

“Federation Corner” column  
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## **Congratulations to the Civic Federation Award winners**

By Paula Bienenfeld

This is the one, folks! It’s our annual Civic Federation Awards Banquet. And...our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Celebrations are in order.

This year we are excited to honor three groups of civic activists that have worked tirelessly over the past year on behalf of their neighbors and our county. Thank you to all of you who work so hard, spend so much time on civic issues, and in many cases shell out your own money for the cause. This banquet is for you. We don’t receive funding from private organizations and we don’t receive a penny from the County government. We don’t owe anybody a thing. Like Consumer Reports, we rely on you. And we are never disappointed. Thank you for all you do.

To purchase tickets for the Banquet please go to our newsletter at our website and scroll down to the last page, here <http://montgomerycivic.org/files/20155.pdf>.

Our awardees are as follows:

### **The Sentinel Award: Piney Branch Young Activist Club**

When the Civic Federation presents this award we honor not only the awardee but also the work of The Sentinel, and its publisher, Lynn Kapiloff. Thanks Ms. Kapiloff for running one of the best newspapers in the area.

The Young Activist Club (YAC), based in Takoma Park, Maryland, began its work with the intent to eliminate single-use disposable polystyrene lunch trays at the Piney Branch Elementary School (PBES). The Club is made up of students at PBES Takoma and Eastern Middle Schools. Parent volunteers also help out.

Some background: according to the Earth Research Foundation, “A 1986 EPA report on solid waste named the polystyrene manufacturing process as the 5th largest creator of hazardous waste. The National Bureau of Standards Center for Fire Research identified 57 chemical byproducts released during the combustion of polystyrene foam. The process of making polystyrene pollutes the air and creates large amounts of liquid and solid waste.”

This past year the YAC had three remarkable successes. First, after years of their advocacy, MCPS agreed to end the use of polystyrene trays in cafeterias and instead use paper trays. The YAC continues to push for MCPS to instead move to reusable trays and dishwashers rather than disposal paper trays, so the battle is not quite won. Second, as a result of their persistence, the City of Takoma Park banned polystyrene restaurant take-out containers. And, third, on January 20th, 2015, our County Council voted unanimously to restrict use of foam polystyrene at foodservice businesses.

As civic activists ourselves we know the hundreds of hours that go into the push for maintaining and improving our quality of life here in Montgomery County. These students organized, and advocated to ban polystyrene, including testifying before county and city government boards; creating and signing petitions; and writing letters.

Because of their efforts last November 10th the Takoma Park City Council passed a bill banning polystyrene eating ware, the type found in sit-down and fast-food take-out restaurants.

The County bill, which prohibits the use and sale of expanded polystyrene foodservice products, takes effect January 1, 2016. Beginning on that date, County facilities, agencies, departments, and contractors will be required to use compostable or recyclable products.

At a time when alarm bells are ringing loudly about climate change and the future of our planet, the YAC is front and center in working towards a healthier world. This award comes at an opportune time; the November 2014 Takoma Park bill gave restaurants six months to replace their polystyrene with other materials. This June is the beginning of the non-polystyrene future for Takoma Park.

### **The Wayne Goldstein Award: Save Our Seminary**

The site that is now the National Park Seminary Historic District was originally a wooded glen and tobacco plantation. It was developed in 1887 as a hotel designed by the noted Washington architect T. F. Schneider. When the hotel proved to be unsuccessful, John and Vesta Cassedy rented and later purchased the property to create, in 1894, National Park Seminary, a finishing school for young women.

The Seminary was purchased in 1916 by Dr. James E. Ament, who expanded the campus. Dr. Roy Tasco Davis bought the school in 1937, and renamed the school National Park College.

Following the outbreak of World War II, Dr. Davis was required by the War Powers Act to sell the Seminary to the U. S. Army and it became an annex to the Walter Reed Army Hospital, serving as a rehabilitation and convalescent center for soldiers wounded in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Viet Nam War. After patient care was discontinued at the Seminary, the property continued to be used for medical research, military housing, and administrative purposes. Over the years, the buildings and grounds declined from inadequate maintenance, and the Army tore down or altered several buildings. When Army officials began to discuss tearing down more of the historic buildings, the Maryland Historical Trust sought to protect the most historic part of the site by securing its listing in 1972 on the National Register of Historic Places as the National Park Seminary Historic District.

### *Save Our Seminary Formed*

Founded in 1988 and incorporated in 1989 by a group of local volunteers and preservationists, SOS was established to combat the neglect of the unique, beautiful and historic buildings and landscape of the National Park Seminary in Silver Spring. Wayne Goldstein, whose passion for historic preservation has left a wonderful legacy for Montgomery County, offered his advice and assistance to the volunteers of SOS about the steps that needed to be taken to save the site.

As a result of the efforts of SOS and its supporters, in 2004, the Army exceded the property and it was transferred through Montgomery County to a partnership of The Alexander Company, and EYA. The historic buildings were saved and the Seminary has been transformed into a unique residential

community. A permanent preservation easement protects the Historic District and assures public access to it. The site is now listed in the National Trust of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of Interior for its architectural significance and its role in women's education and the history of U.S. Army medicine.

SOS volunteers created the organization that educated the public and brought attention to this nearly forgotten gem. They conduct monthly tours and have published a book to share the story and bring life to the campus history. *Enchanted Forest Glen* is the award-winning photographic history of the National Park Seminary and the successful effort to save it from demolition by neglect. Throughout the years, with their passion and perseverance, SOS has advocated on behalf of the site's significant past, dealt with daily on-site maintenance, assisted throughout the rehabilitation by storing and cataloguing artifacts and sculpture, supplied historic photos to aid in the restoration of historic buildings and raised funds for professional conservation. More information on SOS and the history of the campus can be found at [www.saveourseminary.org](http://www.saveourseminary.org)

We are sure that Wayne Goldstein would be delighted to see this organization honored with the award that bears his name.

### **The Star Cup: Planning and Land Use Committee**

This Award is awarded to the Federation delegate or committee performing the most outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County. This year we once again honor the Planning and Land Use Committee (PLU). The PLU Committee is chaired by Virginia Sheard, a long-standing board member and contributor extraordinaire to the workings of the Civic Fed. Members of the PLU Committee have attended countless meetings, listened to and reported on the County's zoning rewrite process, and diligently kept us informed on this very complex but important process. We thank them for their continued exemplary service and are honored to award them with the Star Cup, named after the Washington Star.

Congratulations to all our Awardees.