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### Andover Township kicks off winter market

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By JESSICA MASULLI REYES

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ANDOVER TWP. — The Green Team is looking to "create a local food buzz" with the first Andover Township mid-winter farmers' market Feb. 12.

Green Team member and market creator Eric Derby said the one-day market will help raise awareness about buying local, fresh food in Andover and Sussex County.

"We wanted to create an awareness campaign about the farmers' markets that exist in the area," Derby said.

The market at Hillside Park Barn will have 23 vendors mostly from Warren and Sussex counties. The vendors will sell cheese, meat, soap, breads, honey, raw fibers, garlic, cider, preserves and other seasonal goods.

The Green Team members hope that by starting this market, they will be on the path to achieving Sustainable Jersey certification for Andover Township. Sustainable Jersey is a certification program that gives New Jersey municipalities clear steps to take in order to become a leader in the sustainable community.

Only one Sussex County municipality, Sparta, has achieved the certification, but many others are registered and are aiming for it, according to the Sustainable Jersey website. 96 municipalities out of 566 in the state were certified.

The close-knit Andover Township Green Team was founded in the summer of 2011 with support from township officials and local interest. Since the beginning, Green Team leader Eric Olsen has wanted to gain Sustainable Jersey certification, but he explained that the process can take time. He said a municipality can gain points based on green activities and these points lead to certification levels. The township has performed some activities such as creating a Green Team, having an Environmental Commission, and hosting a farmers' market.

"Sparta has a really successful Green Team," Olsen said. "They are a good model for us."

Certification would make Andover Township eligible for grants and funding opportunities through the program. Olsen said the Green Team is now focusing on the new initiative — local food.

"This (farmers' market) is our kick-off for our contribution to the movement," he said.

Derby said this market will not only be good for buyers, but also for the farmers who often lose their income source in the winter.

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"It allows farmers to lengthen their season and sell what they have," he said. "We want to let people know that they can have a winter farmers' market to focus on local and organic as much as possible."

Rather than making this market weekly or full-year, Derby plans to provide information for Andover Township residents as to other nearby markets, such as the winter market in Newton or the summer market in Sparta.

"If you like these farmers, you can catch up with one of them at these farmers' markets in season," Derby said.

The market will include unique vendors that aren't always at a farmers' market, such as an alpaca fleece vendor and the Avian Wildlife Center bird exhibit. Live music will entertain and attendees will be able to sign up for workshops in food preservation and gardening.

Mayor Mike Lensak praised the market in a prepared statement.

"It is events such as this that make our town such a great place to live," he said. "I invite everyone to come and celebrate the endless bounty of local food and talents that Andover Township has to offer and support the local economy as well."

**If you go**

What: Andover Township Green Team Mid-Winter Farmers' Market

When: Sunday, Feb. 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: Hillside Park Barn, 150 Lake Iliff Road, Andover Township

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