

Cory Wegielewski Honored at Garden Dedication

When serious health issues necessitated Cory Wegielewski's early retirement in 2019, the board and staff decided on a meaningful and lasting tribute to her 32 years of working for NCDF: a garden in her honor at The John W. Weeks House, a community for which she has always had a particular fondness.

Celebrating her significant contribution to NCDF residents, colleagues and friends, Cory's Garden was dedicated at the *Salute to Service* Community Event on September 15, 2022. Cory was welcomed as guest of honor, accompanied by her husband Eddie and their daughter Katie. Other family included Cory's sisters Christine and husband Mick Hale, Terry Flaherty and son Paul, and Eddie's sister Lucy Brown. Cory's longtime friend Lori Manning was there with her husband James. Also in attendance was horticulture specialist Michael Bonadio, owner of A. Bonadio & Sons landscape contractors and a longtime NCDF vendor, who worked with Eddie and NCDF staff members to design and install the garden.

Timing the dedication of this garden with the *Salute to Service* event made sense, as Cory has always appreciated the festive aspect of an annual community-wide gathering and the teamwork on the part of the staff to bring the entire occasion together. She would gear up for it each year, playing a key part in the planning by asking vendors to sponsor the event, and she looked forward to the opportunity to socialize with residents, friends, staff and board members.

Cory arrived at NCDF in November 1987, hired as Property Manager for Casselman House and The Hamlet (later renamed Houghton Village). She went on to manage all but one of the NCDF-owned properties at one time or another, and worked with other staff members to cover Warren House when NCDF was seeking a new property manager there. For over ten years, and while she was also managing first Weeks House and later Houghton Village, Cory managed High Rock Homes, an affordable housing community in Needham for which NCDF provides property management services. Cory also managed Louis Garfield House for CAN-DO. Ultimately, as Director of Operations, she was coordinating and facilitating general maintenance and upkeep of systems at all NCDF properties, while managing daily operations at Weeks House.

Upkeep of the properties was Cory's strong point, and staff members still seek out her knowledge and expertise. For example, NCDF Maintenance Superintendent Alex Salazar recounts being on the phone with Eddie trying to determine when a particular project had been completed or where certain stock items were located, and Cory would chime in with the answers. She has overseen the transformation of NCDF properties from



Katie, Cory and Eddie Wegielewski in front of the garden at Weeks House named in honor of Cory's 32 years at NCDF.

one renovation to another, experiencing two rounds of major improvements at Houghton Village. She is known among her colleagues as a hard worker, willing to stay as late as necessary to get the job done. The staff describes Cory as a caring and generous person, but at the same time she makes everyone laugh with her dry humor.

Cory's years at NCDF were a family affair. Her daughter Katie assisted from time to time with administrative projects at Weeks House, Houghton Village and the main office. Eddie was hired in 2009 as a Maintenance Superintendent, and retired in 2019. After Cory's diagnosis and decision to retire sooner than expected, Eddie realized that he needed to continue working, and returned to NCDF in a part-time position as Maintenance Operations Coordinator.

The circumstances that led to Cory's early retirement began in late summer 2019, when the staff became aware of her breathlessness when climbing stairs and doing simple tasks. Not long after, she received a devastating diagnosis: pulmonary fibrosis. She worked part-time for a while using oxygen, but by November she had to stop working altogether in order to focus her energies on a life-altering illness. Her leave-taking created a real challenge for her co-workers, given the pivotal role she played at NCDF. During the height of the pandemic, Cory questioned her ability to complete all the required tests to be eligible for the transplant list. The qualifying process, followed by a lengthy waiting period, was extremely stressful, but her positive attitude helped her to cope. In April 2021 she underwent a double lung transplant at Brigham & Women's Hospital. Her road to recovery has been long and difficult, requiring return visits to intensive care and

NCDF

Newton Community Development Foundation, Inc. was founded in 1968 by priests, ministers and rabbis from the Newton Clergy Association and Church Women United Organization to meet the community's need for affordable housing. NCDF works vigorously to provide reasonably priced housing in Newton, currently owning and managing six properties that house hundreds of low and moderate-income residents, many of whom are elderly. NCDF also manages several other properties owned by other organizations. Although NCDF receives local, state and federal funding, it relies a great deal on contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations and local businesses.

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In Memoriam

In 2021, NCDF mourned the loss of three distinguished and dedicated former members of our Board of Directors, Advisory Committee and the community. Their commitment to serving others was instrumental in advancing NCDF's mission.

Peter Barber (Dec. 8, 1947 – May 8, 2021) was born in Denver, CO, grew up on a series of army bases and eventually moved to Charleston, NC with his mother and three siblings. In 1970 he graduated from Harvard College and married Marygrace Davie. Together they raised two sons, Christopher and Matthew, ultimately moving to Newton. Two years later he began his long career at Northland Investment Corporation, where his interests led him to a primary focus on the renovation and reuse of existing buildings. When Northland reorganized in 1995, he formed Northland Development Corporation, and merged in 2001 with New Boston Fund as its development arm. Before and after retiring in 2009, Peter was deeply involved in many charitable and community organizations, among them the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Massachusetts Audubon Council, the Church of the Good Shepherd in Waban and Newton Community Development Foundation.

Alan Schlesinger, NCDF Executive Director from 1975-1978, reminisces: "Peter Barber was a Director of NCDF from the 1980's until he and Marygrace moved from Newton in 2002. He brought to the job a wealth of real estate development knowledge as vice president of Northland Investment Corp. Whenever Peter entered the room there was a burst of energy, the pace picked up and things got done, including particularly Warren House. Peter was a quick learner about affordable housing, a great solver of problems and a cheerful guiding presence in our organization."

Bob Carleo (Jan. 14, 1930 – Sept. 6, 2021) was born and raised in New York City. He graduated from Manhattan College in the Bronx with a degree in Civil Engineering. Following graduation, he and his wife Anne Marie moved to the Boston area, where he earned a Master's degree in 1964 from Northeastern University in Hydraulic Engineering. Bob worked for more than 50 years in highway engineering, with projects that included the Mass Pike extension and the "Big Dig." Bob and Anne Marie raised seven children, and were involved in their church, politics, civil rights and organizations such as Freedom School, METCO and the Newton Community Development Foundation.

NCDF Executive Director Jeanne Strickland has recollections of Bob relating to his extensive engineering expertise and how he creatively addressed some challenging drainage issues when NCDF was seeking zoning approval for The Hamlet (now Houghton Village). Paul Doherty, President of the NCDF Board from 1987 to 1992 and current member of the NCDF Advisory Committee, remembers how Bob garnered enormous support from neighbors when NCDF was proposing the development of Warren House. He served on the Board and then the Advisory Committee for many years, and, with his wife Anne Marie, was a longtime supporter of NCDF.

Helen Drinan (Nov. 2, 1918 – Sept. 8, 2021) lived a long, benevolent life full of family, service, teaching and politics. She was born and grew up in Clear Lake, Iowa, and started her teaching career after graduating from the University of Iowa. During WWII she joined the Red Cross, met her husband Frank Drinan, and they rode hospital trains together during the war. They eventually settled in Newton Highlands in 1958. Helen taught at Weeks Junior High until she began raising her son and three daughters. Both she and Frank were very involved in several nonprofit, civic and political organizations. Helen served for more than two decades on the NCDF Board of Directors, particularly active on the Resident Relations Committee, and after stepping down from the Board, continued to serve on the Advisory Committee for many years. After Frank died in 1977, Helen took a job at Boston College Law School, where she worked for over 30 years, retiring at the age of 92. She served on the Newton Council on Aging, and over the years opened her home to many international and Boston College students.

According to Alan Schlesinger: "Helen, together with her contemporaries Eloise Houghton and Fiora Houghteling, formed the moral core of the Board following the original Newton clergy who founded NCDF in 1968. Helen, Eloise and Fiora in particular viewed NCDF's work as a calling founded in social action of their churches, and Helen was always noted for her dedication, clarity and compassion. Helen and her late husband Frank were always involved in whatever was happening in Newton, and she combined her volunteer efforts with a long career at Boston College Law School."

Connecting the Dots for NCDF Youth

The NCDF Youth Program provides a framework to connect the dots for families and children living within our housing communities. Believing our young residents should have every opportunity for a successful future, we provide an environment that contributes to their developmental growth by cultivating curiosity, creativity and imagination. The most meaningful interactions evolve from simply taking time to talk regularly with our youth, nurturing their talents and interests, encouraging life-long learning, and offering guidance towards making the right connections as they grow into adulthood. For older teens, this can include helping them work through the college search and application process, explore career possibilities, and in some cases, gain work readiness and experience.

The NCDF Youth Program is proud of two longtime participants who recently achieved milestones in their young lives. In 2021 Sephora Beauvoir (photo below) and Chelize Foster (at right) were chosen to take part in the Summer High School Internship Program offered by the City of Newton, which included skill-building workshops. Paid a stipend by the City, the two worked for the NCDF Summer Youth Program alongside Community Engagement/Youth Services Coordinator India Arnold, who encouraged them to lead activities on their own, giving them leeway to take charge and hone their leadership skills.

When Sephora Beauvoir, a senior at Newton North High School, expressed the need for support in the early stages of applying to colleges, India connected her with Newton Assistant Director of Youth Services Meghan Murtagh, who worked with Sephora on the college application process: identifying which colleges she was interested in, choosing a topic and writing an essay, and completing the application. Throughout the many stressful hours of writing and re-writing, Sephora benefited from Meghan's help with editing and meeting deadlines. Their efforts resulted in an opportunity of a lifetime! Sephora, who graduated on June 8th this year, was accepted into Lasell University in Newton, MA, with a full-tuition, four-year scholarship. She will be living on campus and has voiced her intention to major in Architecture and Psychology. India was over the moon, saying: "I am so pleased that NCDF played a role in supporting her through this transition. Sephora is a true success story of what we aim for – guiding our young residents toward achieving their college and career dreams and endeavors!"

Sixteen-year-old Chelize Foster has lived at Houghton Village since she was a baby and grew up with the NCDF Youth Program. She has come full circle, now working part-time as Youth Program Assistant. As a Junior at Newton South High School, she arranges her hours around class time and studies. She has developed her own intuitive approach to working with her younger neighbors, seeking out those that are off in a corner



to insure that everyone is fully engaged. Describing this first job experience, Chelize says: "Kids can be very silly, dancing and laughing and enjoying time together; laughing is so important. My day is better just by being with them; it makes me happy to make them happy. Playing sports and games with kids can be exhausting since you're not just watching them but involved in activities. Some days there are as many as 15 kids all demanding your attention at once. You have to keep your energy level high, which is not always easy."

Chelize says that Houghton Village is a great place to make friends. She believes that close interaction with younger children, and being able to keep up with their exuberance, earns their trust. She responds to their constant questions by offering advice and teaching them how to handle various situations. According to India: "Chelize is friendly with everyone, able to easily adapt and get along with different groups of people. She is self-motivated, takes the initiative in seeing what needs to be done and going for it. You either have the knack for that kind of work or you don't. You have to be able to keep up with the kids and engage them, a skill beyond simply knowing them from growing up in the same community."

Chelize recommends the High School Internship Program as a good learning experience that gave her a feel for what the Youth Program job would be like, and helped her think about what kind of work she might want to do in the future. In addition to her part-time job, Chelize provides volunteer technology assistance at Weeks House, helping seniors learn how to use Google and Netflix and solve issues such as setting up an email account or logging onto wifi. Science and Chemistry are her favorite subjects. At the end of last school year, Chelize received the Trajectory Award: "In honor of significant growth in science over their high school career and a willingness to take on new challenges." In her free time, She enjoys playing basketball and relaxing alone in her room listening to music and playing video games

The NCDF Youth Program is sincerely grateful to the foundations, businesses, government agencies and individual donors whose generosity allows us to provide afterschool and summer activities at no charge to families.



Spotlight on Dina Troiani

This year, Director of Property Management Dina Troiani is marking 30 years at NCDF! Hired directly out of college in 1992, Dina started out as Assistant Manager at Warren House, where she handled the leasing of the newly converted former Warren Junior High School. Approximately two years later she was splitting her time between Warren House and The John W. Weeks House, and eventually became Weeks House Property Manager. She has served in multiple roles at NCDF over the years, managing all but one of NCDF's six properties as well as providing property management support services for West Suburban YMCA's Newton Corner Place. In 2014 Dina became Director of Property Management, overseeing daily operations of all NCDF managed properties. She assists with compliance and budgeting for Myrtle Village in West Newton and since 2019 she works with Joanne Fuentes to facilitate property management services for High Rock Homes in Needham.

Having a fundamental knowledge of every facet of NCDF operations, Dina has extensive experience in budget preparation, financial reporting, credit checks, rentals, lease renewals and training new management staff. She serves as NCDF's Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) Coordinator, and is diligent in following up with rent discrepancies, and insuring NCDF's compliance with HUD, MassHousing, HOME units, Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit through Spectrum Enterprises. She helped to implement the Language Access Plan policy for NCDF, supporting residents that do not speak English, and she facilitates the MassHousing Asset Management Reviews and HUD Management and Occupancy Reviews. She meets regularly with Property Managers and Maintenance Superintendents, and is always available to advise and assist with daily property needs, upkeep and preparation for Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspections.

Dina works with other staff to administer major contracting jobs at NCDF, including unit renovations. Within the past six years she has scheduled and overseen a series of renovations and upgrades at Casselman House, working with the LEAN (Low-Income Energy Affordability Network) Multifamily Program and Mass Save to control costs. She spent countless hours tackling the myriad of compliance and regulatory issues involved with refinancing of Casselman House in 2020 and has stepped in as needed to assist Executive Director Jeanne Strickland with special projects.

Dina achieved the Certified Professional of Occupancy (CPO) designation through the National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) in 2008, and became certified in Fair Housing Compliance (FHC) in 2012. She is currently awaiting notification about National Affordable Housing Professional (NAHP) certification, which recognizes and promotes achievement of the highest possible standards in affordable housing management. She thrives on order and says: "I'm a total rules person and compliance driven." She admits to becoming a little more flexible over the years. She finds it rewarding to see positive outcomes at the properties, saying that happy renters make it all worthwhile.

Dina grew up in Woburn, Massachusetts in a household that included her parents, her older sister Lisa and her grandparents. Most Saturday nights were spent with extended family. Dina considers her parents, Domenic and Lucille Tringale, as her greatest role models. While both were born in Boston's West End, her father's parents emigrated from Sicily, and her mother's lineage is half Spanish and half Italian. Dina is very proud of her Italian heritage, admiring everything about the culture: food, family values, etc. She took care of her Dad during a heart-wrenching illness, until he passed away in 2017. Her Mom still lives in Woburn, 40 minutes

from Dina, and Lisa lives in Port St. Lucie, Florida with her fiancé John.

Dina was a very shy, quiet kid with a love of animals. She took up horseback riding at the age of eight, riding English style, taking part in dressage and other competitive activities,

and learning to care for horses. Her love of animals prevails, currently nurturing a few guinea pigs as pets, and supporting a horse rescue organization and the Guinea Pig Sanctuary in Salisbury. Dina attended high school at Our Lady of Nazareth Academy in Wakefield, and in 1992 earned her bachelor's degree in Management with a minor in marketing from St. Joseph's College in Maine.

In June 1996, six months after returning from a three-week trip with family throughout Italy, Dina met Joe Troiani. Their mutual Italian heritage and immersion in its people, culture and traditions were a key factor in solidifying the relationship. They married in 1998 and moved to Bradford, MA in 2000. Joe, an electrician but really a "jack of all trades," works from home as a technical engineer for Verizon. Their 21-year-old daughter Francesca (Frankie) will graduate next year from UMass Boston with a degree in biology, a minor in geriatrics, and a particular interest in long-term studies of Alzheimer's patients and how to slow the progression of the disease.

If fate had taken Dina in a different direction, she might have gone to culinary school. Cooking is in her DNA – her mom's dad was a chef at The Ritz-Carlton Boston and head chef at Mass General. Her love of cooking also stems from her Italian background. Dina felt it important to learn family recipes and the history and stories behind them. She uses her grandfather's methods for making "gravy" (aka sauce), and every holiday she bakes an array of Italian cookies from family recipes. Joe and Dina have a huge home garden, but he is the avid gardener and known for great sauces.

Living 50 miles from NCDF involves a two-hour round-trip commute each day, but Dina strives to maintain a good work/life balance. One of her secrets to a good life is trying to recreate things in the past that have made her happy. She works long hours but enjoys vacations, especially time spent with family and trips to the beach. She and Joe anticipate retiring to the Cape, preferably Falmouth. She would like to retire early, but finds it hard to imagine not working. She believes in the adage "work hard and play hard," but admits that she spends way more time on work.

Dina looked forward to being a Mom and wanted a large family, but it wasn't meant to be. However, she considers the NCDF staff to be her second family. She appreciates the respect of her colleagues and the comfortable environment working with good friends. When asked to describe Dina, Special Projects Coordinator Joanne Fuentes replied, "Dina is one of my best friends. I don't see how NCDF could function without her. She was never one to walk away from anything, always willing to help, a true team player." Executive Director Jeanne Strickland also does not hold back when expressing her feelings about Dina: "She has been phenomenal from the moment she arrived at NCDF. She's methodical, delves into learning what she needs to know about a particular project, and takes pride in getting the job done. She's dedicated, loyal, and has your back regardless. We have come to rely on Dina for quite a bit here at NCDF and are always grateful for her support!"



Cory's Garden (continued from page 1)

pulmonary rehab to build her endurance, but her strength and resolve have seen her through.

The plantings in the garden, which is adjacent to the Weeks House entrance, include some of Cory's favorites: hydrangeas, roses, hostas and an ornamental Kousa Dogwood, lilac and rhododendron bushes, as well as a variety of flowering and shade perennials. Michael Bonadio incorporated 32 boxwoods into the design in recognition of Cory's years at NCDF. Eddie, an accomplished home gardener, was instrumental in helping to choose plants.

Cory too is known for her love of flowers and foliage. While managing NCDF properties, she enhanced the landscape with her favorite plantings, feeling it important to maintain a pleasing outdoor environment. When she was told in July about a garden at Weeks House in her honor, her initial reaction was "shocked, but very touched by it, and a little embarrassed." Given her dedicated years at NCDF, her love of gardens, and all she has been through personally, a setting to enjoy natural beauty is an ideal way to celebrate Cory.

NCDF Executive Director Jeanne Strickland closed the ceremony: "Cory, you have been a part of the struggles and the triumphs as NCDF has grown to where it is today, playing a major role in our success for more than three decades! We are eternally grateful to you, for your dedication to the NCDF community, your thoughtfulness and most importantly your friendship." Jeanne also expressed great appreciation for the generous donors that made Cory's Garden possible!

The Community Event Is Back!

The heretofore "annual" *Salute to Service* Community Event returned with great fanfare on September 15, 2022 following a two-year, pandemic-induced hiatus. The community-wide gathering, which took place at The John W. Weeks House, included a barbecue dinner and raffle. Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller joined in on the festivities and presented Eloise K. Houghton awards to four residents, who graciously contributed their time and talents on behalf of everyone at NCDF.



Above left to right: NCDF Director of Resident Services Marissa Wheeler, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Kamden Hall, Barbara Sweatt, Deb Cebulski, NCDF Executive Director Jeanne Strickland and Terri Lacy.



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at Warren House

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<https://www.ncdfinc.org/donate/>
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Ediss Gandelman, *in memory of Kathryn Lanza*
John Hale
Sheila Horowitz, *in memory of Gail Stern*
Jane Kennedy
David & Suzanne Knipe
Caroline Lena, *in memory of Gail Stern*
Joan Fenno Mansfield
Katherine May
Kevin McCormick
Rodrigo & Maria Niobla
Rozalia Pansovoy
Christine Pelrine
Joyce Picard, *in memory of Eloise Houghton*
Marcia Lassman & Benjamin Pu
Marina Shtykova
Evgenia Stavitsky
Penny Tedder, *in memory of Gail Stern*
Paeviz Tehrani
Glenna Weiss
Marissa Wheeler, *in honor of Joanne Fuentes*



We hope this list is complete and correct, and sincerely regret any omissions or errors. Thank you!

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NCDF also provides a range of property management and consulting services to other nonprofit organizations, housing authorities and condominium associations. Please contact us for more information.



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