

JANUARY 2016 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



NATHAN CHARRON Environmental Education Coordinator HART Commuter Information Services

Since November 2013, Nathan Charron has served as the Environmental Education Coordinator for [HART Commuter Information Services](#). He promotes awareness of the environmental impacts of transportation in Hunterdon County.

For example, Nathan offers technical assistance to schools, municipalities and the business community to implement anti-idling awareness campaigns. He is responsible for the development of sustainable transportation curricula that is correlated to New Jersey Core Content Standards for classroom use in schools and organizations. He provides classroom education to K-12 students and spends a lot of time crossing the county to make presentations to local organizations, community groups and schools.

Sustainable Jersey connection: By providing technical assistance and encouragement to green teams, municipal representatives and schools in Hunterdon County, Nathan is helping towns and schools achieve Sustainable Jersey certification. Twelve Hunterdon municipalities are certified, with more in the wings working toward certification. Nathan said, "The Sustainable Jersey program provides the perfect framework for HART's assistance. A lot of what we do dovetails with the program and creates an entry point for meeting and then assisting towns and schools with these important environmental actions."

Nathan is currently working with ten municipalities: Alexandria Township, Clinton Town, Frenchtown Borough, Flemington Borough, High Bridge Borough, Holland Township, Kingwood Township, Lambertville City, Lebanon Township and Raritan Township. He is also helping four schools: Hampton Public School, High Bridge Elementary, Milford Public School and Thomas B. Conley Elementary.



As a Sustainable Jersey partner, he promotes and provides technical assistance to advance actions including, but not limited to: Anti-Idling Education and Enforcement, Community Education & Outreach, Education for Sustainability Programs, Green Challenges & Community Programs, Green Fairs, Safe Routes to School, Sustainable Community Plans and Sustainable Land Use Pledge.

Sustainable Jersey's Hunterdon County Hub: Nathan has been working with Sustainable Jersey to establish a regional hub to bring the green teams together on a regular basis. Nathan said he is focused on getting the hub officially launched in 2016 and is starting with a core group of the towns that are located throughout the same general area, are active in Sustainable Jersey, and are already connected through a common school district. The initial Hunterdon County Hub will include five towns: Alexandria Township, Frenchtown Borough, Holland Township, Milford Borough and Kingwood Township.

Anti-Idling campaign shows results: Vehicle idling produces harmful and unhealthy emissions. With Nathan's guidance, fourth grade students at High Bridge Elementary School took on the idling problem outside of their school. Students conducted an inventory of the number of vehicles idling and recorded how long each car idled. At the students' request, police issued warnings to parents idling their vehicles (see the [warning sample](#)). Students provided educational handouts to the drivers and information was sent home to all parents to inform them about the issues with idling. To ensure that the anti-idling message would continue, a "Design-a-Sign" contest was held where students submitted sign ideas, with students voting for their favorite entry. The selected sign was installed in the student pickup/drop off area.



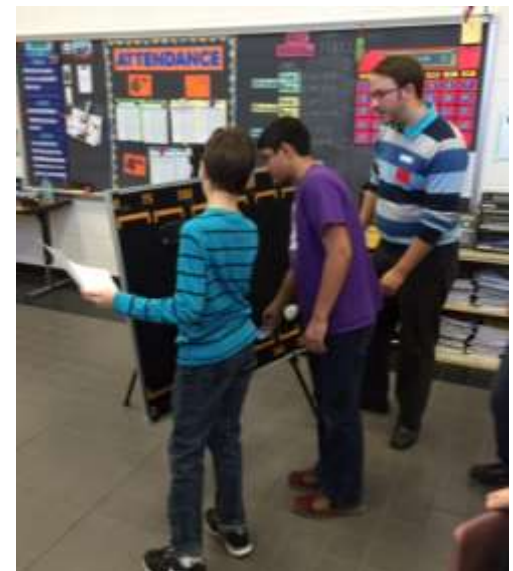
Nathan has recently finished assessing the results of the final survey, comparing them to the preliminary numbers, and the data shows a nine percent decline in the number of vehicles idling at the pick-up location at the school.

Watershed focus before transportation: For three years, Nathan served as a Watershed Specialist for the [North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development](#) program where he managed public education/awareness campaigns and was responsible for assessing the execution of restoration projects and implementation of adaptive management techniques to improve site sustainability. He got his hands dirty as he assisted in both wetland delineations and restorations and the collection of monitoring data, including plant transects, vegetative cover analysis, geomorphic data, soil sampling, and species counts. While in this position, he worked on the Musconetcong Watershed Management Plan, and the Walnut Brook Riparian Restoration program, as well as countless other programs to help improve water quality throughout the region.

Junior Solar Sprints program: Nathan is especially proud of the Junior Solar Sprints program in Hunterdon County. Junior Solar Sprints engages middle school aged students (grades 6-8) to design, build and race solar-powered model cars in regional competitions (county based). For the past four years, HART has participated in the program and has 14 schools in the program. After months of building, testing and experimentation, students from all schools converge on Kingwood Township School to compete for the fastest, most-innovative and best-engineered vehicles. Nathan added, "I am always amazed by the creativity and ingenuity of the students. Last year a participant added a special lens to his car to focus the sun on the solar panels. I am waiting for the year that a student designs a simple transmission."



Education that led him to his current position: Nathan was first inspired to major in the sciences by his high school biology teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington. After graduating from high school, Nathan went to Raritan Valley Community College where he received an Associate's degree in Education. He then attended Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey-New Brunswick and received a Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Ecology and Natural Resource Management. He also has an Environmental Protection Agency Watershed Management Certificate he earned from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Why sustainability matters: "Sustainability has an impact on everything we as humans do. It's important to take the time to think about how what we do impacts our community and the world in the future, not just for our generation but for future generations. I have seen a positive shift here in Hunterdon County; sustainability is catching on and is more tangible to people now. If someone is not motivated by the quality of life benefits, I also like to point out how these actions can improve the bottom line with cost savings. I am inspired because we

moved from nine certified communities to twelve certified communities in Hunterdon County, with every municipality but one being registered with the program.”

Advice for green teams getting starting: “One of the first things I like to tell a new green team is that they should just dive right into the program and get started on an action. The longer you think about it, the harder it is to get started. Just pick a few actions and get your team involved. After you get started, you will see the momentum and enthusiasm grow within the group.”

What is HART? HART is a nonprofit Transportation Management Association that works with local businesses, commuters, schools, and county/local governments to promote sustainable transportation throughout Hunterdon County. HART is funded in part by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, NJ Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, NJ TRANSIT, and the NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety. All HART programs and services are offered free of charge.



HART assistance available to towns and schools in Hunterdon County: HART can provide, through its [Sustainable Hunterdon](#) initiative, assistance to municipalities and schools in Hunterdon County in completing various Sustainable Jersey actions. Nathan noted that while HART specializes in a set of the actions, the staff is available to support a municipality or school in obtaining assistance in completing many of the other actions in the certification programs.



What you may not know about Nathan: In high school Nathan achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, which is the highest rank that a person can achieve within the Boy Scouts of America Organization. He lives in Milford, New Jersey with his wife Amy, his almost two-year old son, Clayton, and his two Siberian Huskies named Aurora and Pasha. Nathan and his family are avid campers and make sure to get out in the woods each summer. Bulls Island, a small forested island in Hunterdon County surrounded by the Delaware River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal, is a favorite destination for a day trip. Nathan likes to play and watch hockey, and loves to ride his Yamaha Stryker motorcycle.