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Cranford Environmental Commission outlines accomplishments of 2011

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By **Cranford Chronicle**
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CRANFORD — The Cranford Environmental Commission recently released its Annual Report for 2011.

Nelson Dittmar, chair of the commission, says, "We are very proud of our accomplishments this year, believing that, in a small way, they have enhanced the quality of life and the environment in Cranford. We are very grateful for the support of the Township Committee, in particular our liaison, Ed O'Malley."

The principal projects in 2011 were the Green Business program, the Anti-idling campaign, the commission's web site My Green Cranford, and the Clean Energy Program.

Cranford was certified as a Sustainable Community in 2010 by Sustainable Jersey, a statewide program that encourages communities that want to go green to pursue local initiatives and actions that will control costs and save money. Over 350 communities in New Jersey have registered for the program, of which 96 have been certified.

Working with The Green Team, the commission continued some of these programs, including the Green Business recognition program, which recognizes businesses for taking actions that benefit the environment while being economically beneficial. Twenty businesses were certified as being green and received certificates of recognition from the mayor. The commission also offered to residents plots in the Community Gardens at Walnut Avenue School.

The commission submitted a letter of comment to the state Department of Environmental Protection on Dec. 21 concerning an application for a flood hazard area permit by the Hekemian Group to construct apartments and a parking garage on Birchwood Avenue.

To raise resident awareness about New Jersey's vehicle anti-idling law and the health dangers of idling, the commission purchased 52 signs urging residents to turn off their vehicle engines when standing. The signs were placed around town, including at all schools.

Mygreencranford.com serves as a resource guide for residents for issues relating to the environment, energy-savings ideas, and environmental events. There is a resource page with links

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to helpful green web sites. Visitors have the option to sign up for the e-mail newsletter, which offers monthly tips and news.

The Clean Energy Program encourages residents to take actions to save energy such as switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs and purchasing Energy Star qualified products. During the year, residents took the Change the World, Start with Energy Star pledge at energystarcranford.2ya.com.

As part of the Sustainable Jersey program, the commission obtained a grant for an energy audit of the Community Center in 2010. During the year, one of the recommendations of the audit report to install light and motion sensors in the hallways and meeting rooms was implemented.

The commission met with the superintendent of schools and representatives of the school system to discuss the goal of town-wide composting. As a result, 12 55-gallon composters were built and placed at the schools. Students are learning about the appropriate kitchen waste to compost.

This autumn the commission urged residents again to forgo the use of powered leaf blowers and rake leaves on two designated Saturdays. The Rake for the Planet program was endorsed in a resolution by the Township Committee.

In conclusion, Dittmar noted, "I am looking forward to continuing many of these programs in 2011 and starting new ones. We make presentations to community groups about the Clean Energy Program and energy-saving ideas. Anyone interested in these presentations or who wishes to join the commission can send an e-mail message to me at candndittmar@cs.com or come to our next meeting on February 6 at 7:30 at the Community Center. To read the Annual Report, please visit our web site at www.mygreencranford.com."

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