

## Common Wealth Award Finalists 2019

The Common Wealth Award Committee is happy to announce two finalists for the 2019 Common Wealth Award. This award, established by the Garden Club of Virginia in 1979, provides annual grants to fund community projects of member clubs in the areas of conservation, beautification, horticulture, preservation or education. The two-word name, Common Wealth, signifies the “wealth” that is “common” to all Virginians.

Garden Club of Virginia member clubs will vote on the projects prior to the Board of Governors meeting in October, at which time the winner will be announced. The finalists are as follows:

*Peter Paul Development Center and Playground Enhancement  
Submitted by the Boxwood Garden Club*

In the heart of the East End of Richmond, in the midst of Richmond’s four public housing communities, lies Peter Paul Development Center. This community center acts as a bastion of hope for the youth of one of the most underserved populations in the area.

In 2018, the Boxwood Garden Club’s membership voted unanimously to partner with Peter Paul Development Center to create a garden space in the vacant lot adjacent to the center. More than 70% of the club’s membership has donated to this project to transform the vacant lot into a playground and green space for the community’s children.

Boxwood’s plan is to plant trees for shade, natives along the property border and throughout the green space and playground. The addition of synthetic turf is planned for inside the playground, would aiding in conservation goals by reducing water and chemicals. The goal is to provide a cherished spot where children and families can interact with a simple and beautiful green space and to become an educational resource to the students attending the center.

A Common Wealth Award will ensure completion of this much needed improvement to a community in need, while supporting GCV’s mission of supporting natural and native green space in Virginia.

*“Peter Paul is an outreach and community center serving Richmond’s East End. Founded in 1979, it is the oldest community-based agency continually serving East End children and families. We live our promise and programming through our purpose statement—Educate the Child, Engage the Family, and Empower the Community.”*

*The Discovery Trail: Connecting Children With Nature  
Submitted by the Mill Mountain Garden Club*

What happens to children when they interact with trees, native plants, wildlife and water? Such experiences are fun, educational and inspirational. Scientific studies confirm that many children suffer from “nature deficit disorder.” The Mill Mountain Garden Club has worked almost 50 years creating and maintaining a unique 2.5-acre mountaintop wildflower garden and native plant sanctuary. Despite this free public garden space being open to the

community, the current mulch trail that carries visitors across the property is not stroller or wheelchair accessible. The Common Wealth Award would provide funds for a redesigned “Discovery Trail.” This environmentally sensitive, crushed stone trail will be user friendly, opening the garden for all visitors.

With this revitalized trail, thousands of visitors can discover the magic of nature. But those who benefit the most are the children who are exposed to key educational concepts woven throughout the trail. The “wayfinding” on the trail encourages children to discover tree identification, pollinator and wildflower education, and pondside water play, among the many educational opportunities. The Common Wealth Award will allow the Mill Mountain Garden Club to develop the “discovery trail” and extend the magic of nature to all who enter.