

Board Member Profile: Bette Daniele

Bette Daniele has served on the Board of the New Jersey Cultural Trust since 2006, and she currently serves as Board Chair. In this Q&A for Women's History Month 2024, she shares her love of community, service, and the incredible women of New Jersey.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Tell us a bit about yourself!

But for my four years of college, I have lived in the Metuchen area in Middlesex County all my life. My husband and I just downsized, and wound up buying the house next to the one where I grew up.



After graduating from the College of William and Mary in Virginia and passing the Certified Public Accountant exam, I spent 20 years working at KPMG, 15 of those as a senior manager in the Tax Department. For the last 17 years, I have worked part-time for the state in the offices of several legislators.

Meanwhile, my volunteer work spans everything from the PTA to the Cultural Trust. I have served on the Edison Zoning Board, the Edison Library Board, and the Board of the Edison Memorial Tower. I have volunteered with the Guardian

Monitoring Program for the Middlesex County Surrogate's Office, an activity that I plan to return to. I have served on the Board of the Metuchen Borough Improvement League (past treasurer), and I am also a member of Book Back Talk and the Quiet Hour Club of Metuchen (past president).

What excites you about serving on the Cultural Trust Board?

I love the passion our Board members have for the state and its cultural institutions. The past year has been a revelation—the enthusiasm of the new members has lit a fire under the old.

With interest rates high, it is so exciting to have more grant money to give! I love reading about the projects and knowing we are making a difference. As I said in one meeting: there is often a lot of enthusiasm for supporting a new exhibit, but it's harder to find funding for a new roof. Well, that is what the Trust does. We help provide the physical and institutional infrastructure that underpins the essential programs of cultural organizations.

Are there particular women in NJ history who inspire you?

Unsung heroes! I belong to the Quiet Hour Club of Metuchen, a women's study group that has been going strong since 1895. Our group of about 20 women selects a theme each year, and every member then writes a 20-minute-long researched paper on a related topic for presentation at a meeting.

When I joined in 1996, I was 41. A friend joked that the average age of the Club decreased to 80 with my joining.

But from the very start, I was inspired and awed by these ladies. There are teachers, artists, doctors, research scientists, librarians, and even a cruciverbalist who designed crossword puzzles for the *New York Times*. Smart, witty, and inquisitive, these ladies had never lost their passion for learning. Imagine an 80 year old giving a paper on the Spanish flu, and its effects on Perth Amboy, NJ, complete with a slide show of archived pictures and newspaper clippings. They were, and are, my inspiration.