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## News & Information

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### Montclair Drives Ahead: Sustainable Jersey Awards \$25,000 to Montclair for Electric Car Charging Stations; Livingston, Maplewood and West Orange Also Receive Awards

By Rikki N. Massand

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MONTCLAIR, NJ - Montclair, Livingston, Maplewood, and West Orange were among the Essex County winners of the 2010 Sustainable Jersey Small Grants Program announced on Tuesday at the Montclair Municipal Building.

Montclair's approach to sustainability will come in the form of electric vehicle plug-in stations around town, promoting environmentally-friendly vehicles as more models are set to appear in the car marketplace over the next decade.

"To me it's a way of attracting attention and through that being able to change people's perceptions," said Jerry Fried, Mayor of Montclair, jubilant about the opportunity to blaze a trail towards a greener planet.

Fried acknowledged that during this economy, funding for municipal efforts is scarce due to limited state and federal resources. He mentioned his experience on a recent trip to Wuhan, China, which is instituting an electric car charging program with about 250 new stations. Mayor Fried pointed out that unlike U.S. municipalities, Wuhan did not need a grant to do it given its governmental setup and current economic climate.

Speaking about the "charge" coming to Montclair, Fried felt most compelled by the theoretical changes that could follow.

"It's an innovative program that also makes a human connection for what a person can do – giving a visceral feeling of how they're participating. A couple of electric cars can make a big difference in the way a community feels about itself. Seeing an electric car puts a smile on people's faces. We have a lot of Priuses in town and we hope to have a lot of [Nissan] Leafs and other electric vehicles."

Fried took the mission a step further, from the local roads to the turnpike.

"We know in order to create a sustainable world we have to create sustainable communities. We know [in NJ] we're the most densely populated state in the country and we hope to be the most sustainable state."

Cindy Randazzo, Director of the Office of Local Government Assistance for the New Jersey DEP, told the audience that Montclair's innovative electric vehicle program fell right in line with issues DEP Commissioner Bob Martin spoke of back in June when he announced New Jersey's prominence as one of 11 states, along with the District of Columbia, that created the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI). In June Martin promoted the TCI as including efforts to reduce greenhouse gases and provide future benefits to the state by reducing air pollution and generating a new state economy around electric vehicles, even creating green jobs if the industry expanded locally. Martin had said addressing air pollution is vital to New Jersey, citing problems with ozone, particulate matter and air toxins.

Montclair had a second green initiative to celebrate on Tuesday, as the town marked the first new school built in Montclair in fifty years – the Charles H. Bullock School on Washington Street.

"It's the family magnet but the theme is really environmental sustainability. They actually have a composter similar to the one Chatham Township has proposed," he said.

The state provided \$4.8 million towards construction of the Bullock School while another grant of \$78,000 contributed to its construction. The building is revolutionary in its use of geothermal and solar heating and cooling, complete with solar panels. Inside it features blocks formed with recycled green and brown glass, and pieces of marble. The school's architect made use of natural light for aesthetics as well as energy-savings.

One of the founding fathers of the Sustainable Jersey effort spoke at the gathering Tuesday as his town, Maplewood, received a \$1,000 grant. Fred Profeta, Deputy Mayor of Maplewood, recounted the initial

steps that have led to 300 of the state's 566 municipalities participating in Sustainable Jersey this year. It all began with his vision and collaboration with Highland Park Mayor Meryl Frank in 2006.

The Mayors Committee for a Green Future started when the League's Executive Director met with Frank and Profeta. Together they set the goal of fostering environmental progress throughout New Jersey and providing a domino-like effect of inspiration in each course of action. Profeta shared the framework at the grant announcement on Tuesday.

"There's three parts of this (Sustainable Jersey movement) – these actions, the tools, and the financial incentives from sponsors like Wal-Mart. We partnered with Randy Solomon, who was then at the New Jersey State Sustainable Institute (at Rutgers), and with The College of New Jersey. They came up with details and academic input, we came up with Wal-Mart and the League of Municipalities and that combination is what has caused us to have 300 municipalities, now more than half of the state, now following this program," he said.

Profeta said Berkeley Heights, Chatham Township and Montclair will all serve as role models to other municipalities. He firmly believes trends will catch on, as he gave his own example. By clicking on "Green Fairs," visitors on the Sustainable Jersey website will see Maplewood's green fair "because we were successful and it's going to basically tell you how to run one" he said.

The idea of setting an example for the state seems to have struck the right chord. When accepting a \$1,000 grant for Livingston, Mayor Arlene Johnson spoke with admiration for the efforts of her green team and volunteers who serve on green teams for towns across New Jersey, stating that their efforts will ultimately increase the pride that citizens feel in their town's environment.

Back in 2007, Mayor Johnson attended one of the initial meetings of The Mayors Committee for a Green Future. She was on hand Tuesday to speak about her town's efforts in earning a \$1,000 capacity building grant, which she said would be applied to providing constant communications on environmentally-themed efforts through websites, electronic blasts and community bulletin boards throughout the town.

"I remember being so fired up for it after I left and thinking this is the way to bring together in synergy so many things that have been going on in Livingston and surrounding communities. The whole will be greater than the sum of the parts," she exclaimed.

Sustainable Jersey wants to exhibit success stories like the "first-in-the-nation" ideas of Chatham Township, Berkeley Heights and other municipalities and produce copy cat results in other Garden State communities.

Randall Solomon, Coordinator of Sustainable New Jersey, wondered aloud about the possibility that such programs could become new standard practices for municipalities and pioneering something new would only be part of the equation. Solomon was enthused about the mix of projects that have been submitted to Sustainable Jersey and he jokingly said the grants awarded would put gas in the tank - "or in Montclair's case, electrodes in the car battery" - for future projects.

According to Mayor Jerry Fried, the important thing to note about environmental sustainability is really taking the long-term view. The Mayor hopes the influence stretches to the decision citizens make each day as to whether or not they need to drive versus riding a bike, walking, carpooling or using public transportation.

"Of course it's going to be cheaper to get the cheapest clothing or the cheapest food and in some ways you can make those choices if you're looking at the short term. I think the advantages of having essentially a pilot program is to get people changing the way that they think into longer-term," he said.

"Obviously in the long-term it's not cheaper to drive a car that burns fossil fuels - it's going to cost us all money, not just generations down the road. At least for me having this pilot program with electric cars it's a way of trying to change a few synapses in your mind so that you'd think a little more carefully. I think that has effects for not only an individual buying a car, but for the people around it," Fried said.

This year, four Sustainable Jersey grants of \$25,000 were awarded - one to Tuesday's host venue Montclair, one to Rutherford Borough, one to Long Branch City, and one to Chatham Township last week. A total of \$220,000 was awarded from Sustainable Jersey and corporate sponsor Wal-Mart. Ten \$10,000 grants and twenty \$1,000 capacity-building grants were also announced. A total of 34 towns in fourteen New Jersey counties won this year's grants, and each will be honored at an awards banquet in Atlantic City this November.

**Photo above:** *West Orange Councilwoman Susan McCartney accepts the Sustainable Jersey grant of \$10,000*

*Photo by Rikki N. Massand*



*Livingston Mayor Arlene Johnson with Randall Solomon and Timothy McDonough, Mayor of Hope, NJ*

*Photo by Rikki N. Massand*



*John Arvanites, Mayor of the Borough of Roseland, accepts a \$1,000 Sustainable Jersey grant with Randall Solomon, Coordinator of Sustainable Jersey, and Cindy Randazzo of the NJ DEP.*

*Photo by Rikki N. Massand*

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