initiated a tree planting program in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools. Since 2016, a total of 494 trees have been planted at twenty-one different K through 12 schools including seven Title 1 schools. This program not only supports the Board's Sustainability Initiatives, reforestation goals, and recommendations from the Joint Environmental Task Force, but furthers educational opportunities throughout the county. Mr. Whitehead will leave a legacy for the county as he plans to retire at the end of 2023.

**Joe Gorney**, a Planner with the Department of Planning and Development, Environment and Development Review Branch. Mr. Gorney works collaboratively with other county agencies on a diverse range of environmental review topics, working to create a sustainable future for residents and employees. He was the staff lead for the Environmental Plan guidance update for the Reston planning study, designating Reston as “biophilic” community. His enthusiasm to better the community is further evidenced by his countless volunteer hours and encouraging others to do the same, while also supporting the annual DPD holiday auction each year to raise money for Fairfax County non-profits with a sustainable landscaping plan.

**And Craig Carinci**, Director of Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Stormwater Planning Division. Mr. Carinci provides excellence in leadership through monitoring and improving stream health. During his tenure as Director, Fairfax County has restored over 100,000 linear feet of streams, facilitated by his open-minded leadership and business acumen that fearlessly encourages his team to push forward on initiatives and collaborate with partners to achieve cost savings.

The Individual Resident category included one winner who is:

**Mei Torrey**, a rising senior at Langley High School and environmental advocate. Miss Torrey promotes and actively seeks opportunity to increase awareness of, and take action on, local sustainability issues. She is the club-elected President of Saxons Go Green, a school-affiliated environmental club at Langley High School. She has also organized fundraisers and collaborated with Clean Fairfax to design reusable bags and distribute them to local grocery stores, retailers and low-income areas throughout the county to reduce plastic waste Ms. Torrey further fuels her passion with in-depth research about human habits, health and social change – providing her with even more ideas about how to make a positive impact in the community.

The organization and business category included two winners. They are:

**The Zero Waste Store**, and the efforts of Mala Persaud. While the Zero Waste Store provide products to reduce plastic waste, the store’s owner, Ms. Persaud, goes above and beyond to educate residents through the Zero Waste Store’s

website and community events. There is always a good turnout whenever Ms. Persaud co-hosts a “Recycling: Ask Me Anything” event with Fairfax County Solid Waste division. Her passion, kindness and helpfulness provides the encouragement for individuals to take action in reducing use of plastics.

**Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association Grounds Committee.** This committee features 14-members who research and recommend actions to preserve, maintain and enhance the grounds of this community. Members put in many hours each year to develop and advocate for projects, identify and address threats to the grounds, introduce new approaches, undertake citizen science projects, host resident engagement programs, communicate through newsletters and materials, and much more. Their impact benefits the residents, the neighborhood and the county.

We are very fortunate to have these leaders working in our community. Their efforts ensure that county residents and visitors can continue to enjoy a healthy, safe, vibrant, and beautiful natural environment for years to come.

Therefore, I move that the Board direct the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination to recognize and publicize the winners.