



RACHEL CARSON'S LEGACY HONORED AT HER SILVER SPRING HOME

Northwest Branch Trail Renamed The Rachel Carson Greenway

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The spirit and Legacy of Rachel Carson was honored twice on Saturday. First, about 150 people were on hand as county officials renamed the Northwest Branch Trail Corridor the Rachel Carson Greenway.

And just an hour later, the Rachel Carson Council, an environmental advocacy group, held an open house in Carson's former home in Silver Spring where the famous author and biologist wrote "Silent Spring," her landmark study on the negative effects of pesticide use.

The Northwest Branch Trail Corridor, which runs from Prince George's county line north through Silver Spring and then on to the Patuxent River for a total of 22 miles, was well positioned to be renamed in honor of Carson, according to Lyn Coleman, trail planning supervisor for the Park and Planning Commission.

The trail is bracketed by Carson's house to the south and the Rachel Carson Conservation Park in Olney to the north.

"In 1998, we started to put together trail plans, because we had never had one," Coleman said. "We identified one of them, which we just called the Northwest Branch Corridor. But as we started to study it in detail and made decisions, we realized that we had a better name. It seemed like a natural fit."

Carson's house on Berwick Road in Quaint Acres is now owned by Diana Post, executive director of the Rachel Carson Council, and her husband Cliff Hall. Before she died, Post said Carson requested that a group be formed that would continue to study and educate people on pesticide use after her death.

The Rachel Carson Council was born soon after, and in 1996 it purchased the house from a sympathetic owner Julia Urick. Post said she and Urick have managed to keep the area surrounding the house as natural and unadorned as possible, in accordance with Carson's wishes.

"She wanted to provide for wildlife and keep part of the lot wild," Post said of Carson. "And we've kept it wild through the years, despite the surrounding development. There are no restricted areas. no flowerbeds. It's very natural looking.

Post said Carson was heavily involved in the house's design and room details. Of great importance to her was to allow as much sunlight in as possible from a large picture window which created a natural atmosphere.

"It has a spirit about it," Post said. "You look out the window and know that htis is where Rachel Carson sat with her adopted son, where she saw Orion constellation at night or where she watched the birds. It's kind of a sanctuary."

The open house also featured a performance by Kate Campbell Stevenson, who wrote a segment about Carson in her one woman musical show "Women: Back to the Future," about prominent women in American history.

Also in attendance was Dr. David Pimentel, president of the Rachel Carson Council and a renowned expert on pesticide use. Although his career preceded the publication of Silent Spring, Pimentel said "it's great inspiration to continue working in Rachel Carson's field."

Carson's house was built in 1957, but she only stayed there a short while; she succumbed to breast cancer in 1964. She began writing "Silent Spring" in 1958 and the seminal work was published in serial form in The New Yorker in 1962.



Kate Campbell Stevenson in a dramatic portrayal of Rachel Carson at the celebrated author's home in Silver Spring.

Photo by Normand A. Bernache