

KEC 40th Anniversary Celebration Draws More Than 100 Members, Friends

The Kent Environmental Council celebrated its 40th year of advocacy and activism with a gathering of 128 members and friends—some from the original group going back to 1970. The social hour and dinner in the Rusty Nail banquet room was highlighted by a retrospective 56-



foot-long series of panels depicting the organization's activities and accomplishments over the past 40 years. The eight past chairs (see photo) were greeted by the current chair, Charles Frederick, who also noted the memorial listing of 111 deceased individuals who had supported KEC over the years.

As master of ceremonies for the evening, Roger DiPaolo addressed those gathered as "fellow travelers," pointing out the ways in which KEC, a "small band of determined individuals," made a difference in this community over the past 40 years by raising environmental awareness, "changing a culture" through the belief that individuals can change their behaviors, showing persistence and "never taking no for an answer."

Some projects undertaken by KEC that DiPaolo mentioned include changing the perception of the Cuyahoga River from a dumping place for trash into an accessible linear park, changing a junkyard on Stow Street into the John Brown Tannery Park, and planting enough trees and bushes along Haymaker Parkway to hide the "hideous" (word used by long-time member Ruth Meade) fence that separates S.R. 59 land from residential neighborhoods.

KEC has continued to be a "strong voice for environmental concerns," said DiPaolo. Forty years ago, "going green" was a theme for KEC because its members thought it was "the right thing to do."

A video produced by Jeff Ingram gave an overview of some of the projects in which KEC members were engaged to carry out their vision for "making Kent a better place to live." Many members got to "visit" their younger selves and reminisce.

Ken Meade, the son of longtime member Ruth Meade and a Washington, D.C., environmental attorney, was the featured speaker for the evening. He thanked KEC for inviting him to speak and indicated how honored, pleased and privileged he was to be with KEC on this special occasion.

Reflecting on his personal remembrances (donuts and hot chocolate as bribery from his mother to help build Riveredge Park and newspaper collections from curbsides and at University Plaza on rainy days) and professional experiences, he focused his remarks on three areas:

- KEC members had a "deep belief" that individuals are capable of changing behaviors for the enhancement of the environment. To address the challenges of the future, individuals must take personal responsibility for their own decisions and actions as they impact the quality of our natural environmental heritage and on society as a whole.
- As we debate the important, challenging environmental issues of today, we must be able to engage in "civil" discussions. We need all the best minds and good people to be part of governmental decisions offering their energy to solve these major environmental problems.

- On an optimistic note, Meade expressed his belief that the next generation is starting on a higher plane because of the changes in attitudes and structures that organizations like KEC have been able to help bring about and because of the inclusion now of environmental principles in educational curricula.

It was a delight to see so many old friends and to spend an evening with people who share such concern for the environment. While all were amazed at how much has been accomplished in these four decades, all were reminded that there is so much more to do to sustain the gains and continue to move forward. They topped off the evening with a celebration cake (see photo).



Finally, special thanks is extended to the 40th Year Celebration Committee (Caroline Arnold, Debrah Butler, Edith Chase, David Ewbank, Anita Foote, Helen Gregory, Joyce Keller, Fred Pierre, Joan Sturtevant, Janet Walker, Ann Ward) for their hard work and contributions. They spent many days making the event memorable and meaningful for all who attended.