

Martha Clarvoe:

Excerpts from the 2009 L’Oreal Paris “Women of Worth” nomination form:

Martha Clarvoe cares about the environment because she cares about people – their health, their ability to appreciate the gifts of nature, and their right to be assured that the natural resources which sustain our very existence will continue to do so for future generations. Her efforts in environmental advocacy have touched on public health and safety, recycling, and climate protection – each one an issue of importance to us all.

Clarvoe’s efforts in environmental advocacy have touched on public health and safety, recycling, and climate protection – Public Health: One of Martha’s major thrusts has been to educate the public on the health and safety hazards of outdoor trash burning. Outdoor burning poses a threat to air quality because, according to the American Lung Association, each pound of household trash burned outdoors emits hundreds of times more dioxin than a properly designed municipal incinerator. In 2000, the chair of the Otsego County Board appointed Clarvoe to its newly organized Burn Barrel Education Committee, charged with devising an education plan and making recommendations for legislation on this issue. Part and parcel of this public education effort included identifying a way to recycle agricultural plastic commonly used to cover and protect hays bales in fields – and most often burned or buried as a means of disposal. As a member of a countywide Agricultural Plastics Recycling Feasibility Study Group, Martha organized an agricultural plastic baling demonstration in August 2006. According to Lois Levitan, Program Leader for the Environmental Risk Analysis Program at Cornell University, “Martha was literally the mother of our attention to ag plastic recycling. She went on to volunteer her time and effort in the early years of this project, before we even came up with the name and acronym “Recycling Ag Plastics Project” (RAPP). Martha helped to make and record contacts in what has now developed into the best database in the nation of people interested in some aspect of ag plastics recycling. She also conducted some of the research that was reported in our 2005 feasibility study, overall keeping the issue alive. Martha was my compadre when there were few others. There is no doubt that the interest and money that New York State has promised to invest in RAPP (the first round of which will go largely to purchasing several mobile balers) is a reflection of our earlier track record, in which Martha played a huge role. The reason that New York State is interested in ag plastics recycling at all is largely to offset the anticipated impact that the proposed open burning regulations would otherwise have on agriculture. Martha has been a key player with the open burning issue for more than a decade.”

Recycling: The environmental issue about which Martha is most passionate is recycling. Even before her involvement in OCCA, she participated in a junk mail recycling project with the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area and with a pilot recycling project organized by OCCA and the LWV. In 2004, Martha and a fellow OCCA member decided to revive a street recycling program for containers for the Village of Cooperstown – not an insignificant task for the home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. The previous program, run by a non-profit youth group, had been suspended because of problems encountered with stinging insects in

the collection process. The duo did their homework and discovered a model for collection bins which deterred the bees and other insects, as well as trash, from being introduced into the bins. Martha did the bulk of the construction of 17 bins placed on village streets. In 2008, the Village of Cooperstown assumed total management of this program, purchasing new bins and allocating village monies and staff to direct the program. Martha was also instrumental in establishing a paper and container recycling program for Cooperstown Middle/High School students and staff, which collected more than 3,500 pounds of paper in its first year. Another recycling effort in which Martha was involved was the design and compilation of "Recycling: Above and Beyond" (enclosed). This guide offers local residents alternative ways to recycle goods rather than putting them out with the trash. Since 2002, Martha has organized a book recycling effort for books that go unsold at the Village of Cooperstown Library's annual book sale. Before committing the books to a recycling center, she makes an effort to find new homes for them. Some remain as close as the county jail while others have been sent as far away as Pakistan. As volunteer coordinator for OCCA, Martha also performs the essential community service of recruiting volunteers for Otsego County's annual household hazardous waste collection day -- and, of course, Martha is on hand to assist with this labor-intensive event which could not be carried off without the help of the volunteers she recruits. In 2007, taking advantage of the drop-off opportunity offered by the household hazardous waste collection, Martha, in partnership with Pedals for Progress, organized a collection of bicycles and sewing machine heads to be distributed in third-world countries.

Climate protection: On the important issue of climate protection/global warming, Martha has spearheaded several significant initiatives which have a positive effect both globally and locally. In 2004, she organized a workshop on biodiesel to announce and promote availability of biodiesel fuels in our area. Yet another one of Martha's major involvements has been in the organization of and participation in a countywide annual Earth Festival, held on or around Earth Day since 2006. In 2009, it was Martha's brainchild to collect Styrofoam -- a material not included in local recycling programs. Five hundred cubic feet of Styrofoam were collected and recycled. Martha also initiated a campaign to raise awareness on the issue of light pollution, helping to design "Starry Nights in Otsego County (enclosed)," a brochure distributed to local planning boards, businesses and county residents. She also organized lectures given to both a local town board and the general public by a representative of the International Dark Sky Association. In 2005, Martha approached two county municipalities, Cooperstown and Oneonta, about membership in the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which would enable them to participate in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP). Both municipalities responded positively. CCP will assist these two municipalities in adopting policies and implementing quantifiable measures to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and enhance urban livability and sustainability. In 2008, Martha made yet another foray into community awareness regarding climate protection by bringing to public attention the concept of the "Low Carbon Diet," a 30-day program recommending simple lifestyle changes to reduce our carbon footprint and fend off global warming. She also approached the Village of Cooperstown Sustainability Committee, which agreed to form an "eco-team" to follow the diet and report to village residents on results. Other climate protection efforts include finding, posting, and announcing through the local media the

existence of “E-Rideshare” (a carpooling website), organizing a “Bike to Work Day,” and conducting an energy audit of her own home and our organizational work space, followed up by informational feature articles to educate the public as to the benefits of energy audits.

- During the four years OCCA supported the Cooperstown container recycling program under Martha’s leadership, more than 8,000 pounds (4 tons) of containers were diverted from the waste stream and the nearly \$2,000 collected from returnable containers was used to sustain this recycling program. In addition, when the Village decided to take ownership of the street recycling program, the 17 bins built by Martha were redistributed to two other county municipalities, thus increasing the number of municipal recycling programs carried out in Otsego County.
- In the eight years of operation of the library book recycling program, we estimate that Martha has overseen the re-use and recycling of 5 tons of books.
- Since the first household hazardous waste collection day (1998), thanks in great part to Martha’s efforts, significant quantities of toxic waste has been responsibly disposed of, including:
 - 63,525 gallons of propane and fire extinguishers, flammable paint and other toxic liquids, oxides, organic peroxides, pesticides, corrosive acids, corrosive bases, dry cell batteries, antifreeze and motor oil;
 - 110 gallons of flammable solids and mercury
 - 61 cubic yard boxes of aerosols and flammable liquids
 - 31,284 linear feet of fluorescent light bulbs
 - 12,000 gallons of latex paint (remixed and distributed for use by local non-profits.
- As a result of the Pedals for Progress collection, 28 intact bikes and 9 sewing machines were donated, and Martha personally delivered them to the Pedal for Progress home office in Massachusetts, again at her own expense.
- As a result of Martha’s contributions to our annual Earth Festival, approximately 1,500 local youth and other area residents have become familiar with important environmental concepts, what local resources may be turned to for environmental protection, and what environmental programs are currently in place in our county. Due to Martha’s initiative to collect Styrofoam for recycling, 500 cubic feet of this material was recycled.
- Due to Martha’s leadership, the two major municipalities in our county – Oneonta and Cooperstown – have joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.
- In its first-year effort, “Bike to Work Day” registered 129 participants in the Village of Cooperstown.
- Tri-organizational energy audit - If all the recommended items are implemented at a cost of \$6,405, the total savings will be \$1,509 per year, translating into an overall payback in just over four years.

Martha’s activities reflect an innovative and unique approach to meeting community needs in that she is always thinking outside the box and drawing on resources, available but not immediately apparent, to meet community needs. Examples of this include research and

design of “bee-proof” and “trash-proof” recycling bins for the Village of Cooperstown, organizing demonstrations by an innovative recycling company which bales agricultural plastics on the farm site, procuring grant monies to enable a fuel company to make biodiesel fuel available locally, and making a logical argument that a 70-minute bike ride to work saves time, money, and energy. Where others see no action to be taken or no issue to be addressed, Martha takes action and enlightens, as she has done with library book recycling efforts, outdoor burning issues, light pollution concerns, carpooling opportunities, and battery recycling. To summarize, Martha Clarvoe leads by example and makes people think positively about their roles as stewards of our environment. Her activism encourages them to become more conscientious citizens and neighbors.