

SUSTAINABILITY HEROES

October 2019



New Jersey Education Association

Sustainable Jersey Celebrates a Decade of Impact: To celebrate Sustainable Jersey's 10th anniversary, we are spotlighting the people, organizations, businesses and agencies that have been a part of our evolution. [New Jersey Education Association \(NJEA\)](#) is the state's largest association of education professionals, representing over 200,000 elementary and secondary teachers, administrators, higher education faculty members, educational support professionals, retirees and students preparing to become teachers. Sustainable Jersey for Schools values the strong partnership with NJEA that has resulted in an annual grants cycle and resources to assist teachers and educational support professionals in addressing sustainability issues such as energy conservation, healthy environments and climate change. Currently, a total of 876 schools and 339 school districts are participating in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program.



Sustainable Jersey Grants funded by NJEA: NJEA is a Sustainable Jersey for Schools underwriter and grant funder. From 2015 through 2018, NJEA has provided \$720,000 to fund 188 projects in school districts and schools. Currently, NJEA is funding another \$180,000 for the 2019 [Sustainable Jersey for Schools grants cycle](#) that will fund ten \$10,000 grants and forty \$2,000 grants. The online application deadline for this cycle is Thursday, October 31, 2019. Past funded projects have included school gardens, plastic and waste reduction campaigns, programs to promote healthy eating and physical activity, outdoor classrooms and sustainability curriculum. "This is an important program that directs resources into our schools," said NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller. Spiller added, "Every day in the news we hear more and more about the importance of recycling and creating eco-friendly products, as well as the value of using sustainable resources. Our job as educators is to prepare the next generation with the skills, information, and resources to become engaged citizens and leaders in our efforts to save and protect our planet."



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Launch: Similar to the municipal program, Sustainable Jersey for Schools convened experts, local school officials, educators and other stakeholders to determine the content of the program. On July 22, 2013, over 100 people attended a kick-off meeting at The College of New Jersey. Working groups representing various partners across the state began to define the program standards and actions that would advance schools toward certification. NJEA's pioneering work through the Worksite Safety and Health Committee, as well as their partnership with New Jersey Work Environment Council, has produced excellent resources, publications and training programs



that have served as a catalyst for action in schools throughout New Jersey. Health and wellness issues related to indoor air quality, extreme temperatures, mold and moisture issues and outdoor air quality programs are all key matters that were incorporated in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program through the development of Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification actions.

NJEA joined leaders of [eight key partner organizations](#) to announce the initiative. These partners brought extensive expertise to the program and their far-reaching networks provided a connection to all levels of New Jersey's public schools community. They were an integral part of a comprehensive coalition of education, business and state agency partners that helped develop and vet the certification program actions. NJEA also includes Sustainable Jersey for Schools in the NJEA Summer Professional Learning Institute to allow more schools and leaders to learn about the program.

A special thank you is due to five of the NJEA sustainability heroes who have been a part of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools journey: Marie Blistan, Sean Spiller, Steve Beatty, Mike Rollins and Thomas Hardy.

Marie Blistan, a special education teacher in Washington Township (Gloucester County), is the president of NJEA. Blistan previously served as NJEA's vice president and secretary-treasurer. She was re-elected to a second two-year term as president effective September 1, 2019. Blistan has been a supporter of Sustainable Jersey for Schools since the beginning and was on the stage representing NJEA as she joined leaders of eight key partner organizations to announce the program in 2014. "We must work tirelessly, not only for our own well-being, but also for the well-being of our students, their families and of the communities that we all share," Blistan said. At NJEA, Blistan is chair of numerous NJEA committees, including NJEA's Political Action Committee, the Executive Committee, the Delegate Assembly, the County Presidents Council, the Staff Pension Committee, the Full Time Release Presidents' Committee and the Strengthening Local Associations Committee. Blistan is a member of the Leaders of Excellence in Education group, which strives to provide the best education for all New Jersey children, as well as a member of the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice. Blistan and her husband, Bob, a retired high school special education teacher in Washington Township, live in Harrisonville. She has two sons, a daughter and five grandchildren.



Sean M. Spiller, a high school science teacher in Wayne (Passaic County), is the vice president of NJEA. Spiller was elected as NJEA vice president beginning September 1, 2017. An enthusiastic Sustainable Jersey for Schools partner, Spiller serves as the chair of the Health and Wellness Taskforce. This task force addresses Sustainable Jersey for Schools actions related to healthy indoor and outdoor school environments, nutritious and local foods, student and staff wellness and active and safe transportation. He is also a member of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Standards Committee. Spiller said, "NJEA is proud to work with Sustainable Jersey. By emphasizing the value of sustainability, we help ensure that we leave a better world for our students."



At NJEA, Spiller has served as chair of the Congressional Contact Committee, as a member of the Urban Education Committee and as an ethnic minority-at large representative to the Delegate Assembly. He was also a member of the National Council of Urban Education Associations. Spiller began his career as an assistant editor for the Associated Press in New York City (1997-1998). In addition, Spiller served as captain of the Rutgers University ice hockey team, leading the Scarlet Knights to two championships. An avid sports fan, he also has served as a coach for local travel and high school teams, as well as the Rutgers University women's ice hockey team. Spiller's focus as NJEA vice president is on helping members become more involved at the community level in order to confront the challenges that face public education and school employees. He and his wife Lauren, also a public school teacher, live in Montclair with their son. Since May 2012, he has served as a member of the town

council. He is also a member of the Montclair Business Improvement District, a member of the Montclair NAACP, the League of Women Voters and many other local groups and organizations.

Steve Beatty, a high school social studies teacher in the Bridgewater-Raritan school district (Somerset County), is the secretary-treasurer at NJEA. Beatty was elected to his second two-year term effective September 1, 2019. Prior to becoming an NJEA officer, Beatty served as president of the Somerset County Education Association, and as president of the Bridgewater-Raritan Education Association. A guitarist and athlete, Beatty was named Star-Ledger's 2003-04 Swim Coach of the Year. He is also an avid cyclist, hiker and kayaker and is a season-ticket holder for the NY Giants. Beatty loves to travel and was a coordinator of the English Exchange program to Kimbolton School in Cambridgeshire, England. Beatty and his wife, Tamara, a teacher and president of the Cinnaminson Education Association, live in Martinsville with his two children, Morgan and Lindsay. He is currently a Bridgewater Township Democratic Committeeman and active in both the Bernards Township and Bridgewater-Raritan Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO).



Mike Rollins is a field representative in the Organizational Development unit of the NJEA Executive Office. Rollins has worked in public education for over 22 years as an attendance officer for the East Orange Board of Education. In that role he served as liaison to the community of East Orange. He works closely with Sustainable Jersey for Schools staff on health and safety issues and has connected schools with free consulting from an industrial

hygienist to address indoor air quality concerns through the NJEA sponsored Healthy Schools Now program. Rollins has also worked closely with the Essex County Democrats. Rollins helps members and leaders through privatization fights and works on the development and implementation of new health and safety programs. Rollins was the president of the East Orange Resource Professionals Association and also served as Essex County 2nd Vice President. He lives in Orange with his wife, Lawana.



Thomas R. Hardy II is the NJEA-National Education Association (NEA) UniServ Regional Director for the Northeast. In this role, Hardy is the Regional Director for Union, Hudson, Essex and Bergen counties. Hardy was instrumental in establishing the partnership between NJEA and Sustainable Jersey for Schools that led to the creation of the grants program. He was a fifth-grade teacher in Guilford County, North Carolina. He had been a school bus driver and teacher assistant before attending High Point University (HPU). During his time at HPU, Hardy participated in a Study Abroad program in Oxford England. In 2002, he was accepted into NEA's Affirmative Action Intern Program. Hardy later trained members nationally in the NEA Intern Program and NEA UniServ Pre-Employment Development Program. In 2014, Hardy was honored by the Work Environment Council for his commitment to ensuring public school safety and health for educators and students. Hardy has worked to expand NJEA's health and safety program. He has also led in the creation of NJEA's Minority Leadership Training Program. Hardy lives in Budd Lake.

