



## February 2015 Sustainability Hero Angela Andersen, Long Beach Township Clean Communities Coordinator and Green Team Chair

If Angela Andersen bursts into a room saying, “I had an epiphany!” her co-workers and fellow green team members know to brace themselves for an inspiring, but often ambitious new direction. Angela is known for her amazing drive and tenacity that is nicely balanced by her laid-back beach personality. She derives her inspiration from the environment and her home on Long Beach Island (LBI). “If work takes me off the island, the moment I come over the bridge and smell the salt air—that’s all I need after a hard day,” Angela said.

Working for the past 28 years for the environment, sustainability has always been her focus. Angela is the founder and chair of the Long Beach Township Green Team and serves as the recycling and clean communities coordinator for the Township. Long Beach Township in Ocean County is one of six municipalities located on LBI.

Angela grew up in in Paramus and is the youngest of six children. Her father, Paul Contillo, spent 14 years in New Jersey’s Legislature representing the Bergen County-based 38<sup>th</sup> Legislative District. Angela said that her parents inspired and empowered her to be a self-learner and her Montessori education taught her to think for herself at an early age.

Angela has a BS in Environmental Studies from Richard Stockton College. While she was a student at Stockton, she worked as an intern mapping coastal permits for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This work required her to be in the field immersed in the wetlands. She continued her work at the NJDEP in the Office of Recycling and Planning before moving her work closer to her home on LBI to the Ocean County Health Department.

Angela later attained an MA in Environment and Community from Antioch University in Seattle, Washington. Antioch University provides learner-centered education which further strengthened her ability to create and develop programs and ideas independently. Angela also served as the South Jersey Director for the American Littoral Society. One of her mentors was Dery Bennett, the Littoral Society Executive Director and inspirational leader of the coastal environmental movement. She often finds herself in situations trying to decide, “what would Dery do now?”

Angela has received a handful of professional certifications. In 1995, she was a part of the first class to get a Certified Recycling Professional certificate at Rutgers University. She said, “I originally signed up because I thought my dad would get a kick out of me doing it.” Her father had

participated in the writing and passage of New Jersey’s mandatory recycling legislation in 1987, which was a major milestone in New Jersey’s solid waste management history. Having this certificate came in handy when she was hired as the recycling and clean communities coordinator for Long Beach Township in 2009. Angela said, “For me, being a recycling coordinator is so much more than bottles and cans. I love my job and it’s my pleasure to build community around environmental education.”

Angela is on the Ocean County Solid Waste Advisory Council, is the co-chair for the communication and education committee for the Barnegat Bay Partnership and co-chair of the Science Committee for the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences. She was recently appointed to a board position with the Association of New Jersey Recyclers.



*Angela pictured doing one of her regular kayak demonstration/pollution prevention programs at Bayview Park in Brant Beach.*

## Long Beach Township Achieves Sustainable Jersey Certification

“When Sustainable Jersey was launched in 2009, I registered Long Beach Township in the first year. It’s been my roadmap ever since and when we achieved bronze-level certification in 2014 with 185 points, that was a great day,” said Angela. The Long Beach Township Green Team is made up of a group of dedicated people from the different municipal departments and a few community members. She added, “I see my role as providing a big picture vision. I try to be a rainmaker or champion that helps get our group going and focused on the goals we have set as a community.”

Angela makes sure to spend time going out into the community to promote the work of the green team. She makes regular presentations at the Garden Club, the public library and the LBI Foundation for Arts and Sciences. The green team leadership has partnered with many local groups and individuals to integrate the messages to a broad audience and has co-hosted events that appeal to all kinds of people; for example, they have had a Pollinator Potluck, a Honey Harvest, a Shellfish Soirée and a Planting with Purpose event. Angela has secured funding for many different efforts including: energy efficiency upgrades, lighting and HVAC at municipal buildings and a food waste rocket compost unit at the local elementary school. She also received a Sustainable Jersey Capacity Building Grant that helped her encourage other LBI municipalities to get involved.

Angela likes to bring in what she calls “guest stars” or people that can serve as subject matter experts to move an initiative forward. For example, she worked with the Alliance for a Living Ocean to implement hydration stations (details below). Angela’s advice for green team leaders is to, “Think beyond your group. Make sure to go out into the community so that what you’re planning fits your community’s interest and identity. I’m living on a sandbar out in the ocean. What works for me will be different from what works in Cherry Hill.” The wisdom of this sentiment is definitely reflected in the Long Beach Township Sustainable Jersey certification report, which you can read in full: [Long Beach Township Certification Report](#). Here are a few examples of projects:

### Hydration Stations

Long Beach Township is the first LBI town to install hydration stations. The hydration stations allow individuals to fill their reusable water bottles with cold, filtered municipal water. The installation of the stations was coupled with a plastic pollution reduction message and educational program. Angela states, “It’s our hope that individuals will realize that recycling plastics is not the answer. The sequence of the three R’s is to reduce, reuse *and then* recycle.” The program’s mantra is ‘put water in your bottle, not your bottle in the water.’ Partners for this effort include the Alliance for a Living Ocean, ReClam the Bay, the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences and Kapler’s Pharmacy.



### LBI Shuttle Service

Long Beach Township started an LBI Shuttle Service. A fleet of nine micro busses service residents and visitors during the peak summer season and weekends through the fall. Launched as a pilot in 2013, the shuttles serviced about 50,000 people by October 2014. Long Beach Township Commissioner Joe Lattanzi and Lt. Paul Vereb of the Township Police force acquired the bus fleet and Long Beach Township maintains the vehicles. The effort has served to get vehicles off the road, increase road mobility in peak season, reduce emissions, facilitate commerce and can provide an emergency management service if needed by moving people in urgent situations.



### Making LBI More Sustainable and Resilient Through Arts and Culture

Long Beach Township formed a creative team and completed a Creative Assets Inventory. The creative team for the Long Beach Island Arts and Culture Committee was convened in 2012. The primary partners of the effort are Long Beach Township and LBI Foundation of the Arts and Sciences. A draft [Creative Placemaking Plan for Long Beach Island](#) was developed to make LBI more sustainable and resilient through arts and culture. It was developed by a unique team of island residents and business people who are also artists, business leaders, nonprofit organization executives, property owners and public service employees. The goal is to enhance quality of life, improve economic conditions and build a healthier climate for creative expression in ways that are realistic, cost-effective and protect the best qualities of LBI.

## **Super Storm Sandy**

In October 2012, Long Beach Township was severely affected by Super Storm Sandy. Angela found herself in charge of *everything but* bottles and cans after the storm. Angela led the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund for Long Beach Township and raised and administered nearly half a million dollars that was provided to primary residents of the town to recover after the storm, all while her family suffered its own losses. She still struggles with the memory but has been working hard to build community resilience. She is now leading the charge for “dune re-vegetation” for Long Beach as part of their continued Sandy recovery efforts. She is raising funds, buying plants and building civic pride around community planting activities. Long Beach Township is now setting the pace and direction for other towns completing reports and Community Vulnerability Assessments. Angela said, “Sandy changed our demographics, topography and word choices- we don’t like the word vulnerable, we prefer to be resilient.”

Along the way Angela has worn, and continues to wear many hats, including newspaper reporter, kayak tour group leader and spin class instructor, all in addition to her accomplishments mentioned here. “The series of jobs and experiences I’ve had in my life has an evolutionary purpose; each leads to a new level,” Angela remarks.

## **Home Base**

Angela and her husband Jim have lived in their Long Beach Township home since 1994 and have two boys named Liam, 13 years old, and Nolan, 11 years old (pictured above refilling reusable water bottles). Angela enlists the help of her boys in her projects and says that she gets a lot of her best ideas on beach runs with her “recycled” or rescue Labrador named Luna. She enjoys writing, travel, international cooking and reading books. Although her husband is not directly in the sustainability business, she appreciates that he is just naturally down to earth and organic. Angela is thankful for the balance she finds at home. She can work in her garden, till the soil and then hop on a boat to feel the rhythms on the waves. It sounds peaceful, but be forewarned, if Angela asks you to go for a coffee, she may be enlisting you in her latest sustainable vision, so get ready to jump!