

August 16, 2016

## Awards will spotlight Newport gateway beautification efforts

NEWPORT, R.I. -- On August 25 Scenic America will present its "Taking the Long View" award to two civil servants for their roles in helping to beautify a key gateway from the Pell Bridge into the city of Newport.

Scott Wheeler, the city's Tree Warden, and Eric Offenberg, Director of Engineering at the Rhode Island Bridge and Turnpike Authority (RIBTA), will receive the awards during a 6pm reception at Bellevue House in Newport, home of Scenic America chairman Ronald Lee Fleming.

Wheeler and Offenberg were instrumental in helping to orchestrate the planting of 31 new trees near the bridge's off-ramp. RIBTA provided removal of an intruding fence and assumed responsibility for ongoing maintenance. The city contributed in-house resources for administration, equipment and planting valued at \$7,000.

"The efforts of Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Offenberg have resulted in a direct and visible benefit to the public," said Fleming. "Because of their hard work, the experience of entering Newport from the Pell Bridge has been immeasurably improved, resulting in a heightened experience for visitors and a rejuvenating lift in spirit for residents returning home."

The purchase of the trees was enabled by a fundraiser at Bellevue House that raised over \$23,000 to further beautify Newport. Also benefiting from the fundraiser was the Daffodillion Campaign, an effort to plant one million daffodils across the city. The Campaign, recognized by Scenic America with an award in 2014, is nearly half-way to its goal, having planted 496,000 bulbs to date, over 60,000 of which appear at the Pell Bridge gateway.

The August 25 reception is part of a multi-day meeting of Scenic America's Board of Directors at Bellevue House. The newly-named awards are inspired by the group's recently released white paper, *Taking the Long View: A Proposal for Realizing America the Beautiful*. The paper examines and proposes solutions to challenges involving five key issues affecting the country's visual environment: Preserving Community Character, Honoring Parks and Open Spaces, Celebrating Byways and Gateways, Promoting Beautiful Highways and Mitigating Visual Impacts of Overhead Wires.

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*Scenic America is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's roadways, countryside and communities.*

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