



WEST CHESTER WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM NEWSLETTER

September 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.

Contents: upcoming events, reports on our August 30 train ride and other past events, looking to our annual meeting and auction, our Roots & Branches book is available, the great train ride, the future of Porchfest, local data center issues, sad to have obituaries of three of our heroes, and much more.

**Deadline for October
2026 is September 30! E-
mail your ideas to Dianne
Walsh at
LDwalsh318@gmail.com.**

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Chester Green Team*

**We welcome
contributions and
suggestions from our
readers for possible
inclusion in a future
issue.**

Calendar of Upcoming Events

When – What – Where.



For details on these and other events, see pages 3-4. See more local events on [our web site](#) and countywide events at <https://chescoenvt.org/>

Saturday, September 12: Secret Gardens of West Chester Tour, a self-guided walking tour of privately-owned gardens in the north-west area of the Borough of West Chester. The tour route includes the outdoor learning area at West Chester Friends School. Stop by the plant sale located on the school campus to shop for additions to your garden. The Green Team's recently-planted garden at Church St. Towers will also be on the tour. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 on the day. For more info go [here](#).

Saturday, September 12: 10am-2pm, Repair Cafe, a free event staffed by a volunteer team. You don't need to live in Downingtown! Repair coaches fix many items including clothing, small electrical appliances, bicycles, toys, lamps, chairs and small tables. Central Presbyterian Church, 100 W. Uwchlan Ave. Downingtown. It is sustainable to repair and reuse!

Wednesday, September 16: 2026 Sustainability Showcase from 11am-1pm in Sykes Ballrooms, 110 W Rosedale Ave., WCU: This event brings together groups and departments from across campus that promote environmental, social, and economic sustainability to showcase current programs, events, and projects. The WCU community, friends and neighbors are invited. The Green Team will host a table.

Saturday, September 19: 11am-2pm, 3rd annual Pawpaw Festival, Bondsville Mill Park, 1647 Bondsville Rd., Downingtown. Learn the amazing benefits of this native fruit and why it is not available in grocery stores. Taste samples, buy pawpaw products. Other activities: stream assessment, peek inside a beehive... See [here](#).

Sunday, September 20: 3-4pm, WCGT Annual Meeting at the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester 501 South High Street. Come meet Green Team members and learn what is happening with green initiatives in the County. Come early at 2:30 for art show and for tabling by WC Co-op, introducing their new grocery store just opened at 204 W. Market St. Recognition of new WCGT officers, Philip Jamison Art and Nature Award given to Nancy Salamon, keynote speaker Nick Rickards, founder, the Turks Head Trail Committee, about plans for creating a hiking trail from West Chester to Wawa. See poster on last page of newsletter.

Tuesday, September 22: 12-1pm, WCU sustainability tours: Green Roofs on campus, Sept. 22. Sign up [here](#).

Thursday, October 1: 2pm, Olivia DiNucci will present "**War is Ecocide**: How We Need to Build a Local Peace Economy Instead" at WCU's Philips Autograph Library. It will also be

livestreamed to Zoom. DiNucci, an anti-militarism and climate justice organizer based in Washington D.C. is a CODEPINK Coordinator who seeks to build and bridge connections from issues to people. The event is co-sponsored by the WCU Office of Sustainability WC Green Team, and other groups.

Tuesday, October 22: Green Team members are invited to join the Chester County Art Association for a **trip to Glenstone** in Potomac MD, one of the nation's most extraordinary destinations where art, architecture, and nature converge. Green Team Interim President Chris Pugliese will share his knowledge and insights.

Tuesday, October 22: 6:30pm, 3 panelists discussing Plastics and Health, Business and Public Management Center, 50 Sharpless St., West Chester. How to minimize our microplastics exposure and clean up the planet? At 6pm, reception with light refreshments and some of our youth members will be tabling.

Regular meetings in our area

(please check online before attending, especially on or near a holiday)

1st Wednesday of every month: West Chester Tree Commission, 6pm, Borough Hall, 401 E. Gay St.

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.

Green Team mourns death of Tom Walsh

This past week we bade farewell to our friend and neighbor Tom Walsh. Walsh, a respected local historian, was the husband of our WC Green Team newsletter editor and board member, Dianne Walsh. Our sincere condolences to Dianne and the Walsh family.

Reporter Bill Rettew, himself a longtime connoisseur of local places and people, published an outstanding [obituary of Tom](#) in Friday's Daily Local News, including this photo, titled "The late historian Tom Walsh leads a walking tour in West Chester." He had been able to interview Tom on Monday. Here are some highlights:



“Walsh created and chaired the West Chester Historical Commission for many years and was often seen pointing and giving walking tours of West Chester....

“He described West Chester as ‘basically a 19th Century walking town....’ He lamented the loss of a West Chester where you

could ‘buy anything’ on a Friday night from local merchants who had children in your school.”

Tom grew up in Marshallton, graduated from West Chester High (now Henderson), received a BA in Social Studies and a masters in Geography from WCU, was a member of the West Goshen Lion’s Club, president of the Chester County Sports Hall of Fame, coached a semi-pro baseball team including 5 future major league players, served on the Chester County Agricultural Development Council, received a Preservation Legacy Award from the West Chester Downtown Foundation, wrote material for the annual Town Tour and Village Walks guides, moved from teaching elementary school to the Owen J. Roberts High School District, and much more. Among many other tributes, historian Catherine Quillman said: “he showed us how knowledge is power and informing residents about the history of the Borough was one way to create a community.”

Tom’s life seems like many lives rolled onto one—what an inspiration! A memorial service will take place a few weeks from now.

The Promise of America: Our New Book

by Margaret Hudgings

THE PROMISE of AMERICA: Our ROOTS and BRANCHES, presented on July 2nd at Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center, was an inspiring celebration of American and West Chester history. Through visuals and spoken word, 30 presenters took the stage to express the indigenous worldview of honoring our connection to the land.

The Iroquois Thanksgiving Prayer for the Natural World, selections from the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, the "I Have a Dream" speech, and other texts honored the rich and diverse legacy of the United States.



The Green Team event was unique in celebrating local residents’ contributions, including botanist Humphry Marshall, artist Mary Cassatt, "The Fighting Quaker" Smedley Darlington Butler, and Civil Rights icon Bayard Rustin. Rachel Carson, born in western Pennsylvania, was also honored for founding the environmental movement in the US.

The event has been captured in a beautiful book that will be included in the Parks and Recreation Department's "Time Capsule."

The photo and name of each person who spoke a part is included, with the relevant quotes from historical figures. This is a great memoir for yourself or to share in celebrating the 250th Anniversary Celebration!

This beautiful locally-produced publication has saturated colors of each poster and a glossy cover front and back. If you had seen the hardback version, this softer version will also delight you!

It is also a guidebook for further endeavors. Right now, we have a limited quantity available at \$35 each. To order, please email us [here](#).



Noel Hedgecock, Volunteer of the Month

By Margaret Hudgings

Last month, we lost Noel Hedgecock, age 50, West Chester Borough resident, community leader, music lover, husband and father of 4. He left too soon but while he was here, he made a positive impact on the community and enriched our lives. (See full obituary [here](#), including a Plant a Tree option.)

The West Chester Green Team would like to recognize Noel for his extraordinary vision and leadership as exemplified by his work on West Chester Porchfest. In 2022, Noel volunteered to help the Green Team create this event and bring music to West Chester's porches. During that first year, Noel recruited the bands, matched up bands and porches, and created the event as we know it today. The Porchfest Committee was dazzled by his creativity, energy, and ability to multitask. The fledgling committee predicted that 500 people would attend our first Porchfest, but 2,500 came out to enjoy the music and conviviality.

People love Porchfest. The music, the crowds, the children's activities and the green porches, the food trucks and the overall ambiance brought out the neighborhood after the isolation of covid, and we celebrated! It was the COMMUNITY HAPPINESS event

that the Green Team intended when we followed the lead of the Porchfest founders in Ithaca NY and brought this free community music event to the Borough.

With our musical roots in West Chester University's outstanding music school and the expansive porches on our Victorian era homes, West Chester is the right setting for an outstanding Porchfest experience.

Year by year, Porchfest grew. Estimated turnout in May 2026 was 7,500 to 10,000. That year, there were 268 Porchfest celebrations in the United States, Canada and Australia. This free, all-volunteer music festival provides a blueprint for how to create a Porchfest. Communities follow it and interpret in their own way and bring music and happiness to their communities.

Miggy Mason, Rani Norley, Beth Quarfot, Lillian DeBaptiste and Margaret Hudgings handled the logistics that first year, and Noel organized the music. He created the DubC Porchfest website and found the bands. In his first week on the job, the band numbers went from 11 to 19. Porchfest was on its way.



Noel was not with us for long, but he made his mark, blazing the Porchfest trail in year one, and launching an event which brings out thousands of visitors. In the Borough, Porchfest is second in attendance only to the Borough's Christmas parade.

Thank you, Noel. Your talent and dedication are making our community a happier place that is alive with music.

Save Porchfest 2027!

By Gavin Gray

The author, president of the student environmental club at Wilmington Friends School, is an admirer of Porchfest.

Porchfest is an event held in West Chester each spring one Saturday in May for just 6 hours. Despite the very short time it occurs, Porchfest (2025 scene to the right) is a fun-filled, community-engaging celebration of music and the arts. Citizens of West Chester offer their porches, driveways, and lawns to small music acts. These music acts perform for the people that venture into West Chester to enjoy good music and participate in the festivities.

West Chester Green Team organized its first Porchfest in 2022, hosting around 50 musical guests. This year the Green Team doubled that amount, hosting just over 100 musical guests. Many of the musical guests are members of the West Chester community, or live nearby. This is due to the Green Team's community-focused

attitude. West Chester Green Team organized its first Porchfest in 2022, hosting around 50 musical guests. This year the Green Team doubled that amount, hosting just over 100 musical guests. Many of the musical guests are members of the West Chester community, or live nearby. This is due to the Green Team's community-focused attitude.

As one example, in June of 2025, the Green Team planted a lovely garden at the Justice Center. By 7 July (photo) it had already unfolded its beauty for the West Chester community. This spring it was taken out due to supposed safety reasons, but the Green Team will persist, and keep providing great things for West Chester.



While Porchfest is an amazing event that the Green Team organizes for the West Chester community, it did not start in West Chester, nor did it start in 2022. The first ever Porchfest took place in Ithaca, New York, in 2007. Since then, around 150 cities have organized their own Porchfests, including Wilmington, Delaware, which organized their first Porchfest just this year.

Although West Chester doesn't host the biggest Porchfest, it may soon be the most expensive. The Borough of West Chester's government requires the Green Team to pay for policing the event. At the moment, the Green Team is paying around \$13,000 to police Porchfest. Which, as a reminder, lasts for 6 hours on one Saturday in May a year. And yet! The Green Team has been told that the cost could increase substantially.

Additionally, police have notified the Green Team that they will not recommend the local government to allow the event to be held next year. Should police be able to control the government's decision this way? If you think not, or if you'd like to see Porchfest return in years to come, there are many things you can do to help. For example, you could call local West Chester government elected officials and voice your opinion.

You can also visit the [Green Team's website](#) to sign up to volunteer with them, make a donation, or access eco-friendly yard signs. If you feel passionately about music and the arts, this may be the path for you. Save Porchfest 2027!

All about our auction: Save the Date, Dec. 5



The Season's Greenings Auction, a WC Green Team tradition, is going hybrid this fall. It will open online at 8pm on Nov 25, that is, Thanksgiving Eve, and will close at 8 pm on Saturday, Dec 5. This year, we will end the auction with a dinner at Holy Trinity Church. All the items will be displayed so

you can see them, ask for more information, and take them or the winner's certificate home if you are the lucky winner.

Mistral French & Fast will provide the starter, with Ted's very popular she crab soup. Kim Stack will offer a vegetarian minestrone soup, with bread from La Baguette Magique and pasta by our long time friends, Limoncello. This year, by popular demand, we are offering a dessert buffet of ten options. Choose just one or sample a few. Including key lime pie and a homemade Dubai chocolate cake. Coffee and tea also provided as well as beer and wine.

Think about doing your holiday shopping at the auction. We have exciting offerings old and new. Photos of the French Alps vacation house in Le Châtelard (the town in the photo), south of Annecy in the French Alps, will show you what this year's winners particularly enjoyed. We have added personalized Tai Chi lessons for whatever your level of fitness. These can be done solo or shared with by a group of friends--up to four people. Learn to knit or bake bread, to grow dahlias or do basic household repairs. Or see stars at the WCU planetarium or ride the WC RR train, this year with an option to pick out your Christmas tree at Wiggins Tree Farm and bring it back to West Chester in the train's baggage car.

Fun and exciting experiences will make your gift stand out. More info will soon be available on [our web site](#).

The Great Train Ride

By Dawn Mazzone



August 30, 2026, was a delightful day for a train ride! West Chester Green Team worked with the Turks Head Trail Committee in creating a scenic, educational and enjoyable ride to Glen Mills.

Inspired by our work with the West Chester Railroad on creating a native plant garden at the Market Street station, the Green Team has decided to feature the trail and train in our programming for this summer and fall. The garden, designed by Green Team interim president, Chris Pugliese, will be planted in the fall.

A special thank you to everyone at the WC RR and to Nick Rickards, Carrie and Eric Roskamp, and Ray Ott from the trail committee. You can learn more about the trail by attending our annual meeting to be held at 3pm on Sunday afternoon, September 20, at the Unitarian Congregation, 501 S. High St., where Rickards will be the keynote speaker. See more on him and the trail at Hello West Chester.

On the train ride, we were entertained by the Late Entry Barbershop Quartet, which opened the trip by singing "America" and then "I've Been Working on the Railroad," a

song boomers were taught in grade school and probably haven't heard since. All those words came back!

The train has comfortable, clean seats, though the cars themselves are almost one hundred years old. We learned that they were constructed of extra strong steel from a foundry along our way where steel for shipping vessels was made and so holds up to severe conditions. These rail cars have outlasted those of the Philadelphia and Wilmington RR that corroded and deteriorated.

The informative commentary provided by the railway line gifted us with many insights.

Another was the information that we were passing the homestead of the Cassatt family. The world famous artist Mary Cassatt was acknowledged in the WCGT program "The Promise of America: Our Roots and Branches," staged this spring and summer, most recently at the Uptown! theater on the weekend of the 4th of July and coming in the fall to WCU.

On the train ride, we also passed the Wiggins tree farm and learned that during the holiday season, riders are welcome to take the train, select their tree and pick it up from the baggage car back at the Market Street station. Love that!

During the the Glen Mills stop, we could explore a charming winery, a restored ticket office with historical artifacts and a lovely picnic area next to the creek. The WC RR personnel kindly offered opportunities to climb up and be photographed standing on the engine.

On the way back to West Chester, Nick Rickards, founder of the Turk's Head Trail group, shared his vision for the trail which will run alongside the railroad tracks. He explained how he became interested in the endeavor, some of the terrain challenges for building the trail and next steps.

We were so pleased to be joined on this outing by the Domestic Violence Center. An anonymous Green Team donor sponsored their tickets.

With more than a hundred twenty participants of all ages, it was a train ride to remember!

West Chester Co-op opens store!



Eleven years in the planning, the [West Chester Co-op](#), which has long provided food for Green Team events and in which many of our readers are member-owners, has opened at 204 W. Gay St., between La Baguette Magique and the Justice Center parking garage. The Co-op provides walkable food shopping with a variety of well-chosen foods. See more at [Hello West Chester](#) and [Daily Local News](#) (photo from there by Bill Rettew). Welcome, Co-op store!

In Memoriam: Franklin L. Kury, Author Of The Environmental Rights Amendment To The Pennsylvania Constitution



From WCU Office of Sustainability's Fall Bulletin No. 3:

Last week, we were saddened to learn of the passing of Franklin Kury, former state senator and author of the Environmental Rights Amendment to the PA Constitution. The above photo shows Kury giving a lecture on WCU's campus in April 2019 as part of a collaboration between the Office of Sustainability and the West

Chester Green Team.

The amendment declares: "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."

[Learn more about his life in a blog post via the PA Environment Digest.](#)

Data Centers and Chester County

By Nathaniel Smith

Data centers, in the news every day, have suddenly become a leading issue in political debates. It is unusual for a largely environmental issue to receive so much attention.

70% of Americans worry about the environmental impact of data centers and 71% don't want a data center constructed in their area; 74% of Pennsylvania voters would oppose a data center in their community.

Data centers (AKA server warehouses) are concentrations of computer processing power driven largely by AI and cloud computing (basically, whatever isn't stored on our own computers). Data centers can be free-standing or part of another commercial building. How many do we need, where do we need them, and for how long (will they, some day, go the way of the late regretted Exton Mall)?

Their downsides include:

- Large amounts of energy to power and cool the centers.
- A lot of water needed in cooling, depending on design.

- Noise and vibration, which many people living near data centers find intolerable.
- Air pollution from on-site generators, whether in permanent use or as back-ups.
- Taking up land that could be used for agriculture, housing, or other purposes.

Just as people have been noticing the storms, floods, droughts, deaths and diseases magnified by climate change, so they notice escalating electricity rates, water shortages and other problems caused by data centers.

At a time when Americans are struggling with inflation, home energy costs are a real concern. Even the [US Congress has noted](#) that “U.S. data center annual energy use in 2023 (not accounting for cryptocurrency) was ... approximately 4.4% of U.S. annual electricity consumption” and “Some projections show that data center energy consumption could double or triple by 2028.”

Ideally, data centers would be far from residences and businesses but not in environmentally sensitive areas, use their own sources of renewable energy supplemented by battery storage, and have a water supply not in competition with residents and businesses. Maybe in exclusively industrial areas with big solar panels on large rivers would be good? That could be required; but regulations have been scarce.

The scale of these facilities can be enormous. “The bulk of the Homer City Generating Station’s over 4 gigawatt capacity — enough to power over three million homes — will power a nearby 3,200-acre data center campus” ([Environmental Integrity Project](#)). According to groups challenging its state air quality permit, that plant east of Pittsburgh “would emit more greenhouse gases each year than all the cars on Pennsylvania’s roads.” Now that’s pollution!

To put that “campus” in perspective, that’s 5 square miles or 2.7 times the size of the entire Borough of West Chester!

But surely such huge and objectionable facilities would not be built in an area like Chester County, with its large population and a highly-appreciated natural settings? Wrong.

A data center proposed largely in East Whiteland on the Foote Mineral Co. property, would [now occupy 887,000 square feet](#) and understandably public officials are hesitant. (See detailed info on the [township site](#)).

Whatever residents might prefer, a municipality can’t ban any such land uses, only regulate them. Thus in June, West Vincent passed [an ordinance](#) regulating data centers. And West Chester Borough Council followed suit in July.

The [West Chester ordinance](#) requires a minimum lot size of 5 acres and a setback of 250 feet on all sides, making it pretty clear that the only feasible site would be the long-vacant 32-acre (about 1.4 million square feet) Wyeth lot adjoining a residential area on the east side of West Chester.

The ordinance requires documenting “efforts to maximize use of renewable and/or clean energy for all electrical and cooling needs” but not the actual use of such energy. It limits the use of back-up fossil fuel generators to testing and times of actual power

outage. It sets specific noise and vibration standards. It permits open-air cooling towers, with consequent potential large consumption of water (unlike closed-loop systems; and one would like to know, in case of inadequate supply, whether a center or residents would be shut off first).

Here is the mysterious part: the ordinance countenances the installation and use of fossil fuel backup generators, even though the Borough's [Home Rule Charter](#) (904(B)3) specifically states: "It shall be unlawful for any corporation, business or government to engage in the creation of fossil fuel, nuclear, or other non-sustainable energy production and delivery infrastructures, such as pipelines, processing facilities, compressors, or storage and transportation facilities, within West Chester Borough."

Perhaps that conflict between the Home Rule Charter and the data center ordinance will deter any applications, and it would surely slow them down as the inevitable legal case winds through the court system.

At any rate, municipalities cannot rely solely on Governor Shapiro's recent [executive order](#), which sets some useful conditions but applies only to new data centers of over 25 megawatts peak demand, thus, it seems, basically to "hyperscale" centers over about 25MW or 100,000 square feet). 25MW [corresponds to the electrical usage](#) of about 20,000 homes, more than the population of West Chester Borough in the 2020 census.

A recent [New York Times article](#) quotes Chester County Senator Katie Muth, who has proposed a 3-year moratorium, as saying at a rally: "We are being told that hyperscale A.I. data centers and their associated infrastructure build-out here in our commonwealth is a sign of progress, a sign of economic growth. We are told that they're necessary for economic development and national security. What I'm asking today is very simple. Who is this progress for? And at whose expense?"

And, we might add, at how much cost to human and environmental welfare? And will this vast network of US data centers be operated in the public interest?

Don't miss the Green Team's annual meeting:

WC Green Team's Annual Meeting

Come meet Green Team members and learn what is happening with green initiatives in the County.

**SUNDAY
SEPT. 20**

**3:00 PM**

**THE UNITARIAN
CONGREGATION OF
WEST CHESTER,
501 S. HIGH ST.**

!! All Welcome! !!

**COME EARLY!
2:30 PM**

**Tabling before the
event by WC Co-op,
introducing the new
grocery store!**

**204 W. Market St.**



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

**3:00 PM**
Recognition of
new WCGT officers:
Tim Lawlor
Vice President
Dawn Mazzone
Program Chair

**Philip Jamison Art and
Nature Award
to be presented to this
year's winner:
Nancy Salamon**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
NICK RICKARDS**
Founder,
The Turk's Head
Trail Committee
*Nick, about plans for
creating a hiking trail
from West Chester to Wawa.*