

## Community Shares of Wisconsin Recognizes Caryl Terrell 2010 Liesl Blockstein Community Leadership Award



*"Caryl has unparalleled passion combined with the common sense needed to make a lasting difference for the people and places she loves. Scarcely a day goes by when I don't come across a policy she helped pass, an organization she helped found, or a life she helped touch. Caryl is a true inspiration for all who wonder just how much one person can do during their short time on our earth."*

— Shahla Werner, Sierra Club Executive Director

Caryl's love of the environment was initially sparked by the Girl Scouts. But her commitment to environmental work was shaped by one summer in Madison, which changed all of her future plans. "When I arrived in Madison I found all these women making an incredible difference politically. Women like Nan Cheney, Becky Young, and Mary Lou Munts were an inspiration."

Rather than pursuing her original plans for graduate school, Caryl decided to stay here, and she got an MS in Public Policy and Administration and an MS in Urban & Regional Planning from UW. Here she found further inspiration from former UW professor John Steinhart, a founding faculty member of the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. Caryl took John's class on Science and Politics. At that time she could not have envisioned how environmental science and politics would mold her future career—and, thanks to Caryl's work, our lives too.

For over 40 years, Caryl has been one of the state's most prominent environmental leaders. She works tirelessly as an advocate—both with grassroots citizens' groups and with the Wisconsin Legislature. Among the many victories that Caryl helped bring about:

- Protecting the Wolf River from Exxon's proposed Crandon Mine
- Passing comprehensive recycling laws
- Passing isolated wetland protection legislation
- Passing groundwater protection legislation

Shahla Werner, current Executive Director of the Sierra Club (John Muir Chapter), noted that after Caryl worked in state government as an environmental policy planner, she was hired by the Sierra Club as its Director in 1983. In her first year on the job, Caryl helped protect water by reinstating a permanent ban on phosphate in detergents. "That gave me the foolhardy notion that bills just pass within a year," Caryl said. "There have been other times when I wonder whether anything can get accomplished."

In their efforts to stop the Crandon Mine, Caryl and others worked with the three Native American tribes whose lands and waters would have been most impacted by the sulfide mining. After their victory in halting the mine, Caryl noted how gratifying it was to play an integral role as the Sokaogon Ojibwe and the Forest County Potawatomi attempted to purchase the proposed mine site. "There were obviously many people involved in that effort, but Department of Administration said that they wanted one person to act as

liaison with the Department and all the interested parties. It was an honor to be entrusted with that role, and to continue working with the tribal leaders. When the tribes were able to purchase the land, **that** was truly a major victory."

Caryl's role of consensus builder was on display again when she worked for passage of the Isolated Wetlands bill. "There were hunting and fishing groups, land trusts, Wisconsin Wetlands, and the Sierra Club, and we were all determined to work together to protect the wetlands. At an annual conference we had in January, we realized we had only a few months before the ground would thaw and the bulldozers would be at work. And we got the bill passed by May 1."

She has an ability not only to educate people but to encourage them to get involved. As Sierra Club Director, Caryl loved having UW students working or volunteering in the office. She also noted the importance of responsibly educating kids about the environment, instead of leaving that to groups hoping to make a profit. "In the 1980s the mining industry and the nuclear power industry provided glossy materials to schools and coloring books to students. I thought, why not provide an alternative view—since the environment belongs to all of us." She helped develop a series of educational pieces that were well received by teachers and students alike.

Caryl noted that more recently "school children have learned about recycling, global warming, alternative wind and solar energy, and the importance of local food production. In some ways adults' attitudes towards recycling were guided by their kids, who went home and taught their parents. That's a hopeful sign."

Currently she focuses much of her energy on campaign finance reform. "Money plays a key role in elections, and, by extension, in our energy policy. It's critical that we be able to elect politicians who are responsive to citizens, rather than to the largest the campaign contributors."

Like any effective advocate, Caryl values both educating people and moving them to action. "You talk to one person and get them on board. Then each of you talk to others. It's amazing what just a few people can do. You don't have to have special skills, you just have to care. You're able to convince others by showing why you're passionate. Pretty soon you're part of a force, and you're able to get things accomplished."

Shahla pointed out the concrete effects of Caryl's ability to reach out and get people involved. When Caryl started with the Sierra Club's John Muir Chapter, membership was roughly 6,000. It grew to 16,000 by the time she retired.

Shahla said that since Caryl retired, she has continued to do "what she loves best"—working as an advocate on behalf of our environment. For the state's Sierra Club chapter, Caryl now serves as Chair of the Legislative Committee, Chair of the Global Warming Team, and member of the Political Committee. She also volunteers for such groups as League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

"Caryl has unparalleled passion combined with the common sense needed to make a lasting difference for the people and places she loves," said Shahla. "Scarcely a day goes by when I don't come across a policy she helped pass, an organization she helped found, or a life she helped touch. Caryl is a true inspiration for all who wonder just how much one person can do during their short time on our earth."