



## October 2015 Sustainability Hero Arthur Ondish, Mayor, Borough of Mount Arlington and Sustainable Jersey Board Member

Arthur Ondish is the first person to make you feel welcome and the last person to give up a fight if he feels strongly about an issue. He is well-known for his unyielding positive outlook that makes those working with him strive to be better.

Having spent his whole life on beautiful Lake Hopatcong, Art has made resource protection and sustainability a focus of his work. Art is an original member of the Mayors' Committee for a Green Future and a current member of the [Sustainable Jersey Board](#). He has been the mayor of the Borough of Mount Arlington for the last 13 years.



As a tireless advocate for Sustainable Jersey, Art has traveled across the state, working with the staff to help other municipalities understand the benefits of sustainability.

Carolyn Rinaldi, the municipal administrator for the Mount Arlington Borough said, "Mayor Art is the force behind all that we have achieved with Sustainable Jersey. He says that Mount Arlington is a small town with big goals." She added, "And Art is the first to give credit where credit is due. He always makes reference to his team. He's an inspiration and has a tremendous commitment to the Borough."

### **Mount Arlington Borough – Home to NJ's Largest Lake**

Located in Morris County, Mount Arlington Borough has a population of 5,050. The suburban residential community is located on the southeast shore of Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey's largest lake and a major recreational resource.

Art's family has deep roots in Mount Arlington dating back to the late 1930's when his grandparents built a summer home on Bertrand Island. His parents purchased a home on the island in the 1950s and Art bought a house across the street from his parents' house and lives there with his wife.

In addition to being mayor, Art is a regional public affairs manager at PSEG and was previously employed at JCPL for 20 years. Art served as the president of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) and as the president of the NJLM Education Foundation.

### **The Mayors' Committee for a Green Future**

In 2006, the New Jersey League of Municipalities formed the Mayors' Committee for a Green Future (MCGF). Art was an original member of this committee of mayors.

The MCGF and the Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, began a collaboration that eventually resulted in the public launch of Sustainable Jersey in February 2009.

Members of the MCGF went on a Sustainable Jersey roadshow, speaking at town council meetings around the state and spreading the word about the benefits of the Sustainable Jersey program.

Fred Profeta, the former mayor of Maplewood Township and the former chair of the MCGF said, “Art played a huge role in the beginning of Sustainable Jersey. Together, we brought the program from one town hall to the next. Art’s a great promoter and can definitely sell an idea. His contacts in the Republican Party helped to make the program truly bi-partisan. Art always stepped up to help when we asked.”

Pam Mount, the former mayor of Lawrence Township and a current Sustainable Jersey Board member, was also a member of the original MCGF. Pam said, “Art has stuck with Sustainable Jersey since the very beginning. Art met with a lot of mayors and helped ease any concerns about the program while adding credibility. He’s a great networker and brings a North Jersey perspective to the Sustainable Jersey Board, as well as a focus on the importance of tourism and resource protection issues.”



**Members of the NJLM Mayors Committee for a Green Future**

Randall Solomon, the co-director of Sustainable Jersey, recounted the numerous times that Art joined him on visits to council meetings that were often contentious. Randy said, “There was a period where some people were spreading rumors that Sustainable Jersey was a communist plot instituted by the United Nations. Art and I went to many communities to set the record straight. He was extremely helpful in assuring local leaders that Sustainable Jersey was non-partisan and an above-board organization and that the New Jersey League of Municipalities was a one-hundred year old organization that carefully vetted its partners.”

Randy added, “Art was warm and built trust at these meetings. But he is also feisty and didn’t take any nonsense from people; he got really animated when confronting people spreading falsehoods about a program that he worked so hard to support. He’s invested his time and personal influence and continues to be an important presence on the Sustainable Jersey Board.”



**Representatives of the NJ League of Municipalities’ Educational Foundation (Art Ondish pictured right), along with officials from Rowan University and sponsors of the Mayors’ Book Club at the Dorothy L. Bullock Elementary School in Glassboro**

### **Mount Arlington Borough – Sustainable Jersey Certified**

Under Art’s guidance, the Borough of Mount Arlington created a green team called M.A.G.I.C. (Mount Arlington Green Initiatives Committee) in 2009.

Everyone from the borough employees to members of the schools, the Board of Education and the public works department are involved. This green team is unique in that it has more employee participation than it does residential volunteers. The high number of staff volunteers results from the strong support that Art and the governing body provide. The green team's [website](#) gives updates and information to the community.

Art is proud that the borough achieved Sustainable Jersey certification in 2012 with 200 points; you can read the complete certification report: [Mount Arlington Borough certification report](#). Currently, Mount Arlington is working on its recertification and is aiming for the higher, silver-level of certification. Carolyn Rinaldi, the Borough municipal administrator said, "We're updating and adding to our certification report. We want to show that no actions have dropped off the list and that we have only added to our sustainability profile. Our next big goal is to make the community garden a reality."

### **Water Conservation and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Outreach**

As a lake town, the green team put a big emphasis on educating Borough residents about methods of water conservation and stormwater pollution prevention. The borough institutes outdoor water use restrictions and MAGIC implemented a water conservation campaign. The water conservation campaign includes tabling at numerous borough events, posting information on the website and making the information available at the public library's information desk. Here is a link to the brochure: [Water Conservation for Your Home](#).

Mount Arlington Borough also works with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, other municipalities that border Lake Hopatcong, and the Lake Hopatcong Commission to educate the residents about the effects of stormwater pollution and how to prevent it.

### **Mount Arlington Rain Garden**

Mount Arlington was awarded a grant from the Raritan Highlands Compact with assistance from Rutgers Cooperative Extension to create a rain garden.

A rain garden is a specifically designed planted area that allows water that would otherwise run off into storm drains and sewers, to be absorbed into the ground. The result is reduced runoff and erosion, and a reduced load on the storm drain system. The Borough worked hard to make the rain garden a success. The rain garden installation was a community affair with help from Mayor Ondish, the superintendent, the principal, students, the Department of Public Works, police and residents. The green team is now hoping to expand the garden and is applying for grants.



**Mount Arlington Rain Garden**

### **Improving Quality of Life in Mount Arlington**

When asked why Sustainable Jersey is important, Art said, "When you focus a municipality's efforts on sustainability, it saves money, improves our environment and our quality of life now and in the future. And as a conservative mayor, saving money means a lot!" We're lucky to have Art as a Sustainable Jersey champion, spreading the word about the components of sustainability: people, prosperity and planet.