President’s Report

 Claudia M. Bates

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This Officer attended the NGC Annual Convention in Philadelphia in May, representing the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. While we didn’t ‘beat Georgia’ (a Florida Battle Cry), we did very well. With help from our Flower Show Awards Advisor, Barbara May, and our Awards Chairmen, Jennifer Condo and Valerie Seinfeld, FFGC earned many illustrious awards, and all can be as proud as your President in what members of FFGC accomplished.

This year’s UF Short Course in Gainesville was another wonderful experience and Tri-Refresher. As always, all who attended left vowing to return yet again as it is ALWAYS a great 2 days of learning.

Due to many medical tests that have become part of our lives, this Officer was unable to attend Short Course North in the Panhandle – but once again, it was a great, great educational activity for our members to enjoy. Our sincere thanks to Jeanice Gage and Sharon Johnson for undertaking the planning and execution of two of our three Short Courses in Florida. NO OTHER STATE in America offers these types of learning experiences and offering Tri-Refresher status regularly. We are all grateful to those who originated this series in our state –UF Short Course is over 80 years old - Tropical is getting to be in the ‘elderly’ range, and we thank Donna Berger for planning and chairing Tropical this year and last - and Short Course North will be around as long as there are people who sign up for it every year and enjoy all that is offered. Thank you all for your support of these Educational opportunities offered by FFGC and Districts 1 – 5 and 10.

This Officer spent two days at Headquarters in July to meet with FINANCE and H & E Committees. Please know, your Officers and Standing Committee members work 12 months a year for FFGC, and it shows in all the successes we enjoy.

There are only 7 months left to push for the President’s Project – COLOR OUR CANOPY. We are so hopeful that our members will undertake this project to contribute to the beauty of our state through planting FLOWERING trees throughout the state. The recent hurricanes decimated so many trees, but perhaps there is a silver lining in that we have the opportunity and incentive to plant colorful, flowering trees throughout our state. We might not live long enough to enjoy the beauty and color we create by planting flowering trees, but our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren deserve to experience the beauty that was once so abundant all over LA FLORIDA – the LAND OF FLOWERS.

FFGC was recently the recipient of $7200 from the collection of monies last year after Hurricane Irma. I Had to inquire as to the disbursement of those monies, as we sent money to DS for Hurricane relief in Texas – all while we were digging out from damage caused by Irma and several severe storms. WE are working on a plan to disburse that money FOR TREE RESTORATION PLANTINGS – not necessarily in addition to what was collected from Natural Disaster relief monies - $39,000 from NGC – but we want to help clubs in the state replace and re-plant trees – FLOWERING TREES will take precedence where appropriate – but we will be giving this money in the form of grants to help beautify and restore damaged and destroyed trees in our state.

We will be working diligently to ensure all clubs try to RECRUIT and RETAIN members. We are seeing many different areas of membership issues – members are aging out – others are very comfortable with their club as it is now, and they cannot grasp that perhaps it will have to be different in order to continue and thrive. If you love this organization, if you love what we stand for, which is creating beauty, creating opportunities for knowledge to everyone in our state, becoming vocal warriors to protect our very fragile environment, creating interest and awe in the wonders of Nature, and you love your many friends in FFGC, please help this organization grow and thrive with new and younger members who will take the torch WE PASS, and be inspired by our efforts and those who came before us. You can look at the Wildflowers on all major roadways in Florida and see the impact a ‘bunch of garden clubbers’ had on this state. Be proud when you drive through the ribbons of color – we all helped that effort get started and stay relevant.

Speaking of pride, take a look at your Headquarters. It is, without a doubt, a showplace in Winter Garden, and a source of pride for us when the members of the NGC Board of Directors visit here in two weeks. This is the direct result of all of you endorsing the dream and helping us to make it a viable building with purpose, and endowed with beauty and grace and truly something in which we can all take pride.

Many thanks for taking time from your families to be with us to help FFGC stay right on track. We don’t say thank you enough for all that each one of you does to help this organization thrive – but please know all are grateful for your dedication and service to FFGC.