



The Montgomery SIERRAN

Serving the People and Land of Montgomery County, Maryland

January 2012

My Green Montgomery is Now Online!

The Montgomery County Sierra Club worked closely with the County's Dept. of Environmental Protection on a great new resource for county residents—“MyGreen Montgomery.” We are excited by its launch and encourage you to visit the site for ideas and help on how to become more energy efficient, conserve water, reduce toxics around the home and recycle more.

Thanks to a new Montgomery County website there is now one resource residents can use to “green” their lifestyles and save money: MyGreenMontgomery.org!

MyGreenMontgomery.org directs users to County, State, Federal and utility programs and incentives that make going green a no-brainer. This information coupled with local resources from County-based nonprofits and community groups makes the site relevant and interesting to residents. Plus, users can post their comments, questions and green events to the website, making MyGreenMontgomery.org a one-stop-shop for eco-info in Montgomery County.

The website was developed by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with support from the Sierra Club. We've been asked a lot of questions about the site so here are a few Q's and A's to help you understand the site before you log on.

What is the motivation for this site?

The #1 goal of MyGreenMontgomery.org is to encourage each resident to do something to decrease his impact on the environment. Whether that is installing a rain garden, using public transportation or just recycling more, if everyone does something—and hopefully is motivated to do more!—Montgomery County will be a more

sustainable community.

Second, many sources provide information about environmental issues. However, few of them provide “how-to's” and local information to support taking action. For instance, if someone wants to install solar panels he may start with an Internet search for pricing, vendors, different types of panels, incentives, product reviews, etc. This is a lot of work for a neophyte! The process may derail motivation if answers are not found. MyGreenMontgomery.org intends to ease fact-finding by including links to reliable information on a particular topic in one place.

Additionally, the website will serve as a platform for users to read testimonials and engage with others who have taken action.

Finally, this site points users to helpful programs. Many residents are unaware of the variety of County programs, incentives and resources that encourage sustainable living. MyGreenMontgomery.org serves as a directory for this information, which encourages users to browse for additional resources.

How can I use MyGreenMontgomery.org?

Here are a few of the site features that may entice you to use the site.

- A list of “Green Projects” organized by topic area – Daily Choices (consumption and waste), Energy, Lawn & Garden, Transportation and Water – help users to take action. Each Green Project page outlines local resources, incentives and answers to frequently asked questions so users have the information needed to act.
- The “My Green Plan” page allows users to create a “to do” list of Green Projects and track their progress. As projects are checked off the list users accumulate “green points”. Organizing tip: the points feature can be used by community groups

for green challenges!

- Local information in the “My Community” section includes a Calendar, Map, a list of Local Groups and Contractor Lists. Anyone can post their organization's event to the Calendar, which serves as a great resource for residents seeking volunteer opportunities or green events.
- The “News and Features” section features blog posts from local experts and County residents. Anyone can suggest a topic and contribute informative or inspiring articles on green topics.

How was MyGreen Montgomery.org developed?

Initially the site was to serve as a residential complement to the County's Green Business Certification Program. The idea was further enforced by the Education and Outreach Committee of the Montgomery County Sustainability Working Group, which recommended the development of an online tool to promote programs and activities that

raise awareness about climate protection. Several members of the Sierra Club volunteered their research, ideas and time to the site's development. In 2010 DEP was awarded \$7.6M through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to develop energy efficiency programs. The website was developed with approximately \$85,000 of those funds.

How is the site being promoted?

MyGreenMontgomery.org is relying on social networks for promotion so your help spreading the word is needed! Please forward the site's URL to your networks, post it to Facebook or Tweet about it. That way we can be sure everyone in Montgomery County does something to decrease our impact on the environment.

Questions? Please contact Susan Marinelli, Planning Specialist III, DEP, at susan.marinelli@montgomerycountymd.gov or 240-777-7753.

—Susan Marinelli

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Letter from the Chair

Connect and Make a Difference

In 2011, Sierra Club volunteers were active, working to protect the environment by supporting more public transit, reducing greenhouse gas emissions through greater household energy efficiency, and protecting our parks from tree-choking invasive vines. I personally want to thank all our volunteers who have given their time to make these happen. Specifically, we:

- 1) promoted money-saving information on County, State and Federal energy efficiency incentive programs, including rebates, tax credits, and loan programs,
- 2) monitored County plans to develop a comprehensive rapid transit vehicle system,
- 3) expressed support for a gas tax increase if the money raised goes to transit and road maintenance,
- 4) opposed service changes on the MARC Brunswick line that may reduce ridership and hurt smart growth,
- 5) advocated for a Wheaton Sector plan that seeks high value economic development and job growth in Wheaton,
- 6) promoted the Montgomery County Residential Energy Efficiency Rebate Program, and
- 7) held regular events to prevent oriental bitter-sweet and other vines from choking off trees at the historic Underground Railroad Trail.

Gearing Up for 2012

We are ready for 2012! We plan to conduct house meetings to get our members and neighbors to embrace money-saving and climate-saving energy efficiency measures. We plan to support County plans that would develop a comprehensive high-standard rapid transit vehicle system. We will continue to battle with those invasive tree-choking vines in our beloved parks.

A Question for You

Here's my question for you. Would you like to offer your home as a place to conduct one of our household energy saving meetings? Do you feel excited about analyzing county master plans and how to make them

more smart-growth friendly? Are you a natural community organizer? Do you like to help rescue habitats invaded by alien species?

If any of these got a nod from you, then please e-mail me at alvin.carlos@maryland.sierraclub.org. Your time and skills will help us achieve our 2012 goals. As you know, unlike our Club national and state chapters, the Montgomery County Group is an all-volunteer Sierra Club group, so any help you can give will go a long way.

And you can always help by sending us a check. Any amount of financial contribution will be very useful for our activities. Make them payable to Sierra Club - Montgomery County Group, and mail them to Sierra Club Maryland Chapter, 7338 Baltimore Avenue #111, College Park, MD 20740. Or you can donate online at <http://maryland.sierraclub.org/montgomery/donate.html>.

Don't Forget to Vote

Lastly, please take a minute to vote for your desired candidates for the executive committee. Those who want to serve have their bios on page 7. Your ballot is on page 7 as well.

We appreciate your continued support. I hope you will become more involved in helping to protect our environment, so that our children & grandchildren may continue to live a healthy, enjoyable life in our neighborhood!

—Alvin Carlos



A Special Thank You to Two Departing Executive Committee Members

Pam Lindstrom and Kate Konschnik made significant contributions to the work of the Montgomery County Sierra Club during the time they served on the executive committee (five years for Kate; six for Pam). Pam brought to the Sierra Club her passion for promoting good quality smart growth in the county and her willingness to dive into the details of master plans, zoning code revisions and county growth policies. She made all who served with her better informed about the importance of these issues. Pam will continue to provide that passion and expertise to the Sierra Club in the future.

Kate's experience as an environmental lawyer working in the U.S. Justice Department and in the U.S. Senate helped us think more strategically about

how the Montgomery County Sierra Club can move public policy and legislation in the county in a more environmentally sustainable direction. Kate plans to relaunch our habitat lecture series in the months to come.

Their departure from the executive committee provides an opportunity for other Sierra Club members with passion and experience to step forward and help us develop local programs and campaigns that protect and enhance the environment.

If you're interested and want to find out more about the executive committee and its work, contact the committee's chair, Alvin Carlos, at Alvin.carlos@maryland.sierraclub.org.

News and Letters

Energy Efficiency Program Powering Up for 2012

We'd like to send a big "Thank You" to all the volunteers who helped out this past year on the program. In 2011, Energy Efficiency Program volunteers were focused on getting the word out about the national, state and local incentive programs that supported residents to insulate their attics, install and use programmable thermostats, purchase and use Energy Star appliances, and get home energy audits.

We worked with and continue to support energy conservation projects the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are offering, such as the Residential Energy Efficiency Rebate Program (see related article). Volunteers met

with County Council Members to register our support for energy conservation projects and to push for more dedicated funding in the budget. We also worked on the development of the new county Web site, MyGreen-Montgomery.org, reviewing content and design and providing feedback on pilot versions of the site.

Our Biggest Effort

Our biggest effort has been the expansion of the energy conservation education program we offered a few years ago. Volunteers have researched "best practices" and model programs and we have designed a presentation that will: raise awareness of the "Top Ten Tips" for home energy efficiency,

promote specific energy conservation actions to save money and energy, and provide information on "do it yourself" resources and financial incentives to get residents to commit to doing home energy conservation projects.

Volunteers Needed

While we have some great volunteers who are both helping to create and provide the presentations and we have some help to do the follow up with residents to encourage people to save energy, we still need more volunteers and help.

Beginning in the spring, we'll provide presentations for neighborhoods, housing associations, civic

associations, and other community organizations. We're counting on you—to volunteer to host an energy saving meeting in your home, or become a presenter, or help us follow up with people who attend the programs, or help us promote our programs.

Make this year, the year you get more involved in saving energy, protecting our environment and helping others do the same, please contact Susan Eisendrath, Energy Efficiency Program Co-Chair (susan.eisendrath@gmail.com) for more information on our programs and to volunteer. Thanks and Happy New Year!

—Susan Eisendrath

Paying More than Lip Service to Smart Growth?

Both the economic forces and the rhetoric behind Smart Growth are gaining momentum nationwide. The Montgomery County version of Smart Growth, however, continues to be plagued by the deadly combination of platitudes and superficiality, right rhetoric and poor decisions. "Natural" economic forces still favor a more urban, car-discouraging, conservationist future for Montgomery County, but County officials need to buckle down and do what needs to be done. Otherwise the promise of Smart Growth to deliver benefits from global climate protection to a better life for low-income residents will be unrealized.

The ongoing issues in the County range from a new Zoning Code (the law regulating land development and use), to area master plans, and to single development projects. Most of these issues are outside the traditional scope of environmental groups. The issues separating success from failure are often technical and only apparent if one searches below the surface.

Zoning Code Rewrite

1. The rewrite of the Zoning Code is like many blind people grasping an elephant and trying to figure out its shape. From the head to the tail smart growth issues focus on the most urban and the most rural places in the County and the body, including mixed use, often transit served centers, and the

agriculture reserve.

The mixed use centers are all included in the brand new Commercial Residential (CR) zone. The CR zone is intended, we are told, to continue and/or improve the sort of development allowed in urban places like the Metro station areas. The trouble is that the CR zone gives less incentive to developers to include affordable housing in station area development, than do the current zones. The environmental significance of the housing affordability gap is apparent when one considers the many lower paid jobs created in the County's offices and labs, and where these employees can find housing they can afford. The newspapers are full of this disparity; environmentalists need to join housing advocates in lobbying to reduce the gap.

In the Agriculture Reserve, there is the possibility that the new Code can do a better job of preservation than the current Code. The planners' efforts so far aim to preserve the development status quo. If we want to improve the agricultural landscape and change the status quo after twenty years of challenges, it is up to us to lobby for the Code that will produce it.

Impact on Master Plan

2. The Sierra Club had a substantial impact on the amended master plan for downtown Wheaton. Thanks to good testimony by Group member

and Wheaton resident Russ Burnett, the plan was amended to make it less apologetic and more proactive about Wheaton's prospects for office development and well-paid jobs.

The east-west imbalance of jobs and residences is another non-obvious environmental issue, but such balance is crucial to producing more of the sustainable complete communities that define Smart Growth. The adopted Wheaton master plan doesn't prohibit the imbalance, but it urges County officials to work hard to promote construction of office buildings instead of just more housing for outbound commuters, and low-value retail.

The next issue will be the master plan for the proposed science center at White Oak, centered on the new Food and Drug Administration campus. The Planning Department has produced an issues report, appointed a citizens advisory committee and hired consultants to do an economic analysis. But the analysis and planning staff presentations disparage any demand for substantial economic/employment growth in the Route 29 Corridor. Thus there still seems to be scant motivation to use public influence and investment to reduce the dominance of the I-270 "employment corridor".

A major obstacle to development in the Route 29 Corridor is traffic congestion and lack of travel alternatives. This problem is reiterated in the recent

reports, even though the County's largest transportation project, the ICC, now runs right past White Oak. Nowhere is the ICC mentioned by planners or consultants. Can it be that the ICC will provide no boost to congestion, accessibility or economy to eastern Montgomery County?

Watching for Bad Decisions

3. Even with a good master plan, County officials can make bad decisions that foil Smart Growth. The prime example in 2011 was the Silverwood housing development proposed for a semi-derelict car dealership property next to the Shady Grove Metro station. The master plan correctly preaches housing at this station area, but Planning Board and County Council turned down Silverwood based on NIMBY lobbying from the County Executive, of all people. Eventually, the County Council reversed itself: the Silverwood developers requested annexation into Rockville city to allow the housing to proceed. Thanks in part to new members supported by the Sierra Club, the Council did vote to approve the annexation and zoning Silverwood needs.

Other groups and interests will be taking the lead in some of these concerns but continued Sierra Club advocacy is also needed.

—Pamela Lindstrom

News and Letters

Volunteers Battle Invasive Aliens, Restore Habitat

I want to begin 2012 thanking all the volunteers that came out to clip, saw, and pull invasive plants from the Underground Railroad Experience Trail in 2011. Since we began working at this site in late 2007, we can proudly say we have removed all the English ivy, bush honeysuckle, and controlled a 1.5 acre patch of kudzu. I also want to boldly predict that if 5-10 volunteers join us each month in 2012, we can remove all of the mature fruiting oriental bittersweet from the park!

Oriental bittersweet has been our priority. This vine can completely cover other vegetation and shade, out-compete and kill even large trees. During our workday in January 2012, we removed a vine that had spread into the crown of a tree that was over 100 years old. Without our work that tree would have not survived another decade. The scars in the rightmost tree in the picture show how the vines can girdle and kill a smaller tree.

Beautiful but Predatory

Invasive plants are a problem because they spread so quickly without any natural predators to keep them in check. They have been brought to this country either intentionally or accidentally over the last couple hundred years. Oriental bittersweet, for example, was introduced from China around 1860 as an or-

namental. The vine has beautiful yellow and red berries that still continue to be used in Christmas wreaths. Japanese barberry, another invasive in this park, is commonly planted as an ornamental shrub.

Removing invasives is labor intensive. Clearing all the vines from the three trees shown in the picture could take one person an hour. We need volunteers so that we can tackle this problem and continue restoring this park's natural history. Fortunately we have removed most of the mature vines that produce fruit. It now requires walking to the other side of the park or hopping a stream to reach the remaining stands.

With your help we can save the trees that serve as habitat for birds, streamside buffers for the headwaters of Northwest Branch, and outdoor classroom for those hiking the park's interpretive trail describing the underground railroad.

Volunteer Opportunities

I plan on leading volunteers the second Saturday of each month from 10-Noon. We meet in the parking lot at Woodlawn Manor. Tools, gloves, and a lesson on what is invasive are provided. Please check the calendar on the website to verify that the event is on.

—Jeremy Arling



Jeremy Arling with an invasive Oriental bittersweet vine. (Photo by Jane Huff)

Transit Moved Forward in 2011

Last year, 2011, was a good year for transit advocates, as funding and other improvements moved forward. Progress occurred albeit at times in a shaky and partial way—on all five of the Montgomery Sierra Club priority areas: Metro rail, the light rail Purple Line, MARC, a Bus Rapid Transit system, and bicycle facilities. Unfortunately, Metro rail—the key to the whole system—continues to face difficulties. Along with advances in smart growth, we should be on our way to a society providing an environmentally sustainable and economically affordable network for moving large numbers of people, with numerous options, beyond hopping into a car for every routine errand.

Conversely, 2011 was also the year a radically different vision appeared, with the opening of the In-tercounty Connector and its multiple lanes designed for a future of sprawl. Extensive plans for new road projects threaten to undercut many transit gains.

Purple Line Advances

The best news of 2011 was a major advance for the Purple Line, as the federal government approved preliminary engineering, and the project received \$69 million from the state. Governor O'Malley should be commended for moving forward on the light rail, linking Metro stations from Silver Spring to New Carrollton. Additional good news was when the University of Maryland dropped its opposition to the Purple

Line's route through the heart of campus, where it will best serve students. However, as the year ended, the difficulty of fitting train tracks and a hiker/biker path through the Bethesda tunnel put a crimp in these plans, although the problem should be solvable.

Metrorail and MARC

On another crucial issue, Metro rail, the centerpiece of DC area transit, avoided another struggle, as localities agreed to make up this year's funding shortfall. Plans were able to move forward for the purchase of new rail cars and for circuit upgrades. A fully funded Metro could go to eight-car trains on all lines in the coming years to avoid overcrowding. Metro faces another funding battle in 2012 and has announced plans to raise fares once again. The federal government's refusal to extend the transit tax benefit also threatens Metro and effectively incentivizes car use. Thus Metro remains in a vicious cycle of diminishing use leading to increased fares leading to diminishing use.

The MARC train system has also moved forward only incrementally. Due to the recession, the system failed to fund a growth and investment plan that would have allowed upgrades to all-day and weekend service. Nevertheless, a recent purchase of 54 new double-decker cars will allow MARC additional passengers and improve passenger comfort. Other improvements are leading to better on-time performance and the Maryland Transit Administration is working on an

upgraded growth and investment plan.

Bus Rapid Transit and Bikes

Also in 2011, Montgomery County released plans for a 150 mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), championed by county council member Marc Elrich. With priority lanes, high-quality buses, raised platform boarding, and other amenities, BRT will deliver most of the benefits of light rail at a far lower price tag. A transit task force, appointed by County Executive Ike Leggett, called for a more extensive, 170 mile system with additional east-west routes and headways of 10 minutes or less during rush hour and 15 minutes or less otherwise.

Because some transit activists believe BRT is inferior to light rail, the proposed system has split the transit community. It appears, however, that the proposal could deliver a "gold" standard of BRT—if so, if the right priorities are set for construction, and if funds do not compete with the Purple Line, the Montgomery County Sierra Club will support it.

Finally, DC's popular bike share system will be moving to Montgomery County in 2012. The county received a \$1.3 million grant to open 20 bike stations, geared toward getting low-income people to jobs, in Rockville and the Shady Grove area. Plans are also underway to bring bike sharing to Bethesda, Silver Spring, and Takoma Park, locations that directly con-

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Five Tips to Get Started on Home Energy Efficiency

Making your home energy-efficient is a win-win proposition. It will save you money and make your home less drafty and more comfortable while reducing your carbon footprint. Here are a few tips to get you started.

1. Use CFL bulbs

An ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescent light bulb uses 75 percent less energy than an incandescent bulb and CFL's will save about \$30 over the lifetime of the bulb and pay for itself in about 6 months.

2. Use smart power strips

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 75 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. VCRs, televisions, stereos, computers, and kitchen appliances draw electricity even when they are turned off.

To stop the energy flow we either have to unplug the appliance or use a smart power strip. Smart power strips are designed so that you can use one switch to turn off some electronics, like televisions and computers, but

leave on other electronics like computer routers.

3. Use a programmable thermostat

The average household spends more than \$2,350 a year on energy bills—nearly half of which goes to heating and cooling. Homeowners can save about \$180 a year by properly setting their programmable thermostats and maintaining those settings. When you're asleep or out of the house, if you turn your thermostat back 10°–15° for eight hours, you can save around 10 percent a year on your heating and cooling bills.

The key to using programmable thermostats is to establish a schedule that is comfortable for your family so that you automatically reduce heating and cooling in your home when you don't need as much.

4. Plug air leaks in your home and insulate

Many air leaks and drafts are easy to find because they are easy to feel—like those around windows and doors. Many houses have air leaks around

where pipes go through the walls, and gaps around chimneys. You can add caulk, spray foam or weather stripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows.

Sealing air leaks is the quickest and cheapest energy improvement you can make and it also makes your home more comfortable by eliminating drafts.

To get the biggest energy savings, the easiest place to add insulation is usually in the attic.

5. Check your heating and air conditioning systems and change filters regularly

Although it's tough to quantify the benefits, it's clear that checking your system's air filter once a month and replacing them at least every 3 months can save energy and help your equipment run better and longer. Get a pre-season check-up of your system by a licensed contractor in the Spring and Fall, to ensure all parts are working properly to avoid early system failure.

If your furnace is more than 15 years old, or your a/c unit is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it with a more efficient and properly



Michael Sellman conducts an energy audit in a Silver Spring home. (Photo by Elizabeth Conlon)

sized unit. Replacing old equipment with more efficient equipment is one way to save.

Help Montgomery County Lead in Energy Efficiency

Now that a winter chill has finally hit the mid-Atlantic region this season, you may be donning an extra pair of wool socks to keep warm when you're at home. If you live in a drafty house, no matter how much you pay to heat your home every month, cold air will continue to seep in and warm air will escape through leaks that are often invisible.

Weatherizing can transform your home into a comfortable refuge from the harsh elements—no matter what the season.

The simple steps of home energy upgrades—plugging leaky areas, adding insulation and air sealing and replacing aging, inefficient appliances—can produce dramatic results. Weatherizing can increase the energy efficiency of a home by 15 to 40 percent. You'll see a sizable drop in your electricity and heating bills and feel the difference in every room.

Energy upgrades also provide the additional benefit of increasing a home's health and safety. On top of lower costs, improved comfort and enhanced safety, energy upgrades increase your home's value.

Yet, with the price tag of weatherization ranging from \$4,000 to \$6,000, many homeowners put off investing in energy improvements because the cost is too steep for their household budget.

Collective Purchasing Power

Homeowners can lower the price of energy efficiency upgrades by coordinating their weatherization with their neighbors. By bundling demand for these services, residents create an opportunity for businesses to compete for the work. This group purchase approach drives up the quality of the services while shrinking the cost.

WeatherizeDC, a program of The DC Project, guides community mem-

bers in coordinating their home energy upgrades. Through our Community Efficiency Initiative, we ensure residents hire contractors that deliver top-quality service by vetting local small businesses. WeatherizeDC only works with Building and Performance Institute (BPI) certified contractors.

By pooling homeowners' purchasing power, our Community Efficiency Initiative makes energy efficiency simple and affordable. Last Spring, a group of neighbors in Silver Spring took this path to home weatherization. The results were promising.

Silver Spring Community Efficiency Project

Patrice and Glenn had lived in Woodside Park, a neighborhood of Silver Spring, since 1994. Though their townhome is relatively new, it was drafty; the lower level, which is partially underground, was cold in the winters. Not

knowing who the good vendors were and without time or energy to devote to extensive research, they had put off weatherizing.

After a colleague of Patrice's hosted an energy meeting in her Takoma Park home, she decided to circulate information about WeatherizeDC on their neighborhood listserv.

"We had been wanting to weatherize anyway. We knew that other people in our complex had been talking about doing it and would be enticed by the possibility of savings."

Savings

Patrice and Glenn gathered support among their neighbors, and 8 out of the 11 homes on their block completed weatherization projects. They saved on average 15 percent on the services.

Not only did they receive discounts from their group purchase, they also

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News and Letters

Transit, continued from p. 4

nect to the DC system. Nevertheless, although the county has provided some excellent bicycle bridges and facilities, connectivity and safety remain big problems. It will be a long time until bicycling in Montgomery County appeals to all age groups and temperaments (as it does in parts of Europe).

Consensus for Higher Gas Tax

At the state level, a growing consensus for a higher gas tax, a piece of seemingly good news for environmentalists, may mask problems. A blue ribbon commission recommended a 15 cent raise in the tax over three years, but slighted the transit question. Although higher gas taxes may discourage driving, much of this money may end up going to new highway projects, which induce driving and sprawl. The Montgomery County Sierra Club, therefore, will endorse a gas

tax increase only if the money raised goes to transit and road maintenance, not new road projects.

Several big road projects still in the works continue the reckless abandon of the ICC. One is a widening of I270 by two lanes in each direction all the way to Frederick at a cost of at least \$3.4 billion. Others are extending the Midcounty Highway, M-83, from Derwood to Clarksburg, which would cut through forests and tributaries, and an extended Montrose Parkway. The Western Bypass, which would extend the ICC, is an ominous portent of plans for a complete outer beltway.

County planners resemble Jekyll and Hyde, seeming to want both smart growth and sprawl simultaneously. The Montgomery County Sierra Club will continue to oppose new road projects, and advocate for transit and smart growth policies that allow for a different, cleaner, greener, healthier future.

—Ethan Goffman

Energy Efficiency, continued from p. 5

took advantage of Federal and local Montgomery County incentives. (More information about incentives can be found at:

<http://www.weatherizedc.org/whyweatherize/costs-a-savings->)

Community Benefits

By organizing for group discounts on these services, residents save money and lead businesses to adopt specific social standards that they want to see for their community, e.g. higher wages and benefits for workers. Only by organizing as a community can you see the

benefits of collective purchasing power —building community, and promoting good business practices.

Be a leader in your neighborhood

We invite you to work with us to build Community Efficiency Projects on your block. With your commitment, we can make Montgomery County a leader in energy efficiency in 2012.

To get involved and for more information, contact Community Efficiency Initiative Organizer, Ayla Schlosser, at ayla.schlosser@thedcproject.org / 202.630.9381.

—Ayla Schlosser

Save the Date, continued from p. 8

Friday, February 10, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Forum: Interfaith Leadership on the Environment

6 Herndon Avenue, Annapolis, MD, Philip Merrill Environmental Center. This forum, sponsored by the Chesapeake Covenant Community, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Annapolis-based Chesapeake Interfaith Environmental Group, is directed at leaders in faith communities. Speakers will include Bishop Eugene Sutton, Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, Dr. Beth McGee and Senator Bernie Fowler. The forum will address not only the faith imperative to cherish and care for creation but also practical ways that congregations can take action. See the My Green Montgomery.org website.

Saturday, February 11, 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Interfaith Leadership Forum: “Faithfully Picking Up the Potomac”

16420 South Westland Drive, Gaithersburg, MD, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Faith communities who all want to make a difference in the local environment meet together to coordinate. This event is sponsored by the Muddy Branch Alliance. The featured speaker is Dottie Yunger of the Chesapeake Covenant Community. This event is open to the community and all faiths. For information and to sign up, go to the Muddy Branch Alliance website.

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Annapolis Green Film Fest

60 College Ave., Annapolis, Maryland Key Auditorium at St. John’s College. Several films will be screened, with the feature film being *Energy on Trial*, a film by Gary Jobson. A brief panel discussion about the issues in the films will follow the screenings. The audience will then be welcome to attend a reception in the auditorium lobby. Free and open to the public. Information including directions on the Annapolis Green website.

8:30 am – 4:00 pm

Green Matters: Urban Farming Pioneers

1800 Glenallan Ave., Wheaton, MD, Brookside Gardens Visitor Center auditorium. This daylong symposium highlights innovative approaches to feeding the world’s population. Featuring Dickson Despommier, author of *The Vertical Farm: Feed-*



Liberty, Ecology, Community! ;)
Hike in Shenandoah National Park?
Want to own property there?
We’re part of a group w/ 81 acres seeking partners to help buy more land to protect it from development, to enjoy nature together, and to use for environmentally friendly enterprises. Property is in Madison Co., VA, close to White Oak Canyon trail and around the corner from Old Rag Mountain - 1.5 hrs. from Beltway. Info: Susan or Joe at: [301-460-3907](tel:301-460-3907) or Susan.Eisendrath@gmail.com or JLibertelli@udc.edu.

ing the World in the 21st Century, Darrin Nordahl, author of *Public Produce*, Ben Flanner, Head Farmer/CEO and co-founder of the Brooklyn Grange rooftop farm, and Jeff Semler Maryland State Coordinator of Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education. Fee is \$89. Information including online registration on the Brookside Gardens website.

Sunday, February 26, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Bethesda Friends Energy Workshop

Beverly Road and Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD, Sidwell Friends Lower School. Learn about being a part of a Community Weatherization Project Weatherizing, how to increase the energy-efficiency of your home, and save money. By joining a Community Weatherization Project homeowners can use their group purchasing power to receive a 15 percent discount on weatherization services. Free and open to the public. See the Weatherize DC website.

Monday, February 27, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Montgomery County Sierra Club Executive Committee

Montgomery County, Maryland. The monthly meeting of the Montgomery County Sierra Club Executive Committee. All Montgomery County Sierra Club members are invited to attend. Come with your ideas and join us for planning and discussion. Contact alvin.carlos@maryland.sierraclub.org for meeting place.

Annual Election



Chris Stoughton

Since September 2011 I have been serving on the Montgomery County Chapter's Executive Committee as I was nominated to fill in for a member who left early. I would now like to continue serving on the Committee with your vote of confidence. I am helping lead the Committee's efforts in developing an energy efficiency program to encourage Montgomery County residents to take energy efficiency actions. I look forward to continuing this work in the years ahead.

In 2010 I ran in the Democratic Primary as a candidate to represent Silver Spring and Takoma Park in the Maryland House of Delegates. I knocked on thousands of doors to discuss with Montgomery County residents about how we can work together to restore the Chesapeake watershed, increase and improve public transportation, and create a clean energy economy.

Even though I fell short in the election in my bid, I have continued to pursue these objectives. I am serving on the Maryland State Sierra Club Legislative Committee as I help lead the State Chapter's grassroots lobbying efforts. In November 2011 I began serving on the Silver Spring Citizen's Advisory Board. I am becoming involved with Silver Spring Green which is an exciting new alliance of Silver Spring environmentalists. I am also an outings guide for the Sierra Club as I lead trips throughout the Potomac region.

Currently I am working as a solar consultant for AtisSun Solar, a Maryland based company that sells and installs PV and Solar Hot Water Systems throughout Maryland.

In the past I have worked as a policy analyst and government relations man-

ager for non-profits in the public health field.

I look forward to continue to bring my enthusiasm and energy to the Sierra Club Montgomery County Executive Committee. In particular I look forward to working with the other committee members, county officials, and residents on our chapter's energy efficiency program.

—Chris Stoughton



Gerald Ehrenstein

I am a physicist who has been interested in the issue of sustainable energy for many years. My day job in the Biophysics Section of the Neurological Institute at NIH focused on the mechanism of nerve transmission. My volunteer work has focused on the environment.

I have taken courses on environmental economics at the University

of Maryland and on the physics of sustainable energy at UC Berkeley. I also taught an undergraduate physics course at the University of Maryland, and included in that course the physics and economics of climate change.

My work as a member of the Montgomery County Sierra Club Executive Committee has focused on energy conservation and sustainability. Fortunately, energy conservation and renewable energy installation, in addition to reducing greenhouse gases, often save money for a homeowner because of the combination of reduced energy costs and significant government subsidies. In order to publicize this, I wrote an article for the Montgomery County Sierra Club newsletter summarizing available subsidies at the Federal, State, and County levels. This information was incorporated into the Sierra Club web site.

I am currently a member of the Montgomery County Sustainability Working Group (SWG) and its Renewable Energy Subcommittee. One of my proposals that was incorporated into the SWG report is for a revolving fund to provide low-interest County loans to homeowners for installation of solar panels or other sources of renewable energy.

I have been a member of the Montgomery County Sierra Club Executive Committee for 3 years, and am currently the Treasurer of the Group. I would like to continue on the Executive Committee and continue to work on issues relating to climate change.

—Gerald Ehrenstein

Sierra Club Montgomery County Group Executive Committee Elections

There are nine members of the Executive Committee who serve two-year, staggered terms. Two seats will be filled by this election.

Vote for up to two candidates (each person who is part of a family membership can indicate their vote by using one of the two boxes.):

Gerald Ehrenstein

Chris Stoughton

Please fill in your name and address (print clearly)

Clip and return this ballot by **February 28, 2012** to:

Montgomery County Sierra Club
Suite 111
7338 Baltimore Ave.
College Park, MD 20740

Save the Date!

Saturday, February 4, 9:00 am – 2 pm.

Stand Up for Trees

12th St NE, Washington, DC

Learn to advocate for trees in your community, find out what tools are available through the District's municipal services, and receive advice from community members who have experience in effectively increasing tree canopy in their neighborhoods. Information and online registration on the Casey Trees website.

Saturday, February 4, 11:00 am – noon

Forest Gardens: Productive Ecosystems

245 First Street SW, Washington, DC. U.S. Botanic Garden.

Modeled on a young natural woodland, a forest garden can produce all kinds of food ranging from perennial herbs, vegetables, fruits, nuts and salads to flour for bread. Besides food, forest gardens also produce wood and other fiber for building, crafts and fuel. And they do this while doing all the other great things ecosystems do. Free, but pre-registration required. Information and online registration on the U.S. Botanic Garden website.

Saturday, February 4, 7:30pm – 9:30 pm

Bag It: Is Your Life Too Plastic?

7750 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC, the Washington Ethical Society library
Bag It has been garnering awards at film festivals across the nation. What started as a documentary about plastic bags evolved into a wholesale investigation into plastics and their effect on our waterways, oceans, and even our bodies. Snacks provided; \$5 donation requested. RSVP helpful but drop-ins welcome. To RSVP, email EarthEthics2@verizon.net. Information on the WES website.

Tuesday, February 7, 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

A Meeting with Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown

8818 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD

Woodside Conference Room, Silver Spring Center.

The Action Committee for Transit sponsors this talk by Lieut. Gov. Anthony Brown. Information on the ACT website.

Tuesday, February 7, 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Human Transit: A Mobility-based Approach to Transit Decisions

8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD, Park and Planning Headquarters auditorium
Learn about rail versus Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Discover the future of quality public transit. Free and open to the public. Information on MontgomeryPlanning.org.

Thursday, February 9 through Sunday, February 12

27th Annual Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education Conference

10100 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD, Clarion Resort Fontainebleau Hotel
MAEOE presents its 27th Annual Conference "Fulfilling Environmental Education's Promise: Authentic Learning & Real World Impact." The keynote speakers are Charles Saylan and Daniel T. Blumstein, authors of the recently published book *The Failure of Environmental Education (And How We Can Fix It)*. Information on the MAEOE website.

Thursday, February 9, 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Smart Growth: Human Transit

National Building Museum, Washington, DC

Jarrett Walker, author of *Human Transit*, outlines the fundamental geometry of transit that shapes successful systems, the process for fitting technology to a particular community, and the local choices that lead to transit-friendly development. Presented in association with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Smart Growth Network. Free, but pre-registration required. Information and online registration on the National Building Museum website.

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Go to <http://maryland.sierraclub.org/montgomery> for additional events and calendar updates.

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Montgomery County Group
7338 Baltimore Ave., Suite 111
College Park, MD 20740