Paula White Named 2022 Volunteer of the Year

By Josh Todd

When Paula White moved to Atlanta in 2009, she struck up a conversation with an Atlanta Botanical Garden volunteer at a local garden center, and...voila! Starting as a Garden Maintenance volunteer, she first committed to a weekly shift in the Woodland Gardens. While working those shifts, she struck up a conversation with another volunteer about the docent program and joined the docents the following year. Becoming an adored volunteer among other docents, she led the group in 2013 as the docent chair. During her time at the Garden, she has also taught visitors through the discovery stations, welcomed guests as a greeter and helped with countless events like Garden Lights, Kinder in the Garden, Goblins and Concerts.

Her biggest impact at the Garden, however, has been at high level leadership roles. Paula held leadership positions for the Gardens for Connoisseurs Tour since 2014, first as the volunteer chairperson, then moving into the event chairperson role, along with serving on various committees and as a Day Captain.

She has co-chaired the annual Garden Symposium since 2014, and says Tracy McClendon, VP of Programs, “Paula helps plan the program, contacts the lecturers, and does anything and everything needed leading up to and on the day of the symposium. This year in particular, the symposium could not have happened without her leadership.”

Paula was also the chairperson for the 2020 and 2022 Flower Shows. Melissa Roberts, the Garden’s Senior Development Manager, explains, “Her kind and generous spirit make her such a pleasure to work with and a treasure for the Garden.”

Paula has been a Centennial Club member and 200 hour volunteer every year since 2011. She was a Root of the Garden from 2013 to 2016 and again in 2020. And she is a three-time Volunteer of the Month in 2013, 2017, and 2022. The Garden is so fortunate that Paula found a home here and cannot thank her enough for her involvement and support over the past thirteen years. She has made an impact on countless lives of Garden staff, visitors and volunteers.
The Centennial Volunteer Award was created in 1991 to award volunteers donating at least 100 hours of service. Each member receives a Centennial name badge, library card, class discount and parking privileges. This core group of volunteers contribute so much to the Garden, and we could not be nearly as successful without each of them. We have 135 members for 2022.

### New Members

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<tr>
<th>Kim Cody</th>
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<td>Rosemary Cox</td>
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### Perennial Centennials

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<td>Nancy Waterfill</td>
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<td>Susan Wood</td>
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<td>Lynda Pollock</td>
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<td>Chuck Young</td>
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<td>Bob Powell</td>
<td>Marlene Zwier</td>
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The 200 Hour Club
In 2022, 24 volunteers donated over 200 hours of service to the Garden. Each of them received an origami folded crane lapel pin in recognition of this achievement.

1st Year
Bev Adkins, Theresa McDugald

2nd Year
Jo Ann Bertrand, Paul Cushing, Lin Inlow, Marj Leinbaugh, Mikiko Lockwood

3rd Year
Elise Halpern

4th Year
Anne Boyte, Chris File, Agnes Miller-Landers, Marge Smith

5th Year
Bhavani Saravanan, Alice Soder

6th Year
Janet Cantrelle, Kathy Gallo

7th Year
Diane Korzeniewski, Jim Mallory

9th Year
Ann Bentsen, Sally Crowe, Charlotte Miller

10th Year
Roy Pinkston, Paula White

11th Year
Johnette Crum

The Roots of the Garden
The Top Hours Award

Marge Smith
280 hours

Anne Boyte
300 hours

Diane Korzeniewski
320 hours

Chris File
325 hours

Janet Cantrelle
420 hours

Charlotte Miller
635 hours
Previous Volunteers of the Year

1992
Jim Fitts

1993
Robin Shore

1994
Harold Edwards

1995
Sally Wright

1996
Aileen Hatcher

1997
Sig Guthman

1998
Penny Huth

1999
Jim Corley

2000
Dolores Wyland

2001
Bob Brennan

2002
Ozzie Johnson

2003
Lynn Lowrance

2004
Minnie Bob Campbell

2005
Merrily Labarthe

2006
Ann Bentsen

2007
Ernest Arvesen

2008
Kathryn LaTour

2009
Amelia Fusaro

2010
Anne Sheldon

2011
Christine Hettinger

2012
Johnette Crum

2013
Judie Taylor

2014
Bob Holmes

2015
Anita Wallace

2016
Jack Nolen

2017
Kathy Gallo

2018
Charlotte Miller

2019
Bob Nelson

2020
Sally Crowe

2021
Janet Cantrelle

Atlanta’s Volunteers of the Month

2020
Carol Phillips
Alice Soder
Steve Kilgo
Bobbie Kilgo
Carrie Mayham
Lauren Melde
Lin Inlow
Bhavani Saravanan
Paige DeMuth
Barbara McRoberts
Kay Roane
Patty Miseje

2021
Cindy Kelley
Merideth Northcutt
Anne Carley
Chris File
Ann Bonislawski
Kathy Bronaugh
Theresa McDugald
Tatyana Fershtat
Janet Cantrelle
Eve Goldstein
Angie Meadows
Denise Bomberger

2022
Jo Kroger
Rosemary Cox
Marge Smith
Linda Hirsch
Allison Nicolle
Heather Tangren
Paula White
Kathryn LaTour
Stan Bokoski
Denise Siegel
Penny Crump
Deedi Henson

Gainesville’s Volunteers of the Quarter

2020
Bev Atkins
Glen and Marie Cypher
Tricia Terrell

2021
Cindy Hodge
Maureen Smith
Mikiko Lockwood
Dan McDaniel

2022
Sally Walpole
Jim Giambrone
Martha and Dick Rightmyer
Meet the Volunteers of the Month

January
Beth Vaughan

January’s Volunteer of the Month Beth Vaughan started her Garden volunteer life as a Docent in October 2017. A retired teacher, she soon also signed on to help with children’s programs and in the library, often leading storybook time. After attending a Docent Update program by Dr. Emily Coffey on the Garden’s conservation and research programs, however, Beth decided that was the place for her, so these days she spends her volunteer time in the genetics lab, helping with things like lab projects for endangered plant species and curating the DNA Biorepository collection. A Centennial Club member for five years, Beth says “I’m proud to be a small part of the many ongoing projects and grants.” Hats off to Beth for being such a vital part of the Garden’s research efforts!

February
Karen Ahrens

After retiring from a career with the Federal Reserve, Karen Ahrens knew she needed to find a way to keep busy and productive. Exploring the many volunteer options at the nearby Botanical Garden, she found her niche with the Gardens under Glass staff, in particular the amphibian conservation program. “I just thought that would be fun!” Now the care and feeding of the Garden’s frogs and other amphibians is “her thing” and she’s a regular on Fridays, helping keep a ready supply of fruit flies and crickets and logging Centennial Clubs hours since 2018. Karen fills in on other days too, always ready to help with water testing, newt release, conferences...whatever is needed. The Garden thanks Karen for being a valued part of the amphibian team!

March
Paul Cushing

Paul Cushing may be a first time Volunteer of the Month, but his involvement with the Garden began decades ago. A fascination with orchids while in high school led him to spend time in the greenhouses, then managed by the City, that ultimately became the ABG. This curiosity led to a lifetime commitment to the Garden that went far beyond his fascination with orchids. As an attorney with the Garden’s law firm, Paul became a trusted legal advisor, a member of the Garden’s Board and now a Lifetime Trustee. Since retiring, Paul can devote more time to the nitty-gritty of the Garden’s orchid collections, doing what he loves in the greenhouse two days a week, racking up over 200 hours already this year. A Centennial since 2018, he is a valued and incredibly knowledgeable behind the scenes orchid volunteer. The Garden cannot thank Paul enough for his lifetime of commitment and is proud to name him March Volunteer of the Month.

April
Anne Kerner

When Anne Kerner first started volunteering at the Garden in 2018, she had no idea how much fun she would have digging, trimming and weeding every week. “I should be doing this in my own yard but it’s much more enjoyable here!” Learning from the staff makes all that sweat worthwhile, she says with a laugh. A Centennial volunteer for the last two years, Anne looks forward to her weekly shifts with a great group of GEMS who have become close friends. They’ve recently taken OKRA training together and can’t wait to help with their first event in the Outdoor Kitchen. The horticulture team says, “Anne is one of our best! We can always depend on her to arrive with a smile and a can-do attitude. The staff and her fellow GEMS love her!” No doubt, the feeling is mutual. For that positive attitude and trademark smile, Anne is saluted as April’s Volunteer of the Month.
Meet the Volunteers of the Month

May
Sandra Jones

May’s Volunteer of the Month Sandra Jones never knew she’d be introduced to frog legs when she started volunteering at the Garden! It was fall 2020 when she signed on as a GEM in the Children’s Garden. Shifts with Garden Lights then other special events followed before Sandra found her favorite role as an OKRA. “I’m not a very good cook so this has really enhanced my knowledge about food preparation! Plus I get to meet some of Atlanta’s most outstanding chefs who have introduced me to some very different foods,” she says with a smile. “One chef prepared frog legs as one of his courses...I would never have tried them if not for this opportunity!” They do taste like chicken, she admits. The staff says they are lucky to have her around. Thanks, Sandra, for being willing to try new things as part of the Garden’s volunteer team!

Gale D. Thomas

Gale D. Thomas brings a love of plants, a wealth of knowledge and a joy of sharing that knowledge to her volunteer duties at the Botanical Garden. A retired mental health professional and educator, she started in 2014 on the Plant Hotline, as a greeter and docent and later with several flower shows and special events. This Master Gardener soon decided, however, that her true calling was with the Plant Hotline. Every week she patiently answers all kinds of plant questions that come in via calls, emails and, even occasionally, in person. Garden staffers value her tremendous knowledge of the plant world. This Centennial volunteer also now writes the Plant Hotline column for Clippings, the membership newsletter. The Garden gratefully salutes Gale D. Thomas for sharing her knowledge and her enthusiasm with Garden visitors!

Gainesville Second Quarter
Susan Hurley

Susan Hurley has been volunteering with the Gainesville Garden for just under a year. This Master Gardener began as a lobby greeter and with special events then quickly added many other roles. She is always eager and excited to learn new things and help out whenever and however she can, most recently in the Conservation Safe-guarding Nursery. In eleven months of volunteering, she has already donated over 160 hours of her time and is a delight to have around. “What I like most about volunteering is watching our visitors experience the same pleasure I feel when walking through the Garden paths. I love sharing their enthusiasm!” Thanks, Susan, for jumping in as a valued volunteer in Gainesville!

Gainesville Third Quarter
Stan Ray

Stan Ray is fairly new to the Gainesville Garden but is a long-time member and volunteer at the Atlanta Garden. “I met Ann Crammond, an early director of ABG, in 1980 and was inspired by her vision of a world-class botanical center. Shortly thereafter my wife and I became members and often visited the Garden and participated in events as it grew from its early beginnings,” explains Stan. Retiring in 2020, he began volunteering at Atlanta’s Garden Lights event before moving to Gainesville in 2022, joining the volunteer ranks as a greeter at the Gainesville Garden. The staff values his welcoming manner, calling him a “positive force” and “the gold standard of greeters.” Thanks for joining us, Stan!
Getting to the other side of FREEZE damage.

This has been the topic of conversation about our personal yards, ABG, and pretty much wherever we go this summer. I got questions about damaged gardenias while swimming laps at the pool the other day. Cannot escape it. We came out of it, slowly. It has been rewarding to see growth sprouting from the ground and green leaves out of bare branches. Some plants just aren’t themselves bloom-wise this year. We are all in the same boat, so there is a certain amount of camaraderie developed from this bad experience. Here at the Gainesville Garden this spring, we just pitched dead plants from the nursery. Ethan climbed the dumpster to push them in. It was sure sad to see them go, but we’re looking forward to new plants growing and filling the empty spaces.

Now it’s the hot summer, with its own set of challenges. Volunteers have stayed busy as we got ready for summer: changing out display pots, potting, weeding, and answering visitor questions...yes, sometimes about the Big Chill! Children’s activities are increasing and Members’ Day was a big hit. Garden life goes on, even without hydrangea blooms.
Docent Doings

By Allison Nicolle
2023 Docent Chair

It has been so nice to see the Garden tours, programs and events return to a new normal following three years of COVID-related disruptions. With the increase in tours, it has been especially nice to welcome new children’s docents and to help them feel more confident in their new roles. The wonderful new docents that I have worked with have all been understandably nervous and concerned about how to remember all the content and ask the right questions while being friendly and energetic, maintaining order, and keeping to the time constraints. I remember being a new docent and having those same feelings. It is a lot to juggle. For those of us who have been leading tours for a while, I think we would all agree that every group is different so flexibility is the key. For a lot of the children who come on a school tour, it is probably the first time they have been to the Garden, and their excitement is contagious. Although we try our best to teach students a few new things about plants, it’s equally important to build on their enthusiasm even if we don’t cover all the facts.

Over time, every docent develops their own style and approach to leading tours. We are also a group that is constantly learning. The docent program provides many opportunities for continuing education. First and foremost, the Garden staff members are a wonderful educational resource. Staffers are very generous in sharing their expertise through formal presentations, leading tours of various areas of the Garden, or stopping and answering questions informally. Our regular field trips are also opportunities to learn more about other cultural venues and natural environments in our broader community. And of course, we also learn from each other. As docents, we are a group of people with interesting backgrounds and a wide range of talents and life experiences. We are also a group that enjoys socializing. I can’t think of a better way to learn something or meet someone new than over a sandwich, dessert or a cup of tea.

Welcome new docents! I hope you are enjoying your experiences so far, and I’m sure many of you are discovering that being a docent is as enriching to you as it undoubtedly is to the people on your tours.
Josh thought it might be interesting for me to share with volunteers a bit about some of my recent travels. I will admit that my role as CEO has provided so many remarkable opportunities to travel the world and see extraordinary natural areas and botanical gardens. I travel for the Garden for multiple reasons – to join donors on our annual domestic and international trips, to attend conferences and to seek out new ideas and exhibitions that might make sense for our Garden.

In May, I enjoyed a wonderful donor trip to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. The first day we enjoyed the marvelous Getty Museum and its Robert Irwin gardens. While the museum itself is filled with gems and beautiful artwork, we were there to focus on the gardens which are whimsical and beautiful. The lower parterre of azaleas sits crisply in a circular pool of water and is enhanced by Irwin’s Corten steel trees covered in bougainvillea. I highly recommend a visit to anyone heading to the LA area.

The next day we headed to the Huntington which is a stunning and joyful garden and museum. It was so memorable to me, as I visited their succulent garden over 30 years ago and remembered my wide-eyed stupor at its moonlike atmosphere and massive clusters of golden barrel cacti. It was like visiting another world that was filled with succulent plants of all colors, shapes and textures. It is still mind blowing to this day!

We also enjoyed a brisk walk through the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden with colleague and CEO Steve Winegar who gave us an enthusiastic and informative tour of their native flora. It’s a special place where native plants tell the story and the beautiful natural features of the Santa Barbara foothills just enhance the experience.

Of course, any of these trips include foods of the region as well as the diversity of wines one would expect. Truly, there is nothing better than blending our love of gardens, plants, food, wine, regional culture and dear friends all into one trip.

In September, we will travel to Portugal which has become a tourist mecca in recent years and next spring, Morocco. Imagine the history, local culture and diverse landscapes we will see in each country. Perhaps a short slide presentation will show up at one of our future volunteer events, with a promise to keep it short!