

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

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Save River Farm Committee Wins Award for Conservation

The Garden Club of Virginia, a long-time champion of conservation in Virginia, awarded its 2022 Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Conservation to the Save River Farm Committee for its grassroots and successful efforts to save an important property and landscape from development.

The Dugdale Award for Conservation is given annually to an organization, industry or individual who has rendered outstanding service in conservation and wise development of natural resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia and is not a Garden Club of Virginia member.

The award will be presented at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society, on Sept. 28, 2022, at 10 a.m.

River Farm, on the banks of the Potomac River south of Old Town Alexandria, has served as the American Horticultural Society's (AHS) headquarters since the 1970s. When the AHS urgently needed revenue to weather the effects of the pandemic, the AHS listed the property for sale. The threat of development of this open, green, waterfront and historic public space spurred the Save River Farm effort, a grassroots initiative which spread to the local community and on to the state and national level — all thanks to the Save River Farm Committee.

The Committee's campaign brought together like-minded his-



River Farm, threatened and saved.

torical, architectural and conservation organizations, parks groups, civic associations, committed neighbors and political leaders. Committee members worked with local government authorities to establish an Historic Overlay District on the property as a measure to control development in case the property ended up being sold.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust stepped up to house the Save River Farm effort under its auspices, and the Northern Virginia Park Authority mobilized efforts to buy the property.

Local volunteers played a key part in keeping the public informed, involved and up to date about ongoing developments in

the struggle to protect the property. After a year-long battle, the property was taken off the market and AHS announced that River Farm will continue as the AHS headquarters and remain open to the public. This outstanding work in conservation resulted in the protection of this beautiful historic property.

“That this committee coalesced in the height of the pandemic and organized a monumental effort to generate support to save River Farm is quite a feat,” said Debbie Lewis, president of the Garden Club of Virginia. “They combined strategy with passion to strike up a great band of like-minded partners.”