

# SUSTAINABILITY HERO

## April 2021



### Susan Lazarchick

Chair, Township of Hamilton Green Team  
(Atlantic County)

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Susan Lazarchick is the chair of the [Township of Hamilton Green Team](#). Working with a dedicated group of green team volunteers, Susan is a sustainability leader who creates a ripple effect of positive change in Atlantic County.

As a big picture thinker, Susan serves as a sustainability resource to her community. She always offers a theory or quote to help make her point. She sees the world through nature's interdependent cause-and-effect relationships, she explained "The Butterfly Effect tells us that if a butterfly flaps its wings, its effect, though initially so trivial as to be barely unmeasurable, can cause a tsunami elsewhere." Susan is a little like this butterfly, she said, "We can all take small actions that will help to tip the balance from decline to restoration. Planning for a sustainable future can bring real-world present-day benefits to our towns and cities." Susan said she likes to say, "What positive action can I take?" and cites American anthropologist Margaret Meade's famous quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Susan enjoys the work of [Doug Tallamy](#), author of *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope*, who has spoken at a GoGreen Galloway event and others around New Jersey. "If you make sustainability accessible, like creating a habitat in your backyard to contribute to [Home Grown National Park](#), it can create the baby steps that lead to big change," she explained. In Susan's own life, she has experienced what it takes to work toward rehabilitation through small steps. At age 32, Susan had a major health trauma that led to a knee transplant, and an above the knee amputation in 2006. Over the years, her work has included enhancing the quality of life for amputees.

A visual learner, Susan takes creative approaches to educating herself and is constantly working on ways to teach herself and others how to be sustainable while supporting South Jersey habitats. In addition to the green team, Susan has participated in [New Jersey Learns](#), the [Greater Hammonton Permaculture Club](#), [Atlantic County Utility Authority's Master Composter Program](#), [Rutgers Environmental Stewards Program](#), the [Atlantic Cape May Sustainable Jersey Hub](#) and is a member of the [Pinelands Preservation Alliance](#).



Susan has had a strong connection to nature and animals ever since she was a child. She describes her childhood as "free range" because she was always outside. Her home town of Northfield has Birch Grove Park, which covers

271 acres of heavily-wooded land dotted with fresh water lakes. She grew up with dogs and remembers volunteering at Melody Corrals horse stable in exchange for free rides. She spent Sundays at her grandparents' farm, where occasional customers would buy cut flowers, vegetables and bird houses at their farm stand in Cape May County.

Susan's dedication to the planet starts at home. They have solar panels, an electric car and chickens, and has raised bees. She is a native plant and tree enthusiast and an active composter. As early as the 1970s, Susan and her husband took advantage of President Carter's tax credits by investing in solar hot water and a solar room to provide energy. Susan got involved with the Environmental Response Network and the Atlantic County incinerator protests in the 1980s, which eventually led to her work with the Township of Hamilton's Green Team.

**Sustainable Jersey Certified:** Established by the Hamilton Township Committee, the Sustainable Township of Hamilton Green Team supports a model of government that benefits residents now and into the future with green community initiatives that are easily replicated and affordable. The green team has held rain barrel workshops, prescription drug drop-off programs, an adopt-a-storm drain program, film festivals and community garden events. Susan explained, "The green team has supported the township with grant funding, support for community events, State-level recognition and overall community wellness and resiliency." She noted that many people are responsible for green team accomplishments, including Luanne McCardell, the Clean Communities Coordinator for the Township of Hamilton, who is the liaison between the township and the green team. Ingrid Perez, a past liaison, also dedicated much of her time to the green team. Township Committee Member Rodney Guishard has been an excellent participant by championing the work of the green team as well.

The Township of Hamilton is a Sustainable Jersey certified community. To learn more about the sustainability actions completed, review the Sustainable Jersey for Schools [2020 Certification Report for the Township of Hamilton](#).

**Save the Earth Expo:** Susan and the green team are looking forward to their Save the Earth Expo that will take place on April 17, 2021. The event will have green vendors, plant-based food and sustainable lifestyle demonstrations using COVID guidelines. The green team holds an annual green fair but had to postpone the Spring event in 2020. For past fairs, the green team partnered with the Township of Hamilton Police Department, the Clean Communities Program and the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) to provide residents with information and programming on sustainable initiatives. The Township of Hamilton Public Works Department shares information on trash collection, recycling and stormwater management. Residents are encouraged to bring electronics and rigid plastics for recycling and personal documents for shredding. Free tree seedlings from the NJ Forest Tree Nursery have been available at past events. At the Earth Day festival at Oakcrest High School, Susan with other green team members gave away Eastern white pines, redbuds and red maple trees seedlings. The Township of Hamilton receives Sustainable Jersey certification points for this event with the action: [Hold a Green Fair](#).

**Energy Efficiency for Municipal Facilities:** In 2019, the Township of Hamilton Green Team presented to township leadership at several public meetings about the benefits of participating in New Jersey's Clean Energy Program (NJCEP) and specifically the Local Government Energy Audit (LGEA). The township recently received a



Sustainable Jersey Technical Assistance Grant to move forward with the LGEA and the Energy Efficiency Outreach Program for Residences; it is scheduled for completion this summer.

Hamilton Township School District recently completed their energy audits and have begun phases of the Energy Saving Improvement Program (ESIP) to improve school facilities. These 2018 audits have been used by the green team to help catalyze overall municipal LGEA participation, enhance the municipal process and improve communication between township committee and the school district.

The green team has held several meetings with the township and school district leadership to enhance related education and outreach. Susan said, "The leadership demonstrated by the municipality has created a positive domino effect, leading the Merchants Association to participate in outreach to business and organizations." The Township of Hamilton received Sustainable Jersey certification points for this work under the action: [Energy Efficiency for Municipal Facilities](#).

### Resiliency Grant from the Sustainable Communities Grant Program:

The Township of Hamilton received a \$10,000 resiliency grant from the [Sustainable Communities Grant Program](#) funded by Atlantic City Electric in partnership with Sustainable Jersey. The grant will be used to incorporate green infrastructure to address stormwater issues and enhance emergency management related to flooding events. As part of this grant, the Township of Hamilton green team provided free green infrastructure training. In partnership with [Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program](#), the green team is assessing and will recommend green infrastructure solutions in parts of the township. Watch the [grant acceptance video](#).



**From Bantams to Labradors:** Susan said she has trouble keeping her hobbies contained. That is true for her Chocolate Wyandotte Bantam project. Susan has been involved with Wyandotte Bantams, American chickens, since 2014, although she was involved with poultry for several years before this. She was a prominent part of the group that got the Chocolate Wyandotte Bantams accepted by the American Bantam Association. Susan said, "To me, these are wonderful little birds. They aren't flashy birds like some, but they remind me of my Labrador Retrievers- pretty easy keepers and good all-around animals." Susan has also raised Labrador retrievers and has had five certified therapy dogs; she is pictured with her dog Molly Brown.



**More About Susan:** Susan has lived her whole life in Atlantic County and can trace her family tree to the late 1800s. Susan's New Jersey roots even link to the famous Leeds family that lived in the Pine Barrens. According to popular folklore the historic Leeds house is where the Jersey Devil originated.

Susan received her Bachelor of Science in Human Services from Thomas Edison State College. Susan and her husband Michael have one son, age 37, named Aron, who lives in the Czech Republic and is planning a wedding that Susan hopes to be able to attend. In her free time, Susan enjoys snorkeling, kayaking, being in nature and pursuing her art, photography, pottery and painting. Susan is a bright, shining beacon that inspires all those around her to value the natural world.