



S P R I N G 2 0 2 0

Municipalities Certified: 204, Participating: 455 ♦ Schools Certified: 241, Participating: 965 ♦ Districts Participating: 351

SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION: SIX SUCCESS STORIES

1,000+ Attendees: Sustainable Jersey Virtual Sustainability Summit

Shortly after the COVID-19 crisis began, Sustainable Jersey pivoted to transition the New Jersey Sustainability Summit into a virtual event and developed four-weeks of content including 21 online events. We want to thank all of our sponsors and speakers for their insights and for sharing resources and experiences. Thank you to the 1,000+ attendees who joined us and conveyed their own lessons learned from out in the field. Together, we made delicious lemonade out of the lemons we were dealt! Review the presentations: [Virtual Sustainability Summit](#).



Toms River Regional Schools Wolbachia Project (Ocean County)

[Toms River Regional Schools](#) (Toms River) Authentic Science Research (ASR) students and Israeli students are collaborating and sharing data on the frequency of Wolbachia bacteria in their respective local mosquito populations. Director of ASR Christine Girtain led students from Toms River in a three-day workshop to learn biotech skills while studying Wolbachia. The workshop was made possible through a Sustainable Jersey for Schools grant funded by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA). Toms River students are looking at the frequency of Wolbachia and West Nile in mosquito samples from Ocean County. Girtain will be collaborating with



Bordenstein Lab at Vanderbilt University and students in Israel. This research could provide a sustainable means of managing mosquito populations through biological pest control that could eventually contribute to a decline in New Jersey mosquito populations and reduce the spread of Dengue and Zika viruses. "The Toms

River ASR program encourages the spirit of discovery through hands-on learning using the scientific method, and the Sustainable Jersey for Schools and NJEA grant provides teacher training, equipment purchasing and allows the underclassmen in ASR to collect and analyze data from the Wolbachia Summer Research Project,"

said Toms River High School South Principal James Ricotta Jr. [Read more.](#)

Highland Park Plastic Bag Reduction Campaign (Middlesex County)

[Sustainable Highland Park](#) managed a year-long education campaign to voluntarily reduce reliance on single-use plastic bags in Highland Park Borough. In February 2019, the work culminated when Highland Park Council passed [Ordinance No. 19-1980: Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance](#). With support from a \$10,000 Sustainable Jersey Grant funded by the PSEG Foundation, Sustainable Highland Park educated residents and merchants about the importance of reducing the use of single-use plastic bags. The multifaceted campaign included the purchase and distribution of 2,500 reusable bags along with the installation of 100 lawn signs throughout the downtown shopping area, 75 posters in store windows and a large permanent banner on Stop & Shop--all of these materials had a Bring Your Own Bag logo the group created. Newspaper and social media promotion, in addition to emails, helped spread the word. Sustainable Highland Park met with citizen groups across sectors at community events, including the Earth Day street fair and Back to School Night. The film "Bag It" was presented in multiple venues, including the schools, the public library and the Reformed Church of Highland Park. To measure the impact of the campaign, Sustainable Highland Park administered a survey before and after. The results showed increased awareness of the dangers of plastic bags related to ocean pollution and the contamination of microplastics in the human food chain. Sustainable Highland Park continues to work with motivated students from the Highland Park Middle and High Schools to expand the educational campaign.



Collingswood Green Dining District (Camden County)

Collingswood Borough established its green team in 2009 with the primary purpose to have the group run a green festival. Ten years later, Collingswood Borough is a green leader in many areas and held its hugely successful Green Festival, which hosted thousands of visitors and offered local organic food, affordable rain barrels, backyard composters and neighborhood artisans making art from recycled materials, in April 2019. Thanks to the dedicated members of Sustainable Collingswood, the Borough achieved Sustainable Jersey certification at the silver-level in 2019. Sustainable Collingswood members write articles for local publications and maintain their own [webpage](#), [Facebook page](#) and [blog](#). The green team coordinates and partners on a variety of town programs such as the Collingswood Bike Share, Wildlife Habitat Gardens Project, Collingswood Tree City USA and two community gardens. In May 2020, Collingswood received a \$20,000 Sustainable Jersey grant funded by the PSEG Foundation to implement their Collingswood Green Dining District Initiative. The idea for the project grew out of an effort by volunteer members of the



Collingswood Business Improvement District and green team. Results from their 2019 Green Dining Survey helped to gauge community interest and form the parameters for the program. The overall goal of the Green Dining District is to strengthen the local economy by providing another reason to visit Collingswood's local restaurants, all while bringing sustainable practices to local eateries that will reduce waste, reduce emissions and so much more.

Mercer County Sustainability Coalition Creates Direct Install Testimonial Videos

Sometimes, the biggest challenge to improving energy efficiency is knowing where to start and how to get through the process. With this in mind, the [Mercer County Sustainability Coalition](#) (MCSC) created fourteen compelling testimonial videos featuring Mercer County business owners and non-profit leaders who have benefited from [New Jersey's Clean Energy Program™ \(NJCEP\) "Direct Install"](#) program. Direct Install pays up to 70 percent of retrofit costs on energy efficiency projects, dramatically shortening the payback timeframe on the project. As added incentive, entities owned or operated by municipalities, counties, K-12 public schools and customers located in Urban Enterprise Zones or Opportunity Zones may be eligible for up to 80 percent of the cost of the installed measures. MCSC is one of ten Sustainable Jersey [Regional Hubs](#). The



alliance of green teams and sustainability organizations from eight municipalities in Mercer County enhances the reach of the coalition's communications and optimizes resources. Working with Tri-State Lighting, the NJCEP-designated Direct Install contractor for Mercer County, the MCSC green teams have been busy promoting the program and its benefits. To watch the videos, visit the MCSC YouTube channel: http://bit.ly/MCSC_DI. Green teams across the state can also review the new Sustainable Jersey Energy Efficiency Outreach Toolkits that provide outreach collateral, municipal letters, media releases and best practices for successful energy efficiency outreach campaigns. Review the [Commercial Energy Efficiency Outreach Toolkit](#).

Winslow Township Middle School Student News Site (Camden County)

The [Soaring Eagle Online](#) is the student news site for Winslow Township Middle School, a rural school serving grades 7 and 8 in Camden County. The impressive student-run, online news site presents articles and videos written and produced by students on a variety of topics including community service projects, school events, field trips and highlights of different academic departments, clubs and sports. Launched in December 2019, the news site presents an inviting compilation of news content for the academic year. For example, the ["Chefs in the Classroom: Food for Thought"](#) article and accompanying video by staff reporter Briana Worthington covers a healthy eating program. The Soaring Eagle is an excellent example of a communication initiative that satisfies the Sustainable Jersey for Schools [Community Education and Outreach](#) priority action. In 2019, Winslow Township Middle School achieved bronze-level certification with Sustainable Jersey for Schools. The Soaring Eagle is one-half of the multimedia presence in the school tasked with covering all major events happenings on campus and supporting school-wide sustainability



initiatives. It is complemented by The Soaring Eagle News and Announcements, a daily news show aired for all students in homeroom. The Soaring Eagle has had multiple journalists pick up individual awards from the Journalism Education Association, including the 2018-19 [JEA Aspiring Young Journalist Runner Up](#).

More Sustainability Stories

Take a moment to read about the people doing impressive work in their communities. Catch up our monthly Sustainability Hero profile.

- March Hero: [David Kois, Hillsborough Township](#) (Somerset County)

- April Hero: [Michael Winka, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities](#) (Mercer County)
- May Heroes: [Patricia C. Heindel, Ph.D. & Elizabeth Warner, Co-Founders, School Culture and Climate Initiative](#)

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