



# Bethesda

## 2010 GREEN AWARDS

The seven winners of the first *Bethesda Magazine* Green Awards were selected by four judges from nearly 120 nominees. The winners range from the executives of a giant corporation to an eighth-grade boy. But they all share one thing in common: an unwavering commitment to living—and promoting—a more sustainable way of life.

By Liz Skinner  
Photos by Michael Ventura



Alliance members (from left) Lynnwood Andrews, Dan Dozier, Suzanne Richman, Amy Wooden (bottom) and Sarah Morse (top) fight nonnative vines threatening to take over the watershed.

## Little Falls Watershed Alliance

**CATEGORY:** Nonprofit organizations in Montgomery County that have created an innovative green product, are selling an innovative green service and/or are promoting a green lifestyle

**Suzanne Richman**, a Bethesda resident for nearly 30 years, spent seven years becoming a certified naturalist—only to discover an eco-disaster in her own backyard.

The creeks of the Little Falls Watershed near her home were degraded from storm-water runoff. Trash was littering this urban area in southwest Montgomery County and landing in local waters, while nonnative plants were strangling the life out of park trees.

Richman gathered other concerned neighbors, including Bethesda environmental attorney Dan Dozier, and in 2008 they created the Little Falls Watershed Alliance (LFWA). Two years later, the group is gaining ground on cleaning up its 9 square miles of terrain, which includes the neighborhoods west of Wisconsin Avenue to the Potomac River and east to American University in Washington, D.C.

With more than 100 volunteers, the LFWA hosts about 25 events a year. Activities at these gatherings include labeling storm drains with “Do Not Pollute” stickers, ripping out English ivy and other in-

vasive plants twice a month, and removing tires and plastic bottles from creeks that eventually flow into the Chesapeake Bay.

“We are addressing our immediate neighborhood because we care about water quality and the Chesapeake Bay,” says Dozier, who is now co-president of the group along with Sarah Morse of Chevy Chase. “We can’t do much about what people in Pennsylvania do to impact the bay, but we can take actions here.”

In fact, the extent of development in Friendship Heights, downtown Bethesda and along River Road makes the Little Falls Watershed one of the most impaired watersheds in the county, Dozier says. The many parking lots and other paved land in the area are increasing the volume and strength of water running to the creeks, causing bank erosion and a loss of habitat for microorganisms the streams need to survive, he says.

LFWA helped support the storm-water rule approved by the Montgomery County Council in July that bans new buildings within 50 feet of the watershed in an effort to encourage effective,

or “smart,” development.

Richman, now chairman of the membership committee, says that rule “is not as good as it could be, but it will make a vast improvement on the amount of water flowing down and rushing into the creek.”

The nonprofit community group estimates its members have removed more than 50 bags of trash from creeks and tagged more than 500 storm drains with stickers to ward off the dumping of motor oil, construction debris and other waste. Many people don’t realize that water in these drains doesn’t go through a treatment facility before hitting the Potomac River, says Morse, a former art teacher.

“The 200 volunteers who helped put up the stickers, and everyone who reads them, now know that what they dump impacts the Potomac and then the Chesapeake Bay,” she says.

# GREEN GIANTS

Visit the Little Falls Watershed Alliance online at [www.LFWA.org](http://www.LFWA.org)