

April 27, 2013 BRWA & DCR Park Service Day "Remember the Ladies" Speech

The late Mary F. Toomey born of Weymouth Ma, educated at Boston University (MA) was an innovative and beloved teacher for 41 years in Weymouth Schools. She possessed a great love of her community and outstanding leadership. She served as a Weymouth Town Meeting Member and became a pioneer in the environmental awareness movement in the mid 1960's. At that time Mary was an English teacher at WHS. Several WHS science students were interested in forming a Conservation Club and asked for her assistance. Although she was not science teacher teacher, they created a dynamic educational club exploring a wide range of earth sciences. At that point the Weymouth Conservation Commission also sought her help. The Conservation Commission was interested in protecting a unique glacier formed piece of land in North Weymouth on the Back River, which the federal government owned and operated as an ammunition depot since 1912, and it was being released for sale to the town. Together they ran a successful campaign with the Town of Weymouth's purchase of the historic glacier Great Esker Park an archeological and wildlife Preserve. She founded the Great Esker Park Natural Science Center, where the students offered children a free summer nature program to learn about our wilderness heritage.

The success of the nature center and Mary's drive to bring awareness to Back River's marshes, headwater ponds, uplands fish and birds attracted the attention of Dr. Mary Sears of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, to meet with Mary and she asked her to come down to Woods Hole and learn the value of this estuary, and Mary again said yes.

As a ardent environmentalist she worked for decades under the direction of Dr. Mary Sears, a Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserves and leading oceanographer of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, to obtain all available lots abutting the Back River, clean up pollution, and restore the fisheries. Her efforts resulted in nine open space parks surrounding the estuary in the towns of Weymouth and Hingham. She was instrumental in creating the Weymouth Back River Area of Critical Environmental Concern in 1982. Mary's work help identify a hazardous waste site on Weymouth Neck that has been cleaned up and restored by Conoco-Philips Inc; in 2007. The Back River estuary and Herring Run were restored which Dr. Sears stated the estuaries controlled the nursery for the offshore fisheries, Back River and Estuary being one of the most important ecological food resources in the region.

Mary's years of dedication, good citizenship and perseverance in her quest to save the Back River garnered the respect of fellow citizens, organizations and support of local, state, and federal officials and agencies resulting to the development of this historic park with a grand opening ceremony on Flag Day June 14th, 2003. She dedicated the park to acknowledge the patriotism, heroism and personal sacrifice of First Lady Abigail Adams and Weymouth's First Daughter born 1744 of Rev. William Smith, Minister of the First Church and his wife Elizabeth Quincy Smith. Abigail Adams became wife of our 2nd American President John Adams and mother of our 6th President John Quincy Adams. Throughout the park are plaques recalling historic quotes from Abigail Adams famous letters written during the tumult of the Revolutionary War period. Mary Toomey is often referred as a "modern day Abigail Adams " for her preserving and selfless service toward the greater good of her country. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Abigail Adams State Park. We are pleased to "Remember the Ladies" who we honor today for their lasting contributions and remember all Patriots past and present.

Mary was the recipient of numerous awards and distinctions including the prestigious Visionary Award from the Gulf of Maine Council, U.S. EPA's 1991 Environmental Merit Award, B. U. Academy of Distinguished Graduates, Conservation Teacher of the Year Award, Audubon

Teacher of the Year, the Weymouth Rotary Club Service Award and named Women of the Year Kiwanis Citizen's Award, Abigail Adams Award, Mass. Women's Political Caucus Education Fund.

Today BRWA, seeks the support of an active membership working in cooperation with our government official and agencies to continue Mary 's vision to improve the Back River and Estuary for the quality and quantity of our water, reopen the shellfish beds, and make necessary restorations for our Weymouth Herring Run to increase river herring which are a vital keystone species sustaining the marine fisheries. In addition we must be good stewards protecting, preserving and promoting the Back River from threat of development, and degrading conditions that would cause harm to the community at large the sea life, wildlife and passive recreational open space parklands.

Thank You,

By Linda Tringale-DiAngelo, President Back River Watershed Association