



Jonne McCarron Is the New Executive Director

For most of this past spring the Montclair Foundation Board of Trustees and the Board of Management for the Van Vleck House & Gardens have been hard at work reviewing resumés and interviewing candidates to fill the Executive Director position vacant since late February. Carl Culbreth, a Van Vleck House & Gardens Founding Member, headed the search committee that sorted through over 70 resumés and eventually interviewed seven prospective candidates. By mid-April the decision was made, and longtime Montclair resident Jonne McCarron accepted the offer to be the next Executive Director of the Montclair Foundation and the Van Vleck House & Gardens.

After almost twenty years in the commercial construction industry in New Jersey, McCarron entered the non-profit world when her daughters were young and first entering school. "It was classic mid-life career change material," says McCarron. "After several decades of working hard I started thinking about what I really wanted to be doing." She joined the staff of the Reeves-Reed Arboretum in Summit in 2000 and eventually became the Director of Education there. Most recently she served as the Executive Director at the Teaneck Creek Conservancy, a 46-acre brownfield-to-greenfield site in Bergen County.

"I'm very excited to be here," reports McCarron. "The Van Vleck family has given us a truly incredible gift. I consider it part of my personal agenda to make sure that everyone in our community has the chance to know and enjoy it too." McCarron invites all our stakeholders to stop by and say hello. Her office is on the east side of the terrace, and the door is always open.



Jonne McCarron is the new Executive Director of Montclair Foundation and Van Vleck House & Gardens.

Family Fun on July 24: Sunset SENSE-ations

Join us at Van Vleck House on Friday, July 24, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, for an evening of discovery in the gardens. Sunset SENSE-ations is open to families and individuals interested in learning about the sights and sounds of nature at night. Participants will enjoy guest presenters, crafts, and activities focused on nocturnal happenings such as creatures of the night and how they are equipped to survive. Learn how to use your senses to heighten your awareness of the natural world and all it has to offer on a peaceful summer evening with your family. This program is rain or shine and will be held outside if weather permits. Guest presenters this year include Wallaby Tales with live nocturnal mammals, Tenafly Nature Center with a live Barred Owl and more!

The fee for the program is \$20 per family for Friends of Van Vleck and \$25 per family for others. **Pre-registration is required.**



Participants at 2008's Sunset SENSE-ations learned about skunks and other nocturnal animals from Travis Gale (and his live skunk) of Wallaby Tales.

VVH&G thanks Jillian Pransky for donating her time and expertise to a second Mini Yoga Retreat, held on June 13. Proceeds from the event will benefit the education programs of VVH&G and the Montclair Cooperative School. Thanks also to TOAST restaurant in Montclair for donating refreshments after the retreat. Weekly yoga classes with Jillian at VVH&G resume in September. For more information, contact Michelle Wiessner at education@vanvleck.org or 973-744-0837.

FROM THE GARDENS...

"We finally have our bins!" I sing out as I lead a tour group past Van Vleck's utility area. Visitors to the garden may find my enthusiasm slightly deranged, but the recent expansion, by six compartments, of our debris management capacity is certainly worthy of celebration. Now there's enough room to establish a proper composting system. This additional allocation of space allows us to store and maneuver the massive amounts of material accumulated during the course of garden maintenance. And the best part is ... the end product will be a treasure we can use.

Tightly packed foliage from last season's cleanup still fills two compartments to the point of overflowing. Although some breakdown has started, decomposition of dry, brown matter alone takes too long. Those leaves could still be in our way a year from now if we don't mix them with enough nitrogen-rich green matter to accelerate the process. We build up each compost pile like a layer cake, alternating grass clippings or herbaceous weeds with equal amounts of stored foliage. The first pile grows at an alarming rate. I get a little nervous as the layers quickly reach the top of the bin. Soon a second bin is filled to capacity. Did we, in fact, build enough bins to hold it all?

After a few days, I take comfort as the piles begin to sink, indicating that decomposition is underway. I place my hand on one of them and feel that it is warm. The source of heat is not, as might be expected, the powerful summer sun. Instead, warmth radiates from the core of the pile as chemical bonds in the vegetation break down and release energy. How hot does it get inside a compost pile? I haven't stuck a thermometer inside, but, based on my research, up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

In a remarkably short time, our first two piles drop below the third board, but then their activity slows. Because oxygen is essential to the continued breakdown of vegetation, we need to aerate in order to maintain the rate of decomposition.

I jab a pitch fork into one of the sunken piles and toss a steaming clump of partially decayed material into an empty neighboring compartment. The exposed inner surface is almost that beautiful shade of dark brown so dear to a gardener's heart. Earthworms and insects are evident, but the living soil system also includes millions of microorganisms. Together they will continue to break down our garden waste until we can no longer distinguish individual leaves, stems, or flowers.

The smaller bins are now free to accept new material as we start the process all over again. Throughout the growing season, we will cycle through several bins as we layer, aerate, and sift to produce a beautiful finished product which we can distribute throughout the property.

— *Laura Roberts, Garden Manager*



Students identify a bird while at an activity station during a Nature Connections field trip at Van Vleck.

Nature Connections Program Is Successfully Launched

This spring kindergarten and first grade students from Ann St. School in Newark explored the beautiful gardens of Van Vleck. Each field trip was designed to meet New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards through engaging and exciting outdoor activities. Students were guided through field stations by trained volunteers, utilizing Van Vleck's grounds as an outdoor classroom. This program was funded by a generous grant from the Turrell Fund, enabling us to provide students with a quality field trip, lunch, transportation, and plant material. Volunteers were vital to the success of the Nature Connections Field Trip Program. Some guided small groups of children through the activity stations, ensuring a more personal experience, while others assisted with serving the lunch. If you are interested in volunteering for this program next year, please contact Michelle Wiessner at education@vanvleck.org or call 973-744-0837.



Van Vleck Gardens Caretaker Willie Byrd turns compost in one of the newly constructed bins at the rear of the property.

Annual Plant Sale: The Sixth Is a Charm

The sixth annual Van Vleck House & Gardens Plant Sale awoke early in May, welcoming with open iron gates, the Montclair community into its gardens once again. It is this very special time of the year, wisteria in bloom, when hundreds of people come together and experience the truly magical qualities that Van Vleck offers. The VVH&G Plant Sale is more than just a plant sale; it is an invitation to the community to come and share in its wealth, hard work, and beauty. And the wealth, hard work, and beauty were quite widespread this year!

The event kicked off on Friday, May 1, with its Wellies & Jellies preview celebration. Party chairs Nancy Bylin and Mary Beth Loughran brought charm, excitement, and grace to this fabulous event. The party took place in the main house and on the back patio, where the wisteria was in full-scented bloom. The back lawn, filled with thousands of specially chosen plants, provided a vivid and natural backdrop to the very elegant event. Guests enjoyed the fabulous food catered by Claudia and shopping in the Garden Cottage Boutique chaired by Heather McCutcheon. Adding to the evening's festivities were musical performances given by children in our community, the MKA Bellringers and a live jazz quintet led by the very talented Montclair sax player Julian Lee, age 14. Even with a few rain showers the event still shined way into morning.

Will they come? Will they come? is what event chairs Joyce O'Brien and Sara Friend wondered as they pulled up in their cars on that misty Saturday morning. All their hard work would finally come to fruition as the iron gates opened for business at 9 a.m. With Laura Roberts and Nancy Aufiero on plant selection and logistics, Provence Landscapes & Outdoor Matters consulting with customers, Doug Ewertsen at the front gate, Karen Whitehaus and Andie Bertsche on Finance, and Fabiola Campbell and Kathy Wessling managing all the volunteers (whose names and contributions are too numerous to mention), the event could not have gone more smoothly or more successfully. When those old iron gates finally opened, come the community did, marching straight ahead, carts and rain jackets in tow, buying or volunteering. And the Van Vleck House & Gardens welcomed them with open arms, a big smile, and a huge sigh of relief! Six is truly a magic number.

Garden Discoveries Pre-K Program

Our Garden Discoveries classes, for children ages 3 to 5, are held twice every month. Participants can register for an individual class or for the entire series. Each child must be accompanied by an adult. Younger siblings are welcome.

Topics and dates for this summer are as follows:

Wednesday, July 15	Growing Gardens
Wednesday, July 29	Summer Sensory Exploration
Wednesday, Aug. 5	Animal Safari
Wednesday, Aug. 19	Monarch Magic
Wednesday, Sept. 16	Fall Planters
Wednesday, Sept. 30	Signs of Fall

Pre-registration is required. Classes fill quickly, so register today! Check www.vanvleck.org or call 973-744-0837 for more information. Fee for Friends is \$7 per child; \$12 for others. There is no charge for accompanying adults.

VVH&G Inspires MKA Interns

As I walk up the hill after my lunch break at Nauna's, the aroma of fresh-baked pizza gradually fades away. I follow the scent of wisteria back to Van Vleck House & Gardens, where I am working as an intern for the month of May.

The wisteria is in full bloom, purple, elegant, and a part of a grand history. It has surpassed its predicted lifespan of sixty years, and is now seventy years old, as tall as the house, and covers the entire courtyard when it is in bloom in May. The house is magnificent, yet simple and elegant. It has an essence that is derived from nature and life's natural treasures. In fact, the house was designed to bring the outside into it through its large windows. The Van Vleck House is truly symbolic of Howard Van Vleck himself, who was a hard-working, simple, gentle philanthropist who really cared about his community.

Walking through the gardens, one may imagine Mr. Van Vleck pruning, weeding, and gardening with his muddy hands. When I interviewed Aubin Ames (MKA '54), a dear friend of Mr. Van Vleck's, she told me "He was the most comfortable wearing jeans and a simple shirt, and there was no sign of heirdom in his demeanor." Mr. Van Vleck contributed a great deal to the Montclair community. He worked with the gardens of the Montclair Museum, hybridized rhododendrons, planned landscapes, and volunteered to design the exterior of the Montclair Kimberley Academy, the high school I attended. Mr. Van Vleck lived for the community. Therefore, Mr. Van Vleck would have been thrilled that Marisabel Raymond established the Van Vleck internship program at MKA, because it is based on the very principles he used in his life. The educational programs at Van Vleck for children and adults are exactly what Mr. Van Vleck had hoped this beautiful property would be able to offer.

During May, the seniors of the Montclair Kimberley Academy take the first step to independence by working and experiencing the real world in a variety of ways. Students work in the community, some develop their own program and work independently, and others travel abroad. Although being an intern at Van Vleck may not seem as appealing as traveling to China or Ireland, the internship experience may be even more beneficial in the long term.

Student interns at Van Vleck are given tasks and must complete them independently. The other interns and I assisted in public relations, taught visiting Newark students and pre-k children from our community, completed computer and office work, and worked hands-on in the garden. The staff at Van Vleck gently supervises and guides the students, but expectations are very high because these are not pretend projects. They need our help. They insist on the kind of excellence that Mr. Van Vleck always expected. The MKA students working at Van Vleck House & Gardens learn to appreciate the work of a man who contributed so much to our community and our school.

— Supriya Prakash, MKA '09



The 2009 MKA interns fill the back of the VVH&G truck, flanked on the left by staff member Willie Byrd and on the right by board member Marisabel Raymond, who established the MKA internship program at Van Vleck.

Mission Statement

Van Vleck House & Gardens is dedicated to preserving for public enrichment the spirit and beauty of this late 19th and early 20th century house and gardens. Continuing the Van Vleck family's commitment to the community and to horticultural excellence, the house serves as a center for non-profit organizations and the gardens are open to the public for display, education and research.

Van Vleck House & Gardens is owned by The Montclair Foundation and operated by a committee of the Foundation, the Van Vleck Board of Management.

Van Vleck House & Gardens Board of Management

Lissa Barrett, Chair	Diana Kostas
Marianne Smith, Vice-Chair	Leslie M. Krauter
Gail Connolly, Finance	Ellen LaBarbera
Brenda L. Bingham, Advisory	Shea Malloy
Marisabel R. Raymond, Advisory	Ann McCarthy
Judith C. Turner, Advisory	Jacqueline McMullen
Andrée Bertsche	Beth Milke
Michael Deenihan	Michelle Ruggiero
Marcia H. DeOteris	William Treene
Doug Ewertsen	JoAnn Weisel
Emer Featherstone, Advisory	Kathy Wessling

Van Vleck House & Gardens Founding Members

Aubin Z. Ames	Susan Jones
Brenda L. Bingham	Jacqueline McMullen
Rose Cali	Barbara Meyer
Joan Crowther	Connie Perdue
Carl Culbreth	Marisabel R. Raymond
Lynn T. Dodd (dec.)	Eileen Tokar
George R. Harris	Judith C. Turner
John R. Helm	Karen R. Whitehaus

Staff

Jonne McCarron,
Executive Director
Mary Keselica,
Communications Manager
Michelle Wiessner,
Education Director
Laura Roberts,
Garden Manager
Willie Byrd,
Caretaker

Office Hours: M-F, 9am-4pm
(973) 744-4752
www.vanvleck.org

The Montclair Foundation Board of Trustees

Jerome E. Raymond, Chair	Barbara S. Fox
Lissa Barrett, Vice-Chair	Gordon A. Hunziker
Leslie M. Krauter, Secretary	Glenn Reiter
Fred Langbein, Treasurer	Michelle Ruggiero
Aubin Z. Ames	Marianne Smith
Robert Butler	Judith C. Turner
Ellen B. Culbreth	JoAnn Weisel
Emer Featherstone	John H. Wessling, III

The Montclair Foundation Honorary Trustees

George R. Harris, Honorary Chair
Brenda L. Bingham
John R. Helm
Jacqueline McMullen
Anne E. Westerman



HOUSE & GARDENS

21 Van Vleck Street
Montclair, New Jersey 07042

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Montclair, NJ
Permit No. 485