

Annual Meeting 2019

May 30, 2019

Amy Bell, executive director

Before we welcome our guest speaker, Dr. Penelope McDonnell, I wanted to share a few brief highlights of the 2018-2019 DCA year. We are proud to be the place in our community for people of all ages to gather, give, and learn. And as a privately-funded nonprofit that does not receive any financial support from the Town of Darien - we are grateful to all of you.

- Last week the DCA presented 22 college scholarship awards to graduating seniors at Darien High School, representing more than \$30,000 of funding. Next month, our scholarship committee volunteers will be interviewing students currently in college, who received scholarships as high school seniors and are now reapplying. The DCA continues to be the largest provider of scholarships at Darien High School and the only one that offers awardees the opportunity to reapply for all their years of college.
- Thanks to extensive outreach by our named scholarship committee volunteers, and the community's generosity, we continue to have many awards sponsored by local businesses and families.
- In addition to all of the outstanding programming you've always enjoyed from the DCA, we presented several well-received special events this year: a book talk and signing with Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jennifer Egan, a cheese and wine tasting luncheon with Darien Cheese and Fine Foods, and the return of our popular Darien Neighbors, Global Players speaker series, which also served as our main fundraiser.
- Our volunteer-run DCA Thrift Shop has always provided significant revenue to the DCA, a much-needed community service for those shopping on a budget, and a place to be "green" and donate unneeded items. Average daily revenue has increased at the shop, new and premium label clothing sales (on days that the shop is normally closed) have added to this revenue, and now a permanent boutique area for more upscale items has been created, further contributing to the bottom line.

- Revenues from our rentals business have grown substantially. We hosted 29 private catered events. Weddings are the most frequent, but there's a huge variety: nonprofit fundraisers, a 20th high school reunion, a 50th birthday party, a bat mitzvah and a corporate sales meeting and party. The formal garden makes for a stunning and wonderfully private setting for many of these events.
- And speaking of hosting events, our DCA bird sanctuary volunteers have given tours of the sanctuary to over 70 local preschoolers this spring, who have also made use of our indoor space for classroom activities. This is in addition to tours given to a number of adult groups in the community. All have been able to enjoy enhancements to the sanctuary enabled by more than \$18,000 in funding from The Darien Foundation - our second round of generous grant support. The DCA bird sanctuary is open to the public - so please take a stroll in this serene space, if you haven't visited!
- We thank outgoing board of directors members Tom Taylor and Chris Filmer for their service to the DCA, and are grateful that both will remain involved - in the financial arena, and bird sanctuary, respectively. Last week, we were thrilled to honor Pat Parlette as our DCA Volunteer of the Year for her contributions to the DCA Thrift Shop for more than 25 years, and for her lifelong connection to the DCA. A member of the Darien High School Class of 1943, Pat was one of the DCA's earliest scholarship awardees.

As your executive director, I am grateful for the leadership of our board, and the collective hard work of the board, staff, and our volunteers - as well as the support we receive from the Darien community. Thank you.