



Joann Held

Chair, Hopewell Valley Green Team; Member, Pennington Borough Environmental Commission (Mercer County)

For almost 50 years, Joann Held has worked to protect and enhance the environment through education, advocacy and regulation. Known as the ‘queen of green,’ Joann is a sustainability hero who has made a significant impact in Mercer County and across New Jersey. She is the chair of the [Hopewell Valley Green Team](#), which includes the communities of Hopewell Borough, Hopewell Township and Pennington Borough. A 45 year resident of Pennington Borough, Joann is a member of the [Pennington Borough Environmental Commission](#) and the chair of the [Pennington Farmers Market](#). She has a BS in Meteorology from St. Louis University and an MS in Air Pollution Control from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Air Quality Specialist at DEP

Joann worked at the [New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection \(DEP\)](#) for 26 years, specializing in air quality issues. She coordinated the development of the DEP air toxics program and is the author or coauthor of numerous scientific papers on these topics. During her time at DEP, she established the Air Toxics Steering Committee and pioneered the development of air toxic evaluation tools. She was also a founding member of the [North East States for Coordinated Air Use Management](#) and the National Association for Air Quality Administrators Air Toxic Committees. She has taught short courses for state agency staff on Risk Assessment for Air Toxics, Health Effects of Air Pollution and Implementation of some of the Maximum Achievable Control Technology standards.



Joann was an early researcher in environmental justice and explored air pollution in the City of Camden through her work at the DEP. She served as the Secretary for the [State of New Jersey Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) and was designated a Camden Environmental Hero by the [Camden Collaborative Initiative](#) in recognition of her advocacy for the City of Camden.

Community Service: Organizations and Committees

After retiring from DEP, Joann focused on local sustainability projects and community service. Active in over 15 organizations and committees, she brings experience, intelligence and her optimistic spirit to every project.

Joann is the president of the [Hopewell Valley League of Women Voters Chapter](#) and serves on the [League of Women Voters Natural Resources Committee](#).

Joann is the vice chair of the [New Jersey Site Remediation Professional Licensing Board](#). For the [Air & Waste Management Association](#), she is a member of the K-12 Education Committee and the Northern and Central New Jersey Chapter Program Committee. She is on the Board of Directors for the [Mid-Atlantic States Section](#).

Joann is also a member of the [Pinelands Preservation Alliance](#) (Board of Trustees), [Mercer County Sustainability Coalition](#); [Alliance of New Jersey Environmental Educators](#); [American Meteorological Society](#); and the [Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions](#).



Pennington Farmers Market

Established in 2009, Pennington Farmers Market is in its 16th season. Joann is one of the original members of the Board of Trustees and is currently serving as the market chair. Most Saturdays, she is at the information table welcoming visitors to the market. She said she enjoys the community aspect of the market. The volunteer board manages the market and its funding. The market gets about 55% of its budget from vendor fees and the rest is raised from donations contributed by local businesses and residents. Over the past 16 years, Joann has worked on publicity, staffing, sustainability and many other aspects of the market. The market, a non-profit organization supporting local agriculture, requires that its products must be grown or otherwise produced within a 50-mile radius of the market.



Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Under Joann's leadership, the Hopewell Valley Green Team has enhanced recycling efforts and expanded their reach as volunteers. They have organized or promoted every type of recycling imaginable, and are currently supporting methods to reduce food waste. Joann explained, "Our goal is to focus more on the "reduce, reuse" part of the recycling paradigm, and then make it easy to recycle by providing multiple options and lots of information."



The green team compiles a list of places to take recyclable items that are not accepted by the county curbside recycling program, and they hold collection events for those items throughout the year. The Hopewell Valley Green Team's [2024 Recycling Flyer](#) is a comprehensive resource that lists recycling events and the ways to recycle items. They collect specific items and materials for reuse, recycling and diversion for proper disposal including plastic bags, usable art supplies, cell phones, Brita water filters, single use razors, tennis balls and more; see the full list: [Collection Events at the Pennington Farmers Market](#).

In 2010, the Hopewell Valley recycling program got a boost when Hopewell Township received a \$2,000 [Sustainable Jersey Grant](#), funded by the PSEG Foundation, that supported non-mandated recycling initiatives including bulk Styrofoam collections and [TeraCycle Zero Waste Boxes](#). Continuing their support of community recycling, last winter the green team held a scrap metal recycling event that resulted in the collection of over seven tons of materials. A second event is planned for February 8, 2025, at the Hopewell Township Public Works facility.

Hopewell Valley: Sustainable Jersey Participation

As chair of the Hopewell Valley Green Team, Joann supports the Sustainable Jersey applications for Hopewell Borough, Hopewell Township and Pennington Borough. Most recently, Hopewell Township achieved Sustainable Jersey recertification in 2023: [Sustainable Jersey Certification Report of Hopewell Township](#).

To get sustainability actions and projects done, Joann uses a Green Friends List. The Green Friends List is an email group of almost 150 people offering varying skills and interests that are available to help with projects. Joann sends out a monthly email to update the group on the green team meetings and to share the projects and opportunities for volunteering. It is a good way to involve more than just the eight official members of the green team in the sustainability work.



In 2010, Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough and Pennington Borough received the [Sustainable Jersey Collaboration Award](#) recognizing their collaborative green initiatives and partnerships on projects in the Hopewell Valley. Joann said, “From our air and water quality, to transportation, to trash and recycling, these issues are common to our three towns. It simply makes sense to tackle them together.”

Community Energy Plan Grant Awards

Joann is excited to begin work on a Community Energy Plan. Pennington Borough and Hopewell Township have each been awarded a [Community Energy Plan \(CEP\)](#) grant from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities that will provides \$10,000 in funding, along with technical support from Sustainable Jersey.

More About Joann

Joann spent her childhood surrounded by lakes, farms and open spaces. She was born and raised in rural McHenry, Illinois. She has lived in Pennington Borough for the past 45 years with her husband Isaac, who worked for the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Lab at Princeton University, and in his retirement, continues his association with Princeton University. They just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Their son, Joshua, currently lives in Evanston, Illinois. In her spare time, Joann enjoys hiking, reading mystery novels and singing in the choir at St. James Church.

