

Conservation

Jill Brody, chairman

First I have to thank Frances Trafton for her own deep interest in conservation, which translated into several programs, and a wonderful new, very successful Movie Night, which we intend to continue.

Even though it came last chronologically, I place it first, because it is a new idea for us. Fifteen of us gathered at Robin Howe's to watch *Ocean Frontiers*, a sobering but optimistic look at what people are doing to conserve and preserve our oceans, a subject near and dear to Rhode Islanders. From cooperative efforts among LNG terminal operators, containerized shipping companies, the Port of Boston, and environmental groups, we saw how an unlikely group of bedfellows banded together to protect whale life in the Stellwagon Bank off the coast of Massachusetts. While the film told that and other stories about the oceans, the real message was how a cooperative spirit and a willingness to listen and learn are the most important ingredients in creating the best possible outcomes for the most number of people—a universal message we can all embrace.

The Washington NAL meeting, another venue where listening is what it's all about, was as always, the highlight of the year for me. Petitioning the government by visiting with and talking to our Congressional leaders, which we do on behalf of the environment, ourselves, our children and our grandchildren, is a humbling exercise in participatory democracy. Those that the group hears from, or visits with during the week run the gamut from members of Congress who do not support any of the GCA positions (and can be downright rude), to nationally recognized environmental leaders who look to the GCA to help them. The evidence for the importance of the GCA can be seen in the creation of the National Parks, the establishment of the National Arboretum, and the Federal Highway Beautification Act, among other programs that we all appreciate and have come to take for granted. The meeting is also an amazing collection of smart, interesting women, most of whom are committed to environmental causes, but some of whom just attend to see what it's all about. It is something that I hope more of you will consider doing, as well.

We are switching our Partners for Plants project, from Sachuest Point (which we are hoping that the Newport Garden Club will take up), to a new project closer to home (which I'm hoping more of us will take up). The Forest Health Works Project (through the Blackstone Park Conservancy), seeks to control invasive species, clean up, plant, record and observe that part of the Park that borders the Seekonk. Anna Browder and Mary Dennis are the coordinators with whom we will be working. The first workdays for this season have already been posted to

you through our email contact list. Continuing scheduled work sessions will be sent as they occur. This is a varied, interesting project, right in our own back yard, so to speak, and one that I hope each of you will try at least once.

Looking forward, I hope to interest more of you in what I consider the social imperative of environmental stewardship by taking as much care of our larger shared environment as we take of our own homes and property. The rapidity of climate change makes it essential that we all learn as much as possible as quickly as possible. Think of clean air not as a political position, but as a health initiative; clean water as a biological necessity rather than a debatable concept; and alternative and renewable energy as the wave of the future that will power the worlds of our grandchildren and their grandchildren to come.

And please, come to a movie night and our other programs. Come to DC to see why Congress considers GCA a force to be reckoned with. Write to state and national leaders—let them know that you are a GCA member and that you represent tens of thousands of women who care about the wake we are creating, and the legacy we leave behind.