

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

February 2020



Deborah Goodman
Learning Disabilities Teaching Consultant
Camden High School (Camden County)

Deborah Goodman is an energetic sustainability champion and leader within the [Camden City School District](#). In 2019, [Dr. Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School](#) was recognized as the 2019 high school Sustainability Champion by Sustainable Jersey for Schools. The application was organized by Deborah when she served as the operations manager at Brimm Medical Arts High School. Currently, Deborah is a learning disabilities teaching consultant at Camden High School.

At Brimm Medical Arts High School, Deborah led a team of teachers, students and community partners to complete enough sustainability actions to earn silver-level certification with Sustainable Jersey for Schools. In the top ten most populous cities in New Jersey, only one high school besides Brimm Medical Arts High School has achieved certification at this level. Brimm Medical Arts High School also received recognition as a sustainability champion from the Camden County Board of Freeholders and was selected from a pool of 572 high schools as the 2019 [Go Green](#) High School of the Year.

After 20 years of experience as a competitive gymnast, Deborah knows how to work hard and focus her energy on a goal. In her role as operations manager at Brimm Medical Arts High School, she understood what was possible at the facility and, more importantly, how to move the green team to make the school more sustainable. She has a knack for continually improving herself and those around her; motivating others to do better. She credits her parents for instilling these qualities in her, especially her mother who was a teacher for 36 years in Marlton and her twin brother who is legally blind.

Deborah explained, “I’ve learned we are all capable of achieving our goals, but the path to our goals is not always the same and usually not easy. We have to work with the resources and talents that we have. Sustainability in an urban school is challenging but we found a way to make it work. Our students feel tremendous pride in their city. They want to help make their school and Camden better, and being sustainable is a good way to do this.”

415 Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Points: After countless hours of work and the collaboration of school administrators, students and community partners, Brimm Medical Arts High School was certified with 415 certification points. In her role as the operations manager, Deborah focused on making the very old school building run better. Deborah described her approach, “First, I recruited the teachers and then the kids to help; this was a critical step. They did the leg work and I organized the accomplishments in the application.” She added, “We’re fortunate because the students at Brimm are required to do 100 volunteer hours and 120 volunteer hours if they want to be a National Merit Scholar. So, I targeted the freshman as soon as they came in the door on the first day of school. I let them know that working on the green team is a good way to achieve the volunteer hours. After they get their hands dirty, they are usually hooked.”



With three overflowing binders to track the actions, Deborah kept the green team on task. The school's sustainability actions included conducting a waste audit; administering a Breakfast After the Bell program; providing access to healthy water in the school; requiring student participation in arts and music courses and completing a green infrastructure assessment, plan and project (the school has two rain gardens and trestles for the greenhouse). The Brimm Medical Arts High School offers a special course that identifies career and technical education opportunities related to waste and energy and the ninth-grade curriculum covers



fresh water, global warming and the impact of human populations on ecosystems. The Camden City School District created a [Camden City School District Sustainability Policy](#) that shapes many of the sustainability actions. Deborah said, "Sustainable Jersey for Schools helped us document and showcase the many things we are doing." Review all of the school's sustainability actions in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools [2019 Brimm Medical Arts High School Certification Report](#).

Classroom Energy Monitoring Program: Deborah is often asked why the lights are off in her office. She does not like to waste energy, she explained, "I keep lights off and everything unplugged until it is needed, even my toaster at home." With her guidance, the Brimm Medical Arts High School Green Team initiated a Classroom Energy Monitoring Program that provided the students with a better understanding of environmental conservation through action. The program enlists students to aide in the day-to-day reduction of energy use in the school. Students help by turning off electrical devices including lights, computers and Smartboards, when not in use for extended times. Each week, different students are involved so that all students learn the importance of energy conservation.

Tower Garden Curriculum: The students at Brimm Medical Arts High School understand the importance of growing fresh fruit and vegetables thanks to their tower garden system which grows plants indoors without dirt. Lesson plans and learning materials for the tower garden integrate the garden into the curriculum. The students track soil pH levels and the growing times for each vegetable or fruit. They add new seeds to the tower and monitor the lighting system. Students were able to compare their indoor school garden to other outdoor gardens within the school district. They looked at the optimal planting times and decided what plants grow better depending on the soil quality, amount of light and water. The students harvest the vegetables, pollinate the new seeds and change the water system.



Women in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering Art and Mathematics): Brimm Medical Arts High School created a partnership with the Girl Scouts of America to bring Women in STEAM opportunities to the predominately female student population who are already focused on science and mathematics careers. After a selection process, 20 students were chosen to attend STEAM events including a field trip to the [STEM Center at Rowan University](#) and attendance at a STEAM careers panel discussion at the [Salvation Army KROC Center](#). With the help of Amani Klass at the [Girl Scouts of Southern and Central New Jersey](#), Brimm Medical Arts High School started a STEAM Troop at the school. The troop meets twice a month to discuss upcoming events, fundraising opportunities and options for women in STEAM careers. Deborah said, "The program empowered our female student population to take a strong stand for their future and make executive decisions about their career choices. Our students also visited other schools within the district to share their experiences." Costs are being covered by the Girls Scouts of America. This partnership between the Girl Scouts and the school met the requirements of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools action: [Enrichment Programs through Partnership](#).



Green Fair: Brimm Medical Arts High School hosted its first green fair in 2019. The event included a variety of local green vendors and community organizations, green giveaways and healthy food options from the

school garden. Many partners participated including American Water Company, [Americorps Watershed Ambassadors Program](#), [Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority](#), [South Jersey Land and Trust](#), [New Jersey Tree Foundation](#), Parkside Non-Profit, Master Gardens, Covanta and many more.

Waste Audit: With the help of Covanta, Brimm Medical Arts High School completed a waste audit. The school sorted its trash to track how much waste was being created and to see if recycling was being done properly. Implemented by the student green team, the audit allowed the students to see first-hand the amount of waste the school is creating. Deborah said, “As we sorted the trash, the students noticed that the food trays were the biggest waste issue.” The waste, totaling 24.8 pounds, included two pounds of cafeteria recycling, eight pounds of milk cartons and six pounds of lunch trays. The green team continues to monitor the trash and recycling, not only during lunch, but also at breakfast, to find ways to decrease the waste. A meeting with the food provider is planned to discuss the alternatives to breakfast and lunch trays. Results were shared with the students and community members during class meetings and school events.



Brimm’s Chow Hounds: Deborah is proud of the Brimm Medical Arts High School’s work to provide services to local pet owners and animals. These activities help teach the students and community about responsible pet ownership, which includes not only caring for pets, but also how pets interact with society and the natural environment. One event the high school does is called Brimm’s Chow Hound House which often attracts about 200 attendees. Wellness visits for pets and pet food are provided at the event. Community leaders and students volunteer their time to help make the event a success. Local organizations pitch in to ensure the communities’ pets are treated well. [Chow Hound House](#), a food bank for domestic animals, donates food and treats for pet owners who attend. The [House Paws Mobile Veterinary Service](#), a mobile vet that serves primarily Southern New Jersey, provides dogs and cats with free wellness visits and important vaccinations. The dogs and cats deemed healthy enough receive free spay and neutering services from the mobile vet. Students help pet owners navigate their way through the Chow Hound House event. In 2019, Brimm’s Chow Hounds assisted in rescuing 213 homeless dogs from Georgia. The Animal Aid Rescue Caravan brought the dogs to Camden for adoption.



What You May Not Know About Deborah: Deborah grew up in Cherry Hill, New Jersey and has four siblings. She started gymnastics at age five and advanced to be a gymnastics team member at Southern Connecticut State University, specializing in the balance beam. She is now a USA Gymnastics, Jersey Optional Gymnastics Association and trampoline coach at [Jets Gymnastics](#) in Mount Laurel. Deborah received a BA in Elementary Education and Psychology at Southern Connecticut State University. She has a degree in Special Education from Rowan University and a MA in Educational Leadership with a certification in Educational Technology. She is currently working on her doctorate.



More About Brimm Medical Arts High School and the New Camden High School Campus: Brimm Medical Arts is a magnet school that offers a standard high school curriculum with a medical infusion that introduces healthcare professionals and health related hands-on experiences. There is a student population of approximately 220. The high school opened in 1994 and is located in an old building that was a former Bible factory. Targeted for 2021, a new Camden High School campus is expected to open its doors. The new campus will be home to four high schools - Brimm Medical Arts, Creative Arts High School, Big Picture Learning Academy (BPLA) and Camden High School. The new campus will offer state of the art facilities to meet each school's specific learning needs including a world-class auditorium for Creative Arts; modern, fully-equipped science labs for Brimm; and drill rooms and seminar space for Camden High and BPLA.