



Award Presentation made to Honor Ed Murtagh

By Bob Hoyt, Director, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection
At the Community Clean Water Summit
March 3rd 2012 | 8:30am – 3:30pm
Silver Spring Civic Building

I am going to name one person now and give that person an award. This is one person who I look to when I need to feel good about where we are today. This person serves as a model for all of us. I am sure many of you will guess who it is before I announce his name.

This person has lived in the County for over 50 years and has been focused on improving water quality in many of our local waterways, namely Sligo Creek. Like many of you, this person has a full time job yet still finds a way to be involved in many different groups and seems to magically appear anywhere there is an environmental outreach event or project benefiting water quality.

Whether its installing a neighborhood rain garden, restoring natural areas and litter clean-ups, working with school children or recruiting others to “do the right thing” for the environment, this person just seems to be in more places than we can count. We joke that he may be cloned. I’m sure some people wish that he was. He says he has fun volunteering and gets the most thrill out of engaging the community and interacting with good people. “They are people you want to hang out with and are never selfish,”



he says. Volunteering with school children has a special place in his heart as he witnesses a student having an “ah ha” moment as they discover how they are helping the community and the environment by digging a rain garden and experience the benefits of a project his group helped plan. “Seeing kids getting involved is very rewarding”, he says. He has done work with Northwood High School and today sees one of the students he’s mentored, actively assisting one of the organizations he works with.

This person is a very active member of the Neighbors of Northwest Branch, the Watershed Stewards Academy, Friends of Sligo Creek, Rock Creek Conservancy, and Conservation Montgomery, and has been instrumental in the creation of Green Wheaton, and Silver Spring Green. He doesn’t think much of “official positions” as he tries not to overextend himself but he chairs the Friends of Sligo Creek’s Stormwater committee, the Watershed Stewards’ Academy, is the co- secretary for Green Wheaton and is a member of the Stormwater Partners Network. In his down time, he writes an occasional environmental blog praising the use of conservation landscaping and the community benefits of bioretention for stormwater prevention.



When asked what makes him most proud, he says, “When people tell me that they have noticed some behavioral change in the community because of what we have done.” Recounting a particularly proud moment, he said, “One time I helped a guy do a rain garden; the person told me that he had become inspired to do the rain garden because he had received one of my emails. He read about rain gardens and was inspired by the email so we installed one.

Another thing he finds particularly rewarding is to see the sense of accomplishment and awe from the community when taking part in a stream cleanup and its impact, like a recent one on the Turkey branch. DEP had completed a restoration yet, there was still trash all over the stream so he decided to organize a cleanup. That day they literally picked up TONS of trash. Now it is much cleaner. He now notices that more and more people that live close by are participating in the clean up.

Working on conservation projects in Wheaton is near and dear to his heart as well and says, getting positive feedback from the community and getting recognition for his organizations effort is very rewarding to him. Since he lives near Sligo, he sees that people are picking up more and more trash, which is good because it looks cleaner but he ultimately looks forward to the day they no longer have to do cleanups. He says, “Change is happening. We used to try to keep track of the number of rain barrels in different neighborhoods, but we have lost track because they are everywhere.”

Many of you have worked with this person and have no doubt been inspired, partnering side-by-side in completing many of these projects and initiatives.

This may seem like a no brainer... but if you haven't already guessed it...Ed Murtagh is our award recipient. Ed, could you please come to the front so we can show our appreciation for all of your amazing accomplishments for Montgomery County communities!

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