

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

October 2021



Stephen Fiedler

Chair, Galloway Township Environmental Commission
Secretary, Go Green Galloway (Atlantic County)

Stephen Fiedler is a founding member of [Go Green Galloway](#), the chair of the [Galloway Township Environmental Commission](#) and a member of the [Atlantic-Cape May Sustainable Jersey Hub](#). Born and raised in Atlantic County, Steve started his first recycling campaign at age ten; fast forward six decades later and Steve is still going strong. Last month, he released the film *Friends Along the Mullica*, which is a standout example of regional cooperation and environmental stewardship.

As a businessowner, journalist, drummer, father, husband, recycling advocate, history buff, kayaker, scrabble fanatic and environmentalist, it is hard to pin Steve to one role. His tenacious drive and competence in many issue areas has served his community well. Just as a band is only as good as its drummer, Steve is a leader who provides a steady beat to successfully advance sustainability efforts in New Jersey.

Steve is a member of the Atlantic County Parks and Environment Advisory Board and the Galloway Township Planning Board. He is one of four co-chairs of the [South East Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey](#) and serves as the secretary for the [Galloway Township Historical Society](#). As a journalist, he has published over 200 articles, educating readers about sustainability issues and leading them to consider the actions they can take to be green. Steve said, "Like Sustainable Jersey, I see sustainability as a factor in every issue."

Friends Along the Mullica Documentary: The Mullica River is a 50.6-mile-long river that acts as one of the principal drainages of the extensive Pinelands region, carrying water into the Atlantic Ocean. In August 2021, the 84-minute educational film, *Friends Along the Mullica*, was released. The visually beautiful film, with views from a kayak on the water to aerials from high above the river, demonstrates the importance of the Mullica River Watershed as told through the stories of people living along the river.



Steve conceived and coordinated the project, which was developed with a consortium of eight towns along the Atlantic County side of the Mullica River: Hammonton, Mullica Township, Egg Harbor City, Port Republic, Galloway Township, Absecon, Brigantine and Atlantic City. Supported by a grant from Sustainable Jersey funded by the PSEG Foundation, the film communicates the importance of connectivity between upstream and downstream communities. Common interests explored include history, wetlands issues, climate change, litter, illegal dumping, off-road vehicle damage, native plant and animal awareness, storm and wastewater management, loss of habitats and more.

Partner organizations for the project include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve, Surfrider Foundation, New Jersey Department of

Environmental Protection, the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, Rutgers University Marine Field Station, the AmeriCorps program, Stockton University, the New Jersey Native Plant Society, the Audubon Society, Atlantic County Clean Communities program, the Atlantic County Utilities Authority and many more. View and share the film: [Friends Along the Mullica](#). Read the brochure: [Protecting Our Mullica](#).

Sustainable Jersey Silver-Certified: Certified with Sustainable Jersey since 2009, Galloway Township has maintained certification at the silver-level since 2010. The township received the Sustainable Jersey Leadership Award in 2013 and the [Creativity Award](#) in 2010. The Galloway Township Office of Sustainability partners with residents, businesses, non-profits, community leaders, local governments and Go Green Galloway. Steve said, "The Sustainable Jersey framework provides a vision of a healthier and more equitable future for our communities, families and friends. For over ten years, here in Galloway Township, the sustained strivings, occasional failings and sweet successes have helped to define our paths as individuals, as team members and as community leaders." For more information, read the [2019 Galloway Township Certification Report](#) and visit the Go Green Galloway [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



Galloway Township Community Garden: The Galloway Township Community Garden opened over ten years ago. Located at the Main Municipal Complex beside the Atlantic County Library Branch, the project has had consistent and reliable community partnerships and dedicated gardeners. It is maintained by gardeners, the Office of Sustainability and Go Green Galloway. There are 24 ground beds and six ADA-accessible raised beds made out of recycled plastic lumber, which are available for rent each year. Garden amenities include a large pollinator bed, a shade structure, a wheelchair-accessible picnic table, a community "sharing shelf" and bulletin board, composters, rain barrels, running water, a community tool shed, salt hay and fresh [Atlantic County Utilities Authority Eco-Soil](#). Steve said, "I have learned a lot about gardening and native plants. Everything from organic gardening and pest control methods, to composting food waste, conserving water with rain barrels, planting natives for pollinators and creating wildlife habitat."



Galloway Township Green Roof: Galloway Township's Green Roof Project is a small-scale example of a living green roof. Located on top of the shade structure at the community garden, the project facilitated a community partnership between Galloway Township, the Agricultural Department at Stockton University (Galloway Campus) and Go Green Galloway. Stockton University grew the plants from seed in GreenGrid modules at the school's lab and farm facilities. Galloway Township and Go Green Galloway then installed the planted modules on the roof of the shade structure at the community garden. The costs were offset by a Sustainable Jersey grant funded by the PSEG Foundation. Steve said, "The initial impact of the grant is our shared pride in the project and the optimism that comes from seeing a green initiative realized." Melanie Lynch, the Galloway Township Chief Sustainability Officer further explained, "The demonstration will highlight the benefits of this rooftop technology, including: the aesthetics of the growing plants, the sequestration of stormwater runoff, the potential cooling and insulating effect on the structure, its contribution toward better air and water quality, its potential to maximize the energy efficiency of buildings and the life extension of roofing materials."



Galloway Township Rain Garden: To correct a drainage problem, a rain garden was added to the west side parking lot of the Galloway Township Municipal Complex. This location is perfect, as it is highly visible to community members. Before the project, the parking area was constantly flooding when it rained. Galloway Township partnered with two Stockton University professors, Patrick Hossay and Tait Chirenje, and some of their students. Steve said, "The completed rain garden has successfully captured and drained the parking lot runoff. Even after a few days of heavy rain, the site only

takes a short time to drain. Our Go Green Galloway volunteers and the Office of Sustainability maintains and adjusts the plantings to see what works best.” To inspire residential rain gardens, a guide was created: [Galloway Township Rain Garden Guide](#).

Reduce Reuse Inspire! In 2020, Go Green Galloway developed and funded a new project called: Reduce Reuse Inspire! The campaign’s goal is to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics in the community. A successful poster contest was held and over 400 students submitted posters. The winning poster design was printed on the reusable bags distributed by Go Green Galloway. The project, supported by a \$20,000 Sustainable Jersey grant funded by the PSEG Foundation, will also integrate plastics education into the school curriculum. The team will be sponsoring a video contest in the middle and high schools. The goal is to provide a short message to prepare the community for the upcoming [New Jersey Plastic Pollution Reduction Act](#). Lectures and film showings on plastics issues are planned and three outdoor reusable water bottle refill stations will be installed as a result of this grant.



Go Green Galloway members also serve as liaisons to school green teams to help boost school recycling efforts. Steve said, “I am concerned by the lack of young people participating on green teams and with groups like the historical society. As the saying goes, ‘We are too soon old and too late smart.’ I am working to bridge this gap and get students involved in Go Green Galloway. We support an internship program to pique their interest in sustainability issues. It is rewarding when an intern returns as a young professional and is able to provide advice to improve our work with the municipality.”

Education and Career: Steve graduated with honors from Pleasantville High School. He attended Rutgers University in New Brunswick and Atlantic County Community College where he studied journalism and communication. For 45 years, Steve worked and eventually took over management of the family business, Kitchen Trends, later to become Fiedler Designs LLC. As a journalist, Steve has written for the Woodbury Times, The Press of Atlantic City, The Current, The Beachcomber News and other periodicals. Read his article on [community solar](#) and [geothermal](#) or review a longer list of titles [here](#).

March Storm of 1962: Living in a shore town, the climate crisis and resiliency planning are key issues for Steve. He was in middle school when the “March Storm” of 1962 pummeled the New Jersey coast. In Atlantic City, 50 mile-per-hour winds and over nine-foot tides led to unique flooding and damage that has not been experienced since. Most all of the barrier islands were breached from ocean to bay in one or more places. Steve has a vivid memory of walking with his father in waist-deep water on the Black Horse Pike after the storm to assess damage to the family’s custom kitchen business. “I will never forget the look on my dad’s face when we arrived at what had been his building and saw cabinets floating in the bay,” said Steve. “His building was destroyed but not his business or his spirit. It took time, but he dug right into renovating an old building, on high ground in Pleasantville, while still maintaining his crews and a full customer workload. I learned the value of hard work and the importance of being an active member of the local community from my father.”



More About Steve: Steve is married to fellow Sustainability Hero, [Barbara Fiedler](#). On their first date they sorted and collected recyclables together; Steve knew Barbara was the one. They will celebrate their 50th anniversary next June! Steve and Barbara work on projects together in addition to championing their own separate sustainability projects. They are very proud of their son, Eric, who is a successful journalist and grant writer/project manager. Steve is still an active drummer, or as he likes to say, a singer who drums. Barbara and Steve have been in many bands since high school but now enjoy playing with their bandmates and entertaining the fans of the [Package Goods Orchestra](#) (PGO) for almost 15 years. PGO’s music runs the gamut from folk, rock, country, swing, torch and R & B.

