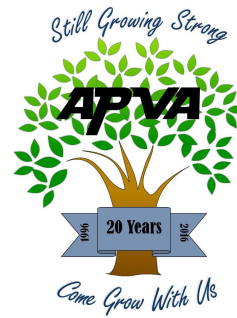


May 2016 APVA Member Spotlight



The roots of my involvement with volunteerism go back to 1974 when my husband and I adopted a baby from Colombia. The process was complicated and challenging, and so a short time later, along with five other couples, we founded a non-profit organization, the Latin America Parents Association. Our mission was to help people through the difficult journey of adoption from Central and South America. During my twelve years in LAPA, I gained an enormous amount of knowledge and experience, which prepared me for a career I had never anticipated – the non-profit world of volunteers.



Elsa Eisenberg

In 1987 I was hired as the volunteer coordinator at St. Mary's Children and Family Services (now MercyFirst), and then in 1992 I became the weekend volunteer coordinator at Planting Fields. Over these past 24 years my responsibilities have grown considerably; in addition to being the weekend coordinator, I also oversee all volunteers and group tours as well.

In 1996 several volunteer coordinators, including myself, from various non-profit organizations, recognized the need for an organization that provided education and support, as well as professional credibility for administrators in our field here on Long Island. Spearheaded by **Maida Cherry**, our group, initially, became affiliated with an organization that was located in New York City, but after a short while and much discussion, we opted to have our own independent organization. In 1997 we changed our name to the **Association of Professional Volunteer Administrators**, and the rest as they say is history.

For me personally, being a member of the Board of Directors of APVA was a wonderful experience. Everyone on the Board was very dedicated and committed to our mission. Although members of the board have changed over the years, clearly, after 20 years, that same enthusiasm and commitment continues today.





Muriel Urban

Muriel Urban's initial introduction to Coe Hall and Planting Fields occurred when she participated in a flower show run by Federated Garden Clubs and held at the mansion. It was the first time she had entered such an event and, much to her delight, she won second prize. But that experience turned into so much more; shortly afterwards, she was so taken by the venue, that she became a docent in 1984.

However, there was more to Muriel's connection to Planting Fields. Many years before, her uncle, **Frederick Arthur Beck**, worked as an insurance broker for Johnson and Higgins, a marine insurance firm that was headed by **William Robertson Coe**, the owner of Planting Fields. When the famous ship, the *Normandie*, which was insured by that firm, caught fire and capsized in 1942, it was Muriel's uncle who handled that claim. In fact, Mr. Coe had to "pull some strings" to keep Frederick here as a civilian to continue his work on the *Normandie* claim. Upon finalizing the claim, Frederick fulfilled his military obligation with a tour of duty in the U.S. Army and returned to Johnson and Higgins after completion of service. Obviously, Mr. Coe had the right connections. Fast forward to the flower show decades later; Muriel brought her uncle Frederick, who by then was in his 90's, to see the show, and she was pleasantly surprised to learn that he still had many vivid recollections of Coe Hall.

Muriel's husband, Al, has also volunteered at various times throughout the years in different capacities, including as a trustee of the Foundation for a time. They have lived in Garden City for fifty years. Muriel's experience as a docent in Coe Hall over these 33 years has been "very enjoyable", according to her. "I like to give the visitors as much information as I can about the house and the family. I also like the people I work with". Muriel has the longest tenure of any volunteer at Planting Fields, which number over 200, and is a shining example of the kind of volunteer that helps make this historic site the wonderful place that it is.