



Allow me to introduce myself. I've been on the executive board for 4 years serving as 2nd VP and then 1st VP but that doesn't mean that you know who I am. I am a RISD graduate and professional gardener. A wife and mother of three girls, a feminist, an environmentalist, and a designer. College brought me to Rhode Island 20 years ago and I've been literally putting down roots here ever since.

I became active in the Garden Club because this is what I'm good at. I love my community and strongly believe in volunteering and giving back. In garden clubs I've found comradery, inspiration, purpose and most importantly- fun. Scholarships, education, creativity and design, environmental stewardship, youth, garden therapy, honoring veterans- it's hard to think of something we don't do.

My President's Project for the next two years is to work for you. That's it. Our Clubs are doing enough. All I ask is that you show up, keep doing what you're doing, and have fun! There is strength in numbers and we are all stronger if we are supporting and learning from each other. Figuring out how to show how active, hardworking, and relevant we are- and have been for over 85 years- THAT'S my goal.

Increased communication is a big focus of mine. Social media, our website, and our newsletter are critical in showcasing who we are within our organization and to the public. Round table discussions after monthly meetings with a different theme- for example fundraising, awards, or programs- will reinforce the support and comradery that makes us unique.

I still haven't gotten to my theme which is "Respect- from the ground up". As an organic gardener it all starts with respect- respect for the soil, your site and conditions, the wildlife, the plants, water requirements, the trees, the light- seeing the big picture. 'Respect- from the ground up' parallels the RIFGC organization. I see my role as being an advocate. The clubs and membership are doing the work. Whatever I can do to showcase their individuality, talent, determination, and commitment is my purpose. Gardeners are simply stewards that lend encouragement and support. Two years in a garden's lifetime is nothing as most people know. That's all the time I've got as RIFGC President so I intend to WORK. And I hope that in two years' time I will be able to do enough. Because none of what goes on in garden clubs is about the executive board or its president- it's not about me. It's about all of you.

I am truly honored to be at your service.

Blakely Szosz