

# SUSTAINABILITY HEROES

## November 2018



### Tara and Timothy Kenyon

Co-Chairs, Sustainable Manville (Somerset County)

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Tara and Tim Kenyon are the co-chairs of Sustainable Manville. Thanks to their coordination efforts, Manville Borough has achieved 2018 Sustainable Jersey certification after two years of hard work.

Tara is an environmental planner and Tim is an environmental economist. Together, they juggle planet-friendly professions while raising a family and making time to volunteer in the community they love. As a leadership team, they possess the right mix of compassion, smarts and tenaciousness. Tara and Tim are exemplary sustainability change agents that are making a difference in New Jersey.

**Sustainable Jersey Certified:** In 2016, Manville Borough Administrator Andrea Bierwirth Wardrop created the green team that is now called [Sustainable Manville](#). She made achieving Sustainable Jersey certification a priority for the borough. Manville Borough has a small staff, so she reached out to volunteers to help with the certification. Tim was recruited first and Tara joined later. Now, the green team is an active group of twenty people from diverse backgrounds including environmental planning, IT, education, the arts and more. Tim said, "Sustainable Manville is fortunate to have the dedicated support of the mayor and the borough administrator, both of whom attend meetings and events, work information tables and provide guidance and feedback to our members."



Sustainable Manville has accomplished a lot in a short time. Tara and Tim credit this success to the participation of the dedicated, talented green team members and community groups. Tara explained, "When we first started out, we looked at all of the Sustainable Jersey action areas and tried to find people in the community that fit the part. By finding these connections and partnerships we were able to do more."

Three women were instrumental in the work including Andrea Bierwirth Wardrop, the Manville Borough Administrator; Nanette Peterson, Director of the Manville Library; and Elizabeth Schuster, Environmental Economist with The Nature Conservancy. Sustainable Manville partners with the Manville Public Library, [The Nature Conservancy](#), [The Watershed Institute](#), [Somerset County Library System NJ](#), [Duke Farms](#), [Manville Arts Council](#), Raritan Valley Community College, ABIS Environmental Club, Manville Shade Tree Commission, [Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#) and many more organizations. Currently, they are building relationships with the Boy/Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and clients of the local Senior Center to address underserved populations.



Sustainable Manville has provided demonstrations at the Annual Manville Community Day, installed a rain garden, designed the Lost Valley Nature Park, conducted a rain barrel contest and much more. Tim said, “Sustainable Manville worked hard to get certified. We have been meeting at least bi-monthly over the last twelve months, and in many cases more often.” Manville also received a \$2,000 grant in the 2018 Sustainable Jersey grant cycle funded by the PSEG Foundation to support their green team initiatives. For more info, visit the [Sustainable Manville Facebook page](#) and you can review the [2018 Borough of Manville Certification Report](#) for a full overview of all the actions completed.



**Community Asset Mapping:** The first Sustainable Jersey action that Sustainable Manville set out to accomplish was [Community Asset Mapping](#). Asset mapping is a participatory process used in community planning that allows local decision makers and residents to focus on what is positive about a community as a base for development. To gather data for the asset maps, they used focus groups and then filled in the gaps with interviews and a desktop analysis. A total of eighty Manville residents and decision makers participated in the focus group meetings hosted by the Manville Public Library. Assets were grouped in four categories: physical, economic, community and natural. This analysis also identified gaps in these areas, which provided a foundation for future projects. The [Manville Community Asset Mapping Report](#) was prepared with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, the Manville Public Library and the Administration of the Borough of Manville.

**Lost Valley Nature Park:** The Borough of Manville is within the Raritan River Watershed. Manville’s location among three rivers—the Raritan River, Millstone River and Royce Brook—has exacerbated issues of flooding, particularly since Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Many homes have been bought out through the State Blue Acres program, where structures are removed and returned to open space. Many of the buyout properties in Manville are in the Lost Valley section of town with a couple dozen parcels immediately adjacent to the Lost Valley Nature Park that allowed the Borough to expand the size of the park.



Tara said, “In a town where flooding is a major threat, the mitigation of stormwater and conservation of water resources is important. We focused on doing projects that address these issues.” Sustainable Manville partnered with The Nature Conservancy, Rutgers University, Raritan Valley Community College and Somerset County in creating a well-respected riverine conceptual plan for the Millstone River called The Lost Valley Nature Park Conceptual Plan. The plan incorporates feedback from eighty residents received through focus group meetings. The completed park will include a range of features such as hiking trails, two boat ramps, native pollinator meadows, newly planted trees and green infrastructure for stormwater management. It will also connect to the county greenway. Next steps are to finalize site assessment and complete a recreation master plan



**Rain Gardens and Rain Barrels:** Manville Borough, in partnership with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE), installed a rain garden at the Manville Public Library. With educational signage in place, the rain garden is a model to visitors of the library and the public-at-large.

Manville Borough partnered with the NJ Water Supply Authority to sponsor a rain barrel rebate program. Property owners with properly installed rain barrels were eligible to receive rebates of up to \$200. New Jersey Water Supply Authority also donated rain barrels for placement at municipal facilities. Sustainable Manville held a rain barrel design contest for residents and local organizations to engage the public, mitigate stormwater and conserve water resources. Rain barrels also provide an aesthetically-pleasing addition to the Borough. Seven designs were chosen from a variety of groups including Manville students, environmental clubs and municipal employees. Manville also partnered with The Watershed Institute and Americorps to host a rain barrel workshop where residents made their own rain barrels.



**Education and Experience:** After receiving a degree in Agricultural and Environmental Economics from Rutgers University and serving as a graduate fellow at Rutgers University - Eagleton Institute of Politics, Tim went to work as a vice president at GfK Consumer Life, a premier syndicated consumer trends practice. Tim led the design and launch of GfK's Green Gauge Global research study, a study of global environmental attitudes and behaviors. Drawing on 25,000-plus interviews with consumers from twenty-five countries, the study provides consumer level insight and foresight into environmental attitudes and behaviors. Tim said, "The study has helped me in my work with Sustainable Manville, I take time to understand what motivates people toward environmental action and link this to why they should care about what we are trying to do." He is an expert in consumer-driven sustainability; he is cited in the national media, has written articles and presented at many sustainability focused conferences.

Tara has a B.S. in Environmental Planning and Design from Rutgers University. She is a licensed Professional Planner in the State of New Jersey, as accredited by the American Institute of Certified Planners, with over ten years of experience in this unique field. She spent over eleven years as a principal planner for the Somerset County Planning Division where she administered several programs including the Somerset County Farmland Preservation Program. Tara served as the coordinator for the Sustainable Jersey Somerset County Green Leadership Hub. In 2018, Tara founded Kenyon Planning, a company that provides professional planning services related to preservation, stewardship, recreation, tourism, sustainability and natural resource conservation to private landowners, municipalities, counties, government agencies, non-profit entities and special interest groups.

**What You May Not Know About Tara and Tim:** Tara and Tim grew up about forty-five miles away from each other in New Jersey. Tara is from Brick Township and Tim lived in Metuchen. Their paths met at Rutgers University where Tim said he knew instantly that Tara was the one. He asked her out near Blake Hall in front of Passion Puddle. After a few in-depth discussions at Ale N' 'Wich, the local pub on Hamilton Street, Tara was in, and the rest is history.

Tara and Tim have lived in Manville Borough since 2007. They have two children; their son Owen is eight years old and their daughter Reese is six years old. Both kids are following in their parents' footsteps as planet protectors and Reese was just accepted in the Earth Watchers Environmental Club at her school. Tim and Tara played soccer growing up and now coach their son's soccer team. They have a black lab named George Washington-the kids were studying the first president when they got the dog from the animal shelter. Free time is spent on the soccer field and participating in cheerleading and swimming. Tara and Tim are now working on starting the environmental club at Roosevelt Elementary School. Tara first became interested in sustainability after she volunteered at the Cooper Environmental Center in Toms River with her High School Environmental Club. Tara explained, "It is important to us that we leave a healthy planet for our children. Sustainability is not extra, it is just a necessary part of everything we do."

