

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Jan Devereaux

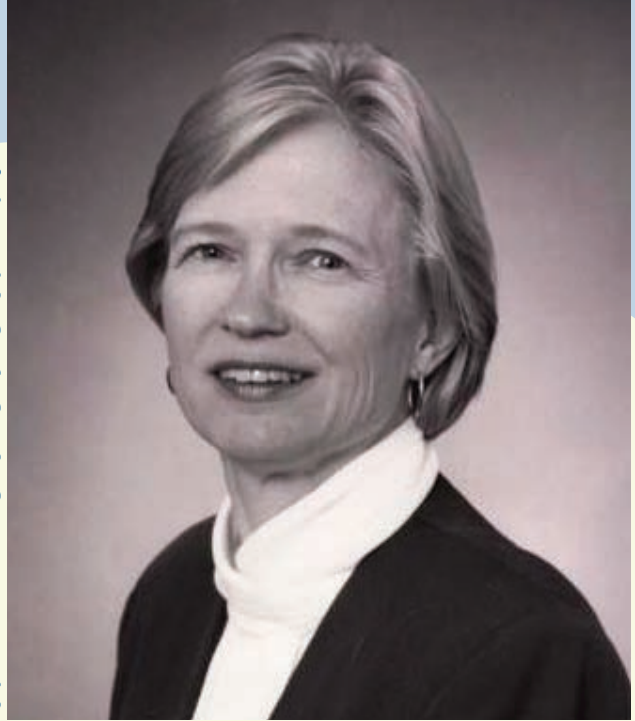


Photo courtesy of Jan Devereaux

Jan Devereaux will be nominated as an Honorary Life Trustee at the Cleveland Restoration Society's Community Luncheon on November 23, 2010. Chair of the Board of Trustees, Joe Marinucci, commended Jan to this honorific position based upon her many years of outstanding leadership and service to the organization. Under her tenure as president, she undertook a planning process akin to a strategic plan, which convened dozens of preservation stakeholders. Over the course of several months, at several meetings, vibrant discussions developed on the topic of ensuring the relevancy of Cleveland Restoration Society's work in the community. The resulting action plan remains cogent today. She represents the best of trusteeship through her steadfast involvement and determination to strengthen communities in northeastern Ohio through historic preservation strategies. The Cleveland Restoration Society salutes Jan Devereaux as an exemplary trustee and is, indeed, honored by her long-term dedication to the advancement of our mission.

**Why do you volunteer for the Cleveland Restoration Society?** Because I support the mission and enjoy working with the people involved with CRS – both staff and volunteers. I believe in the value of place and the importance of community. CRS works to enhance and maintain the sense of place – so you know whether you are on East Boulevard or Fairmont Boulevard; in Tremont, Ohio City, or Little Italy; in Willoughby, Lakewood, or Chagrin Falls. A belief in the importance of community and a belief in the people who live in that community and what they can achieve by working together are key to a sense of place.

Good architecture and good design make a better place and CRS works to maintain good architecture and design. In older cities like Cleveland maintaining a sense of place means community revitalization, and CRS is definitely about that.

**Do you volunteer with other groups in the community and, if so, are their missions similar in purpose to CRS?** I work with several groups that have overlapping missions. What I have done for the last thirty years of my life is a natural outgrowth of earlier interests – a college major and a master's degree in history; an interest in how groups, communities, and cities get things done; and a love of working with people.

In addition to working with CRS, which I have done for more than fifteen years, I serve on the Shaker Heights Landmarks Commission, whose goal is to help people appreciate and take care of the very special housing stock and built environment that is Shaker Heights. Another Shaker group I am involved in is the Fund for the Future of Shaker Heights, which works to enhance the attractiveness, stability, and integrated character of neighborhoods in Shaker by using grants for housing improvements. Several years ago I was elected to the board of the Ohio Historical Society, a statewide nonprofit with a significant role in community

revitalization and economic development via its Ohio Historic Preservation Office. It is a major player in state tourism, too, through ownership, management, and partnership agreements with state historic sites. OHS is also involved with history education through well known programs like National History Day and its growing history website.

**Do you have a favorite CRS memory?** CRS was instrumental in getting the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the nation's largest and incredibly dynamic and effective preservation organization, to hold its 2002 conference in Cleveland. It was exciting to be involved in planning for that conference and thrilling to see visitors' over-the-top reactions to Cleveland.

**What do you consider major CRS accomplishments?** One that we don't think of enough is the role CRS, and specifically its president Kathleen Crowther, played in creating a network of state and local partners in historic preservation – adding to the effectiveness of preservation organizations across the country. Kathleen advocated for and then chaired the State and Local Partners program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She was instrumental as the program defined its scope, laid out its goals, and began to operate.

The Restoration Society's regional growth also deserves mention. CRS started as the Downtown Preservation Society – focused on helping Cleveland save key buildings threatened with demolition. It then began to work in other parts of the city – where loss of population and decline in income threatened the viability of quality homes. Next was suburban Cleveland, especially first ring suburbs but also other communities concerned about aging housing stock. CRS is now beginning to work in outlying counties and plans expansion eventually to all of Northeast Ohio.

**What do you consider the biggest challenges for CRS in the next five years?** CRS has been resourceful, even entrepreneurial, in creating programs and finding the ways and means to get them implemented. That has been its history. The economic downturn we are now in is long-term, and the housing sector has been especially hard hit. We seem to have turned the corner but a full recovery could take years. CRS has been extremely prudent – has done a lot to control costs - and is finding new ways to serve communities beyond its bread and butter loan program. The organization is on the right track, to stretch and reinvent itself as retired Nordson Corporation CEO Bill Madar challenged us when he led our strategic planning process three or four years ago. CRS must find ways to fulfill its mission that are effective for the region and productive for the organization in this economic climate.

Are there new ways to intervene in the housing crisis? What can we do to ensure that greater use of demolition to address an increased number of abandoned homes doesn't mean the tragic loss of quality housing? Are there cost effective ways to more profoundly influence public opinion on important preservation issues?

The challenges are many but the people resources at CRS are great. And Cleveland needs the continued good work of the Cleveland Restoration Society. ♦