

BEACON AWARD WINNERS

1997 - 2018

1997 Joseph Hinkle	2005 Meredith and Eugene Clapp	2013 Mark Duffield and Jennifer Hill
1998 Robert & Elizabeth Owens	2006 Sandy Steele	2014 Frederick A. "Tad" Stahl
1999 Beacon Hill Nursery	2007 Dick and Jack Gurnon	2015 Bernie Borman
2000 Jason Pingree	2008 Jillian and Vivien Gattie	2016 Priscilla Fales
2001 Peter Thomson	2009 Karen Cord Taylor	2017 Jeannette & Elsie Herrmann
2002 Herman Greenfield	2010 Frank Mead	2018 Paula O'Keeffe
2003 Henry Lee, Linda Cox, Thomas Kershaw	2011 Gael Mahony	2019 Ivy A. Turner
2004 Susan McWhinney-Morse	2012 Sharon Malt	2020

1997- Joseph Hinkle

Dick Adams, Chair of the Citizens Award Committee, presented Mr. Joseph Hinkle with the Beacon Award on Monday, May 20th at the 75th Diamond Jubilee, amongst much celebration. Mr. Hinkle has been an active member of the Beacon Hill Civic Association for over 20 years. During his tenure he had become involved in 3 different Cambridge Street Committees, was instrumental in forming the Peter Faneuil School Project Review Committee, served as Chairman of the BHCA, he was active on the committee overseeing the design of the Central Artery crossing from Charlestown to Boston and has brought a modesty and friendly tone to all meetings that he has attended and chaired—an invaluable contribution!

The Committee considered over a hundred nominees but after due deliberation Mr. Hinkle was chosen by consensus.

1998 - Robert and Elizabeth Owens

Robert and Elizabeth Owens, known to friends and neighbors as Bob and Bidy, have lived on Mount Vernon Street for nearly 25 years. They have been leaders and volunteers in almost every neighborhood event and institution. Bob has served as President and Chair of the BHCA, President of the Shady Hill School Board of overseers, and on the board of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Bidy

has served on the Hill House board for 15 years, holding offices as President and Vice President and serving on numerous committees.

1999 - Beacon Hill Nursery School

The Beacon Hill Nursery School (BHNS), founded in 1955 to fulfill the neighborhood's need for early childhood education, is the recipient of the 1999 Beacon Award. Presented by award chairman Michael Bissanti at BHCA's Annual Meeting, the award was accepted by Frances Howe, a school founder, and Muriel Florent, who has been its director since 1977.

Bissanti noted that the BHNS has always been a valued neighbor. The school was founded on several principles that, most importantly, valued early childhood education. Frances Howe considered this to be consistent with the intellectual society on Beacon Hill. It was founded as a cooperative neighborhood school, and accepted anyone who came from within walking distance. At times Mrs. Howe generously made up the difference when a family couldn't afford the tuition. At various times, the school was located in a library, a church, backyards, and homes of those families involved—further strengthening the community's unique commitment to BHNS.

“Today, the BHNS operates consistently with its founding principles intact, having served our community as a catalyst, uniting our families, neighbors, children and, ultimately, the Beacon Hill community,” said Bissanti.

2000 - Jason Pingree

Jason E. Pingree, a man who has touched the heart of virtually every family on Beacon Hill, received the Fourth Annual Beacon Award at the Beacon Hill Civic Association's Annual Meeting held on May 15, 2000, at the Union Club.

BHCA Board member and Beacon Award Committee Chair Michael Bissanti presented the Award. Bissanti said that, for more than 28 years, Pingree, an individual who works tirelessly and selflessly behind the scenes, has been a good neighbor to all and a role model for Beacon Hill's young people. And, he does this for no other reason than that he loves doing it.

For 19 years, Pingree has coached a Little League team, the *Beacon Hill Indians*. Since the late 1980s, he has been Scout Master of Boy Scout Troop #74, and still leads the boys on ambitious trips, such as a three-week hike around Colorado last year.

Many young people in the neighborhood fondly remember their first work experience with Pingree, who has owned a paint contracting business since 1977. Every summer he

has hired neighborhood children and taught them not only to paint a house, but also how to fill out a job application, handle a job interview, and run a small business.

Jason Pingree grew up on the North Shore. After his college graduation in 1972, he moved to Boston to join an insurance company. At that time, Pingree said he was not particularly happy at work and so began looking for other things to do. He soon found himself on the boards and committees of Hill House, the BHCA and the Beacon Hill Nursery School, and dealt early on with the never-ending issues associated with parking, traffic and trash. In the late 1970's, he started the first teen drop-in center at Hill House, and in the 1980's organization the Beacon Hill Film Society which regularly showed the films of the times at Suffolk University's Walsh Theater.

In 1976, Pingree quit his job at the insurance company. "My father was so upset that I had quit my job without a new one that he made me paint his house," said Pingree. That was the beginning of a long, successful career, and folks who have not become acquainted with Pingree through their children have most likely met him when their houses need painting.

Nowadays, Pingree stays away from committee work, preferring to deal with youth on a one-on-one basis. "I do this not for the reward and recognition, but because I love doing it," he said. "I learned a long time ago that I cannot save the world, but that there is usually one kid that I can connect with each year. I feel I have done something if I can teach him teamwork, learning right from wrong, and how to make the right choices in life."

Longtime friend Russell Werner of Mt. Vernon Street, who nominated Pingree for the award, likened him to the Award's namesake—the beacon that once stood on the top of the Hill and cast light throughout the neighborhood. "I'm really happy that the BHCA has chosen to recognize Jason. I know that many parents on Beacon Hill over the past 28 years have really appreciated the enormous time and energy Jason has put into coaching for the Hill House, taking kids camping for the Boy Scouts or giving someone their first summer job. Thanks, Jay, and congratulations. You help make Beacon Hill a great place to live."

2001 - Peter Thomson

Those of us who live on Beacon Hill today are better off because of the significant contributions of Peter Thomson, this year's winner of the annual Beacon Award. A neighborhood leader who moved to Beacon Hill in the 1950s, Thomson has worked throughout the years on many neighborhood improvements that positively impact the quality of our lives.

“He has had his hands in so many levels, whether he is leading a meeting or putting on gloves to pick up trash,” said Chris Pratt, Beacon Award committee chair. “Peter is a very visible leader who has had his hands in most everything.”

For years a board member and chair of several committees, the Bellingham Street resident served both BHCA chair and president. He still represents the Association at city-wide meetings regarding the development of the Prudential Center, the Central Artery and Cambridge Street. Through his participation on the 250 Cambridge Street Corporation, he has helped make funds available to better the quality of life on the North Slope.

In 1983, he was the driving force behind changing the direction of Charles Street and creating the Codman Island at Charles and Beacon Streets, and still works to maintain that garden today.

BHCA Chair Ben Colburn said Thomson remains an invaluable resource for the Association. Always willing to step forward when needed, his ‘institutional memory’, sense of community and love of history are helpful to today’s leaders.

The award was given by his long-time friend, BHCA VP Maurice Katz, who said, “The Beacon Award was established in 1997 to honor those how have made a difference. Peter, you have made a difference, and tonight we honor you.”

2002 - Herman Greenfield

Herman Greenfield, a 68 year old business owner who has taken care of generations of Beacon Hillers, was awarded the Sixth Annual Beacon Award at the BHCA’s 80th Annual Meeting.

A savvy businessman and friend to all, Greenfield has owned Gary Drug on Charles Street for 30 years. Despite competition for larger chains, he continues to operate his corner drugstore in the middle of a city as if it were a small neighborhood store.

“We gear our store to what the residents of the neighborhood want,” said Greenfield. “If a customer wants a certain product, we will get it for him or her the very next day.”

Greenfield said that his job is to make people’s lives easier, which is why he goes the extra mile to help. When he sees people in need, he often assists by linking them with people and services that can help.

“It’s been fun,” he added. “Kids come in the store and they grow up and come back. It brings back all those memories. You couldn’t ask for a better neighborhood to serve.”

Beacon Award co-chair Louisa Paige thinks the neighborhood couldn’t ask for a better business owner. “He is part of the bread and butter of our community. He has kept us all up and running.”

2003 - Henry Lee, Linda Cox, Thomas Kershaw

This year the Beacon Award Committee honored three individuals for their efforts that have significantly contributed to the quality of life for those who live, work and visit Beacon Hill.

Each winner has contributed in a number of ways. Each is a long-time resident of Beacon Hill. Each has set a high standard of community service. And each has worked in different ways, but with uniform success, to protect, preserve and enhance the parks that cradle the Beacon Hill neighborhood: the Boston Common, the nation's oldest public park; the Public Garden, the first public botanical garden in the United States; and the Esplanade, the face of Boston every Fourth of July. These parks have not always been well cared for, and at times, have suffered from neglect and 'disinvestment'. The three honorees have done much to ensure that we can all partake of the peaceful beauty of nature.

The first honoree, Henry Lee, has lived on the Hill for the last 45 years. He is a member of the Friends of the Public Garden and has served for 32 years as its president. We honor him and the Friends for their tireless efforts to protect the Boston Garden, Boston Common and Commonwealth Mall.

The second honoree, Tom Kershaw, has lived on the hill for nearly 40 years. As a business leader, he has been a moving force behind the Beacon Hill Business Association, as well as a generous donor to numerous organizations. Tonight we honor him for his significant efforts in improving the Boston Common. It was through his efforts, and those of Henry, the Friends and others, that 100,000 people come to the Boston Common each winter for ice-skating.

Linda Cox, the final recipient, has lived on Beacon Hill for 36 years. We honor her for her work as co-president of the Esplanade Association. Since its founding in 2001, the Association has quickly become an important advocate for and protector of the Charles River Esplanade. Through her efforts and those of the Association, private funds were raised to rebuild the Gloucester Street playground. She worked tirelessly to ensure that the MDC's master plan met the clear needs of this important treasure.

2004 - Susan McWhinney-Morse

Susan McWhinney-Morse, this year's winner of the Beacon Award, was called a 'visionary, catalyst, warrior and tireless advocate' by Ben Colburn, who chaired the selection committee. "She has lived on the Hill for over 40 years, and has been at the beginning, middle and end of countless issues of substance on the Hill and a leading

contributor to numerous institutions that make our neighborhood such a great place to live,” said Colburn.

At the Annual Meeting, Colburn cited a few of McWhinney-Morse’s numerous contributions to the neighborhood:

Founder and now president of the Beacon Hill Village

President and Chairman of the Beacon Hill Civic Association

A founder of the Temple Street Garden Club

A leader in the conversion of Temple Street to a pedestrian way and in the preservation of the Temple Street Park

First in the line of defense against Suffolk University’s encroachment into the residential portions of our neighborhood

President of BHCA’s 250 Cambridge Street Corporation, a charitable organization working to improve the quality of life on the North Slope

“All in all, she is a tireless advocate for improving the quality of residents’ lives on the entire expanse of the Hill,” said Colburn.

2005 - Meredith and Eugene Clapp

This year’s Beacon Award was presented to Meredith and Eugene Clapp by Myles Striar, BHCA Committee Chair. Over the past two decades, the Clapps have tallied an extraordinary record of civic leadership across the spectrum of local institutions serving Beacon Hill. In the early 1980s the Clapps began their local civic engagement by tending the business of their four children’s first school, the Beacon Hill Nursery School, as members of the Board and officer. They divided their attentions for the BHCA and Hill House with Gene serving on the former and Meredith the latter, each for more than a dozen years.

Gene’s leadership at the BHCA as Chairman from 1999-2001 saw a marked improvement in the professional operations of the office. Then-incoming Chair Ben Colburn praised Gene as he retired from his post in May of 2001 for his “principled positions and quest for sanctity of public process.” Meredith’s long-term service to the Board of Hill House served as excellent preparation for her yeoman duty to the 74 Joy Street Advisory and Construction Committees now hard at work on the renovation of our community center. Her patient and devoted participation in the Hill House Senior Dinners demonstrates how this exemplary couple reaches out in service across generations.

Despite this full roster of neighborhood efforts, the Clapps have also given of their time and energy to such various Boston nonprofits as King’s Chapel, Rogerson Communities,

the Vincent Club, the Conservation Law Foundation and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, to name but several. This recognition was long deserved and happily bestowed with two of their four children in attendance.

2006 - Sandy Steele

The 10th Annual Beacon Award, the BHCA's recognition for significant or sustained contribution to the Beacon Hill community, was bestowed on veteran BHCA director, Esplanade Association president and community leader Sandy Steele. Outgoing BHCA director Donald Paige presented the award to his longtime friend, capping over a decade of partnership in the stewardship of our neighborhood and many more years of friendship.

During her more than 15 years as a Director of the BHCA, Steele's most cherished accomplishment is her role in the acquisition of the Firehouse at 127 Mount Vernon Street, now home to Hill House administrative offices and other community activities, for community space. Active on the BHCA's Zoning and Licensing Committee, she has advocated tirelessly for a proper balance of residential and commercial properties. Most recently, Steele has parlayed her commitment to preserving and enhancing our local green space, evidenced by her accomplishments as Vice President of Government Affairs, into her current position as president of the Esplanade Association.

The BHCA and the neighborhood as a whole, has benefited immensely from Steele's unflagging commitment to neighborhood affairs, and we applaud her dedication to Beacon Hill's interests.

2007 - Dick and Jack Gurnon

The discussion amongst the members of the nominating committee for this year's Beacon Award was short. It did not take long to add up the "absolutely's" and "perfect's" that constituted the unanimous vote to honor father and son duo, Dick and Jack Gurnon.

Some in this room remember when Dick Gurnon first started working at the hardware store in a Charles Street basement in 1948, first part-time and on weekends, and by 1952 as a partner in the business. Soon Charles Street Supply moved upstairs to 43 Charles. In 1963 a fire burned almost everything and Dick's lease was cancelled. By Labor Day, the store re-opened at 54 Charles Street. It is rumored that one Louisburg Square customer walked up to Dick after the fire with a check and told him to rebuild the store and to pay him back when he could — which he did.

Jack began working at the store when he was "old enough to dust" and "tall enough to see over the counter to make change." After graduating from UMass in 1977, Jack started working full time. In 1985, Charles Street Supply took over 56 Charles Street for a grand

total of 2,100 square feet.

Dick retired in 1997 and Jack now runs the place he grew up in, with his family living above the store. Geographically located in the center of Charles Street, the store is Charles Street's hub.

But the more than 24,000 products for sale at Charles Street Supply are not the real reason people frequent the hardware store. You might be looking for a hammer and a nail, but what you'll find is someone to help you hang your painting, if you need it.

Ever wonder how volunteers reach the top of every light post on Beacon Hill during Holiday Decorating? By standing on a ladder donated by Charles Street Supply. Need supplies for Beacon Hill Clean-up Day? Every request is quickly answered with a yes, no questions asked. Put simply, the Gurnons are good neighbors.

It is fitting that the Gurnons sell everything you might need to make your house feel like your home. For more than 50 years a Gurnon has made Beacon Hill feel like home to the neighbors who live here because of places like Charles Street Supply and people like Dick and Jack.

2008 - Gillian and Vivien Gattie

Gillian and Vivien Gattie, who are identical twins, have quietly gone about their business of improving the neighborhood for decades without expecting any praise or any thanks. They moved to Beacon Hill from their native England during the late sixties. When they first arrived there were very few trees on Hancock Street. So the first thing they did was to plant a tree and encouraged others to do so as well. Together the neighbors planted flowers, had trees pruned and tree guards installed, decorated for the holidays and transformed the street into the handsome tree-lined road it is today.

The Gatties began reaching out to the community in the early '70s, when they both volunteered at Massachusetts General Hospital. Shortly thereafter, they began serving the homeless, first at the former Old West Church soup kitchen and then at Neighborhood Action, Inc. on Bowdoin Street. It was the beginning of a long and rich commitment that has lasted for 25 years. Every Thursday evening the pair can be found at the soup kitchen serving dinner to about 150 guests living on the edge of poverty - Gillian as hostess and Vivien as the dishwasher operator.

Over the years, the two have quietly served the community in many other ways as well, such as serving on boards and committees, volunteering in the offices for small organizations including the Beacon Hill Civic Association and the Esplanade Association, looking after the elderly, helping them with their finances, reading to the blind and more. "We get a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from doing this," they both said. "It's the smaller organizations that need the help."

2009 – Karen Cord Taylor

Karen Cord Taylor of Phillips Street was awarded the Beacon Hill Civic Association's 13th annual Beacon Award at the Beacon Hill Civic Association's 87th annual meeting, held May 18 at the Union Club.

Although Taylor has worked in many ways to make the neighborhood a better place to live during her almost 40 years as a resident here, she is best known as the founder and publisher of *The Beacon Hill Times*, which she started in 1995.

Taylor often said she liked for the newspaper to hold a mirror up to community. With it, she made neighbors, city officials and community groups look at themselves through the eyes of the reader — which made them accountable. Arguably, every resident of this neighborhood has benefited from the newspaper's existence, whether it was from learning about an upcoming lecture, being reminded of street cleaning regulations or learning about local political candidates through the newspaper's endorsement process.

Taylor's list of accomplishments mirrors her interests in the neighborhood. Almost 20 years ago, during her tenure on the board of the Beacon Hill Civic Association, she organized a study report evaluating Cambridge Street and making plans for its future. Thanks to her vision and persistence over the years, the neighborhood now has a newly renovated boulevard beautified with plants and flowers.

She served on the board of the Beacon Hill Nursery School and was active in Hill House when her two girls, who were raised on Beacon Hill, were young. She has been a commissioner for the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission. An avid gardener herself, she is a longstanding member of the Beacon Hill Garden Club.

Taylor was also a founding member of the Beacon Hill Seminars. She has served on the Mass General Cambridge/Blossom Street Committee and was appointed by Mayor Menino to chair his blue ribbon committee on City Hall Plaza. Several years ago she helped get the Art Walk back on its feet and now it thrives under new leadership.

Taylor credits her involvement to her upbringing. "My parents and grandparents were always involved in the community," she said. "My father was on the school board and involved in politics. My grandfather started the local bank and was a leader of community organizations. I don't think I thought about it. It was just what you did."

And that was fortunate for Beacon Hill. For many neighbors, Taylor has been a leader, a mentor and a friend. Whether building community by publishing a local newspaper or developing a long-range plan for Cambridge Street, Karen has been a wonderful visionary. Her thoughtful reasoning, drive, persistence and ability to provoke thought in others have resulted in many positive changes for our neighborhood.

2010 – Frank Mead

In recognition of decades of significant contributions to the neighborhood through community service, Franklin Mead of Beacon Street was awarded the 14th annual Beacon Award.

From helping to write the architectural guidelines for the Beacon Hill Historic District in the 1970s to co-founding Beacon Hill Seminars and Beacon Hill Village, Mead's capable hands can be seen in the very preservation of the buildings on the Hill and the quality of life of those choosing to live here.

"Over the years he has had a hand in creating and sustaining so many aspects of life on Beacon Hill, both intellectual and architectural, right across the board," said Tad Stahl, chair of the Beacon Award nominating committee. "He never sought any real recognition. That is the sort of person he is," said Stahl. "The committee could not think of another person more deserving."

Mead, who moved to the Hill with his first wife to pursue a Masters in Architecture from Harvard University, began his lifetime of service when his daughter began school at the Beacon Hill Nursery School. "We were around, and there were things that needed to be done and we did them," said Mead. "It was not only a lot of fun, but an opportunity for my family to do things together as well," he said.

As an architect, responsibilities like chairing the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission and writing the current guidelines were a "natural outgrowth of my professional skills," said Mead.

His role in co-founding Beacon Hill Seminars and Beacon Hill Village was also a natural progression, as he tells it. "My wife had just died and I was very sensitive to how vulnerable we all were," he said.

Over the years, Mead has served as director of the Cambridge Street Community Development Corporation, and the Friends of the Public Garden and Boston Common. He was the president of the Beacon Hill Civic Association in the early 1980s. Outside the Hill he was president of the Harvard Club of Boston and director of the Alumni Association for Harvard. He also worked with the Swedish American Chamber of Commerce, the Swedish American Council in New England and the Swedish Council of America.

"These things are all fun," said Mead. "I am really humbled by the award and obviously thrilled."

2011 - Gael Mahony

At its 89th Annual Meeting held last night at the Union Club, the Beacon Hill Civic Association honored an individual whose vision was instrumental in shaping our community more than 50 years ago and continues to guide us today. Gael Mahony, a

‘legal giant’ who has generously and endlessly bestowed his valuable skills on the neighborhood, was awarded the 15th annual Beacon Award.

His dedication to Beacon Hill began in 1949 when Mahony, a lifelong resident of Boston and Yale University undergraduate, met the charming Connaught O’Connell, a Radcliffe student from Jamaica Plain, at a Harvard-Yale football game and began a courtship that led to marriage in 1952. “He was very lovely and a brilliant tactician,” Connaught said. “He told me that we could live anywhere but if we went beyond Dartmouth Street, the fresh air might kill him.” Later she told her mother how lucky she was. “I don’t belong out in the suburbs with homogeneous drip-dry people. I belong on Beacon Hill where everyone is so odd I fit right in,” she said.

Now married 59 years, the devoted couple moved into their present home on Pinckney Street 55 years ago and raised three children there. With Connaught often at his side, the unflappable Mahony became one of the finest trial lawyers in the country. During his career, he litigated complex cases, ranging from the 1962 prosecution and conviction of those involved with the scandal surrounding the construction of the Boston Common Garage to the dispute over development rights to Fan Pier during the late 80s. “He was often referred to as ‘the heart and soul of Hill and Barlow’“, said his wife, who added, “but he is so modest, you wouldn’t know a damn thing about him if I weren’t here to tell you.” Now in his mid-eighties, he is still a member of the team at Holland & Knight and included in *The Best Lawyers in America* guide.

In 1922 the Beacon Hill Association officially began operations. Mahoney said that it was essentially made up of a loosely connected group of dedicated individuals. Thirty-three years later he, along with John Codman and other neighborhood leaders, decided that the organization should become a legal entity in order to work more effectively to become a historic district. Mahony handled the legal work, was one of its original incorporators and became the corporation’s clerk. It was he who spontaneously added the word ‘Civic’ when he discovered another organization had already registered as the Beacon Hill Association. Soon after, a board of directors was formed, and at age 29 Mahony became the Beacon Hill Civic Association’s first president.

During his presidency, Mahony focused his efforts on the formation of a historic district to preserve the architectural character of the neighborhood and to help maintain property values. He succeeded, and Beacon Hill received its historic designation in 1955.

”Let us all see to it that the Hill is not just the oldest district still intact in Boston, but the most progressive,” Mahony said to his neighbors at the time. “Let us maintain our property and keep our sidewalks, streets and alleys clean. We should set an example for the whole of the city.” His counsel has oft been repeated since.

Rollins Place resident Toni Norton, a family friend whose father Carmen diStephano worked with Mahony on the historic district, said, “Mahony always had the good of the

Hill in his heart. A very positive, well-balanced and constructive person, he gives of himself both to his clients and to his community,” said Norton. “His greatest victory was fighting for the Hill against Suffolk.”

In that case, Mahony represented the BHCA in its successful 1970 court challenge to Suffolk University’s effort to construct a non-conforming building at 150 Cambridge Street in violation of the applicable Boston Zoning Code, a challenge that was finally decided by the Commonwealth’s highest state court, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

“It was a blockbuster case – vicious and drawn-out,” said Hancock Street resident Tad Stahl, who first met Mahony at the time of the trial. “He did a magnificent job and was totally convincing in his effort to insure Suffolk would build within zoning restrictions. There is nobody quite like Gael. He is very bright, dedicated and genuine. You knew you could believe in him. If he said something was right, you just knew it was right.”

Avoiding the negative impact to the neighborhood from the construction of tall and massive buildings remains a BHCA priority. Several years ago the association turned again to Mahony to moderate a contentious public meeting about Suffolk’s plans to build a 33-story dormitory on Somerset Street. Earlier this year, the BHCA opposed Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary’s expansion plans, urging it to conform to existing zoning restrictions.

Mahony’s contributions and commitment to the Beacon Hill neighborhood extend well beyond legal matters. Under his leadership, the BHCA convinced the city to replace the Victorian electric street lamps with more historic, romantic and dimmer gaslights. “When a city worker arrived to install the gaslights outside our home, he told us that ‘Thomas Edison spent his entire life inventing the electric light and you are now going backwards. In fact, you are making it even easier for the Boston Strangler’ who was around during that time,” said Mahony.

Years ago Mahoney, who is known for his ability to draw people together, convinced Mayor Kevin White to plant the flowering pear trees so enjoyed today on Pinckney Street as long as his neighbors would feed and protect them- which they did. Again, last year, he raised funds from Pinckney Street residents to replace those trees that had been damaged by a microburst.

He was the first of many BHCA presidents to form a ‘Curb your Dog Committee.’ His zealous committee members twice painted ‘Please curb your dog’ in yellow at each intersection, only to awake the mornings following to find the words covered over by brown paint. It was soon discovered that a Miss Watson, a ‘little old lady on West Cedar Street,’ was coming out in the middle of the night to cover the words in brown paint, according to Connaught. She also kept a sign in her front window which read ‘Dogs are nicer than people.’

Unfortunately, Gael Mahony was not able to attend the Annual Meeting last night because he and Connaught had previous travel plans. The Beacon Award was accepted by their daughter, Medb Sichko, also of Beacon Hill.

2012 - Sharon Malt

Twenty-two years ago Sharon Malt made the decision to devote her time and skills to non-profits rather than to continue her career in marketing. It was a decision that benefitted so many cultural, environmental and horticultural organizations both on and beyond Beacon Hill that last night she was presented with the sixteenth annual Beacon Award.

Malt said that working to help this neighborhood become what it is today has been tremendously fulfilling to her. "I enjoy working with nonprofits because you can take risks, work with people when they are at their best, and help them achieve whatever course they are following."

Helping young families raise children on Beacon Hill, as she herself did, has always been a passion for her, and perhaps her largest contribution to the neighborhood was her work with other community leaders to help Hill House grow. Formed in 1966 and then located at 74 Joy Street, the community center offered dinners for seniors and a few children's programs, such as baseball. But by the late 1990s it had financial difficulties and so a group of community leaders joined together to put it back on its feet. "It was an exciting time. I worked with great neighbors to help make it what it is today," said Malt, who served as co-president at the time.

After membership drives, capital campaigns and three years of renovation, Hill House moved to its current Mt. Vernon Street Firehouse location in 2001. "Since then it has blossomed," Malt said. "It's more inclusive and the 'go to' place for all families. More than 2000 children now enroll in its programs, 800 in soccer alone. We now are realizing Hill House's value in keeping kids in the city."

Malt, who estimates she spends about 25 hours a week volunteering, is careful to balance her time with a mix of activities. She was recently honored for her work on the Charles River Watershed Association, served as president of the Esplanade Association, is co-chair of the Council of Overseers for the Huntington Theatre, and opens her home to benefit the Nichols House Museum and the Beacon Hill Circle for Charities. She is active with the Conservation Law Foundation and is working to bring UNICEF back to the Hill.

Last month Malt stepped down from serving as president of the Beacon Hill Seminars, a membership organization of about 200 people who create, participate and lead a diverse group of about 22 adult education courses each semester. This month she'll take on the presidency of the Beacon Hill Garden Club. It is an organization she has long participated

in, having served as conservation chair regionally and nationally, and as its vice president.

And she loves cats. So much so that as an overseer of the MSPCA – Angell, she agreed to serve on the cat committee, whose mission is to reduce the population of abandoned cats through spay and neuter programs, and to find homes for mature, abandoned cats. “It’s a nice change from other committees,” she said. **

2013 - Mark Duffield and Jennifer Hill

The Beacon Civic Association (BHCA) has presented the 17th annual Beacon Award to Mark Duffield and Jennifer Hill, proprietors of Blackstone’s on Beacon Hill, in recognition of their many philanthropic contributions to the neighborhood.

After meeting as co-workers at the New England Conservatory, Duffield and Hill took ownership of Blackstone’s on April 1, 2006, and soon began a campaign of community service through the Charles Street gift store, donating more than \$20,000 in cash and goods to schools and charitable organizations to date.

With Duffield and Hill at the helm, Blackstone’s has supported the BHCA, Beacon Hill Business Association, Friends of the Public Garden, the Boston chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, Boston Children’s Hospital, Hill House, the Park Street School and WGBH, among other local organizations and non-profits.

“For us to be in business at all depends on neighbors and this community supporting the store, and they should be able to depend on us to support the community,” Duffield said. “We’re here for the good times and the difficult times in people’s lives. We think of it as the right thing to do”

Hill added, “Over the past seven years, the people here have become part of the fabric of our lives.” One cause particularly close to their hearts is children’s cancer research, and over the years, Duffield and Hill have been there to offer a small gift and encouraging word to the many patients from nearby hospitals and their family members who visit the store.

Duffield collaborated with his sister, Sharon Duffield, and illustrator Don Sherwood two years ago to author a children’s book entitled “The Last Shepard and Tales of the 10th Ornament,” proceeds from which have raised around \$8,000 to benefit pediatric cancer research and care at Mass. General Hospital for Children (MGHfC) Cancer Center so far.

This month sees the publication of “As I recall: Fireflies in the Night,” a new children’s book by Duffield and his sister, Sharon, with illustrations by local architect Monika Pauli, in which the siblings recall the joys of catching and releasing fireflies as youngsters.

Donna Petro, treasurer of the Business Association and a board member of Friends of the Public Garden and Beacon Hill Village, recalls how Blackstone's began selling hand-painted Christmas ornaments from Poland and launched a five-year program to "decode" hidden messages in the decorations, which eventually brought 150 people together from across the U.S. to celebrate the holidays on the Hill.

"They have unique way of combining fun and doing good for other people as part of their business, which I think is pretty unusual," Petro said of the Blackstone's owners. "Their focus has always been on helping the community and charities, as well as doing business."

Duffield and Hill are also committed to building camaraderie among the neighborhood's businesses as exemplified by the BHBA Window Decorating Contest – an effort spearheaded by Blackstone's several years ago that brought 36 participating stores together for a juried contest while raising money for cancer research through the Jimmy Fund.

"We don't think of anybody as competition," Duffield said of fellow merchants in the neighborhood. "We think of them as part of the community."

In keeping with this inclusive spirit, the Blackstone's owners typically welcome new businesses to the Hill with a gift basket and a personal greeting.

Frank Mead, chairman of the nominating committee for the Beacon Award, said the Blackstone's owners were "resoundingly the top choice" to receive the accolade this year.

"We felt they as individuals and a retail operation on Charles Street have done a great job of representing Beacon Hill in terms of generosity and interest in community," Mead said. "That's the kind of thing we believe the Beacon Award is supposed to acknowledge, and we're delighted they've been selected."

The Beacon Award nominating committee hasn't been alone in acknowledging Duffield and Hill's civic-mindedness, either: The Retailers Association of Massachusetts honored Blackstone's with RAMAES Award of Excellence for community service in 2009, and Massachusetts General Hospital recently recognized the store as one of 15 organizations and individuals who have significantly contributed to cancer research during a reception at the hospital's Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation, among other accolades. **

2014 - Frederick A. "Tad" Stahl

At its 92nd annual meeting on Monday, the Beacon Hill Civic Center (BHCA) honored the late Frederick A. "Tad" Stahl with the 18th annual Beacon Award for his "significant and sustained" contribution to the community.

“It’s unusual for me to be speaking for Tad, but I have no hesitation in saying that he would have been profoundly moved by receiving the Beacon Award, especially because it comes from fellow Hill residents and neighbors,” Jane Stahl, Tad’s wife, told the Times after learning that he would receive the accolade. “He lived, breathed and cherished Beacon Hill for 52 years from our first address at 94 Beacon St. to his last at the corner of Hancock and Myrtle, and he counted himself fortunate to have served as a [BHCA] board member in the early and the last decades of that time span.”

Stahl, who died on July 26 of last year at age 82, founded the architectural firm F.A. Stahl & Associates in 1961 and later served as executive architect of Burt Hill in Boston. He designed many city landmarks, including the State Street Bank building at 225 Franklin St., the Park Street Church Ministries building and, his personal favorite, 70 Federal St. He was also responsible for the restorations of Quincy Market, Old South Meeting House and the Talbot Building at Boston University, as well as the designs of more than 25 community libraries throughout Massachusetts.

Stahl received an honorary Doctorate of Collaborative Practice from Boston Architectural College in 2009, among other recognition for his career achievements.

Stahl served on the BHCA board of directors from 1963 to 1973, founding and chairing the organization’s Planning Committee in 1965. He returned to the board more than five years ago and served as co-chair of the Civic Association Planning and Research Committee, which oversees institutional development and expansion plans in and around Beacon Hill.

Stahl’s other civic contributions included his work with Historic New England and the Boston Architectural College, where he served as a faculty member and on countless committees.

Joan Berndt, a longtime neighbor of Stahl’s and a fellow BHCA director who served on this year’s Beacon Award Nominating Committee, described him as a “generous, talented and dedicated” community member who skillfully combined his architectural expertise with a long-term vision for the growth of a historic neighborhood in the city.

Berndt cited making Temple Street into a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare and saving the adjoining Ralph Adams Cram Chapel/Richard Upjohn Double house from demolition among Stahl’s many significant efforts on Beacon Hill.

“He was thoughtful, insightful—an activist with a gentle demeanor who was well respected by all,” Berndt wrote in email to the Times. “He was a mentor to many, and truly a senior-statesman-like presence whose myriad contributions were given generously.”

Pel Stockwell, chair of the award nominating committee, wrote in an email, “With the pool of nominations for the incredibly deserving people and groups that are submitted, it

can be difficult to select a winner. Tad stood out not for any one act, but for 50 years of his commitment to preserving, promoting and planning our neighborhood. Always thoughtful and insightful, he was a mentor to many of his Beacon Hill neighbors.”

BHCA Executive Director MaryLee Halpin added, “It is heartwarming to see this prestigious award go to Tad, who gave so generously of himself to the causes that were dear to him.” **

2015 – Bernie Borman

The man who served as president of the Beacon Hill Civic Association from 1971 to 1974 was on hand for the group’s annual meeting at Hampshire House to receive the 19th annual Beacon Award for his “significant and sustained” contribution to the community.

“It was a different time,” Bernie Borman said upon learning of the accolade. “I have to take the [award] as evidence from another era, and I’m just happy that people remember it.”

Borman, now nearly 83, was raised in Belleville, Ill., a small city located 17 miles east of St. Louis, and earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Illinois in 1954. He then served as an officer in the U.S. Army in Korea after the truce before enrolling at Harvard Law School.

Upon earning his law degree in 1959, Borman found work as an attorney at the now-defunct Boston firm of Lane & Altman Esqs.

“When I started, it was a five-man firm, where everyone shared all the duties,” Borman said. “But as the firm evolved and grew, specialization crept in.”

He was named a partner at the firm in 1967 and focused largely on commercial leases and other real estate documents for the last 30 years of his career until his retirement in 2003.

Borman’s involvement with the Civic Association began in 1970 when he penned an article for the Beacon Hill News at the request of its publisher, in which he pointed to the group’s upcoming election as an ideal opportunity to engage residents in neighborhood activities.

Borman was soon enlisted to head up the Civic Association, based largely on his tenure with the Greater Boston Junior Chamber of Commerce from 1960 to 1967, during which time he served respectively as both the group’s president and vice president.

With Borman at the helm of the Civic Association, the organization hired its first executive director and full-time secretary, as well as tripling its membership and increasing revenues 10-fold. During this time, the Civic Association began publishing a regular newsletter and introduced community events, like pancake breakfasts and the

Charles Street Fair – the precursor to today’s Block Party. The group also worked diligently to help transform an abandoned school building on Bowdoin Street into subsidized housing in 1974.

Borman’s most memorable achievement, however, probably remains spearheading a successful campaign to save Park Plaza from redevelopment in the mid-‘70s.

Under the guise of urban renewal, Borman said the city had given a developer an option on 40 acres of prime real estate, which, in reality, it had no jurisdiction over. The initial proposal included plans to build six skyscrapers the height of the Prudential Center that would sit atop an eight-story garage on Boylston Street, facing the Boston Common and the Public Garden. In 1977, the developer, who had garnered support for the project from citywide, was ultimately thwarted by a grassroots campaign led by Borman.

“There’s great strength in the truth,” Borman said. “If you keep telling the truth, you’re going to get somewhere.”

In the ‘90s, Borman also penned more than 100 restaurant reviews for Toni Norton’s Beacon Hill newspaper. He said passersby would stop him on the street to request that he review a particular restaurant or ask for a recommendation.

“At that time, I had more notoriety from [the reviews] than from all my civic work,” Borman said.

Today, Borman reminds his neighbors that they too are responsible for preserving Beacon Hill and its rich heritage. “We’re caretakers in a way, and we’re supposed to leave this neighborhood better than we found it,” Borman said. **

2016 - Priscilla Fales

Priscilla Fales, who has touched the lives of hundreds of neighborhood children and their families during her 47 years as a Beacon Hill Nursery School teacher, was awarded the 19th annual Beacon Award at Beacon Hill Civic Association Annual Meeting.

In 1969, armed with a brand new early education degree from what was then LaSalle Junior College, Fales took her first step into the school’s Green Room, the classroom for three year olds where she has since spent her entire professional career. It is here that she has nurtured two generations of young children, giving them their earliest exposure to classroom learning and community living.

For nearly five decades happy sounds have radiated from the Green Room as children laugh, sing and dance, often to music Fales strums on her own guitar. There, she starts the little ones on their journey of learning how to be part of a group, share with others and solve problems on their own.

Parents praise her as a kind, caring, warm and supportive teacher. Her special way with children draws them back years after they have outgrown their nursery school days.

Others admire her constant striving to improve her curriculum. While various theories of early educational have come and gone over the years, Fales said the overall principal has remained the same. “You try to have the curriculum come from the children themselves rather than impose it on them,” she said. “I think that is important. You learn what it is that they want to do, and that is what you follow.”

She delights in simple ways to engage the preschoolers. Using only natural materials, she has designed whole curricula focusing on rocks and sticks. The children build with sticks, decorate them, wrap them, and arrange them in vases. “We do a lot of provocations,” she said. “We talk about shadows, reflections and opposites using the rocks. It is fascinating to see that if you set out black and white rocks, most will put the black ones on white paper and the white ones on black paper.”

Most of all, she loves it when the children ask questions and she can help them figure out the answers. “My best moments are when I feel as though we have helped a kid who is struggling so that he struggles less,” she said.

Often that takes weeks of working with the child’s parents to learn what’s best for the child. This is something the community of parents on Beacon Hill value. While most work at least half time, they are committed to their kids’ education and make the time to be a part of it, she said. It’s one of the reasons the nursery school has been a special place at which to work.

The changes she has seen during her long tenure mostly relate to the school’s infrastructure. It has grown to twice its original size. Children can enroll at a younger age and stay through kindergarten. The two playgrounds have been renovated and updated to the current thinking in outdoor play. And, not surprisingly, the young ones are a lot more technology-savvy than they use to be.

Next month, Fales will retire from the Green Room. All these years the school has been her family, said Fales, who never married. She is grateful to it and the community for all she has learned and the support she has been given during her professional life. Now she looks forward to enjoying other parts of her family, new activities and, importantly, living a life not quite so scheduled.

As one parent said, “While the thought of spending 47 years with the toddler set would make many of us shudder, Priscilla has made it her life’s work. For that, the Beacon Hill community is immeasurably thankful.” **

Elsie and Jeannette Herrmann

One day after Mother's Day, Elsie Herrmann and her daughter Jeannette were jointly presented the 20th annual Beacon Award at the Beacon Hill Civic Association's annual meeting while remaining characteristically humble about their "significant and sustained" contributions to the community.

"Why me?" Elsie pondered four days earlier from the kitchen of the Pinckney Street home where she raised Jeannette. "Lots of people have done lots of things for this community, but it's been a pleasure to do whatever I could."

Elsie, who turns 95 on July 1, was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and moved to Hamburg Germany, before settling in Braintree at age 9. She later attended the now-defunct Vesper George School of Art in Boston and, during World War II, began her career as a draftsman at the Pneumatic Scale Corporation. After the war, she worked as a buyer for Jordan Marsh.

In 1955, Elsie married George Herrmann and moved to Pinckney Street. The couple relocated five years later to a more spacious home a few doors away after welcoming two children. Elsie participated in parent-volunteer-work and actively promoted the Window Box Contest in its early days while her children attended Beacon Hill Nursery School and the Advent School.

As a parishioner at King's Chapel, Elsie served on many church committees, including the vestry. She organized a monthly dinner for 500 guests of the Pine Street Inn, handling duties from shopping and cooking to food delivery and service. Elsie also served as president of the boards of Bethany Union and the Fragment Society, and she recently retired from a long-term position on the board of the Lend a Hand Society.

On Beacon Hill, however, Elsie is perhaps best known for her work with the Beacon Hill Garden Club, including leading the civic garden projects for many years, tending to the community's gardens at Faneuil House, the Codman Island and Old North Church and the window boxes in front of the Charles Street post office. "It gives me satisfaction to make the neighborhood look nice, and to plan the plantings so they look attractive all year round," she said.

Molly Sherden, a member of the Beacon Award nominating committee and a fellow longtime member of the Garden Club, recalls the frequent sight of Elsie hauling huge bags of fertilizer to the community gardens. ("Use or lose it" is how Elsie describes her hands-on approach.) She describes Elsie as "dedicated" and "humble," adding that she often shies away from accolades despite receiving national recognition from the Garden Club of America for civic planting.

"I'm delighted that Elsie and Jeannette were both chosen," Sherden said.

As for Jeannette, she said she followed the philanthropic example set not only by Elsie, but also by her father George, who co-chaired the Beacon Hill Civic Association's

Traffic and Parking Committee for many years alongside Peter Thomson, took hotline calls and helped with drop-in counseling for Project Place, and campaigned for Presidential-hopeful Eugene McCarthy in 1968.

“My parents were always active in the community so it just seemed like the most reasonable thing to do,” Jeannette said.

As a teenager, Jeannette’s civic-mindedness led her to make pancakes for Boston peace breakfasts at the Charles Street Meetinghouse and to serve on the board of directors for Hill House, where she helped to organize dances and other programming and to secure funding for teen activities.

After some away from Boston, Jeannette, an economist by profession who designed financial instruments for the Chicago Board of Trade, developed advanced approaches to risk management in international markets and analyzed clinical and financial issues in health care, returned with her husband and eldest child, Caroline, to Beacon Hill in 1994. Their second child, Geoffrey, was born here two years later.

Jeannette soon became involved with the Beacon Hill Civic Association’s Traffic and Parking Committee, and was eventually elected as president and then chair of the organization’s board of directors. Among the issues at the forefront during Jeannette’s tenure as board chair were negotiations with Suffolk University and the renovation of the 74 Joy Street community center. Since finishing her term, Jeannette continues to be engaged with the Civic Association in traffic and urban-planning issues, including the redevelopment of the Government Center Garage and Parcels 7 and 9.

“The Civic Association has worked for over 95 years to make the neighborhood a place where we all want to live, raise our kids and remain afterwards,” Jeannette said. “It’s sometimes hard for people to reach a consensus and move forward in a constructive way, but the Civic Association does a great job in scaffolding that process and promoting thoughtful change.”

Suzanne Besser, president of the Civic Association’s board of directors and a member of the Beacon Award nominating committee, said Jeannette’s “experience, thoughtfulness, impartiality and judgment have helped guide many a decision-making process that has benefitted the neighborhood and city.”

Besser describes Jeannette as a “very hard worker [who] rolled up her sleeves and dug right in” during stints as the Civic Association’s president and chair and even volunteered as executive director at a time when the organization sought to fill that position.

In addition to her terms on the Civic Association board, Jeannette served on the boards of the Beacon Hill Nursery School and the Friends of the Public Garden. She continues to serve on the board of the Fragment Society.

“Beacon Hill is fortunate to have families like the Herrmanns who contribute so much of their time and energy to keeping our neighborhood as great as it is,” Besser added.

Meanwhile, Jeannette now hopes to pass along the commitment to her community that she inherited from her parents to her own children.

“My parents modeled good behavior on the civic-engagement front, and I hope I model good civic engagement for our kids,” Jeannette said. “I think it’s terribly important that people get involved in their communities, both for themselves and for the long-term health of those communities.” **

2018 - Paula O’Keeffe

At the 2018 annual meeting of the Beacon Hill Civic Association, Paula O’Keeffe was presented the 21st annual Beacon Award for her significant and sustained” contributions to the community.

A West Newton native, O’Keeffe was admittedly unfamiliar with the neighborhood when she and her husband Bill moved to a small house on Cedar Lane Way after he graduated from Boston College Law School in 1965. She soon found work as an assistant teacher at Beacon Hill Nursery School and became acquainted with many who would go on to become her lifelong friends. “It was a really terrific experience that introduced me to Beacon Hill and its people,” O’Keeffe said.

In the mid-1970s, O’Keeffe began her first stint on the Beacon Hill Civic Association board of directors and helped organize two street fairs, which closed Charles Street between Beacon and Revere streets for the whole day.

After a couple of years with the Civic Association, O’Keeffe left the group to focus her attention on volunteering for Hill House, which she described as something of an ad hoc organization at the time. She would go on to serve on Hill House’s board of directors, as well as its board president. Among her most notable achievements in this role were organizing two wine auctions at the Boston Athenaeum in 1978 and ’79, respectively, which she described as “Hill House’s first really foray to become known on the Hill.”

1980 was a pivotal year for O’Keeffe as she began volunteering three times a week in the Massachusetts General Hospital Emergency Department.

“I was training for my EMT license and wanted to see if I could stand what I saw in the ER,” she said. “I loved it, but couldn’t get a part time job with Boston EMS...so I stayed at the ER and have loved every minute.”

Now in her 38th year with MGH, O’Keeffe assists patients in nearly every capacity of their hospital visits, signing them in upon arrival and helping shuttle them between locations, among other duties.

“No one who enters the ER wants to be there; they come with family and friends who also are nervous, and this is where I come in,” O’Keeffe said. “In small ways, I can make their experience more pleasant, which is a real privilege. I love it, and regardless of what else is going on in my life, it makes me feel great.”

In 2010, the Massachusetts General Hospital recognized O’Keeffe as a member of “the one hundred” – 100 everyday individuals and group whose effort in the fight against cancer has been inspirational. She established an endowed fund at MGH that provides financial assistance to promising junior faculty involved in basic cancer research in 1999, and her other gifts to the hospital include donations to the Kurt Isselbacher Scholars Fund and the Cancer Center Research Fund.

Meanwhile, O’Keeffe has also co-chaired five Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill tours – an annual event sponsored by the Beacon Hill Garden Club in which members open their private gardens to the public.

“This is really fun because it provides Beacon Hill with a day that is like a big party on our streets,” O’Keeffe said. “This kind of festivity is unusual in most places, but not here. Many people work together very hard to make it such a huge success, and the money we earn goes to environmental and educational causes.”

In the early-‘90s, O’Keeffe returned to the BHCA board and, since then, has gone on to distinguish herself as the chair of its Safety Committee and the police liaison to Area A-1, which in addition to Beacon Hill, includes Chinatown, Downtown and the North End. She also serves on the district’s Police Advisory Council, which meets monthly with members of Area A and is the largest in the city.

While the Beacon Award Nominating Committee reviewed many applications this year, Russell Gaudreau, chair, said O’Keeffe was the most deserving recipient for myriad reasons.

“In many ways, Paula personifies what this award is all about,” Gaudreau wrote. “She has served the Beacon Hill community in so many different ways for such a long period of time. She has had a positive impact on the lives of so many members of the community...[and] in her various leadership roles she has always been respectful of others. She is unassuming, but very effective.”

Suzanne Besser, Nominating Committee member, added, “What we love about Paula is the tireless, quiet and selfless way she generously donates her time and people skills to better all aspects of our community. She volunteers because she truly believes in and enjoys what she does.”

Another Nominating Committee member Molly Sherden wrote, “Paula is a friend to many on the Hill and a mother and grandmother to other residents here. So, she is perpetuating her love of and care for this neighborhood for generations to come.”

As for O’Keeffe, who has chaired many past BHCA annual meetings, she said she was looking forward to attending Monday’s gathering as a guest – and (left as a) Beacon Award honoree – instead.

“I’m very pleased that I landed on Beacon Hill and not Wellesley,” O’Keeffe said. “Life is never boring here, and Charles Street is in better shape than ever. Most people who live here really care about the neighborhood and are willing to put effort into it. What fun it is to see volunteers with ladders winding greens and bows around gas-lights at Christmas time. How lucky am I and to have spent my life here?”**

2018 – Ivy A. Turner

At the 97th annual meeting of the Beacon Hill Civic Center Monday night at the Union Club, Ivy A. Turner received the 23rd annual Beacon Award for her “significant and sustained” contribution to the neighborhood.

Turner was drawn to Beacon Hill for its historic architecture after moving to Boston in 1988, and as a real estate broker by trade, she worked for several local firms before opening her Charles Street real estate office, Ivy Associates, Inc. (now called The Ivy Team/KW) in 1995.

In November of that same year, Turner attended the “Cheers for Children” fundraiser at the Hampshire House, sponsored by Tom Kershaw, now chairman of the Hampshire House Corporation. It was then that Kershaw lamented to Turner and Dr. Chris Quigley, owner of Charles Street Family Chiropractic, that the dwindling Beacon Hill Businessman’s Association (a.k.a. the Charles Street Merchants Association) had no plans to continue its annual tradition of decorating Charles Street’s gas-lamps for the holidays.

“At this time, businesses and residents were kind of at war in the neighborhood,” Turner said, adding that in one instance, a florist was fined after a neighboring resident reported the business to the city for displaying flowers on the street.

Likewise, as new business owners, Turner and Osgood also met resistance receiving approval from the city to mount sign boxes outside of their respective storefronts.

So, Turner and Quigley agreed to assist Kershaw and a local floral arranger in spearheading the effort to decorate the Charles Street gas-lamps under the auspices of the Businessman’s Association, which was rechristened the Beacon Hill Business Association at Turner’s urging. Kershaw in turn handed over the small sum of money left in the organization’s coffers to Turner and Quigley, who were then tasked with soliciting the remaining funds for the decorations, as well as recruiting volunteers to handle the decorating tasks.

“There was no email back then either,” Turner said, “so we had to go around door to door on Charles Street, talking to business owners and asking for their help.”

After the warm reception that the inaugural outing received, Turner said there was no way the tradition could be abandoned, and they soon found themselves inundated with requests to decorate gas-lamps in front of Cambridge Street businesses as well. In response, decorating expanded to Cambridge Street and all areas in the neighborhood where businesses could be found in subsequent years.

Meantime, Turner joined the Beacon Hill Civic Association board of directors in the late ‘90s and continued to serve in this role for around 10 years. During this time, the Civic Association assumed the decorating reins as the Business Association began to focus more on staging its annual Holiday Stroll. Turner credits Suzanne Besser, who then served as the group’s executive director, for helping to coordinate the decorating effort during this transitional period.

“Suzanne was tremendously helpful,” Turner recalled. “Sometimes she expressed doubt we could pull it off, but we always did in the end.”

In 2000, Turner et al set out to decorate all 1,089 lamp-posts in the neighborhood for what was intended to be a once-in-a-lifetime event to ring in the new millennium. And with the tragic events of Sept. 11 the next year, Turner admits she was initially reluctant to continue the tradition. But she acquiesced, however, after receiving countless calls from neighborhood residents asking when the decorations would go up.

“People said we need it more than ever,” she said. “The key was always about getting people together, and I truly leaned that that year.”

Since then, Turner has witnessed the marriages of several couples who met decorating, adding that one of her “greatest satisfactions comes from seeing photos of couples away on vacation together who came together as strangers just a few months before.”

Holiday decorating has also become something of a rite of passage for newcomers to the neighborhood, Turner said, beginning with the “Garlands and Greens” fundraiser at Hampshire House in November, followed by the decorating and Holiday Stroll in December before volunteers remove the decorations in January.

“My main motivator and what makes the event so important to me is that it brings the community together, and that’s what I like to do – bring people together,” she said.

And as a classically trained cellist, Turner also helped conceive the “quartet-a-thon” in 2001 as part of the annual Beacon Hill Art Walk.

“At first, the musicians were skeptical of playing outdoors, but we found some sheltered garden spaces where they could perform... and the music was so well received that many musicians came back the following year to do it again,” Turner said. “They especially

like having the opportunity to play for people who might have never been to a classical concert...as well introducing children to live music for the first time.”

Turner also finds it encouraging that “there seems to be more of a desire to sit and listen for longer periods of time,” adding last year’s event drew a queue that stretched around the block.

“Kind of like decorating, it’s something for people to enjoy that takes a lot of volunteers to do their part and also showcases the neighborhood,” she said.

Russ Gaudreau, chair of the Nominating Committee for the second consecutive year, said Turner was a deserving and obvious choice for this year’s Beacon Award recipient, given her “significant and sustained” contributions to then neighborhood.

“We looked for someone who not only stood out, but also has been doing it for a long time,” he said. “And Ivy is the perfect candidate in that sense.”

Gaudreau lauded Turner for assembling the volunteers and coordinating the holiday decorations without fail every year for the past two decades, regardless of weather or other extenuating circumstances.

“It’s quite a feat, not only because of the sustained benefit to the Beacon Hill community, but on a much-broader level, because the neighborhood is such a popular visiting point for people from all over the world,” Gaudreau said.

Meanwhile, Dec. 7 and 8 of this year will mark the 20th consecutive year of decorating lamp-posts throughout the entire neighborhood, which Turner speculates now might be the largest event of its kind worldwide.

“To truly appreciate its significance...and to see just how hard it is, you have to get out there and join in the decorating,” Turner said. “Once people do it, they develop an appreciation for it, which they didn’t have before...and then there’s no stopping them from helping us out going forward.”

** denotes excerpts/articles taken from The Beacon Hill Times.