A strong legacy is like a family quilt with new pieces added generation after generation. It starts with a passion or a hobby or an interest, and over time, it evolves into something almost inherited - a love for something that has woven its way into a family’s genes. It was out of this love that the Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH) was founded and thrives today.

DCH’s co-founder Helen Ayers Detchon lived a life that legacies are built on. She not only cultivated and passed along her family’s passion for gardening but also created a robust vehicle to help people discover their own unfounded passion for plants. Born in 1924, Helen was introduced to gardening and its captivating ways from a very young age, inspired by her own mother’s love of gardening and her cultivated rose garden. Helen, also an avid gardener like her mother and sister, recognized the need for public greening and public horticultural education efforts here in Delaware. Modeling their organization off the example set by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Helen and co-founder Emily du Pont established DCH in 1977, giving public horticulture a foothold in Wilmington. From their efforts sprung projects focused on bringing plants and plant education (and their myriad benefits) to people and places throughout Delaware.

But it wasn’t just Delaware that benefitted from her tenacious passion for plants and gardening. While engaged in ways to grow DCH and its influence, Helen also actively recruited her son Hank Davis to get involved in her passion for plants and horticulture. At the urging of his mother, Hank, fresh out of college, got involved with DCH’s first Rare Plant Auction® by moving plants behind the scenes of the inaugural fundraiser. Hank was a consummate figure at the auctions and started to develop his own love of gardening and plants, thanks to his mother.

With Helen’s passing in 1991, Hank’s involvement in RPA® and DCH increased. “She helped me develop a love of plants, which translated into an education and career in horticulture. Everybody at DCH knew me because of my mom, which was an honor,” said Hank. Currently serving a 2-year term as Board Past President, Hank continues the legacy and tradition of his family’s dedication to gardening and public horticultural education.

As co-founder, Helen established and was one of the first voices in Delaware to advocate and support a mission to inspire individuals and communities through the power of plants. DCH distinguishes her and her lasting legacy of philanthropy through our planned giving program named in her honor.

By becoming a member of the Helen Detchon Society, you support the longevity and impact of programs created and implemented by the Delaware Center for Horticulture. Your contributions also continue the legacy established by early advocates of public greening, like Helen, for the benefit of generations to come.

For more information or to get involved, please contact DCH Director of Advance ment Marcia Stephenson at mstephenson@thedch.org.