



## Westtown Township Announces the Winners in the EAC Residential Sustainability Contest

The Westtown Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), would like to recognize the winning entries in the 2022 Residential Sustainability Contest for their dedication to environmental stewardship and the promotion of environmental awareness.

“We’re so proud to celebrate the sustainability actions and environmental stewardship of our outstanding residents,” said EAC member Paula Kline. “Protecting our health, along with clean air, water and soil, starts at home. The awardees serve as tremendous examples to other residents who want to become more sustainable in their own homes.”

This Residential Sustainability Contest honors and brings to light a wide variety of actions



*Paul & Sherryann Plesse*

households can take in 5 essential areas: energy, transportation, waste reduction, natural resource stewardship, and food. The actions in each area were scored for their impact on our air, water, and soil as well as on habitat and biodiversity. The top 5 scorers received gift certificates from local businesses that focus on sustainability themselves.

One of the highest scoring residents provides an example of successful farming in a suburban context. **Paul and Sherryann Plesse**, who also won first place in the "Home Garden Vegetable Basket" category at this summer's Agriculture Fair at Kimberton, grow all the standard vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, sweet corn, broccoli, spinach, and eggplant to more specialized crops like sweet potatoes, figs, ginger, grapes, turmeric, peanuts, and cotton. Their orientation to stewardship speaks to a meaningful relationship with their land.

“We take care of our land and natural resources and it in turn takes care of us,” the Plesse’s said. “The land teaches you as you go - you make mistakes, you learn, you get better. This farm is our home and everyone and everything who lives here plays a role in the cycle of life - even the fallen trees that heat our home in winter. Nature gives us a beautiful cycle if we just learn to appreciate it and use it wisely, she gives us every single thing we need,” they continued.

When asked what they would like to share with their neighbors, the Plesse’s replied, “People are always amazed that you can grow this kind produce in West Chester! I would encourage everyone who has an interest in gardening to just START! We started growing 30 years ago on a postage stamp size backyard.”



*Plesse garden and chickens*

**Suzanne Lauer** scored high on energy conservation by purchasing Energy Star appliances, switching to LED light bulbs, updating attic insulation, installing a geothermal HVAC system, and other conservation measures. Her passion and enthusiasm for sustainability was even more evident when she described her care for her yard. She uses an electric leaf blower, her “woman-powered” garden shears (no hedge trimmer), and a battery powered chainsaw & weed whacker. These tools are used to care for the half of her lawn that she has transitioned to a natural meadow full of native plants that attract pollinators.



*Lauer converted lawn*

“I would urge every household to reduce their lawn. Leaving the perimeter or a tree's root zone unmown encourages a natural environment for pollinators, birds, and insects and variety in the landscape. It's also easy! Less environmental and noise pollution from mowers and blowers benefits everyone,” Suzanne commented.



**Karyn and Kevin Heym** have saved energy and money by using a programmable thermostat in conjunction with a high efficiency electric heat pump for heating and cooling. They have also taken efficiency measures such as changing their HVAC air filters at least twice annually, using an attic ventilation fan, and caulking and weatherstripping around doors and windows.



The Heym household is committed to supporting local biodiversity and preventing water pollution as well. Together with their two sons, Sam and Ben, they maintain a rain/meadow garden, which is recognized by the National Wildlife Federation. Concerned about stormwater pollution, they help clear the storm drains near their home, use only non-toxic cleaning and laundry products, and use rain barrels for watering. The family is aware of the problem of light pollution and the International Dark Sky Association's call for a shift in night-time

lighting and they have installed motion activated lights around their home.

"I would urge every household to see themselves as a vital part of improving and restoring our ecosystem. People travel to parks and preserves to enjoy plants and wildlife and feel the sense of wonder that nature brings. Simply by planting native trees, shrubs, and flowers, reducing the use of pesticides, and leaving the leaves, we can create that habitat and beauty in our own yards and neighborhoods. What a beautiful world that would be!" reflected Karyn Heym.

**Janice Archbold** was able to check most of the boxes in the sustainability contest. A PECO home energy assessment pointed her to efficiencies that could reduce her home energy use. She is a committed recycler and recycles old appliances and electronic waste. Her yard has received both the Audubon Bird Friendly Recognition and National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat status, and is a testament to the diligent work she has done to plant native trees, shrubs, and groundcover to protect birds and pollinating insects. Janice has a vision to combine open space and meadows with the production of renewable energy.

The Westtown EAC has compiled a [list to guide residents in finding the resources](#) for taking action in their homes and yards.

"We all have a role to play in finding solutions to the threats to clean air, water and soil, climate crisis, and environmental injustice - including in our classrooms through environmental education and stewardship," said Ray Dandrea of the EAC, who organized the contest. "Congratulations to these outstanding individuals and families for their ideas, creativity, and leadership in finding solutions to protect our local environment and create a more sustainable Westtown."

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