



*Sheila Clarke*

## *VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT*

### *Champions Among us*

In June of 2006, Sheila Clarke went to the inaugural meeting of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) meeting – where she was elected Secretary; initially Sheila came to this committee with “beautification” in mind; more than anything, she wanted flower boxes or hangers in the Downtown. Four



and a half years later and many, many hours of volunteer time behind her she is still on a quest for those hanging flower baskets – but now she has raised the money and has the know-how to make this happen.

“From the get-go, there was no doubt in my mind that Sheila had the energy and the enthusiasm to make things happen”, said Meghan Young-Tafoya, current Chair of the EDC. “Both of us were novices to the procedures of local government, but I could tell she was a quick study and that she really wanted to jump in and create some vibrancy in our Downtown.”

Flash forward to early January 2009, when Michele Williams, a fellow member of the EDC, and Sheila attended a meeting with Pete Hechenbléikner (Town Manager) and Steve Goldy (Selectman) to talk about putting together a small Oktoberfest in the Downtown area – near the train station – to celebrate the Downtown Improvement project and acknowledge the downtown merchants who had soldiered through the construction. After the meeting, they reported back to the EDC that this “small Oktoberfest” had now turned into a Downtown celebration stretching from Main Street down Haven Street and somewhere in this conversation they had both agreed to be Chairs of the Oktoberfest – which eventually became the first ever Reading Fall Street Faire. “She always has a vision and implements her ideas as evidenced by initiating and running the Fall Street Faire for the past two years,” said Michele. “Sheila has the incredible ability of juggling numerous balls in the air. The Fall Street Faire is a ton of work and Sheila not only expanded it from 2009 when we co-chaired the Faire, but took on the role of Chair in 2010 and never flinched. She devotes 6 months of her time to the Fall Street Faire.”

The hard work and effort that Sheila put into spearheading the Reading Fall Street Faire pays off in so many ways; on the day itself town residents enjoy the day, businesses enjoy the exposure, and visitors including our Governor and State Representatives get to see Reading at its best. And, the proceeds of the Faire are put right back into the Downtown – which this year, just might include those hanging flower baskets.

*Contributed by Rec. Magazine Correspondent Meghan Tafoya*