

June 2024

President's Chat

By Emily Huang

oper oper As ever, spring is full of reunions with old bird friends and one or two surprises. Colorful spring warblers, thrushes, leafing trees, and one new flower after another—each day brings so many gifts that exhaustion from sheer joy is a real possibility! The surprise gifts to date include one or two exhibitionist Sora at Hughes Hollow and an elegant outof-nowhere Upland Sandpiper in Spencerville (a lifer for me).

Spring is also a time for transitions, so let us acknowledge our retiring Club officers with much gratitude and welcome new ones with open arms. I would especially like to thank Past President Scott Young for his strong leadership, powerful commitment to climate and environmental activism, and generous friendship throughout the past two years—I'll be counting on your advice, Scott. To Mark England, who's bravely stepped up to be the new Vice-President, there aren't adequate words for what you do for the Club as a field trip leader, teacher, and steward of some very important county birding areas. We must not forget Karen Cyr, who served two years as Secretary with grace and sharp reporting skills and is now passing the torch to Elaine Kim.

On a sad note, I will long remember Janet Millenson, a Past MOS President and MBC State Director who passed away this April; she was a stalwart voice for birds and was a woman who practiced everything she preached. Finally, this year, Francesca Grifo, Lisa Wilcox Deyo, and Luis Selva have volunteered to take on new Director roles, for which we are extremely grateful.

The Montgomery Bird Club has grown tremendously in just the past few years, a reflection of accelerating interest in birds and birding among all demographicschildren, adults, people of color, people of differing abilities and income levels. Nature should be accessible to all, and at the same time everyone should have the privilege and responsibility for taking care

of it. In the coming year, it's important to keep an open spirit that welcomes all interested folk and all

positive attitudes to birding, from the urban/ backyard birder, to the multi-lister, to the serious conservationist. Expensive SOCIETY equipment and limitless free time are not required to appreciate and enjoy birds!

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As I write this, we have just enjoyed BONTGOMERY BIRD our 2024 spring Social, an annual Club event at which we gather to dine on the delicious catering of Smokey Glen Farm in Nature Forward's beautiful Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase. Each year at the Social, we honor a member who has made significant volunteer contributions to the Club, and this year the honoree was Chris Wright, longtime member, birder extraordinaire, and our Club Treasurer from 2015 to 2023. Chris was awarded a painting of his favorite bird, a red-phase Eastern Screech-Owl, by outstanding bird artist and fellow Club member Diane Ford. Much deserved, Chris; let me add my personal thanks for your dedicated service and

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President's Chat

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kindness to me when I was floundering as a new VP. Overall, the evening was a tremendous success, much assisted by cold wine and mellow companionship, and we thank Nature Forward for generously donating the venue.

Most Club members know that, in addition to being VP for the past two years, I've also been serving as County Co-Coordinator (with Karen Cyr) for the 3rd Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas (2020-2024). So, it will come as no surprise that I urge everyone to get out there and atlas, atlas, atlas! Together, we've done a terrific job in Montgomery County, which is literally only one breeding code from total completion. But most other counties need a lot of help, and with about four months left until BBA3 is closed, we can still accomplish wonders. I'd like to draw particular attention to Wicomico County, which is being coordinated by MBC State Director Francesca Grifo, and to Somerset County, coordinated by Club member Margaret Poethig. These Eastern Shore counties have breeding birds not found in Montgomery, so you can add to your lists while having a great time helping out the atlas.

These days the Club is involved in a number of projects, from pursuing birding accessibility projects at popular birding sites, to expanding our demographic, to continuing bird conservation projects. I have a particularly strong personal interest in habitat conservation, which includes native plantings and nest box trails. Our biggest trail monitoring job (22 boxes at Blue Mash) is performed by super volunteer Katie Moore. And, of course, our youth birding group, capably managed by Kathryn Carr and Tara Clifton, is going strong; fostering youth interest in birds and birding is a wonderful way to support the future of birds in this county. I encourage Club members who are interested in any one of these areas to reach out to Club officers, and if you have a new idea that you'd like to share with us, please let us know!

Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

I am excited to feature the Youth Montgomery Bird Club in this issue of *The Chat*! With the support of the MBC Council, the YMBC was established by Kathryn Carr and Tara Clifton and held its first field trip in February 2023 at Gunners Lake. In the next 15 months, the youth bird club offered 14 field trips to various area hotspots and has 5 more trips planned. It's amazing to see such an enthusiastic and welcoming group of young birders, parents, organizers, and mentors.

Years ago, when my son Nathan was in middle school, I had a hard time connecting him with other local youth and mentors. We eventually joined the Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) and participated in many wonderful events including the annual New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding fundraising competition. Although the regular YMOS field trips took us all over the DMV, I still would have loved the option to participate in outings closer to home and with less time commitment.

Recently, a friend who lives in a nearby county in Maryland told me that she had run into a 14-year-old birder from Montgomery, and she asked me if I had any resources to share, and I enthusiastically responded "Yes!" The MBC website has a section geared toward young birders, and any youth is welcome to attend one of the Club's free scheduled walks. For more information, visit <u>https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/young-birders/</u>.

Perhaps you know some young people and their families who may be interested in nature and in birding? Perhaps, like me, you are interested in supporting young people and seeing them grow? I hope you will join me in learning more about the YMBC in these pages and celebrating their impact and success. Have a great summer! See you out in the field.



Welcome New Members

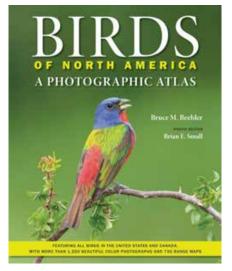
By Moira Davenport, Membership Chair

Bogdan Alexandrescu, Vivien Lee, and Josh Whitman Lyda Astrove Alison Celentano Becker Lisa and Nathan Booth Kevin Ebert Paula Goldberg Cindy Hall Bridget Hartman Stephen and Anne-Sophie Hricik John Hubbell Craig Johnson Robert Jones Anastasiya Kochergina Michael McGinnis and family Robyn Muncy Cynthia Nystrom Matthew Pinegar

Eric Rodic and Rachel Kohnke Diana Rowny Elizabeth Smith Paul and Ashley Tierno John Trezise Woody and Jennifer Turner Emily Wiggans Adria Zeldin and Peter Gray

Club News

- Roy Howard, MBC Chapter Director and a pastor, shared his birding journey on *The Thing with Feathers*, a podcast about birds at <u>https://</u> <u>courtneybellis.com/the-thing-with-feathers-podcast/</u>. Tune in to Episode 65 from April 22, and let Roy know what you think!
- Cintia Cabib, documentary filmmaker and producer, premiered her latest documentary, *Bird Walk*, at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton on May 4. The screening was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Cintia and featuring MBC member and nature photographer Vickie Baily and MBC President Emily Huang. For more information and how you can support the film, visit <u>https://birdwalkfilm.com/</u>.
- Bruce Beehler, ornithologist and photographer, celebrates the launch of *Birds of North America: A Photographic Atlas* on June 1 with the American Bird Conservancy. For more information, visit <u>https:// brucembeehler.wixsite.com/brucembeehler</u>.



In Memoriam

By Emily Huang, MBC President

The Montgomery Bird Club remembers those we have lost this year. We are grateful for their friendship and for their contributions to the Club and to birding. They will be greatly missed.

Bill Adams Bonnie Borsa Don Messersmith Janet Millenson Jim Tate





Who's Who

The 2024 Club Election results are in! By unanimous vote, the following MBC Officers and Directors have been elected.

Officers

- President: Emily Huang
- Vice-President: Mark England
- Treasurer: Lisa Norwalk
- Secretary: Elaine Kim

State Directors

- Lisa Wilcox Deyo
- Francesca Grifo
- Cheryl Hogue
- Jim Ivett
- Ed Vigezzi

Chapter Directors

- Josephine Cox
- Roy Howard
- Brooke Levey
- Luis Selva

In this issue, we are delighted to introduce our new MBC Vice-President, Mark England. Stay tuned for other introductions in the fall issue of *The Chat*.

Mark England, MBC Vice-President



Mark credits a May 1996, several-second scope view of a motionless male American Redstart for his late start in birding at 47 years old. This "wow" moment caused him to next visit nearby Little Bennett RP, where he saw his

first Indigo Bunting and Scarlet Tanager and was then hooked on birds for life.

At Little Bennett that fall, Mark met Hugh Mahanes, who became a great friend, birding mentor, and later president of MBC before his death in 2006. They birded regularly in the area, then shared a trip to southeast Arizona, where Mark began an ongoing love of the West. While working as a cost estimator and Senior Project Manager in the fast-paced and often-stressful commercial construction industry, Mark began taking courses in the ANS/Graduate School Natural History Field Studies Program, eventually earning a Certificate of Accomplishment. He enjoyed the field identification classes on butterflies, wildflowers, and trees, but especially birds. In 2005, he took over Don Messersmith's "Bird Life" class, which he taught for several years.

Since 2000, Mark has led many local trips for ANS (now Nature Forward), and for the MBC nearly that long, most often to Oaks Landfill and Blackwater NWR. He feels privileged to have co-led 10 ANS trips out West, including four to Yellowstone/Grand Tetons NPs with his naturalist friend Rob Gibbs. Mark has served as both chapter and state director for the MBC and was the Seneca CBC compiler for nine years.

Mark was born in Lexington, Kentucky, where his father taught Southern US History at the University of Kentucky. The family moved to the DC area in 1960 when his dad took a job with the National Science Foundation. This also enabled his librarian mother to be reunited with some of her family, who had grown up as a "Pioneer Family" in Greenbelt, Md.

Mark's wife Ellen is a retired college math instructor, and their daughter Elizabeth is a digital archivist with the National Archives and mother to 5-year-old grandson Miles, who says he wants to go birding with "Oppa" very soon. Older daughter and foster-parent Teresa teaches special education for MCPS and lives in Gaithersburg.

In his spare time, Mark plays old-time clawhammer banjo and lately is trying to figure out fiddle tunes on the autoharp. At 75, he figures it was now or never to accept the Club VP role, and he thanks MBC President Emily Huang for gently twisting his arm.



Mark's favorite bird is the Short-eared Owl. Digital drawing by Nathan Tea



Birds of Note (Mid-February to Early May)

By Andy Martin

Carla Morris was exactly where she needed to be on April 24 to spot a very rare bird for the county! She observed (and got photos for documentation) an **American White Pelican** flying up river over the Potomac adjacent to Violette's Lock. In her own words, and under the species comment section for this sighting in eBird, "I was not expecting this!" This is only the second sighting for this species in Montgomery, joining another **American White Pelican** record from the same location by Dave Czaplak way back in March of 1998!

It is exciting to have **Black-crowned Night Herons** continue to return and nest on the small island at Lake Whetstone in Montgomery Village. Individual birds started to return in earnest by mid-March and at one point in April, Elaine Hendricks counted as many as 58 birds there. The year 2021 seemed to mark the start of the explosive growth of this breeding colony with only 4 birds being reported in 2020, triple that in 2021, and a few times over the 80 bird mark between 2022 and 2024.

Ed Escalante found a **Western Cattle Egret** along Prescott Rd near the Little Bennett RP golf course on April 15.

Ryan Douglas spotted a **Golden Eagle** flying over Moyer Road Local Park near Damascus on April 7.

Multiple **Sora** were noted at Hughes Hollow from April 14 to April 29. Jared Fisher found as many as

4 separate birds there in one outing on April 20. Jared also found a **Virginia Rail** at Hughes Hollow on May 1. Dave Czaplak reported a **Common Gallinule**, also from Hughes Hollow, on April 23.

On April 26, Gail Mackiernan received a tip from a friend who works at Spencerville Academy near Burtonsville that there was an **Upland Sandpiper** foraging in an adjacent field. Gregg Petersen was first on the scene to confirm it. Jared Fisher noted 4 early **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the Summit Hall Turf Farm on March 23. And Lois Forster found an early **Greater Yellowlegs** at Blue Mash on March 26.

A Lesser Black-backed Gull was spotted by Dave Roberts over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on February 8. Joe Hanfman noted a "first of the season" Caspian Tern at Triadelphia Reservoir on March 30. Howard Youth observed a Forster's Tern over the Potomac River near Lock 7 on April 10.

A few **Marsh Wrens** have been noted in Montgomery over the past couple of months. Robert Walker found one on the NIH Campus in Bethesda on March 15. Michael Vincent and Ryan Carr heard a **Marsh Wren's** distinctive call in a wet grassy area near Riley's Lock on April 21. **Marsh Wrens** were also reported recently at Hughes Hollow within McKee-Beshers WMA.

Jared Fisher briefly recorded the call of an **Eastern Whip-poor-will** from his Darnestown area yard on May 10. John Sojda heard an **Eastern Whip-poor-will** call just

> a single time along Izaak Walton League Way on April 14, and Bilcha A. heard one along the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail near Kemp Mill on April 21.

> Some good birds were noted in the county during the last part of April including a **Cerulean Warbler** found by Scott Baron at the Damascus Recreational Park on April 24. A **Black-billed Cuckoo** near the intersection of River Rd and Willard Rd was found by Jared Fisher on April 28. Also by Jared, a **Summer Tanager** at Blockhouse Point CP on April 29.

As of May 2, there have been 207 species of birds reported in Montgomery County. The top five county listers: Jared Fisher, John Sojda, Roy Howard, Team Carr—Ryan and his mom Kathryn, and Mary Ann Todd.



Sora showing off its feet at Hughes Hollow. Photo by Michelle Browning



Youth Birding: Special Edition

By Ryan Carr

What Makes the YMBC Special

The Youth Montgomery Bird Club (YMBC) walks are a great way to get to know other youth birders. Personally, I love watching and talking about birds with other kids, and the YMBC has really opened the door for connecting us with each other. Being a member has been an excellent experience, and I think that anyone can enjoy it! I would also like to thank all the people who gave me this opportunity, especially my Mom (Kathryn Carr) and Tara Clifton who organize and manage all of the trips. To help describe what the YMBC means to its members, I asked others their thoughts too.

I like birding with other kids who also enjoy birding. It's fun to find as many birds as we can during the trip. On our last YMBC walk at Blue Mash Nature Trail, we saw 2 Broad-winged Hawks, which was a lifer for me. I can't wait to go on our next YMBC trip!—*Ada*

I really like YMBC walks because I can be with other birders. One day at Lois Y. Green, we ran into the woods and saw a Barred Owl perched in a tree overhead and an American Kestrel!—*Calla*

The mentors are helpful and I have learned a lot. It's fun to find birds with my friends!—*Ethan*

With YMBC, I have friends about my age that share my passion for birding. The trips are always so much fun, and sometimes even magical, like the time I said I wish I could find a Vesper Sparrow, and an hour later, Voila! The Vesper Sparrow appears in front of us!—*Gavin*

The YMBC is a great way to enjoy many different birds at different locations. For example, Winter Wrens at the C&O Canal, Redhead at Gunners Lake, and Broadwinged Hawks at Blue Mash Nature Trail. My favorite YMBC trip I've had so far was birding Oaks Landfill and finding Northern Harriers, a White-crowned Sparrow, and, best of all, a Short-eared Owl hunting the expansive fields as night fell, its golden eyes reflecting the last rays of light as it dipped up and down looking for potential prey.—Leo

I didn't know a lot about birds, but when I joined the YMBC it helped me learn a lot! I would rather go birdwatching with this club than just go birdwatching with my dad because there are more friends and it is also fun to meet new people. Birdwatching with this group means so much to me. I know that birdwatching with this group is something that I really don't want to miss!—*Riya* A favorite memory of the YMBC is when my friends and I rode in the same car at Oaks Landfill and worked together to spot birds, which reminded me of our World Series of Birding competitions. It's more fun birding with a group than going on a birding trip by yourself.—*Will*

Our family loves being a part of the YMBC. We have visited many nearby birding spots that we didn't know about before. Ethan enjoys being with the other young birders and learning new things from the mentors.— Aaron (parent)

I just took to birding a few years ago as it provided me a meditative outlet to feel connected, to slow down and to rejuvenate (and to tap into an old skill/hobby in photography). However, as a parent you are always running around shuttling your kids to their activities, which leaves little to no time for activities you might enjoy. YMBC has provided me with an outlet to "feed two birds with one scone." I have been able to share my love for birding with my kids, and get to go birding myself with my older daughter and others like us. Biggest challenge is that my young daughter (age 6) feels left out, and I've got to bring her in soon into YMBC walks!—*Ayan (parent)*

I'm so thankful to the Montgomery Bird Club and our fabulous mentors for giving Tara and me the opportunity to organize local bird walks for these kids. It is amazing to see how close they have grown and their excitement to not only see birds but see each other. Watching their faces light up is a true gift.—*Kathryn (parent)*

I love providing an opportunity for kids to connect with other kids with the same love of birds. It is a worthwhile endeavor because when youth appreciate nature, they will be better environmental stewards in the future.— *Tara (parent)*



Vesper Sparrow from one of the Oaks Landfill field trips. Photo by Hongmei Zhao



Spring and Summer Field Trips

This spring we enjoyed YMBC bird walks at Blue Mash Nature Trail and Rachel Carson Conservation Park. At Blue Mash, we saw many great species including Broad-winged Hawks, a Bald Eagle, multiple Brown Thrashers, and a Prairie Warbler. We also got a closeup view of a Common Raven when it flew right over us. At Rachel Carson, we identified 47 species. Highlights included great views of Indigo Buntings, an Orchard Oriole, and two Swainson's Thrushes, which were a lifer for one of our members. Also, if you're looking to see or hear an Ovenbird, Rachel Carson Conservation Park is the place to go!

We are looking forward to our June trip to Hughes Hollow. Big shoutouts to Lauren Carey, Stephen Davies, Mark England, Dave Powell, and Stella Tea for mentoring us this season!

The YMBC also has some awesome trips planned for this summer on July 7 (Patuxent Research Refuge— North Tract), August 11 (Blue Mash Nature Trail), and September 1 (Meadowside Nature Center/Lake Frank). Reservations are required via <u>tinyurl.com/</u> YMBCSummer24.

We are always looking for new mentors too. We handle all of the administrative work, you just pick the place and show up! If you are interested in being a mentor on a walk or want to tag along to see what being a mentor is like, please reach out to us at youth. birding@gmail.com.

Anacostia Riverkeeper Free Boat Trips

By Tara Clifton

Did you know the Anacostia River has a large undeveloped section in DC despite it being one of the most urbanized rivers in the US? Anacostia Riverkeeper offers free boat trips on the Anacostia River. There was an unofficial youth trip on March 23 from the DC boat ramp to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and PG county. The captain taught about features of the Anacostia, cleanup and conservation. It was a VERY rainy day and the trip was on the verge of being canceled, but it cleared and 31 species were found in about 2 hours. Some highlights include Blue-winged Teal, many Wood Ducks, good looks at Osprey and having fun birding by boat. Thanks to Lauren Carey for being a great mentor. Go to www.anacostiariverkeeper.org to find birding trips or to organize your own group.







Returning mentors, Lauren Carey and Dave Powell, joined the YMBC at Hughes Hollow in early June. Photo by Kathryn Carr



Youth Birding: Special Edition

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The 2024 World Series of Birding

In May, I participated in the middle school division of the New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding in Cape May with my team, the YMOS Tern of Events. We had a great time! During the four-day trip we identified 162 species, including 153 species on the competition day. The Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) sent 25 kids to the World Series, including four other YMBC members: Ethan, Gavin, Leo, and Will.

My team had many highlights both during scouting and on the big day, such as seeing multiple White-rumped Sandpipers in a flooded field, locating a Red-headed Woodpecker nest, watching multiple Piping Plovers, fantastic views of approximately 30 Black Skimmers, and getting to see a Long-billed Dowitcher, Whimbrel, and Purple Sandpipers. Getting up at 1 a.m. was not fun, but we were treated to the calls of several Eastern Whip-poor-wills at the Woodbine Airport and got to hear two species of owls and a Yellow-breasted Chat.



Ryan (second from top) and his teammates—Cam, Karolina, Mikey, and Will competing in the 2024 NJ Audubon's World Series of Birding in Cape May. Photo by Dave Mandell

I highly recommend birding at the Ocean City, NJ, Welcome Center, where we found trees filled with Black- and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, White and Glossy Ibises, Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, and Brant in the water beyond the center.

But my favorite place of all was the Cape May Bird Observatory, where we had amazing views of Common Yellowthroats, a Rosebreasted Grosbeak, a Magnolia Warbler, an American Redstart, a Bay-breasted Warbler, a Nashville Warbler, two Black-and-white Warblers, a Northern Parula, and the most spectacular view of a male Blackburnian Warbler. We also heard a Black-throated Green Warbler, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a Blackpoll Warbler, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Believe it or not, it was even better than the Watkins Pond-King Farm Stream Park hotspot in Rockville!

The YMOS takes a summer hiatus but will kick up again in August. For more information, contact George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com or visit <u>https://mdbirds.org/young-birders/</u>.



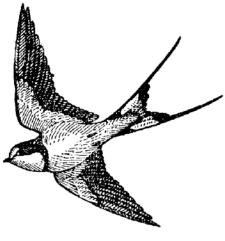
Summer Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, MBC Field Trip Coordinator

Once again, the Club has had a successful late winter and spring season with most trips fully attended and many with long waiting lists. Check out the trip reports on our website at www.montgomerybirdclub.org/trip-reports/! A note of thanks to Ed Vigezzi for keeping the site up to date with new reports as well as any changes or cancellations.

We typically don't schedule trips when the Club's program closes down for the summer, but we will start up with a bang in September. We are already lining up leaders for the fall and early winter; it will be another exciting season!

If you are new to MBC or want to improve your birding skills, consider signing up when the trips are announced in *The Chat* and on the website at www. montgomerybirdclub.org/calendar/. This is a great way to gain new skills from our knowledgeable, experienced leaders and a good way to meet members of our local birding community. Watch for Club emails later this summer for more information.



But Wait...Bonus Summer Field Trips!

AUGUST 4 (Sunday) and AUGUST 17 (Saturday) **OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE**

Late afternoon visit from 5:00 until 6:30 p.m. to look for fall migrant shorebirds, if water levels are good. Meet at 5:00 p.m. at 6001 Olney-Laytonsville Road (Rt. 108), Laytonsville, Md. For more information, contact trip leader. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

Reservations are required for all MBC field trips unless otherwise noted. Contact trip leaders for reservations, directions, and other information. For recent field trip reports and Club guidance on in-person events including COVID-19 precautions and inclement weather changes, please visit www.montgomerybirdclub.org/.

Kudos and a big thank-you to all our trip leaders:

Kathy Brown	Andy Martin
Jo Cox	Katie Moore
Moira Davenport	Gene Murray
Leo Dilling	Anne Mytych
Mark England	Jim Nelson
Clive Harris	Paul Orsinger
Gerry Hawkins	Evelyn Ralston
Susan Higginbotham	Dave Roberts
Rob Hilton	Lisa Shannon
Roy Howard	Scott Young
Emily Huang	



May Social

The May Social was a great success! A big thank-you to Evelyn Ralston, MOS President and Past MBC President, for taking and sharing these wonderful photos. In addition to announcing the election results, outgoing MBC President Scott Young presented the following awards:

Outstanding Service Awards

- Moira Davenport
- Gail Mackiernan
- Dave Roberts



Rae and Woody Dubois enjoying the festivities



Gerry Hawkins and Mark England catching up

Valued Service Awards

- Mark England
- Cheryl Hogue
- Emily Huang
- Stephanie Mason
- Stella Tea
- Ed Vigezzi



Scott Young presents Chris Wright with a painting of an Eastern Screech-Owl by Diane Ford





Cheryl Hogue serving drinks and having a fun time with Francesca Grifo, Paul Orsinger, and Jo Cox



Stephanie Mason, one of the evening's Valued Service Award recipients, with Emily Huang



Executive Director of Nature Forward, Lisa Alexander



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