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# Park Ridge Green Team 'brings home the Bronze'

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Information contained in this article was provided by James McDermott, a member of the [Park Ridge Green Team](#), and the [Park Ridge School District](#).

The [Park Ridge Green Team](#) Committee has seen its hard work over the past 18 months come to fruition. This group of volunteers has been promoting community recycling, working with the district's schools on recycling programs and striving for the first tier of certification in the state's Sustainable Jersey program.

## Schools earn grants

Recently, the [Bergen County Utilities Authority](#) announced the winners of grants funded through its Environmental Awareness Challenge Grant program. Each three of the district's schools were awarded \$1,000 grants. Green Team members Barbara Coleman, and Vince Lemba, who is also a custodian at West Ridge Elementary School, worked with the district to develop a recycling program, including a detailed list of materials needed to launch it in each school and then submitted the grant applications.

Now that the grants have been awarded, district administrators and members of the Green Team are



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHRYN A. BURGER

Members of the Park Ridge Green Team Committee made a presentation at a mayor and council meeting late last year, announcing that they had achieved bronze status with Sustainable Jersey, a nonprofit organization that promotes recycling, energy conservation and other environmentally beneficial initiatives. Pictured from left front row are then-Mayor Donald Ruschman, James McDermott, a member of the Green Team; Barbara Coleman, chairman; Roseanne Crisafi, secretary; and Danielle Cawood, co-chairman. Back row, from left, are Councilman Steve Hopper;

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establishing protocols for recycling efforts at the schools.

Green Team members George Bottinor, Betsy Thomason and Vincent Lemba; and Terence Maguire, then-council president.

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**State certification**

The Green Team also reached a milestone, earning the Sustainable Jersey bronze certification. Founded in 2009, Sustainable Jersey is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports community efforts to reduce waste, cut greenhouse gas emissions and improve the environment.

To become Sustainable Jersey-certified, municipalities must submit documentation that verifies the completion of the required sustainability actions, meeting a minimum of 150 action points to be certified at the bronze level. In addition, municipalities must create a Green Team and select at least two of seven priority action options. [Park Ridge](#) completed three of the seven by conducting an energy audit for Borough Hall; a municipal fleet inventory, and registering all municipal buildings with the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, the Environmental Protection Agency's online interactive energy management tool that allows municipalities to track and assess energy and water consumption in their buildings.

Green Team members attended a mayor and council meeting late last year, and announced the certification and presented a plaque from Sustainable Jersey verifying the certification. In accepting the award, Mayor Donald Ruschman praised the group for its efforts on behalf of the borough. "I am proud of this accomplishment for our community and appreciate the efforts of the Green Team volunteers," he said.

[Park Ridge](#) is one of 96 out of 354 registered municipalities to have attained certification. Currently, 62 percent of New Jersey's towns and cities have registered to become certified. Nearly 75 percent of New Jersey's population lives in registered/certified Sustainable Jersey communities.

**Goals and objectives**

The [Park Ridge](#) Green Team is currently planning community initiatives and programs and also discussing the goal of achieving the silver certification that requires the completion of additional priority action options. Those interested in volunteering for the Green Team or who would like to attend a meeting can contact the group at [greenteam@parkridgeboro.com](mailto:greenteam@parkridgeboro.com).

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