



WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM NEWS

May 2026

Mission: The West Chester Green Team is a civic organization in West Chester, PA, that works to educate the local public and to establish and nourish green initiatives in the community in harmony with nature and each other, promoting the health of all living things and of planet Earth.

Inside:



WCGT Calendar of Upcoming Events

When – What – Where.



May 16: Porchfest! Various locations in the southwest quadrant of West Chester. See more info beginning on page 5.

May 20: Ribbon-cutting celebration of the Church Street Towers garden and Little Library, 11AM-1PM, Church Street Towers, 222 N. Church St., West Chester. See page 3 or more details.

For details on other April and later events, see listings beginning page 3. Also see more events at <https://wagreenteam.com> and countywide events at <https://chescoenvt.org>.

Related groups and committees (please check online before attending, especially on or near a holiday):

4th Monday of every month: East Bradford Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), 7 – 8:30pm, East Bradford Township Bldg, 676 Copeland School Rd.

4th Monday of every month: East Goshen Sustainability Advisory Committee, 7 – 8:30pm, East Goshen Township Bldg, 1580 Paoli Pike

4th Tuesday of every month: West Goshen Sustainability Advisory Committee, 6 – 8 pm, West Goshen Township Bldg., 1025 Paoli Pike

4th Tuesday of every month: Westtown Environmental Advisory Council, 7 – 8:30pm, Westtown Township Bldg., 1039 Wilmington Pike (Rt. 202)

4th Thursday of every month: West Chester Sustainability Advisory Committee, 6:30 – 8 pm, Room 240, Borough Hall, 401 E. Gay St.

Be sure to visit our Web site at <https://wagreenteam.com/> and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WCGTeam/> (all are welcome to post environment- and sustainability-related items there). If you wish to support our work, please donate here: <https://wagreenteam.com/contact-2/>

NOTE: Deadline for the June 2026 issue is **May 31!** We welcome contributions and suggestions from our readers for possible inclusion in a future issue. E-mail your ideas to Dianne Walsh at LDwalsh318@gmail.com.

This and That: More Coming Attractions

May 9: Repair Café, Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown



REPAIR CAFE
DOWNTOWN

May 9th, 2026 10am - 2pm

Central Presbyterian Church
100 W. Uwchlan Ave. Downingtown, PA 19335

**Bring Your Beloved
But Broken Items and
Get Them Fixed... for FREE***

Everyone is welcome, you don't have to be a Downingtown resident.

AVAILABLE REPAIRS
Soft Toys - Dolls & Stuffed Animals
Computers & Electronics
Jewelry
Sharpening
Mechanical & Electrical
Things Made of Wood
Clothing & Textiles
Bikes

Limit TWO items per person!
*Lamp and bike parts available for purchase at our cost

MORE INFORMATION

  repaircafedowningtown.com
 repaircafe165@gmail.com
 [@RepairCafeDowningtown](https://www.facebook.com/RepairCafeDowningtown)



Flyer design by Upward Arrow

“The greatest *threat*
to *our planet* is the
belief that *someone*
else will save it.”

Robert Swan

Porchfest: May 16

West Chester Green Team's Beloved Porchfest Returns for Its 5th Year — Bigger Than Ever

WEST CHESTER, PA — Mark your calendars: West Chester Green Team's Porchfest is back, and its 5th annual celebration is shaping up to be the biggest one yet. On Saturday, May 16th, from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM, the southwest quadrant of West Chester Borough will once again come alive with music, art, food, neighbors, and good vibes — all completely free.

For those new to the fun, Porchfest is exactly what it sounds like: local homeowners open their porches to musicians and artists, who perform for free, for anyone who wanders by. There are no tickets, no wristbands, no catch. Just a wonderful afternoon in a great neighborhood.

This year's festival spans over 20 blocks — 12 of which are closed to vehicles — giving attendees the freedom to roam, discover, and linger. With over 125 bands signed up to perform (109 will be on stage), drawing talent from West Chester, Philadelphia, Delaware, and New Jersey, there's something for every musical taste. Thirteen food trucks will be on hand to keep everyone fueled, and dedicated children's porches will feature arts & crafts, bunny hopping races, story time, hands-on music exploration and more. As the sponsoring organization, the West Chester Green Team will host separate porches focused on community environmental issues, including clean water and air quality, Dark Skies, Living Landscapes, West Chester Garden Club, the work of the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) and more.

Porchfest was born in 2022, when the Green Team members wanted to get people outside and reconnect after the isolation of Covid. What started with 43 bands and about 2,500 attendees has grown year over year — 3,000 attendees in 2023, 6,000 in 2024, and more than 8,000 in 2025. The 2026 edition promises to surpass them all.

The event is organized entirely by volunteers and made possible by the generous support of the Green Team and Porchfest's presenting sponsor the West Chester Downtown Foundation, along with a wide community of local business sponsors.

Porchfest is free and open to everyone. Come for the music. Stay for the community.

For more information, visit westchesterporchfest.com

Volunteers still needed! If you can help with Porchfest, sign up here:

<https://westchesterporchfest.com/volunteer-with-porchfest/>



PORCHFEST & BUNNIES

MAY 16 at Everhart Park 2:00 – 4:00

Bring the Family for the Fun!

Tammy Steele will have the bunnies entertain. Tammy, who studied in Ecuador, will read bunny stories in both Spanish and English.

Free. All welcome.



Viniendo a PORCHFEST, el 16 de mayo en Everhart Park.
Hora: 2:00 a 4:00 p.m. Cerca del parque infantil.

Los conejitos estarán saltando y su entrenadora, Tammy Steele, los pondrá a prueba para el entretenimiento de niños y adultos por igual. Tammy, quien estudió en Ecuador, leerá cuentos sobre conejitos tanto en español como en inglés.

Gratuito. Todos son bienvenidos.



May 20: Ribbon-cutting at Church Street Towers

Join **Church Street Towers** as we Welcome
Senator Carolyn Comitta & Community Members
for the Ribbon Cutting Celebration of Our Garden on May 20th
11:00 am – 1:00 pm



Designed and planted by the West Chester Green Team

We will observe a moment of silence for the Justice Center garden
as we mark the inauguration of the
Garden and the Little Library here at **Church Street Towers**
222 N. Church Street, West Chester

May 30: The Chester County Art Association presents Art in the Woods.

11AM-4PM. Representatives from the Green Team will be there with plants! Please bring dog or cat food, treat, toys, and/or other pet supplies to donate to Lucky Dawg Animal Rescue. They will be onsite with animals ready for adoption. Enjoy the art, meet your new best furry friend, and take home a plant, too!



PRESENTS

ART IN THE WOODS

Step into a world where nature meets creativity! Join us for Art in the Woods—a one-day outdoor art show featuring 80+ local artists, live music, food, and more. All are welcome to stroll the trails and celebrate art in the great outdoors!

Spring Art in the Woods is proud to sponsor Lucky Dawg Animal Rescue — please bring dog or cat food, treats, toys, litter, and other pet essentials to support their mission. Lucky Dawg will also be onsite with dogs and cats available for adoption, so you can enjoy art in nature and maybe meet your new best friend!

SATURDAY, MAY 30

11 AM - 4 PM



LEARN MORE - CHESTERCOUNTYARTS.ORG



100 NORTH BRADFORD AVE
WEST CHESTER, PA 19382

June 6: Garden Tour, 10 AM 'til noon

The Green Team traditionally holds a garden event in June. This year our Vice President, landscape designer Chris Pugliese, has set up an exciting opportunity to visit the personal gardens of Donald Pell Gardens, a design-build landscape company located half an hour's drive north of West Chester, near Phoenixville. This event is free to all. (Photos illustrate some of the Pell gardens.)

If interested, please email nathanielbsmith@earthlink.net to sign up and receive driving instructions. We expect 10-15 participants and will facilitate car-pooling.

To see more information about gardens [here](#), including links to past tours and videos of local gardens. For our 2025 tour, see [here](#).



Extra! Read all about it!

Did you see the April 27th issue of the West Chester Chronicle? Our Earth Day festivities were front-page news!

Chronicle Editor Kyle Hudson attended the Wellness Fair and spoke to several people took photos, then posted a wonderful reel of those photos to Instagram and wrote the very complimentary article for this newest of local newspapers.

Thank you, Kyle, for the wonderful publicity!



Volunteer of the Month – Yashvi Kiran

This month we would like to honor Yashvi Kiran as our volunteer of the month. Yashvi, a freshman at Episcopal Academy in Newtown Square, has taken on a leadership role with youth and created a presentation for our recent Earth Day dinner. She also marched in the "Our Power, Our Planet March" led by former mayor Jordan Norley and spoke at the courthouse corner on the plastics issue. Yashvi very creatively uses cartooning to convey her message to younger children. Elizabeth Gombosi, head of the Green Team's Plastic-Free, Please committee is working with Yashvi, with both advised by our **Environmental Leadership award winner, Dee Durham.**



Dee Durham has advised us since early days on how to get rid of plastic. In her case, she has accomplished it for the entire state of Delaware. She and a small group of supporters have created an organization to educate about the dangers of plastics and to ban them to protect their citizenry. She has led workshops and participated in panels at West Chester University and created an environmental education day for youth who attend school in Delaware. She is a superstar of the green movement and we are so happy to honor her.

Also receiving an **Environmental Leadership Award was Faran Savitz**, award presentation by Nathaniel Smith.

"I much admire Faran's job title, Zero Waste Advocate. What he does at PennEnvironment, where he has worked for 7 years, is about so much more than plastics reduction.

His title is a sort of philosophical statement. Humanity's unfortunate impact on the environment comes from the contrary of Zero, excess: too much stuff, too much trash, too much development, too much warfare, too much air and water pollution, too much fossil fuel, including of course plastic.

Faran has been instrumental in increasing the number of municipalities that have adopted single-use plastic restrictions, including several in Chester County.

Faran has been a regular visitor and resource for our area. Not only has he worked with municipalities to reduce plastics waste and litter, but he has also shared his knowledge in events like our virtual panel on cutting plastics use, recognizing Earth Day, 5 years ago.

He also joined our panel 3 years ago on "How to ban PLASTIC" along with, as it happens, this year's fellow awardee, Dee Durham.

On PennEnvironment's Beyond Plastics page you can find a map of the over 3 dozen PA municipalities that have banned plastic bags. It is not a coincidence that almost all of them are in the Philadelphia area. The site estimates that these bans have eliminated almost a billion plastic bags per year!

Another aspect Faran is working on is controlling plastic pellets, the basic form in which plastic is shipped for processing, which contribute to ubiquitous microplastic pollution, with harmful effects on waterways and oceans and unknown effects on human health.

Good fortune to Faran in all such important ventures and congratulations on receiving our Environmental Leadership Award!”

Six Ways Gardening Supports Longevity

Adapted from Your Garden Is a Gym, a Pharmacy, and a Therapist, by Julie Stewart, published online by Super Age

Digging in the dirt may be one of the most powerful prescriptions for a longer life.

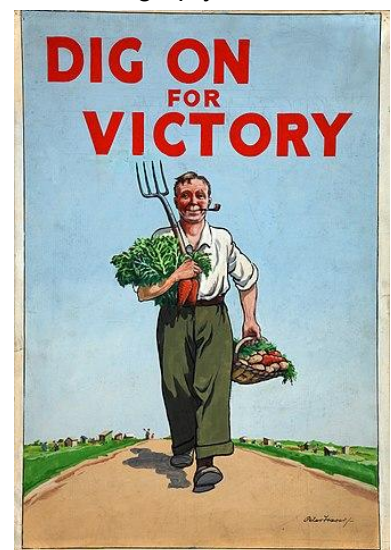
When food prices go up, people start doing something revolutionary: they start gardening more. Which turns out to be one of the healthiest possible responses.

During WWII, about 20 million American households grew produce in their backyards and in community gardens. These “Victory Gardens” supplied an estimated [40% of the fresh vegetables](#) for people at that time. Today’s gardening wave is less coordinated, but the instinct is the same: when the world feels unsteady, plant things. We’re here for it! Because gardening may be one of the most underrated longevity practices we have.

The benefits of gardening go far beyond what you’d expect from a few hours spent digging in the dirt. From stress relief to strength building, there are several surprising perks to rolling up your sleeves and picking up a trowel. They are:

- 1) Build muscle and burn calories.
- 2) Regulate your stress response.
- 3) Boost your microbiome
- 4) Breathe in immune-boosting compounds.
- 5) Sharpen your brain.
- 6) Reset your circadian health.

To read the entire article, go to: <https://superage.com/your-garden-is-a-gym-a-pharmacy-and-a-therapist>



Earth Day Recap

First of all, we want to thank:

- The United Methodist Church of West Chester for providing the venue for our Wellness Fair and Power Dinner.
- Church of the Holy Trinity and Joe & Susan Karas for hosting the Connor Petula Jazz Quartet concert.
- All exhibitors who participated in the Wellness Fair and/or donated goods and services for our raffle baskets.
- Our local restaurants for donating or otherwise providing the delicious food for our dinner.
- Alison Perez, Spanish teacher from Downingtown High School West who brought her students to the park clean up at Everhart Park and to the Earth Day dinner. Alison and her students held a fundraiser for the Green Team and presented their earnings to us. Alison, very appropriately, read with Mia Bosna, the part of an Enlightened Teacher in the native American choral reading at the dinner. Many thanks, Alison, for your leadership of youth and your excellent role modeling.
- All who volunteered their time and talents to work on making the day a success.
- All who attended our special events.

The jazz concert was very well received, and we heard the following comments from attendees:

"I found the music good to listen to, pleasantly varied, and very suitable to the beautiful Holy Trinity setting." – Nathaniel Smith

"It was an absolute honor to be at the concert. The musicians were top-notch and the space was perfect."—Susan Karas

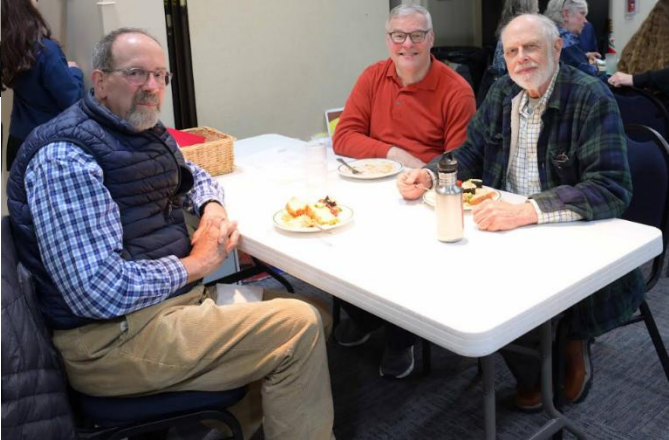
"The jazz concert at Holy Trinity Church was an excellent event. The quartet, made up of WCU music students, was very engaging and entertaining. They played a wonderful selection of tunes that suited the occasion perfectly, and they played with confidence and competence." -- Tilo Stahl

"Excellent musicians. Impressive knowledge, selection and performance of many of the great jazz standards." – Lou Ferdik

"I don't know much about jazz, but I know I loved that jazz! The concert, performed by four highly talented West Chester University students and musicians, was an outstanding and energetic display of artistry." -- Tim Lawlor



Photos from our Earth Day (and evening) celebration:





Support our Local Businesses: Thinking about FOOD

Who doesn't like food? We have many wonderful restaurant supporters and when you are headed out to eat, why not head to one of them? These restaurants are not national chains; they are local mom and pop stores and Green Team supporters.

First of all, think about dinner at Limoncello followed by gelato from D'Ascenzo's. That's Italian and delicious, too. Both of these establishments donated food to this year's annual Earth Day dinner.

Two or three more that we will mention this month are Kildare's for the best in Irish fare and Andiario's/La Baguette Magique: two spots under the same ownership. Andiario's is great for that special dinner while La Baguette Magique makes bread from organic flour that is both healthy and delicious.



We have to mention Mistral, French and Fast, too, for the best takeout anywhere. They provided the beef stew for the Earth Day dinner. You can find them in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church on West Miner Street in West Chester.

Last but certainly not least, cheers to the Master's Baker for that absolutely stunning and delicious cake we enjoyed for dessert. It was a work of culinary art (see previous page).

Shop local. Shop with our friends.

More businesses will be listed each month. Thank you to all of our donors and supporters.

The Justice Center Pollinator Garden is No More —But the Plants Live On



You may have noticed that the beautiful pollinator garden several Green Team members planted back in May 2025, in front of the County Justice Center on W. Market Street in West Chester, has been removed. Two of our members met with County representatives to discuss this turn of events and found that the county determined that the garden was a possible security risk and had it removed. The plants were spared, however, and have been given new homes at both Hibernia Park and around the Old Glory statue at the Historic Courthouse at Market and High Streets—the latter location being very visible to visitors and residents alike.

While we are dismayed at the loss of the Justice Center's garden, we are hopeful that the plants will do well in their new homes and that even more people—and pollinators--will get to enjoy them.

Who Owns Your Water?

By State Rep. Danielle Friel Otten Adapted from the *DFO Dispatch*, April 7, 2026



Pennsylvanians' right to pure water was enshrined in our state constitution in 1971. This week, I want to talk some more about events happening right now that could put that constitutional right to the test.

The two largest regulated water utilities in the country have announced an agreement to merge. This merger would combine American Water Works (the parent company of Pennsylvania American Water) and Essential Utilities (the parent company of Aqua PA) into a mega-corporation with a market capitalization of

\$40 billion and an overall enterprise value of \$63 billion. If you are an Aqua customer or a PA American Water customer, this merger directly affects you. And if you live in a municipality with its own municipal water authority, this merger could affect your future water bills as well.

The companies' [official press release](#) cites "enhanced scale and operational efficiency" as the reason for the merger and claims that there will be "no change in customer rates." But [history suggests otherwise](#). In fact, customers regularly see significant jumps in water and wastewater bills when utilities consolidate. This phenomenon affects not only current utility customers but also municipal water customers whose municipal authorities will be left with fewer options and less leverage, should they need to privatize their water system.

Right now, when a municipality in southeastern Pennsylvania decides it can no longer afford to run its own water system and puts it out to bid, there are two utilities that typically bid on the takeover, Essential Utilities (Aqua) and American Water. While more choices would be better, having two utilities competing for the bid means your municipality at least has some bargaining power to push for things like service guarantees, rate caps, and infrastructure commitments.

If this merger goes through, there will be one bid, from the one enormous water utility remaining in our region. What does that do to your municipality's bargaining power? What does it do to yours? When there is no competition, there is no incentive to keep your rates down, your pipes fixed, or your phone calls answered.

This consolidation of our water infrastructure into fewer and fewer private hands is especially concerning at a time when Pennsylvanians are already feeling the impact of data center growth and corporate profits on our rising electric bills. If we fail to act, those same projects, which consume staggering amounts of water, are poised to drive up our water bills too.

A single large data center can consume [up to five million gallons of water per day](#). Pennsylvania currently has no rule limiting how much water these facilities can take. We do not even require them to tell the public how much they are using. [More than 20](#) hyperscale data centers are in the planning pipeline in Pennsylvania right now. If those data centers get built, they are going to need water. And someone is going to have to pay for the costs driven by increased demand and related infrastructure development.

A consolidated water utility with no competition has very little reason to fight costs on your behalf. And as we've seen it play out before, if the utility's costs rise—or if the utility can make the argument that they *expect* their costs to rise—the utility will go to the Public Utility Commission, ask for a rate increase, and usually get one. The utility's profits are protected, at ratepayers' expense.

Water is not a luxury; it is a necessity. And in Pennsylvania, clean water is a right. The fewer private entities that control our access to this essential natural resource, the more our constitutional right comes under threat. In future installments of this series, we will talk about proposed legislation that would protect Pennsylvania's clean water and protect Pennsylvania's water customers from subsidizing corporate profits.

Right now, it's important to know that the PUC has the ability and authority to approve or reject the merger between Essential Utilities and American Water and to impose conditions including rate protections, affordability commitments, and infrastructure investment guarantees.

A [series of upcoming hearings](#) on the merger will give the public an opportunity to weigh in. In Chester County, in-person hearings were scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, at Penn State Great Valley in Malvern, with sessions at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. Telephonic hearings were held April 28.

As your state representative, I will be urging the PUC to either reject this merger or impose strict, enforceable requirements including rate protections, transparency requirements, and service quality guarantees as a nonnegotiable condition of approval. Chester County residents and all Pennsylvania water utility customers have the right to safe, reliable water at an affordable rate.

How Polluted Is the Air In PA? Use This Tool To Find Out

Five PA counties, including Bucks and Philadelphia counties, received a failing grade for clean air, according to a report.

From *West Chester Patch*, by [Dino Ciliberti](#), Patch Staff, Fri, May 1, 2026

Children within 37 out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties are breathing unhealthy air, according to a recent report evaluating ground-level smog and particulate pollution.

The American Lung Association said in its 2026 "[State of the Air](#)" report that nearly half of U.S. children — about 33.5 million — are breathing unhealthy levels of air pollution, with 152 million people overall living in areas that received failing grades for smog (ozone) or particle pollution.

The report, based on 2022–2024 data, evaluates counties for ground-level ozone (smog) and both short- and long-term particle pollution, ranking the cleanest and most polluted areas nationwide.

In the Commonwealth, the report found that Bucks County, Philadelphia, and three other counties received an "F." Only two counties in the state — Somerset and Tioga — received an "A" for the cleanest air.

Pennsylvanians who want to know the quality of the air they're breathing can use [this tool](#) that sorts data by county and ZIP code.

Remainder of the article can be found at: <https://patch.com/pennsylvania/westchester/s/k9ugz/how-polluted-is-the-air-in-pa-use-this-tool-to-find-out>