



October 2024



David L. Steinberg

Runnemedede Borough Green Team; Towns Helping Towns Committee; Reimagine Runnemedede (Camden County)

Innovative things are happening in [Runnemedede Borough](#), also known as ‘The Heart of New Jersey.’ From murals to creative public spaces and poetry events, the motivated local community is working together to unlock their town’s potential. Resident David Steinberg is a driving force behind this movement. He is a [Runnemedede Green Team](#) volunteer and a member of the Runnemedede Creative Team. He also serves as the vice president for [Reimagine Runnemedede](#).

David is a rare combination of a passionate poet, peace advocate, helpful mentor and relentless warrior for the environment. He is a 2018 Nobel Peace Prize nominee by the International Writers and Artists Association and the recipient of the 2019 Changemaker Award granted by the [New Jersey League of Conservation Voters](#). In September 2024, he was appointed a 2024 [Peace Ambassador](#) by the Universal Peace Federation Ambassador of Peace on the United Nations International Day of Peace.

Runnemedede Borough: Sustainable Jersey Silver Certification

On September 19, 2024, Runnemedede Borough advanced from bronze to silver-level Sustainable Jersey certification. In Camden County, only Runnemedede Borough and Cherry Hill Township are currently silver-certified. Eight Camden County municipalities are certified at the bronze level. For a full picture of what they accomplished, review the [Sustainable Jersey Certification Report of Runnemedede Borough](#). Runnemedede Borough was certified with 360 points in its 2024 Sustainable Jersey certification application; 75 points of the total points were from completing the Arts and Creative Culture Actions: [Establish a Creative Team](#); [Creative Assets Inventory](#); [Municipal Commitments to Support Arts and Creative Culture](#); and [Utilizing Your Creative Assets](#).



Green Team Mentor: Towns Helping Towns

Since 2019, David has served as the chair of Towns Helping Towns Committee for the [Tri-County Sustainability Alliance \(TriCSA\)](#). He gained expertise serving on the Haddon Heights Green Team from 2013-2019 and then on the Runnemedede Green Team. David realized that his experience would be helpful to towns working to get certified with Sustainable Jersey. David said, “I reflected on ways that I could make a difference, and it was clear that mentoring Sustainable Jersey municipalities was a good place to make an impact.” After mentoring Barrington Borough and Somerdale Borough for over a year, Barrington successfully achieved Sustainable Jersey certification in September 2024 at the bronze-level and Somerdale Borough plans to submit an application in 2025. David has also worked with Merchantville Borough and Maple Shade Township. He added, “As a group, TriCSA decided that we could strengthen

sustainability initiatives in our region if we collaborated. When we share resources, we keep costs down and reduce environmental degradation. I look forward to the ripple effect as these new sustainable towns will continue to do innovative work. We can learn from them and partner on future projects.” The Towns Helping Towns Committee was awarded the 2020 [Sustainable Jersey Collaboration Award](#) in recognition of his good work.

Runnemedede Borough Arts and Creative Culture

The Runnemedede Borough Creative Team, a subcommittee of the Runnemedede Green Team, works to raise awareness of the arts and generate innovative ideas for projects in Runnemedede. The Creative Team works in partnership with [Reimagine Runnemedede](#), a non-partisan, citizen-based group that offers solutions through Arts-Based Community Development and Creative Placemaking. David participates in all three groups and is the Reimagine Runnemedede vice president. He explained, “We as a community are all one soul, and I am doing my part to give back to my community by helping Reimagine Runnemedede to do what they do best, to revitalize, and breathe new life to our community.”



Runnemedede Peace Park Labyrinth

David served as the project coordinator and architect for the [Peace Park Labyrinth](#) in David L. Venella Park. The labyrinth in the park is promoted as an Oasis of Peace in an Unpeaceful World. Since 2023, the Runnemedede Creative Team and Reimagine Runnemedede have hosted artist events at the labyrinth making it a creative community destination. The labyrinth has its own song, making it one of only a few in the world with this distinction. David convened seven musicians and two singers to perform the song: *Toward the Core*. Events at the labyrinth have grown from the celebration of solstices and equinoxes to include more events incorporating music, fire spinners and a green living wall.



Runnemedede Poetry Contest

The Runnemedede Green Team, in collaboration with Reimagine Runnemedede, held a poetry contest for the Volz Middle School to engage the community, honor local talent and foster a sense of belonging and pride among young residents. Runnemedede Mayor Kappatos led the awards ceremony and distributed gift cards to the winners. Twenty-two clever phrases from the contest were made into stencils and painted on the sidewalk along the Black Horse Pike business district. A \$50 gift card was given to the person who located the most stencils. The term “Loveamedede” came from one of the participants and was adopted by the “Loveamedede Pike Jam,” a twice-a-year festival that now attracts over 1,000 people. A mural with the words “Runnemedede Is a Small Town, But to Some, it is the Whole World” came out of the poetry contest as well.



Runnemedede Mural Festival

In 2023, Runnemedede Borough passed a [Mural and Public Arts Ordinance](#) to strengthen and enhance Runnemedede and its business community. Several businesses have murals painted on their property and more murals are scheduled to be added. This work has been accomplished through donors and a grant from the [Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission](#). The Creative Team collaborated with Reimagine Runnemedede and the [Runnemedede Chamber of Commerce](#) to host a

mural festival. David and members of the community rolled up their sleeves and participated in mural painting days, which also served to spotlight the local businesses. A mural walking tour is being planned for November 2, 2024, to coincide with Runnemedede's Pike Jam Food and Music Festival.

Poet and Peace Activist

David has authored numerous books and received multiple awards for his writing. He is a founder of the [Society for Poets of Southern New Jersey](#) and served as the first president from 1980 to 1990.

In 2018, he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to challenge others to explore what they can do to bring about peace in their own heart and within their communities. David's poem, "My Enemy in the Mirror," was translated into Arabic by Faleeha Hassan, a famous writer from the Middle East known as the "Maya Angelou of Iraq." The poem was published in a magazine in Gaza, which made him the first Jewish writer to be published in Gaza during the war with Israel in 2014. The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize followed his work making presentations at universities, libraries and houses of worship (a synagogue, mosque and church) with Faleeha Hassan. Their presentation was entitled, "A Muslim Woman and a Jewish Man Reading Poetry and Hosting a Discussion on Peace."

As a poet, David has published 22 books and edited 9 poetry anthologies. His poetry has been translated into Arabic, Greek and Portuguese in 12 countries: England, Netherlands, Sweden, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Gaza, Brazil and Greece. He received 10 writing awards, including the 1995 Community Service Award from the Philadelphia Writer's Conference for creating a publishing program that enabled 35 poets to publish 64 poetry books. In 2022, David received commendation letters for outstanding achievement from New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy; United States Congressman Donald Norcross; Director of the Gloucester County Board of Commissioners Frank DiMarco; and Woodbury Mayor Peg Sichel. In 2019, David was recognized as the "Best Literary Activist in the USA" by the International Artists and Writers Association.

Environmental Advocacy and Community Activities

Since 2020, David has volunteered for [Delaware Riverkeepers](#) and fought against the proposed Gibbstown liquefied natural gas (LNG) Export Plant. He submitted 43 resolutions against this project that he secured from working with municipalities and faith-based, environmental and civic groups. In addition, since 2018, David has been working to make sure that the remediation being done by the former Sunoco Inc. meets the Environmental Protection Agency standards for the Girard Point Philadelphia Refinery, which is part of the Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) Refining and Marketing, LLC Refinery. David said the now closed PES Refinery was built over the aquifer that serves New Jersey farmers and water companies. He wants to make sure that the pollution in Philadelphia will be remediated to eliminate any possibility that it will contaminate New Jersey water supplies.



David serves on the board of [Professional Service Group \(PSG\) of Mercer County](#), which is a community program and job support group that provides assistance with resume writing, interviewing and networking for people in career transition. David scheduled an art exhibition for his friend Helene Hathaway Layton who lives in a nursing home. She is an artist, songwriter and poet. Helene's 95 portraits of famous classical and modern composers will be on display at the [Heggan Library](#), located in Washington Township (Gloucester), in January 2025.