

# OCTOBER 2016 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



## DAVID HESS Vice-Chair, Sustainable Moorestown (Burlington County)

With outstanding skills in process improvement and strategic planning from a 43-year career in industrial engineering, David Hess is the point person for managing the spreadsheets and keeping Sustainable Moorestown moving forward toward their goal of promoting social equity, economic vitality and environmental quality.

If he is not sorting tomatoes on his family farm, David is busy serving in his role as the Vice Chair of Sustainable Moorestown. David said, “My wife and I are active in the community because it’s important to give back. This work is a part of what makes our life whole. I want a more sustainable world for my family and community; volunteering with Sustainable Moorestown gets me closer to this goal.” David also spent ten years as a Board Member for the YMCA of Burlington County where he received the Distinguished Service Award.

**Farmer Dave and the Browning-Hess Farm:** David and his wife Debbie own the historic 42-acre [Browning-Hess Farm](#) which has been identified as the oldest working farm in Moorestown and has been in the family for seven generations. The farm produces Spring flowers, 25 varieties of heirloom tomatoes, four or five regular varieties of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, zucchini and yellow squash, cucumbers, cantaloupe, pumpkins and gourds in the fall and other vegetables. Crops are sold directly to the community through its Farm Market on Lenola Road. The farm was the 190th farm preserved in Burlington County under the County’s farmland preservation program. In 2010, the Moorestown Open Space Committee identified the Browning-Hess Farm as a candidate for farmland preservation and entered into an agreement with the Burlington County Freeholders to purchase the development rights of the Browning-Hess Farm where Moorestown would pay 20 percent of the purchase cost and Burlington County would pay 80 percent of the purchase cost.



## Moorestown Township achieves silver-level Sustainable Jersey certification:

Sustainable Moorestown is a volunteer organization comprised of Moorestown residents, small business owners and other stakeholders passionate about sustainability. David got involved four years ago, when the town held an introductory meeting to discuss the Sustainable Jersey program and participation in Moorestown’s Green Team. The initial chair of Sustainable Moorestown, in 2013, was Kathy Ward; she led the Sustainable Moorestown Green Team to its first bronze-level award as well as its first silver-level award in 2014. David credits the current chair of Sustainable Moorestown, Wolf Skacel, with managing the initiative to establish a Green Team sub-committee for Creative Assets in 2015 and being a great partner leading Sustainable Moorestown to its third silver-level award with an impressive 405 points earned: read the 2015 [Moorestown Township Certification Report](#).



David explained, “Sustainable Jersey has created a program to recognize initiatives that will encourage townships to promote sustainable actions to protect environmental resources, promote economic strength and promote community involvement

and diversity. The silver-level certification is a testament to the many active township committees and community organizations that support Moorestown programs.”

He highlighted the work of three committees: the Tree Committee, the Environmental Advisory Committee and the Arts Committee. Moorestown’s sustainability program includes: energy tracking and management, inventory and upgrade all buildings, brownfields inventory and prioritization, sustainable business outreach, complete streets inventory, fleet inventory, a sustainable land use pledge, a natural resource inventory and more. Notably, Moorestown Council passed an ordinance in 2015 creating Sustainable Moorestown as a standing township committee. For additional information, visit the Sustainable Moorestown [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Sustainable Moorestown is having its first “Sustainable Moorestown’s Sip N’ Chat” event on October 26 at the Harvest Seasonal Grill & Wine Bar. You can meet members of Sustainable Moorestown’s Green Team at the event.



**Moorestown Tree Committee:** David said, “The Moorestown Tree Committee has been a very active township committee for several years and is one of the finest in New Jersey.” The committee was initially an informal group of concerned citizens that would make routine recommendations to the Moorestown Township Public Works Department as well as the Moorestown Town Council. In time, the group’s goals evolved to include the creation of an ordinance for the protection of trees and then the development of an inventory of township trees. The inventory is a reference and guidance document for the Public Works Department to support the tree maintenance program, as well as to identify unpermitted tree removal incidents. Today, the committee is recognized as a key component of the Township’s environmental and sustainability efforts and continues as an important partnership of the public and private sectors to protect the tree population of Moorestown. David clarified, “The key is not to ask this committee for anything during the Philadelphia Flower Show; the committee members are actively involved in the event. Other than that, the sky is the limit.”

**Moorestown Creates:** Over the last two years Sustainable Moorestown created the Sustainable Moorestown Arts Committee. “By working with artists in our community, we’ve enlivened our work and have had some really lively events,” noted David. The committee recently changed its name to “Moorestown Creates!” This committee is a team of representatives from MooreArts, [Moorestown Business Association](#), Moorestown Library, Moorestown Township Public Schools, [Moorestown Theatre Company](#), Sustainable Moorestown, and [Perkins Center for the Arts](#). The committee’s focus is to form a stronger community of creative people living and working in Moorestown by connecting, advocating for and informing Moorestown’s artistic community and helping to develop its unified voice. The committee developed a 2-part [survey](#) as their first step in identifying the breadth of Moorestown’s artistic community and has conducted two public events during 2016. Don’t miss the Artist Studio Tour Event scheduled for October 22, 2016 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

**Moorestown Open Space Advisory Committee:** It is not by accident or chance that Burlington County has retained over 111,000 acres (approximately 22 percent of the total county land mass) of farmland. The continued existence of farmland and farmers in Burlington County is a result of sustained public and private efforts. Agriculture is recognized as an essential variable to the quality of life of all County residents. The Moorestown Open Space Advisory Committee, working with Sustainable Moorestown, actively seeks to identify properties in Moorestown that could be acquired for benefit of the community and seeks to identify farm properties that could be preserved as a component of their mission statement.

**Moorestown Community Gardens:** “Sustainable Moorestown’s work to develop and expand our community gardens is one of the most active initiatives for the green team and has become a key community identity element to Moorestown residents,” explained David. In January 2015, Sustainable Moorestown established a green team member position that serves

as a formal liaison between Sustainable Moorestown and the Moorestown School Board to promote initiatives of common interest as well as to encourage the development of formal Sustainable Jersey for Schools green teams. All six of the Moorestown schools are now participating.

Sustainable Moorestown partners with [Live Civilly](#) and the Moorestown School Board to promote participation in community gardens at Moorestown schools. Three garden beds at the Moorestown Upper Elementary School, created in 2013, were expanded in 2015 to include a history garden. Raised garden beds have also been established at the Mary Roberts Elementary School, the William Allen Middle School and the Baker Elementary School which features a rain garden. Teachers participate in Live Civilly Garden Workshops and a "One Garden-One Week" program coordinates maintenance of all these gardens. Farmer Dave keeps tabs on the school gardens by meeting periodically with school green team leaders. His suggestion to use non-toxic soapy water in the high school greenhouse was well-received by school administrators. All of the school gardens provide produce to support participating school cafeterias during the school year and surplus produce is routinely donated to local Moorestown Food Pantries, particularly during summer months when schools are not in session.



Sustainable Moorestown coordinated the planting of a roof garden on the Moorestown Town Hall roof and works with the Perkins Center for the Arts to create Growing Givers. In this program, children sow vegetable seeds and raise them to transplant size at which point they are donated to a Donation Garden where the vegetables are further grown and then harvested for donation to local food pantries and soup kitchens.



*The green team created a green roof on top of Moorestown Town Hall.*

**Education and career:** David has an MBA in Systems Analysis from Drexel

University and a B.A. in Psychology and Business Administration from Rowan University. He began his professional career as an industrial engineer with Oscar Mayer. He next worked for ten years at Wheaton Glass. David was the manager of material control/industrial engineering at General Electric for over three years and then spent seven years as the Okidata plant manager, managing up to 200 people. He spent six years at Alcan Packaging and ten years as a private consultant with Resources Global Professionals. Throughout all of these demanding jobs, David always had a hand in the family farm. He often worked over twenty hours on the farm in addition to his full time job.

**What you may not know about David:** David is a Jersey boy who has lived most of his life in Burlington County. He said, "I grew up with both sets of grandparents and a handful of aunts and uncles all in the same township. I had a lot of nearby places to visit when I was riding my bike." He credits his grandfather with passing on his entrepreneurial flair and his farming passion. David and his wife Debbie have three children and five grandchildren. Their oldest daughter, Jennifer and her husband Mike, live in Hokessin, Delaware and have three boys who love to help on the farm. Jennifer is an obstetrics and gynecology doctor. Bryan is their middle child; he is an infectious disease doctor at Jefferson Hospital. Bryan and his wife Rose, live with their daughter on the farm and have the distinction of representing the seventh family generation to live on the farm. David and Debbie's youngest daughter is named Becca and she lives in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania with her husband and four-month old son. David enjoys sailing, snow skiing and is a sports fan, his favorite teams are the Phillies and the Eagles. In their free time, the family likes to go to their beach house in Brigantine. David admitted he likes to check out the work of the Brigantine City Green Team. Who knows, maybe the Brigantine Green Team could use a seasonal member to get help get their certification to the silver-level!