

Floral laurels: Southampton woman among Heroines

By CATHERINE BAUM Staff Writer

[Originally published on Wednesday, May 14, 2008]

SOUTHAMPTON - The creator of floral arrangements in Conant Park and on the Route 10 bridge will be recognized for her work today.

Teresa Barton, 66, is one of nearly 300 Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts who will be honored at the fifth annual Unsung Heroine Celebration at the Statehouse this afternoon. The event, hosted by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, recognizes women who quietly make their communities and the commonwealth better places.

A town beautification volunteer for about seven years, Barton has planted wave petunias, sweet potato vines, zinnias, blue salvias, profusion zinnias, marigolds and more in Conant Park, around the pavilion near the Edwards Public Library and on the Route 10 bridge. With no town funding available, Barton started the project by mailing requests for contributions to townspeople. She did the work on her own for the first three years. Today four volunteers help.

Barton, who co-chairs the Southampton Women's Club and is secretary of the Southampton Historical Society, is the second Unsung Heroine recipient from Southampton. Last year selectmen nominated Virginia Ahart, who suggested Barton for this year's honor. "I had thought of her last year when I was there and hearing what all of the women have done," Ahart said. "I said to my husband, 'Terry would be great for this.'"

Speakers at today's celebration include Senate President Therese Murray, House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi and Attorney General Martha Coakley, who will deliver the keynote address. Booklets naming the nominees and reasons for their nominations will be distributed at the event.

"It was great to be honored and it was humbling to hear what the others were doing - it was a really uplifting day," Ahart said of last year's event.

A Southampton resident for 12 years, Barton expanded her project last summer to include baskets of flowers on the bridge over the Manhan River on Route 10 near Sheldon's Ice Cream.

"You see not just a few marigolds but an array of flowers," Ahart said. "To keep them nice all summer is a challenge - it's a real job and she just does it."

Barton knows about plants from experience in her own yard, according to her husband, Henry Barton. "She's made a big improvement in our yard," he said. "I encourage her because there's less lawn that I have to mow."

Barton will go to Boston with her husband for the ceremony today.

"I'm thrilled and proud," Barton said about his wife's honor.

Catherine Baum can be reached at cbaum@gazettenet.com.