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HISTORIC CREPE MYRTLE PROJECT LIVES ON AT NEW REGIONAL LIBRARY



Photo Above: *Cara Burton, Library Director (left) and Jeannette Edwards, Soroptimist Officer (right)*. Second photo: Crepe Myrtles line the Shore's Route 13, a historic highway beautification project.

(ACCOMACK, VIRGINIA) January 9, 2019 - Cara Burton, Eastern Shore Public Library Library Director, recently presented the Soroptimist Club of Accomack County a progress report and update regarding our new Regional Library. Burton focused on the planned Eastern Shore Heritage Center, previously the "Eastern Shore Room," and how the new facility will better serve Accomack and Northampton Counties with advanced technology, community involvement serving all ages, and preserving our Heritage. At the conclusion of her presentation, the Club was pleased to present the Library with a \$1,000 donation.

In 1929, the Town and Country Garden Group, the garden club associated with the Woman's Club of Accomack County, financed the planting of 442 crepe myrtles, at a cost of forty cents apiece, along highway Route 13. Over time, they planted about 700 crepe myrtles from Cape Charles to Exmore. Not since that era had any crepe myrtles been planted until 1987, when the late Rachel B. Hall of the Soroptimist Club, proposed forming a committee to beautify the Eastern Shore. She, and Co-Chair, the late Sue Poulson Chesser, wanted to continue the venture started by the Woman's Club by planting crepe myrtles from Exmore to the Maryland state line.

Shortly after the formation of the Committee, Mrs. Hall passed away, and the Rachel B. Hall Memorial Crepe Myrtle Project was born with Sue Poulson Chesser carrying forward Mrs. Hall's dream of crepe myrtles along Route 13. In 1988 she coordinated with local tree nurseries and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to plant 250 bushes, which up until the last several years, they had been planting bushes ever since. In 1988, under Sue and her Committee's work, the Club won the "Keep Va. Beautiful Distinguished Service Award", in 1999 the Club received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the State Beautification Program, and in 2001 won a "Gold Leaf Award".

As of 2008, the Soroptimists had planted more than 4,500 crepe myrtles that line both sides of Route 13 on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. VDOT budget constraints and inability to plant and maintain new bushes called a halt to the project. In 2014, the Soroptimists ceased the Rachel B. Hall Memorial Crepe Myrtle Project when the committee chair Sue Poulson Chesser passed away. Funds designated for the project are being reallocated for other community beautification projects. In 2017, Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital received \$15,000 for the creation of the Sue Poulson Chesser Memorial Garden. The donation to ESPL will support planting of crepe myrtles at the new library location in Parksley, opening in 2020.

For more information about the library's building project, visit www.shorelibrary.com.

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