

# News



from the Alexandria Sanitation Authority

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## Winners of Ellen Pickering Excellent Award Announced at Alexandria Earth Day Event

(Alexandria, VA) The City of Alexandria's Environmental Policy Commission and the Alexandria Sanitation Authority announce the first annual Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award recipients. They are Elizabeth Chimento and Poul Hertel. Both are residents of the Old Town section of Alexandria.

Aside from donating much of their time, they have also spent their own money to ensure that the City and State governments had hard technical data to support their concerns relating to emissions emanating from the Mirant Potomac River Generating Station. They zealously defended the rights of their community to ensure that the power plant was held to all permit conditions and rules and regulations of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Their work has been the catalyst that raised the awareness of this issue to City Council and eventually led the City to achieve a \$34 million dollar settlement with Mirant aimed at installing improved stack and fugitive PM2.5 controls at this plant, in addition to the \$35 million dollars Mirant recently spent on the stack merge project which helps address the downwash issue originally identified by the award winners.

Ellen Pickering's daughter, Frances, a member of the award selection committee, notes, "It was very difficult to choose among the nominees because they are all doing equally valuable work to protect the natural environment and promote environmental sustainability. They are taking different approaches to the issue and all of their approaches are vital. I know my mother valued all of these approaches -- her own efforts ranged from planting cherry trees to fighting city hall."

She adds that Ms. Chimento and Mr. Hertel should be commended for taking on such a controversial issue. "It takes persistence, courage, and vision -- and, in this case, also scientific and communication skills -- to take on an issue that not everyone can readily understand and not everyone would necessarily agree about at the start. It couldn't have been easy to challenge the interests of a corporation and to make the levers of a government bureaucracy work in support of its citizens. But they did take on these challenges, and they prevailed."

The Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award is named in honor of Mrs. Pickering's lifelong dedication to preservation and conservation in the City of Alexandria. Frances Ellen Pickering, a long-time activist, first gained recognition for her lobbying efforts that, more than 30 years ago, helped to create the Mount Vernon Trail between Alexandria and Washington. An active preservationist and conservationist, she was deeply committed to preserving and enhancing the City's waterfront. She urged the adoption of the City's Open Space Plan, lobbied to preserve Founder's Park and protect it from high-rise development, and implemented the planting of 1,000 citizen-donated cherry trees during her tenure as chair of the Alexandria Beautification Commission. Mrs. Pickering was also elected to City Council and a member of numerous City boards and commissions, including the Alexandria Sanitation Authority.

To read more, go to [www.alexearthday.org](http://www.alexearthday.org).