

Text of Norma Weinberg's thoughts  
at Installation as Chair NEU/HSA - 2010-2012  
the  
Annual Meeting,  
Home of Nancy and Al Clapp  
Jaffrey, NH  
July 17, 2010

Dear Friends,

I am humbled and honored to be your new Chair.

The New England Unit of the Herb Society of America has the most original and longest history of any Unit in HSA...three quarters of a century and counting.

Faith, Karen, Beryl, Linda and I recently returned from an absolutely wonderful National Meeting of the HSA in Nashville, Tennessee. Over 200 attendees from all over the U.S. came together to learn from and share with each other. This event only happened because 75 years ago, a small group of motivated and interested folks came together, in the Boston area, to bond in a common interest about useful plants. A small group could make a difference then, and one person or a small group can make a difference today!

We still have that special chemistry. While working on the 'Plant Sale,' as Vice Chair, these past two years, I have been continually impressed with our members. The friendships we make, the depth of knowledge, curiosity, dedication and persistence in the sometimes, face of adversity. We have a collective desire to share what we know with children and adults, with a unique enthusiasm for herbs.

Because TV and Internet news bring us up-to-the-minute details of a world in turmoil, people are retreating to the land to find solace in green nature. 'A seed is a promise.'

I will digress for a moment and tell you a tiny story of my recent experience at the Defense Veterans Brain Injury Center in Charlottesville, VA. (June 7-11 2010). You may or may not know that I am in a graduate program in Brain Injury at GWU,

Washington DC. I had the opportunity to spend time with a small group of wounded warriors who had returned from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to traumatic brain injury due to explosive devices, many are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, bodily injuries, migraines, and vision problems. The goal of DVVIC is to help return them to some semblance of civilian life.

I had arranged ahead of time with the occupational therapist and speech language therapist to identify any soldiers that might take delight in a garden. Our goal was to help them build their own space where they could plant, grow, nourish, harvest and use the veggies and herbs they sowed.

When I first met these guys, they were sitting or lying in beds, shades drawn, unwilling to be in a car in traffic or near groups of people. They appeared depressed and withdrawn.

The idea of a garden in their backyard was presented. We asked for their advice in laying out the site and creating raised beds for vets in wheelchairs. Virginia has clay soil so the ground needed tilling and soil amendments. There were glimmers of interest, memories of growing up on a farm, excitement about using a tiller. (A good Samaritan came by with a truck load of horse manure to till in (way too much!))

With some trepidation, a short car trip to a nearby garden nursery, where we found tomatoes, squash, watermelon, cantaloupe, and herbs to buy. By week's end, there was a palpable feeling of excitement – their own garden, a planned cookout, and smiles.

So what might my preliminary goals be as Chair?

1. To strengthen the numbers in our Unit so that we are here in 2085 – 75 years from now.
2. To listen to our present members as to what they would like from NEUHSA, now and in the future.
3. To continue to reach out to young and old alike and share the natural pleasures, curiosities, and wonders of a garden.

4. To remind us all that you benefit most when you participate together...in the teaching herb garden, with children, with community, with each other.
5. Be more than a dues paying member. Tell your friends and garden clubs about our Unit. Invite them to join us at a meeting.
6. Be a part of as many upcoming events and programs as you can.
7. Be a Mentor for new members.
8. Volunteer to be part of a committee.
9. Bring your homegrown herb entries to our first ever, competitive 'Herb Show' at Tower Hill August 20th.
10. There is strength in our numbers!

Let's do this together!

Thank you.

norma