

Ewing Township Green Team 2019 Annual Sustainability Report

Executive Summary

2019 was another year of singular accomplishments in sustainability for Ewing Township and its Green Team. This past November Ewing was certified in the [Sustainable Jersey](#) (SJ) program for the 3rd time overall and for the 2nd at the SILVER level. Of the 453 [Sustainable Jersey](#)-registered municipalities in New Jersey, Ewing is one of only 53 communities that have attained recognition at the SILVER level. As a side note, our SJ points totaled 510, our highest yet and the 9th highest in the state.

In addition, the Team secured a \$1500 Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions grant to create a pollinator garden at the entrance to the Ewing Senior and Community Center. And, at the same time, we partnered with Mercer County in the beginning phases of planting two wildflower meadows on Ewing public lands.

These accomplishments reflect the

efforts of the team to continue to build on previous years' efforts and plans. Our [Strategic Plan](#), developed during our 2014 /2015 Community Visioning, continues to guide our efforts in building a healthy and sustainable community. This is supplemented by actions in the Sustainable Jersey certification program.

This Annual Sustainability Report is the Green Team's primary means of reporting on its progress in accomplishing the key goals identified in the [Strategic Plan](#) and in pursuit of our [Sustainable Jersey](#) certification. We look forward to growing our relationships with local and regional partners and to involving more individuals, businesses and community organizations in our efforts to shape a more sustainable future for our community.





The primary activities of the EGT during 2019 were the completion of the actions and write-ups necessary to finalize our submission for Sustainable Jersey certification by early September. The bar was high. Three years ago in 2016, we not only achieved SILVER level with 450 points, but were also named a Sustainability Champion (the municipality with the highest point count) for medium-sized municipalities. Since that time, municipalities in our size range have been upping the bar and point tallies in the 600+ range have not been un-

sual.

Working in cooperation with staff from a number of Ewing Departments and numerous outside Township boards and organizations, we began finalizing our actions and completing the writeups thereof by the end of May. June 2nd was the first submission deadline. By early September we had gotten credit for most of our actions and resubmitted for those actions we believed we could complete. By the November awards we had accumulated 500 points and were eventually awarded another 10 points for a



grand total of 510 points in a total of 46 actions in 16 categories. As noted earlier, ours is the 9th highest point tally in the state.

Our full certification report is available on the Sustainable Jersey website at [Ewing Community Certification Report](#).

Action Overview

A sampling of the new actions for which we received credit this certification round include:

- Promotion of wildlife through the **Animals in the Community** action. This includes our Gardening for Wildlife education and registration in the National Wildlife Federation program. We also submitted for actions managing the feral cat population completed by EASEL.
- Ewing also received numerous credits for promotion of the Arts and

Culture.

- **Emergency Communications Planning** and **Vulnerable Populations Identification for Emergencies** are new areas for which we received credits for work Ewing was already doing.
- Our 2018 Ewing **Township Welcome Booklet** was another new effort for which we received credit as an innovation & Demonstration Project
- In the area of Natural Resources we received credit for **Water Conservation Education** and a **Tree Hazard Inventory** completed by forester Bill

Brash in conjunction with the Emerald Ash Borer grant from a number of years ago.

- And finally, we received 55 out of a possible 75 points for efforts improving communication to the public. These include: **Improving Public Engagement in Municipal Government** and **Planning and Zoning**, to updating and maintaining a **Municipal Communications Strategy**, **Digitizing Public Information**, and promoting **Online Municipal Public Service Systems**.



The EGT redoubled its efforts to build a more connected community and create events for local businesses in 2019 and we were very pleased with the results. A primary request by residents during the Community Visioning in 2014 was that of creating more ways to come together in informal fun settings to promote community relationships and to create vibrant events for local businesses. A number of our events focused on just that.

New and improved this year was our annual Scarecrow event held at the ESCC. In collaboration with the [Arts Commission](#), [Art Has No Boundaries](#), a group of citizen volunteers, and Recreation Director Ted Forst, we planned for month-long autumn scarecrow fun with an **All-Around Town Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt** in October in addition to our annual contest.

Spear-headed by EGT members Lisa Feldman and Joanne Mullowney, planning began in July to recruit Ewing businesses to create scare-

crows and display them on their properties for Ewing residents, workers, and students to hunt down and complete a ballot for a drawing to win our grand prize of \$200.

We couldn't have been more delighted with the results. Thirty-four businesses signed on to build scarecrows. Early on, we were uncertain of how much public interest there would be, but feedback came trickling in. From teachers working together after work to hunt down the clues, Elks members, both family and student groups, and to discus-

sions on Facebook, the response was wildly in favor. More than 75 families and groups participated and were entered into a drawing for the grand prize at the annual Trunk or Treat event. The best feedback of all was the stated assumption by many that **NEXT** year they would better understand how the hunt worked and be better prepared to find all of the scarecrows!





Ewing Fall Spin

For the third year running, the annual Ewing Fall Spin served as the kick off event for Ewing Township's annual Community Fest held this year on September 21st.

The weather was glorious and the riders departed from Campus Town for a 12 mile tour of Ewing sites of interest thoughtfully compiled by the bike team organizers.

Feedback was definitely favorable and riders commented positively

about the police escort, the opportunity to enjoy Ewing by bike with others as well as the camaraderie and community spirit.

Every year event proceeds are donated to a charity of the organizing committee's choice. This year's selected charity was [HomeFront](#). A check for \$990 was presented to a [HomeFront](#) representative at the December 10th Township Council meeting.

Thanks go to Event Chair Garry

Keel, Pete Boughton, Joe Mirabella, Mark Wetherbee, Joanne Mullowney, Steve Czelusniak, Robert Kirby, and Patrice Coleman-Boatwright. Special thanks are also owed to Recreation Director Ted Forst for his collaboration and unfailing support though months of organizing.



Goals

- ⇒ Promote healthy lifestyles
- ⇒ Raise awareness of bike safety
- ⇒ Raise awareness for the need for a more bikeable Ewing.
- ⇒ Create a stronger, better connected community.





Beautify Ewing

This year's annual **Through the Garden Gate Tour** was held on June 22nd and 23rd. The event was run, once again, in collaboration with local Girl Scout Troop #70138 and the [West Trenton Garden Club](#) under the leadership of Chair, Joanne Mallowney.

The tour showcased sixteen gardens, new additions and old. Two gardens featured butterfly houses, allowing tour goers an up close walk among our native butterflies and exciting opportunities to learn more. They all exemplified

the best of gardening practices. Some were **National Wildlife Federation** certified and most followed sustainable landscaping practices.

The tour started at the Ewing Senior and Community Center and highlighted the pollinator garden in the building's central courtyard. In its second season, visitors were treated to the second year "creeping" in progress. The EGT looks forward to highlighting the garden next year, when we will look for the leap! We were very pleased at the turnout as our share of the profits went to fund

Scarecrow event prizes in October.

We also worked in cooperation with the Ewing Community Gardens Association to promote community gardening at Ewing's Community Gardens on Whitehead Road Ext.

Our goal remains building a community of gardeners, educated to the need for sustainable gardening and landscaping practices while working to create a more beautiful and connected Ewing Township.

Old Garden Adage

"The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap."

(Referring to the growth of garden plants)



Through the Garden Gate Tour



Arts and Culture

The EGT's Arts subcommittee, capably and passionately led by Lisa Feldman, persisted in its efforts to find new opportunities to introduce 'the arts' into Ewing's culture and, with an expansion of creative activities and new collaborations, 2019 was a very successful year.

In June we held a public meeting to inspire more residents of Ewing to get involved, which, BTW, earned us SJ points. About 35 people attended which was very encouraging. Ideas and positive energy

discussions flowed and we came away from the meeting with hope with new possibilities.

From this meeting we did create a new 'sub-committee' that included new members of the public as well as from established Ewing groups such as the [Ewing Arts Commission](#), [Art Has No Boundaries](#) and the local non-profit [1867 Sanctuary](#). This group was instrumental in planning the new and very successful **All Around Town Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt** (mentioned earlier).

In addition, the EGT's *Through the*

Garden Gate Tour featured a number of Ewing artists at various gardens on the tour "en plein air." This was great exposure for local artists and added an exciting new dimension to the already colorful scenery.

The [Arts Committee](#) also participated in the planning of Ewing's Community Fest with a stated goal of increasing 'the arts' presence at the event. Unfortunately, few artists were represented at the event and this remains an area with room for improvement.

Goals

- ⇒ Boost community spirit and self-image
- ⇒ encourage joint collaborations which helps promote multiple causes at the same time
- ⇒ increase civic participation through celebrations, creating new connections
- ⇒ promote interaction in public spaces



Ewing Arts Meeting



Education and Outreach

The Ewing Green Team continued to focus on educating the Ewing residents on topics relating to sustainability as they were a major component of the goals articulated in our 2015 Green Team Strategic Plan. We did this through a variety of outreach means. In 2019 these included:

- **TABLING**

A regular EGT outreach activity. The EGT is a regular fixture at **National Night Out** in August, **Community Fest** in September, and the [Mercer Green Fest](#) in March. During these events we continued our outreach to the community about recycling. Our **Trash Toss** game continued to be a very successful method of recycling education. The EGT is also a regular presence at the Township Shred Days and uses

that event as an opportunity to pass out information on a variety of topics.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL INSIGHTS SERIES**

In addition, we offer programming through our *Environmental Insights Series* where we have initiated a public conversation about critical environmental issues. In 2019 we offered: ***Gardening for Stormwater and Wildlife: How to Build a Rain Garden, Wild About Ewing! Gardening for Wildlife in the Suburban Landscape, and Gardens with Buzz*** (Note Naturalist Mary Anne Borge from Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve in the photo on the right) to support our Gardening for Wild-

life education and outreach. There seems to be a lot of interest in these topics and attendance was excellent! TCNJ English Professor and wildlife gardener Glenn Steinberg (pictured on the following page) and EGT Chair, Joanne Mallowney gave two presenta-





Promoting Wildlife and Biodiversity

tions during the year on the ***Gardening for Wildlife in the Suburban Landscape*** program at the Ewing Library in February and for the West Trenton Garden Club in early September.

- **POLLINATOR GARDEN AT THE ESCC**

During the ESCC Pollinator Garden planting event, Chair Joanne Mallowney also ran a brief program for the volunteers highlighting the plants selected and explaining the wildlife value of each.

- **SOCIAL MEDIA**

We maintained regular electronic outreach to Township residents via Facebook; the **Ewing Green Team** website, a sister site for the **Ewing Community Gardens** Committee,

the **Ewing Recycles** website and our **Wild About Ewing** website. Communication via Facebook is particularly robust and our followers have been increasing with regularity.

- **E-NEWSLETTERS**

We also continued sending regular electronic newsletters to our mailing list. In 2019 we sent out 9 newsletters on a wide array of topics. We currently have 1038 subscribers. Our open rate is averaging at about 30% which is well above the industry average of 20%.





Natural Resources

Preservation and conservation of open space, forests, wetlands and historic sites are important elements of any approach to community sustainability. The EGT works to affect positive changes to the natural environment through actions to protect and increase the tree canopy and to educate Ewing residents about the importance of this critical natural resource. We promote sustainable landscaping practices to protect biodiversity and vanishing wildlife. The Garden Tour and the Community Gardens contribute additional benefits to this action area.

Arbor Day

The [Ewing Environmental Commission](#) and Green Team once again held a joint Arbor Day Celebration. It was held at Drake Farm Park on April 27th and two Princeton Elms, one contributed by Ewing Township, and the other, donated by GT and EC members, were planted on the drive as a living memorial to the service of our two boards. Landscape architect Dan Burke contributed a work crew to do the planting. Evan Crumiller coordinated the event

and arranged for a bronze plaque on site. Since rainfall was again plentiful, the trees appeared to thrive during the season. Hosting an Arbor Day celebration is one of the requirements for becoming a [Tree City USA](#). The EGT also added its voice to that of the Environmental Commission in advocating for a Tree Ordinance in Ewing.

Wild About Ewing

The Team also continued its efforts to educate and advocate for wildlife through our [Wild About Ewing](#) committee, teaching gardeners to landscape sustainably and to value wildlife contributions. We held three well attended programs for homeowners. We have also begun a point climb in our effort to be recognized as a Community Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation.

Pollinator Habitat Initiatives

In September, we planted another pollinator garden, this time in front of the ESCC,

with funding from a \$1500 ANJEC grant. We were fortunate to have the assistance of a large number of community volunteers. And finally, the two wildflower meadows on Ewing Public Lands, a joint project with Mercer County, were seeded in late fall. Heavy rainfall had delayed the seeding earlier in the planting season so we were most pleased to see the seeding accomplished. In Spring 2020 we will look to see the first results. It takes about three years for meadow plants to fully come into their own, but we are on our way!





Protecting Our Waters

April Stream Cleanup

Every spring, in celebration of Earth Day, [The Watershed Institute](#) in Pennington runs annual stream cleanups in local communities. Upon receipt of the invitation we jumped at the chance to make this happen in Ewing. The [Watershed Institute](#) has been conducting cleanups since 2007 removing over 118,000 pounds of trash from local rivers and streams and we welcomed the opportunity to partner with them.

Statistics show that rivers and streams provide 65% of our nation's drinking water. Our goal was not only to improve the health of a local waterway for ourselves, but to make the stream a safer, healthier place for wildlife. We wanted to remove Ewing's share of the millions of tons of trash that end up in our nation's rivers and streams every year. Additionally, we hoped to clean up an eyesore in the

community and raise awareness of the problem of litter in town.

This action was ably headed up by volunteer Donna Morgan (2020 new EGT appointee), who worked with Watershed staff to determine the location in town most needing of a cleanup. It was quickly determined that the West Branch of the Shabakunk Creek by the Home Depot more than fit the bill. And so the call went out to solicit volunteers for the event.

The event ran on Saturday morning, April 6th, from 9 – 11 am. Over 40 volunteers turned out and we collected 3400+ pounds of trash. Unfortunately, we won the prize for the largest tonnage collected during The Watershed's spring cleanups this year. However, this was a site

that had not been treated to a cleanup in the past and we are hopeful that in future, the haul from the site will be much lessened. Much work remains to be done to partner with Home Depot in prioritizing the need for keeping both the surrounding property and stream clean and clear of debris.





Waste is one of the most difficult issues facing our community when it comes to sustainability. From creating waste, to disposal of all types of wastes, to recycling, the impact of waste on our environment and our economy is enormous. The GT continues to spend considerable effort in education and outreach to residents about the extent of the problem and how to recycle correctly. We offer our fun **Trash Toss** game at public events such as **Community Fest** and **National Night Out** to work with residents on a one on one basis. This enables participants to ask their recycling questions as they try to decide what goes into the recycling can versus the garbage can. We have found the amount of confusion around recycling issues to be amazing, yet not unique to our town.

October Fall Festival

We also added the **Trash Toss** game to the October **Trunk or Treat** event where our recycling guru, Heidi Furman, also collected candy wrappers for donation to the Terracycle's Zero Waste candy and snack wrappers recycling campaign. We would love to find a way to do this on a larger scale and a more regular basis.

The EGT's annual **Scarecrow Contest**, which exemplifies "upcycling" to create art, is also concluded during the **Trunk or Treat** event. This event has run for the past 6 years and promotes creativity in using our recyclables to create unique and fun scarecrows, suggesting that some items can have a whole new life and purpose.

Shred Days

Additionally, we still regularly volunteer at the Township's Shred Days each year. This is our opportunity to connect with residents and hand out informational flyers on topics of seasonal interest. These might be about topics such as grasscycling, gardening for wildlife, invasive plants, spring and autumn landscaping tips.





Direct Install

The Green Team continued its outreach to local businesses about programs to help them reduce their energy consumption. We focused on [Direct Install](#), a program for small to medium-sized local businesses developed and supported by the [New Jersey Bureau of Public Utilities](#), and its [Clean Energy Department](#) which offers up to 70% in funding grants to encourage them to upgrade their facilities to reduce energy consumption.

The program is an excellent value and we are puzzled that more small businesses do not take advantage of it. We, as well as other members of the [Mercer County Sustainability Coalition](#), have held informational events about the program and been mystified about the lack of interest from the business community. According to the [NJPBU](#) and the [Clean Energy Program](#), only 4 small businesses in Ewing took advantage of the program in 2019.

As a result of these disappointing figures, we decided to change up our outreach. Using funds from a \$10K MCSC grant from [Sustainable Jersey](#),

we decided to create "Direct Install Stories," a series of videos, featuring business owners who successfully participated in the DI Program and were willing to share their stories. This would, we hoped, enable businesses to learn about the program from those who directly benefited from it from the convenience of their homes or businesses, while not sacrificing work time.

2019 was spent in finalizing our needs for the video series: putting out an RFP for a videographer, selecting our choice from the applicants, choosing a DI small businessman to represent each town, and finally, and to determining what were the major points that needed to be conveyed in each Direct Install Story. And, as this report is being written, the first drafts of Ewing's Direct Install videos have been created and are under review. We look forward to sharing them in the very near future.

GT member John Hoegl heads the Energy Committee. Other members include Mark Wetherbee, Garry Keel, Evan Crumiller, and Pete Boughton.

Green Business Recognition Program

The Green Team is pleased to report that we welcomed two new members into our Ewing family of recognized Green Businesses in 2019: Home Front, an organization that works to break the cycle of poverty among the most vulnerable members of our community, and Surface Technology Inc, a small business that manufactures special coatings for metal processing equipment. Both embrace environmental sustainability in their daily management practices, installing roof top solar arrays and energy efficient lighting, among other practices. Both also took advantage of savings realized from the Direct Install program.

We have already begun accepting applications from local businesses and look forward to welcoming a third class of Green Businesses in the future. Thanks to EGT member Evan Crumiller for overseeing this effort.



Learn more at ewinggreenteam.org

Respectfully Submitted By
Joanne Mallowney
for the 2019 Ewing Green Team

2019 OFFICERS & BOARD

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Kylie King—Student Ambassador
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Our thanks....

None of the accomplishments that we have discussed on these pages would have been possible without the active support from Ewing Township officials. We are very grateful to Mayor Bert Steinmann and Township Business Administrator Jim McManimon who have been key partners in helping us attain our goals. Member of the 2019 Township Council: Kevin Baxter, Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, David Schroth, Sarah Steward, and Kathy Wollert have also lent their unfailing support for our actions. In particular, we wish to recognize Recreation Director Ted Forst, who has also worked with us to complete a number of important projects such as the bike ride, the Scarecrow event, the pollinator garden as well as other actions.

In our quest for this year's SILVER certification, we also owe thanks to



the Health Department staff, Kristen Reed and Teri Vacirca; IT Director, Robert Green; Emergency Management staff Michael Narducci and Julia D'Amico; and Finance Department staff member Carol Kohler.

We also thank numerous other boards, committees and organizations in town with whom we partnered to complete activities including, but not limited to, the Ewing Environmental Commission, the Arts Commission, the Planning Board, the Ewing Township Historic Preservation Society, the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Art Has No Boundaries, the West Trenton Garden Club, and the folks at the EASEL Animal Rescue League.