

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

July 2018



Christine Symington

Program Director, Sustainable Princeton

Christine Symington has served as the Sustainable Princeton program director since 2014. Her leadership skills and ability to manage complex projects has made her the go-to person in Princeton for anything related to energy and the larger sustainability movement. She is known for her coalition

building. Evidence-based science is her standard and her favorite question to ask is, "Did you fact-check that?" Coming from the private sector, her past experiences provided her with the ability to move an organization forward, set goals, create and implement action plans and evaluate and process results. Sustainable Jersey has learned from the steady stream of good ideas and strong examples that have come out of Princeton and all of New Jersey has benefited as a result. Sustainable Princeton is a pioneer in demonstrating what can be achieved at the local level.



Christine serves on the Sustainable Jersey Energy Task Force and the Sustainable Jersey Electric Vehicle Working Group. When asked if she had any advice for other green team leaders, Christine said, "I like to immerse myself in each issue and make sure to do the research. After I understand the facts, then I go out into the community to share and learn from others. Progress comes when positive relationships and partnerships move an issue forward."

Sustainable Jersey Silver-Certified

Sustainable Princeton is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that works closely with the Municipality of Princeton to lead the municipal green team. Christine assisted the municipality in achieving Sustainable Jersey silver-certification for the second time in 2017 with an impressive 525 points. Christine works directly with municipal department heads to provide information, education and model programs. She also participates on the Princeton Environmental Commission. You can read about the actions that Princeton did to achieve Sustainable Jersey certification by reviewing the



[Sustainable Jersey Certification Report for Princeton](#). Follow Sustainable Princeton through its [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

Great Ideas Lecture Series

Led by Christine, Sustainable Princeton manages a successful Great Ideas lecture series in partnership with the Princeton Public Library. Christine said, "We're lucky to have access to so many interesting thought leaders in our community that volunteer to speak on these important topics. The attendance by the community has been great." Sustainable Princeton does surveys after each lecture and reviews the data to track effectiveness of outreach and the lecture content. The three lectures in the 2016/2017 series saw an average 95 percent increase in attendance. The recent lecture topics were "Building a More Sustainable Princeton: What We Can Learn from Other Communities," "EVs: How to Choose, Charge & Change a Habit" and "Beyond Recycling: Building the Circular Economy in NJ." The next Great Ideas event will be on October 17, 2018, and the topic is "Our Energy Future: Could We Be Carbon Free?" The lectures are zero waste events.

Climate Action Plan for Princeton

In 2017 Sustainable Princeton was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for Princeton. Sustainable Princeton is partnering with the municipality to develop a set of specific strategies, actions and goals to lower the town's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and better prepare its infrastructure to withstand the dramatically increasing impacts of climate change. Christine explained, "Development of the CAP will be a comprehensive process designed to leverage community expertise and ensure community buy in. The development process is just as important as the completed plan. We want to make sure that everyone in our community has provided input and helped to guide the plan. We're meeting face to face with residents and going to their meetings." Working groups with members representing all sectors of the community are being formed to address specific areas of focus including transportation, the built environment, land use, natural resources, clean energy supply, and waste. A baseline inventory of Princeton's GHG emissions has been determined and CAP Steering Committee is in the process of setting realistic, quantifiable goals for the town.

Last week, Christine and her colleagues presented to the Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood Association about the CAP. And on June 16, 2018, Sustainable Princeton staffed a table at, and was a sponsor of, the Community Loteria event. The three representatives that attended were Yamile Slebi, Sustainable Princeton Trustee; Jenny Ludmer, Sustainable Princeton Outreach Manager; and Christine. Information about the CAP was shared and children and adults played the recycling dart game that tested their knowledge on proper recycling sorting in order to win LED lightbulbs and reusable water bottles. Sustainable Princeton diverted five pounds of recycling and 12 pounds of compost, and not a single disposable plastic water bottle was used at the event.

Green Business Recognition Program

Since 2015, Sustainable Princeton has worked with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Air Quality, Energy and Sustainability to promote the New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry to Princeton businesses. As a result, Princeton now has more businesses on the registry than any



other municipality. Sustainable Princeton hosted a workshop to help businesses through the registration and application process. Then the businesses on the registry were promoted by being acknowledged on social media and at a recognition event at a Princeton Council meeting where Mayor Liz Lempert and Council honored each business on the registry with a certificate of recognition from the town.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations

Sustainable Princeton, in coordination with the Municipality of Princeton's Department of Infrastructure and Operations, installed a Level II dual-port EV charging station in the town's Spring Street public parking garage. Christine secured a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection grant for \$5,000 to install the station and then got a donation of the station equipment from BMW and ChargePoint. Christine said, "The EV charging stations are a good example of the positive relationship that Sustainable Princeton has developed with the municipality. We worked collaboratively on this project for the best outcome. So far, the EV charging station reduced GHG emissions by 1,845 kg."



Mercer County Sustainability Association

Christine has represented Sustainable Princeton in the [Mercer County Sustainability Association](http://www.mercercountysustainability.org/), which is an alliance of the green teams and sustainability organizations of Mercer County. The countywide partnership allows members to work collaboratively and share resources and best practices. The group hosts a Sustainability Expo each year in March that serves as the area's local green fair. Another big event is the Farm to Table Fun(d)raiser that will take place on July 19, 2018, at Terhune Orchards. The event celebrates the local food movement and promotes awareness about county-wide sustainability efforts while raising money for the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition. To learn more or buy tickets, visit: <http://sustainablelawrence.org/home/>.



What You May Not Know About Christine

Christine has lived in New Jersey for about ten years. She grew up in Levittown, Pennsylvania, and attended West Chester University receiving a B.A. in Education. Her concern for the environment started in elementary school. Christine's earliest sustainability memory is of a school project that she did in the second grade called, "I will not hatch." It was about a chick that did not want to leave its egg because of the environmental degradation of the planet. Christine's favorite job was serving as a camp science teacher for third graders at a nature camp at the Myrick Conservation Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Christine worked in the financial services business for 14 years before she made a conscious career change to do something in the sustainability field. She attended the GreenBiz conference in Paris, France, and returned to Princeton where she immediately started as a volunteer at Sustainable Princeton and then was hired as the program manager. In her free time, Christine enjoys hanging out with friends and catching up on the latest sci-fi books and movies.

This week, Christine is volunteering for [The Red Umbrella Princeton](http://www.redumbrella.org/), a children's literacy organization that provides free storytelling, books and arts and crafts to children. Christine will kick-off this year's program on July 5, 2018; she will read to children the book, "Kate, Who Tamed the Wind" by Liz Garton Scanlon. It is about a girl who hears the call to take action for the environment, is patient while waiting for results and ultimately makes an important contribution to the planet as a sustainability hero. Sound familiar?