

JUNE 2017 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



TRACEY WOODS

Chair, Maplewood Township Green Team (Essex County)

Tracey Woods has served as the chair of the Maplewood Township Green Team for a total of three years. She is a member of the Maplewood Township Sustainability Committee, the South Orange Maplewood School District Green Team, the [South Orange Maplewood Action](#) (SOMA Action) Environmental Committee, the Maplewood-South Orange-Millburn Green Teams (MAPSOMIL Green Teams) and the Sustainable Jersey Essex County Hub. She serves as the Trash Tacklers Coordinator for the [South Mountain Conservancy](#) and is a [Rent Party-BackPack Pals](#) volunteer. Maplewood Township is a silver-level certified Sustainable Jersey town and one of only seven municipalities participating in the [Sustainable Jersey Solar Challenge](#) program. Led by Tracey, Maplewood Township supported the first prize team for Sustainable Jersey's Coding for Community with the Waste of Energy program that addresses a chronic overheating problem in the South Orange and Maplewood School District.



Tenacious, smart and always positive, Tracey is an outgoing sustainability champion for her community. She has an affinity for network building and collaboration has been a key strength for the green team work in Maplewood. Tracey said, "I believe we are on the edge of great change. We need to help as many people move forward to be more resilient and sustainable. Honestly, I think it is important to think big—really big and then never let go of that vision. This outlook has fueled the Maplewood Green Team."

Sustainable Jersey silver-certified: Maplewood Township was one of the first 34 towns certified by Sustainable Jersey in 2009 and achieved silver-level certification in 2013 and 2016. Read the [2016 Maplewood Township Certification Report](#) to see all of the actions this town has completed. The 20-person green team includes volunteers and township officials. The group meets monthly and has an active outreach program with a newly updated website (<http://maplewoodisgreen.org>), [Facebook page](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). Tracey said the Maplewood Green Team is planning its annual green day which is scheduled for October 14, 2017. Maplewood Green Day is one of the most successful green fairs in New Jersey and Tracey led the event in 2002, 2003 and 2004. In the fall, Tracey will lead the newly formed green team technology committee that will look at how technology can improve sustainability in Maplewood. The focus on technology is a result of the team's involvement in Sustainable Jersey's Coding for Community contest. Tracey will also be a speaker at the [2017 New Jersey Sustainability Summit](#) as she helps present the winning project from the Coding for Communities competition.

Collaboration is a key to success: Maplewood Township received the Sustainable Jersey Collaboration Award in 2013 and 2016 for projects done with South Orange Village and Millburn. In 2015, Tracey was instrumental in starting the School District of South Orange and Maplewood (SOMSD) Green Team. All of the schools in the district participate in the district-wide green team and the resulting increase in sustainability programs and projects has been evident. Participants trace this success to collaboration. The schools work together on sustainability actions and also collaborate with the municipal Maplewood and South Orange green teams. The SOMSD Green Team was recognized with the 2016



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Collaboration Award for outstanding achievement resulting from collaboration with the municipal green teams. Three schools were certified with Sustainable Jersey for Schools in 2016.

Saving water through drip irrigation: Tracey is a local advocate for drip irrigation. She has installed and demonstrated the installation of drip irrigation in many local community and residential gardens including the South Orange Elks Rent Party garden which is a large vegetable garden that grows crops for local food pantries. Tracey worked with the school gardeners to install drip irrigation at Seth Boyden, Tuscan and Jefferson elementary schools. Tracey explained, “Drip irrigation reduces water use while increasing garden yield. Drip emitters are placed at the base of the plants so no water is lost to evaporation or run-off. The plants are watered by a timer, which makes it the ideal system for people who are away from the garden during the day.”



re:Yard community certification program: In collaboration with the Millburn and South Orange green teams, Maplewood developed [re:Yard](#), which is a community program that recognizes lawns, gardens and yards for being sustainable and reducing many of environmental impacts from standard yard care. To receive re:Yard certification, a yard earns points by satisfying requirements from credits within the re:Yard guidelines. The program includes 31 credits covering topics such as water efficiency, sustainable materials, composting and native plants. Tracey has organized demonstration events for the program including an eco-mower test drive held on the front lawn of Maplewood’s Town Hall. Information about sustainable yard care is shared on the [re:Yard Facebook page](#).



Essex Community Energy: Tracey championed the [Essex Community Energy](#) program which promotes New Jersey Clean Energy Program’s “Home Performance with Energy Star.” The Maplewood Green Team, in collaboration with the South Orange, Irvington and Millburn green teams developed the program for all of the Essex County Green Teams. The website is accessible to all partnering communities and offers a state approved list of energy auditors that serve in Essex County. The site lists their prices for energy audits and what the different audits include. The site narrows the list to contractors working in Essex County to keep it from being too daunting. The website offers a recommendation feature so that residents can recommend a contractor if they had a good experience. Tracey said, "Our mission is to help neighbors reduce their carbon footprint by learning about energy audits and the programs out there to help them get it done. Ultimately we want to reduce our town’s overall carbon emissions."



Adopt-A-Park Site program: Tracey developed and implemented the [Maplewood Adopt-A-Park Site program](#) in partnership with the green team and the Maplewood Department of Public Works. For this litter control program, the six public parks in Maplewood were divided into sites for adoption by individuals, families and small groups who commit to doing a litter collection at the site each month. The program works in concert with the large yearly cleanups that are already in place at some of the parks. Tracey said, “The Department of Public Works reports that there is less litter in the parks thanks to the program. The benefits of this program extend beyond the improved look of the parks to an improved community. If a park is clean and looks good, it becomes a community gathering point.”

Solving over-heating problem in schools: Led by Tracey, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood (SOMSD) and the Maplewood Green Team are working together on a multi-year action plan to address over-heating issues

in the schools. Because the school buildings are almost a century old, this project is a cost-effective way to achieve greater classroom comfort as well as energy savings. Tracey developed an on-line survey for school staff to report the heat conditions in their working spaces. The pilot school was able to see improvement as there was a one-third increase in the number of classrooms that reported the conditions as comfortable and a significant reduction in the number of windows open while the heat was on. Tracey said, "There was a bit of a learning curve for me on this one. To be able to talk to the facilities staff about boilers, I had to read a bunch of heating manuals that I got from the library and I quickly became obsessed with plumbing." She added, "The SOMSD administration and the schools have been great partners. After more than a year of working collaboratively, we are glad to see some positive returns." A \$10,000 Sustainable Jersey grant, funded by the Gardinier Environment Fund, will be used for the heat mapping and to make the needed adjustments. Tracey presented the project to technologists at the Sustainable Jersey Coding for Communities civic tech competition and the Maplewood Green Team partnered with Encore Dev Labs who developed custom-built units to report and track the temperature in the classrooms in real time. The units send alerts to the school administrators when the rooms exceed set temperatures or when a window is open while the heat is on. This project will be expanded to the other schools in the district in the fall and the green team hopes to have some energy savings numbers next year.



Save Our Reservation: In 2014, Tracey was on the organizing committee of a coalition of concerned citizens focused on protecting the historic South Mountain Reservation, a nature preserve that was threatened with the potential construction of a 75-foot high, 810-foot wide dam across the Rahway River. The US Army Corps of Engineers had proposed the dam for flood abatement. Tracey was instrumental in the outreach that helped stop the project from moving forward.

Studio art, sculpture and modelmaking: Tracey received a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Studio Art from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Sculpture from Queens College, the City University of New York. After graduating, Tracey worked as a tech in the Foundations Department at Parsons School of Design and then at Dinaburg Arts working on campaigns for Absolut Vodka and Saks Fifth Avenue. Tracey then moved to Joseph Hutchins and Company, Inc. where she was an architectural modelmaker.

What you may not know about Tracey: Tracey grew up in Adelphi, Maryland and Wilmington, Illinois; she has three sisters, one of which is her twin. Tracey resides in Maplewood with her husband Rich and her two sons Jasper (age 9) and Arlo (age 7). Tracey and her twin sister Kelly live five blocks apart from each other. Tracey participated in the Earth Day on the Washington DC Mall in 1990, which was the pivotal year when Earth Day went global, lifting environmental issues onto the world stage and then most recently, she marched again in Washington DC for the 2017 People's Climate March. With the participation of her husband, Tracey brings sustainability into her family's daily life. When she moved into her house in Maplewood, Tracey transformed a big grass lawn into a productive vegetable garden with the goal of producing one-third of her family's food in the backyard to offset their carbon footprint. They have done an energy audit and implemented the needed improvements. She will often leave the car at home and walk to a green team meeting and her son knows how to run a reservation clean-up like a seasoned pro. This summer, Tracey and her family are hoping to travel to North Carolina to visit the Appalachian Trail.

