

DECEMBER 2016 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



PATRICK J. MCDEVITT, JR. **Founder and Chair, Sustainable Monroe Township** **(Gloucester County)**

Coming from a large Irish Catholic family, Patrick McDevitt knows the importance of hard work, collaboration and putting community first. Patrick's good nature and enthusiastic leadership approach made him a natural fit for the chair of Sustainable Monroe Township. In 2016, after a few tries at getting certified, Monroe Township achieved Sustainable Jersey certification and was awarded the 2016 Sustainable Jersey Rookie of the Year award. The award recognizes green teams that overcome challenges by leveraging resources to achieve success.

Patrick admitted that there were times when the green team struggled with attracting volunteers and completing actions. He credits the core green team members, like [local business owner](#) Mary Lou Smith, for keeping the group moving forward and providing a place for the green team to meet. The green team rallied around the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Patrick cited a second quote, by Theodore Roosevelt, that guides him, it is: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." In his work leading the green team, serving on the environmental commission and in his employment in the solar industry, Patrick is creating a life that is true to his values while making the world a better place.

Monroe Township achieves Sustainable Jersey certification: Sustainable Monroe Township was formed in 2013 after Patrick suggested the township register with Sustainable Jersey. The township agreed, as long as Patrick would lead the effort. The Monroe Green Team is a volunteer organization of residents, business owners, school staff and municipal employees; the group has collaborated with the [Monroe Township Public Schools](#), the [Williamstown Sunrise Rotary Club](#) and the [Free Library of Monroe Township](#). To achieve certification, the green team completed and documented a number of sustainability actions including: energy audits of the municipal facilities, a community garden, safe routes to schools, a complete streets plan, raingardens, a wind ordinance, a sustainable land use pledge and an environmental assessment ordinance. To read about all of the actions achieved for certification, visit the [Monroe Township Sustainable Jersey Certification Report](#). Patrick leads the social media campaign and manages the sites for Sustainable Monroe, take a look and link to the Sustainable Monroe Township [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Pinterest](#) sites.



Tri-County Sustainability Alliance connects green teams: In the beginning, Patrick sought out mentors. He credits Lori Braunstein, the founder of Sustainable Cherry Hill and Chris Waldron, the Camden County Director of Sustainability, for helping him. Patrick is now active in the Sustainable Jersey Hub, the [Tri-County Sustainability Alliance](#), which serves green teams and townships in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties. Patrick said, "I learned that of Gloucester County's 24 municipalities, 18 were registered with Sustainable Jersey, and three were certified. I wanted Monroe Township to be the fourth one certified. I got in touch with Sustainable Jersey and this led to meetings with several other Environmental Commissions and green teams, with whom we continue to communicate and partner now." Fast forward



a few years, and Patrick is serving as the point of contact and mentor for the Gloucester County towns. The Monroe Green Team is hoping to mentor additional Gloucester County green teams to assist in achieving certification. Patrick mentioned, "Through our participation in Sustainable Jersey's Tri-County Sustainability Alliance, we were able to host a Sustainable Sips Networking event. This event, with three mayors and representatives from other towns in attendance, resulted in valuable contacts who assisted in implementing our actions for the Sustainable Jersey certification."

First annual green fair solidifies movement: Patrick is proud of the first annual [Monroe Township Green Fair-Farmers' Market-Shredding Event](#) that was held in October. He explained that the event entailed a lot of coordination, which required the green team to grow its relationships with the municipal government. The momentum and positive feedback that the event generated helped the green team achieve certification. Led by green team member, Beth Davis, the event included a farmers' market, green vendors, local music, a paper shredding truck, electric and hybrid cars, local environmental groups, energy saving programs, demos for healthy living and a rain barrel workshop. Working in cooperation with the Monroe Township Mayor's Office, the Department of Public Works, the Main Street Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Parks and Recreation and Clean Communities, the collaborative group planned a very successful event with about 24 vendors. Patrick said, "Hopefully this event will be the first of many green fairs to come. And, although we did not take actual participant counts, based on the reported amount of paper collected, 3,680 pounds, we're estimating between 100-150 people dropped off documents to be shredded."



Supporting local food makes sense in a community with local farms: With an area of 47 square miles and a population of almost 34,000 residents, Monroe Township is the second largest municipality in Gloucester County. Monroe Township has approximately 4,539 acres of land preserved through the Green Acres Program; 294 acres are preserved by Gloucester County Fish and Wildlife and another 128 acres has been preserved as a park by Gloucester County. Of Monroe Township's land, 18 percent is agricultural. Sustainable Monroe Township and the Monroe Township Environmental Commission have taken a lead role in promoting the local farms, farmers' markets and farm stands to the residents.



Patrick said, "Living in the Garden State provides a big benefit; we can buy fresh locally-grown produce, and when the availability is almost in your back yard, this becomes a no-brainer." Monroe Township has two organic farms ([Muth Family Farm](#) and [Savoie Organic Farm](#)) that offer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs and farm stands. Monroe has a family owned blueberry farm, Piney Hollow Farm, which has been growing blueberries since 1939, a fresh cut flower farm, [Muth Farm Flowers](#), and a pasture-raised chicken farm, [FAR Wind Egg Farm](#), that sells fresh eggs. Sustainable Monroe Township is also starting a community garden called [Williamstown Organic Community Garden](#), that Patrick is excited to promote and work in to develop his own green thumb. Green team members, Mary Ellen Muth of Muth Farm Flowers, and her husband Michael Sherfey, are both lifelong gardeners who have agreed to be the community garden mentors. Patrick said that the green team is looking forward to welcoming not one, but two new microbreweries to town in 2017.

Strong partnership with Monroe Township Schools: The Monroe Green Team includes teachers and volunteer members of the Williamstown Middle School Environmental Club. This partnership helped the town get certified in the municipal program and now all of the schools in the Monroe Township School District are registered and working toward certification in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program. Middle school science teacher, Janet Mead, and volunteer

Sandy Keen, a Rutgers Environmental Steward and Master Gardener, lead the environmental program at Williamstown Middle School. The student volunteers have accomplished many projects, such as creating gardens for native species, growing vegetables for the community, constructing portable habitats, making rain barrels and rain gardens to reduce erosion, building bird houses, improving recycling efforts and building fish ponds.

The Williamstown Middle School Environmental Club is for 5th through 8th grade students who give up half of their lunch period twice a week to work on the projects. Every year the students learn about the life cycle and migration of the Monarch butterfly. They hatch and release them and have established a patch of milkweed in one of the school courtyards. This year one of the larger raingardens, that was designed around a storm drain, was in need of updating and maintenance. With support from the Environmental Commission and Monroe Public Works Department, the ground was rototilled and prepared for a Monarch Waystation project. The green team oversaw the updating of the rain garden and the club is currently in the application process to have the waystation registered with Monarchwatch.org. Once certified, the site will be included in the International Monarch Waystation Registry, an online listing.



Ukraine, Clan McDevitt and Solar City: Patrick is a logistics professional with over 15 years of experience in all facets of supply chain management. He spent 11 years as a dialysis buyer for Lourdes Health System where he purchased all of the equipment and supplies for the inpatient and outpatient dialysis units that performed over 1,000 treatments a week. While in this job, Patrick made a connection with a local group that collected medical supplies to bring to needy hospitals in Ukraine. Patrick provided supplies and the partnership turned into ten years of Patrick travelling to Ukraine each year on exchange trips with medical supplies. Patrick worked with the Children’s Hospital in Lviv, the largest city in western Ukraine, where many of the patients were children affected by Chernobyl. This international experience was a transformative time for Patrick, he said he learned to value the resources we have in the United States and to see the lasting health effects of ecological disasters.



Patrick spent six years at home raising his four children. Patrick said, “For Clan McDevitt, I was the chief cook and bottle washer, chef, manager, chauffeur, tear wiper, network administrator, homework supervisor, screen time monitor and backpack checker.” When he returned to work, Patrick served as a communications coordinator for a turf and irrigation company. It was in this job that he started hearing about Sustainable Jersey and decided to get involved. In 2014, in an effort to align his personal values with his employment, Patrick’s job search led him to a position at [Solar City](#) where he currently serves as an inspection coordinator. Patrick said, “New Jersey is a supportive state for solar. I enjoy being part of the team that helps people switch to solar energy which directly contributes to lessening our contribution to climate change. Our recent merger with [Tesla](#) enables consumers to now consider a solar roof, batteries for storing solar power and the highest rated electric car lineup in the world.”

What you may not know about Patrick: Born and raised in Collingdale, Pennsylvania, Patrick’s father worked hard as a railroad employee while his mother raised her five children and juggled various outside jobs as well. Patrick attended 12 years of Catholic school that he credits among other things, with fostering his focus on serving the community. Although not called sustainability, he says his mother was an expert in re-use and stretching the budget to make ends meet. Patrick said that not much was taken for granted in his household. For the past 13 years, Patrick has lived in Williamstown (Monroe Township) with his four children, Colin (age 9), Declan (age 12), Aidan (age 14) and Brenna (age 16) and likes to spend free time with them.