

New fountain, plaque honors Emily 'Lee' Stewart

Thirsty adults, children and dogs will all benefit from a recent gift of a multilevel water fountain (including a water bottle filler) to Silvermont Park from Emily "Lee" Stewart's family in honor of their mother who passed in 2015, according to a news release. Stewart was a key Transylvania County community leader and powerhouse in supporting improvements to save the Silvermont Mansion when it was proposed to be torn down due to disrepair, then getting a county senior center opened once the first floor of the mansion was repaired and starting up the second-floor Silvermont History Museum in partnership with others. The museum is now run by the Transylvania Heritage Museum, directed by Rebecca Suddeth. Last, but not least, Stewart was pivotal in getting Silvermont Brevard's Pumpkin Fest started in 2015 via a donation to the county by Stingy Jack's Pumpkin Patch.

The new water fountain is located at the entrance to the tennis courts and a plaque honoring Stewart's many contributions to Silvermont was installed right above it for a dedication ceremony hosted by Friends of Silvermont on



Submitted photo

A dedication ceremony hosted by Friends of Silvermont on Sept. 20 included Lee Stewart's family members.

Sept. 20. Family members, including her daughter Nancy Stewart, were present. Her family was joined by many FOS and Pumpkin Fest volunteers setting up for this year's Oct. 3-25 Silvermont Park event. Pinkie Byrd, president of Friends of Silvermont, wrote and delivered the below remarks dedicating the fountain and plaque,

and thanking the family for their generosity to Silvermont Park.

"Emily Mashburn Stewart, fondly known as "Lee," was born in Asheville, then went to college and remained in the Chicago area until she and husband, Bill, retired to Brevard in 1995. At some point Lee became a member of the Land of Sky Council on Aging. This is when she dis-

covered that Transylvania County was one of only four counties in North Carolina without a senior center. She worked with others to have Silvermont become the site for ours.

"On the center's first anniversary, Lee asked about the Silverstein family possessions and was directed to find someone from the Transylvania His-

torical Society. This is how she met Jan Osborne and 18 months later we had the Second Floor Silvermont History Museum.

"In 2015 Lee asked me to attend a meeting she was having with the director of the Children's Center about reviving the Festival of Trees at Silvermont, which had served as a fundraiser for that organization for many years. This revival would have necessitated moving all senior center activities to another location for several weeks and was no longer feasible. I was Lee's partner in discussing alternate fundraising options with the Children's Center.

"Lee suggested an alternative of a modest Halloween-walk through Silvermont Park featuring a scavenger hunt. The Children's Center accepted this proposal and, then, the Stingy Jack Halloween Venue offered their whole event and inventory to Pumpkin Fest was born.

"The next thing I knew, volunteers were moving all the donated exhibits and supplies into donated space in a local warehouse. Lee and I tasked ourselves with checking out and testing all of the strings of lights and displays. Some still have a

little white tag on them that says "OK" in Lee's hand. Lee's health prevented her from working on Pumpkin Fest that first year and she unfortunately passed away that December.

"Today, with this plaque on the tennis court fence, behind the multilevel water fountain donated by her family in her memory, we are honoring Lee Stewart for everything she has done for Silvermont and our whole community."

Friends of Silvermont honors Lee Stewart's memory for her many contributions of time and leadership over the years to Silvermont and thanks her family again for their gift of the water fountain to Silvermont Park. This year the Friends are holding the 9th Pumpkin Fest fundraiser at Silvermont Park, on the first four Friday and Saturday nights in October (Oct. 3-25, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. For details see pumpkinfestbrevard.org).

If you would like to volunteer with or donate to Friends of Silvermont or 2025 Pumpkin Fest, contact Pinkie Byrd at pinkieb@comporium.net, Maury Bandurraga at pumpkinfestbrevard@gmail.com, or Ruth Wright at pfestbrvdlvols@gmail.com.