

2021 Achievement Awards

Environmental Commissions Category

Pollinator Garden and Surfside Science Lecture Series

The Avalon Environmental Commission (EC) held two lecture series to educate and inspire those in their municipality. The Pollinator Garden Lecture Series, which was held at the new Avalon Pollinator Garden, taught people the importance of pollinator gardens and how to maintain them. The Beachside Science and Surfside Park Lecture Series, held at Surfside Park, focused on an array of topics from barrier islands, the Northern Diamondback Terrapin, nesting shore birds, seashells and bird migrations. Kudos to the Avalon EC for providing a wide array of environmental educational opportunities for their community.

Green Infrastructure Implementation

Two members of the Caldwell Environmental Commission attended the Rutgers Green Infrastructure Champions course and were inspired to see how they could make green infrastructure an integral part of their local landscape. With a grant from Sustainable Jersey, and with even more assistance from the Rutgers Water Resources Program, they were able to install rain gardens, provide green infrastructure books for the Public Library, and offer discounted rain barrels to their residents. They are presently in discussions about the option of porous asphalt for town parking lots. Caldwell provides an inspiring example of how to install and instill green infrastructure in your community.

Celebrating Restrictive Plastic Packaging Ordinance

Inspired by ANJEC and helped along by Surfrider, the Cape May EC took the reexamination of the town's *Master Plan* as an opportunity to pursue banning disposable plastic shopping bags, straws, bottles, cups and Styrofoam food containers. Surfrider sponsored the showing of the film, "A Plastic Ocean" at five different venues around town. After a two-year educational campaign, they adopted an ordinance restricting the use of plastic packaging in the municipality. This is a great example of using community outreach and education to help move a piece of legislation.

COVID Trails Response Project

With the onset of COVID-19, Cherry Hill focused on providing expanded and improved trails for their residents. Thomas Paine Trails (consisting of four trails) was opened in February 2020, right at the onset of the pandemic. Later, Bowling Green Trails was expanded from one short trail to five trails. Downs Farms Trails added its first bench (which was an Eagle Scout project) and trails were resurfaced. Their efforts resulted in improved and expanded trails as well as educational opportunities regarding safe use of the outdoors.

Ongoing Project Awards

Howell Organic Community Garden Monarch Way Station

The goal of the Monarch Way Station was to draw pollinators to the Howell Organic Community Garden as well as provide stable and ample resources for monarchs and other butterflies to feed, reproduce and prepare for migration. With the help of several members of the community garden, the area was cleared, mulched, and new flowering perennials were added to bring additional pollinators to the area. Further development of the area included birdhouses, a sitting/meeting area, and the addition of a drip irrigation system. In addition to birds and pollinators, this multi-use space is enjoyed by members of the garden for committee meetings, casual gatherings and celebrations. The result has been a boon to both the pollinators and the community.

Madison Swap & Share

The Madison Swap & Share, a Facebook Group, launched in the spring of 2020 and has grown to more than 2,000 members. The group differs from Craigslist or Freecycle in that the members not only deaccession belongings, they share and borrow items, directly increasing their utility and reducing waste. Everything posted in the group must be offered for free. Members post over 30 items daily. The results have been satisfying from an environmental and community standpoint, including reduced carbon emissions due to: fewer items ending up in the landfill; reduced consumption with a focus on refurbishing and recycling; and fewer miles traveled to shop for new items. The local focus has allowed for the easy exchange of items and fostered a sharing community.

Local Environmental Hero Award

Brownfields Inventory

Maplewood Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) intern Roberta Ezike, a masters degree candidate (now a graduate) in Environmental Science at Rutgers Newark, worked with assistance from members of the EAC, Maplewood Township Administrator and the NJIT Brownfields Assistance Center to create a *Brownfields Inventory* for Maplewood. In addition to completing a thorough work plan, she also presented her findings to the Maplewood EAC and then to environmental commissioners throughout the State at the ANJEC webinar "Turning a Liability into an Asset: Remediating and Redeveloping Brownfields in New Jersey." The brownfields inventory comes at a time when the Maplewood EAC is updating their *Environmental Resource Inventory* and the township is reexamining its *Master Plan*, so the *Brownfields Inventory* will be able to inform both processes.

Home Eco-Guide: Ten Environmentally Friendly Tips for your Home and Garden

Georgia Madiba, a member of the South Orange Environmental Commission and Green Team, conceived of the *Home Eco-Guide* as a response to the need for educational and promotional printed material, and it reflects her own passion for encouraging and educating on everyday actions to protect the environment. The eight-page guide covers such areas as recycling, energy efficiency, eco-friendly yard practices, stormwater management, food waste, and more. Madiba worked with *Matters Magazine* to arrange for the booklet to be an insert to the April 2021 issue. This project had a wide impact. The magazine is delivered free of charge to every household in South Orange and Maplewood. In addition to the 15,000 inserted in the magazine, another 5,000 were distributed to local shops, eateries, realtors and events.

Artistic Creation Award

"Annabelle the Dragon"

The artist Robin Ruggiero creates prehistoric figures out of found materials and has received acclamations for her work from the *Asbury Park Press*, *Coast Star News*, and CBS News. When she visited the Wall Township EC's virtual meeting, the Commission invited her to make a creation for one of their nature trails. Robin uses twigs, tree limbs and whatever assets the woods provide, in addition to twine and some rope in bringing her creation to fruition. While residents may consider these items as refuse, Robin sees her work as using the environment's 3 Rs – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. The installation of Annabelle the Dragon encourages people to visit Wall Township's Community Park Self- Guided Nature Trail to enjoy taking pictures of the dragon, to walk the trail and learn about the history of Wall's earlier settlers, and to learn about the environment. This nature-based and nature placed art installation is a wonderful benefit that everyone in the community can enjoy while also taking advantage of the historical and environmental education opportunities the trail provides.

Honorable Mention

Zero Waste Program

The Bordentown Environmental Commission has been focused on a zero-waste program, using various zero waste collection boxes from Terracycle and participating in the Trex Challenge. So far, they have collected more than 1,100 pounds of plastic film for the Trex Challenge and almost 400 pounds of oral care products like toothbrushes and snack bags. Their efforts so far have resulted in 1,500 pounds of plastic being kept out of the waste stream.