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Carlstadt Green Team ready to showcase its first major events

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BY MICHAEL LAMENDOLA
MANAGING EDITOR

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Less than a year since its creation, the [Carlstadt Green Team](#) and its members are ready to hit the spring running with a slate of community events including a farmer's market and a green fair, both at the borough's new park on Broad Street, and the creation of a new community garden at Zimmermann Park on Sixth Street.

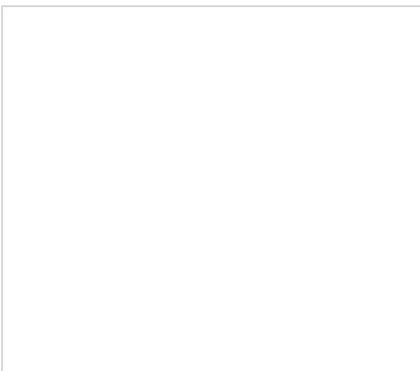
The Green Team sprouted last year when the borough council approved the creation of an environmental committee made up of three local residents, Melissa MacKenzie, Keri Crescenzi and Abby Verpeut. The committee soon evolved into a green team, as it was of point value to the borough's Sustainable Jersey status, where becoming certified opens a town up to greater grant opportunities and notifications on more resources, such as consulting and supplies that can become available to them.

"We have more interest from the community and have gotten a few new volunteers this past year," said Verpeut, who said since its inception, the team has been throwing around brainstorming ideas with entities such as the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, [Bergen County Utilities Authority](#) and



PHOTO COURTESY/KERI CRESCENZI

Carlstadt Green Team founders (l-r) Melissa MacKenzie, Keri Crescenzi and Abby Verpeut have a lot in store for the borough coming up in the next couple months. The team will host a fresh air market and green fair. The team is also set to break ground on a community garden at Zimmermann Park.



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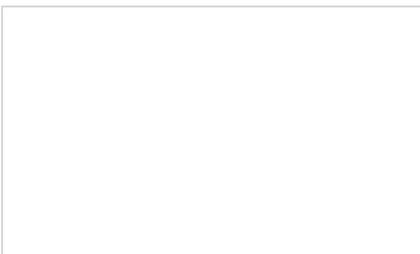
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Whole Foods, whose Green Mission program will send volunteers for some of the team's green initiatives. She said the team and borough have been collaborating on bolstering its Sustainable Jersey points as well, which should stand at 90 in the coming months as initiatives such as a Mayor's Wellness Campaign were passed by resolution and energy audits have been undertaken in borough-owned buildings. Sustainable Jersey certifies towns on the bronze level when they hit 150 points and certifies silver when they hit 350 points.

MacKenzie, who is spearheading the farmer's market, which she is dubbing a "fresh air market" and will take place on April 29 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., said she researched organic farmers and dairies in New Jersey and invited them, reached out to the Food Shed Alliance, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey and other small family farms in an effort to generate vendor support. Vendors will pay a \$25 fee to the Green Team's trust account to fund other projects and would have to meet at least one of the following criteria: organic or sustainable farming practices, be it a New Jersey farm, a local business, allergen-free bakery, specialty hand-crafted all natural products or preservative free foods.

"We are trying to set a standard for this market," said MacKenzie. "We are trying to set a standard for healthy living."

MacKenzie said they hope to run a market event in June, July, September and October and is trying to seek more dates for use of the park from the council, but admits it will be difficult with just volunteers. One thing she is not concerned about is farmer's market saturation in the area, something that led to the departure of some vendors from the Rutherford Farmer's Market last year. MacKenzie said the fresh air market will more than likely consist of farms and small businesses that sell specialty items and organic and sustainable products. She said consumers search far and wide for a place where those types of vendors are all congregated in one spot.

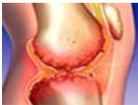
"It will offer healthy choices and open some eyes hopefully to better living and eating," said MacKenzie. "It will get people out and about in town and involved in the community. Hopefully some more people will want to become involved with our Green Team. The funds generated will help to fund our garden, and that will add some beauty to the town."

The garden is going to be located on a 10 by 40-foot plot set aside by the borough for the Green Team's use at Zimmermann Park last fall. Crescenzi is heading up that effort and said the area, all well-manicured, doesn't require much work to begin planting this spring. With little funding from the Green Team itself, she's looking for volunteers and community groups to sponsor beds in the garden, which would be responsible for maintaining that particular section. She said the team is currently setting up bylaws as a template for how it will run and to establish some general rules. Either way, Crescenzi said anyone can come down to help weed, water and help in anyway they can.

"It will give people a place to come together and enjoy gardening or just being outside," said Crescenzi. "I think it could be a huge benefit to the senior citizens who will soon be living across the street. The Girl Scouts are looking for projects and this will serve that purpose. I would like to have lectures and use it as a teaching garden, as I teach environmental science. I would also like to connect it with the arts by having local artists or children make signs and possibly a mural."



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On May 12, the new park on Broad Street will host a green fair from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., an effort Verpeut is getting off the ground. She said the event will be a far departure from the one-table booth the then environmental committee set up at the [Carlstadt School Picnic](#) last year.

"The atmosphere will be fun and educational—demonstrations, speakers, activities and hopefully live music," said Verpeut. "Some local residents who already do sustainable things are going to show and tell. We will have an environmental film playing during the last part. The park is big so there will be plenty of spots if people want to bring blankets and enjoy the day."

Verpeut said locally, she has already gained support from the Girl Scouts who will have a table about sustainable gardening and a senior club that wants a table with natural unprocessed baked goods to sell for charity. She's trying to solicit support from other vendors having either local or earth friendly items to sell and is seeking local musicians interested in coming out to perform throughout the day.

"In a lot of ways, the fair is the community. If people are interested, it will be a success," said Verpeut.

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