

## AUGUST 2016 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



### JOANNE MULLOWNEY Co-Chair, Ewing Green Team

From gardeners, to business owners, to artists, bikers and her next-door neighbors, Joanne Mallowney is on a mission to build a stronger, more vibrant community through the power of sustainability. As co-chair of the Ewing Green Team and a member of the Environmental Commission and Mercer County Sustainability Coalition, Joanne strives to deliver on the issues that matter most to her town. Why does she volunteer? Joanne answered, “I have three children and three grandchildren and I don’t want to miss the mark on what I think may be the biggest challenge of my generation, creating a more sustainable world. I hope to leave the world a better place and set a good example through my actions.” Known as dependable and fiercely committed to the cause, Joanne is meeting her goals and making a difference in Mercer County.

**Ewing Green Team achieves Sustainable Jersey certification:** With the advent of the Sustainable Jersey program, the Ewing Green Team was established in 2009 by municipal resolution. The team consists of 12 community members and three Ewing Township representatives, including a member of Ewing Town Council, the business administrator and a staff representative. In 2013, Sustainable Ewing achieved Sustainable Jersey certification at the bronze-level; read the [Ewing Township Certification Report](#).



Joanne works collaboratively with her Ewing Green Team Co-Chair, Michael Nordquist. She is quick to point out the strength of their partnership, “I can’t say enough about Michael Nordquist; he’s an invaluable asset to the community and Ewing Green Team. It has worked well to share responsibilities and collaborate.” The team has improved sustainability in Ewing in a variety of ways including increased and improved community garden space, energy audits of municipal buildings, installation of LED lighting, maintenance and improvement of Township trails and open space and numerous waste recycling efforts. The Ewing Green Team submitted an application and exemplar action documentation for Sustainable Jersey certification at the silver-level; the application is currently under review.

**Web-based communication tools strengthen the Ewing Green Team:** Joanne also serves as the Ewing Green Team communications/IT officer and creates the communications: [Ewing Green Team website](#), [Ewing Recycles website](#), [electronic newsletter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) (@EwingGreenTeam). These exemplary communications provide a valuable service to the sustainability efforts in Ewing. Joanne shares the green team activities internally with the township boards and commissions through presentations at meetings and she helped develop a comprehensive [2015 Ewing Green Team Annual Report](#).

Joanne said, “Anyone seeking information about advancing sustainable behaviors and initiatives today expects to be able to find the up-to-date information on-line. It’s imperative that green teams use web-based tools to facilitate discovery of our messages and encourage participation. Green teams, which embrace a learning culture of adapting to change and learning new things, need to be sure to include technology in that mix.”

**Visioning process results in strategic plan:** “Following Ewing’s bronze-level Sustainable Jersey certification in 2013, we decided to take stock before moving forward,” Joanne explained. In 2014, a group of 50 people from Ewing came together

for a conversation. Community members, township staff and elected officials took time out on a Saturday to have a discussion about Ewing's sustainable future. The strategic planning process helped grow the green team and align the priorities with the community's interests.

The visioning and plan was made possible with a \$10,000 Sustainable Jersey Small Grant funded by PSEG Foundation. The strategic plan is a culmination of input from the visioning, green team meetings, online surveys and interactions with Township administration and boards. The plan details the goals, identifies the practical actions necessary to achieve them and outlines strategies for continuing to grow organizational capacity. The Ewing Town Council passed a resolution in support of the Vision and Strategic Plan on May 24, 2016. Read the [Ewing Township Sustainable Green Team Strategic Plan](#).



Joanne said, "We have a clear vision and mission for the coming years and have begun implementing the recommended actions. We learned that working collaboratively with organizations with similar interests is important. We work with the Ewing Environmental Commission, Arts Council, Historic Preservation Society, Girl Scouts, West Trenton Garden Club and our neighboring sustainability organizations. Collaboration is helping us to meet the goals of our strategic plan while expanding our reach within town and the county."

**Promoting a more bikeable Ewing with 9/24 Fall Spin:** A large contingent of visioning participants felt that improved bike infrastructure was necessary to prepare Ewing for a sustainable future. Joanne said, "In response to the strategic plan, we focused on supporting biking infrastructure."

Green team members, led by former Ewing Green Team Chair Pete Boughton, organized a Ewing Fall Spin in October 2015. The successful ride was intended to garner the public support needed to move forward an agenda of building a network of bike friendly trails and roads, while also engaging residents in healthy lifestyles and nurturing awareness of bicycle safety. At the same time, the Ewing Bike Advocacy Group was formed to further cycling goals. The group meets monthly and includes avid cyclists in town, TCNJ students and an advisor from Greater Mercer Transportation Management.



Numerous partnerships contributed to the success of this initiative. Ewing Township coordinated registrations through the Ewing Recreation Department, provided facilities for the kick off and end point, event insurance, police support for ride safety and the services of the Township planner. The Mercer County Department of Transportation, a local bike shop, the Historical Society and the newly formed Cultural Center also contributed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Spin is planned for September 24, 2016; make sure to pre-register [here](#).

**Identifying Ewing's creative assets:** The Ewing Green Team and Arts Commission are partnering to compile an inventory of Ewing's creative assets. The goal is to create a directory of cultural, historic, natural, creative and human resources, including local artists, businesses, cultural activities and events, buildings/venues and arts and community organizations in Ewing. A Ewing Creative Assets Community Resource Guide will be developed as a one-stop source for all community-oriented people, places, or events. Ewing artists are asked to complete the [Arts Survey](#).

**Accomplishing more through the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition:** Joanne is on the steering committee and is an active participant in regional sustainability efforts through the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition. This county-wide coalition of green teams and sustainability organizations aims to address environmental concerns that span municipal borders. Joanne has been a central figure in the formation and institutionalization of the organization and helped create and support the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition [website](#), [Twitter](#) (@SustainableMer) and [Facebook](#). The Coalition is one of seven regional sustainability hubs around the state supported by Sustainable Jersey. “The Ewing Green Team sees numerous advantages from our participation. It makes sense to promote sustainability and tackle issues together since environmental issues know no regional boundaries. By uniting, coalition members can become greater than the sum of our individual parts.”

Mercer County  
Sustainability  
Coalition



Joanne and the Ewing Green Team are involved in the organization of the Living Local Expo, the Mercer County annual green fair that is organized by a volunteer committee from the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition. The Expo brings a wide variety of resources each year to educate and inspire residents to live a healthy and sustainable life. In addition to partnering with the other sustainability organizations to solicit and obtain vendors, non-profits and other exhibitors, Joanne was responsible for the creation of the [Living Local Expo website](#) and for co-authoring “Tips for Greener Living.”

**Sustainable Jersey grant to address emerald ash borer threat:** Joanne is active in the awareness and educational campaign for the [emerald ash borer](#), a non-native insect pest that infests and kills all species of ash trees in the region. In 2016, Ewing Township received a \$20,000 Sustainable Jersey Small Grant funded by the PSEG Foundation to address the threat. Joanne said, “We’ll develop a partnership to manage the spread and removal of trees infected with the emerald ash borer on Ewing municipal lands. The grant includes partial replacement of 100 ash trees lost to the emerald ash borer. We’ll be working with New Jersey Certified Tree Expert Bill Brash to manage the grant. One of our goals is to develop a process that other New Jersey communities dealing with the pest can follow.”

**Ewing Garden Tour encourages beautification:** In June 2016, the Ewing Green Team held a garden tour to promote beautification, sustainability and youth development. The self-guided event, featured gardens throughout Ewing. Participants purchased a ticket and received a pamphlet containing the name of each garden, its location, as well as a brief description and a map. Approximately 20 gardens were in the tour including Joanne’s self-titled “Blood, sweat and tears” garden. There is a preview of the tour on line: [2016 Garden Tour](#). Girl Scout Troop 70138 and the West Trenten Garden Club collaborated with the green team to do this event and the partners are looking forward to an expanded tour in 2017.

**Education and profession prior to the Ewing Green Team:** Joanne received a BA in Classics from Douglass College in New Brunswick and a Masters in Library Sciences from Rutgers University in New Brunswick. She is a retired Information Technology Librarian with over 15 years of experience in technology training for the public. Joanne managed the East Brunswick Public Library website and oversaw the computer training programs. She was responsible for a significant expansion of the course offerings, creating the more than 30 classes offered.

**What you may not know about Joanne:** Joanne is a New Jersey native; she grew up in Middlesex County and has enjoyed living in Ewing for over 40 years with her husband Bill whom she met at Rutgers University. She has three sons named Edward, James and Paul and three granddaughters, Devin, Tierney and Logan. She loves gardening, a passion of hers since an early age, and her latest project is building a rain garden in her yard. In her spare time, Joanne enjoys researching her family’s genealogies and has travelled to Germany to meet family members that she found. She has traced her lineage to the 1700s but is still trying to confirm her possible link to William Hooper a member of the Continental Congress who signed the Declaration of Independence.