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## West Chester Goes Green: 3 WCU Students Work at Grassroots Levels in the West Chester Borough

Courtney Bodle

Kara Thorpe

Paige Vermeulen

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Grassroots Levels in the  
West Chester Borough

Courtney Bodle, Kara Thorpe, & Paige Vermeulen

September 11, 2019

# Who is the West Chester Green Team?

- Alliance of 4 groups
  - Don't Spray Me! (DSM)
  - Chester County Citizens for Climate Protection (4CP)
  - Ready For 100
  - Plastic-Free Please Action Group (PFP)
- Passionate leaders on the issues of protecting and maintaining a healthy environment
- [WestChesterGoesGreen@gmail.com](mailto:WestChesterGoesGreen@gmail.com)

# Don't Spray Me!

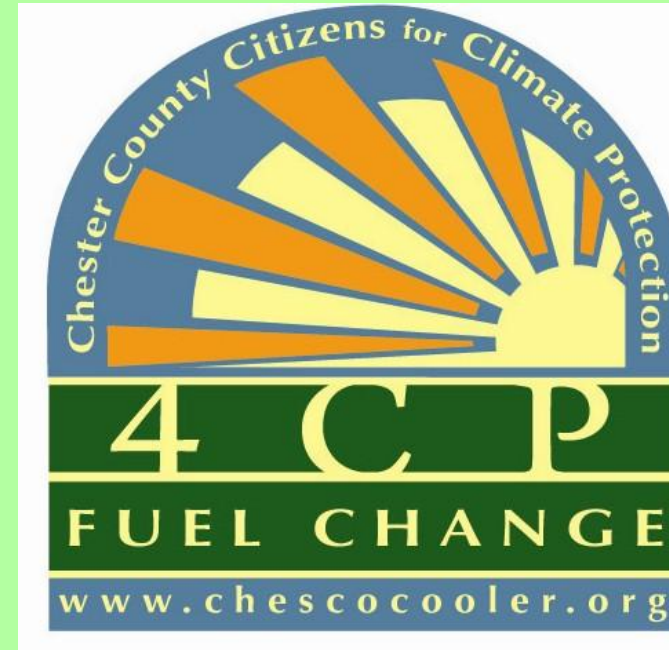
- Within the Sustainability Committee of Sierra Club's Southeastern PA group
- Founding member of the West Chester Green Team
- Opposes toxic chemical spraying as a means to control mosquito vector-borne illnesses (e.g. West Nile Virus)
- Solution: larviciding and spray buffers
- Fights for public power and voice on the matter
- Works to educate public
  - MCS, ecosystems, human health "unknowns"



DSM's New Logo  
Credit: Daniel Ferencak

# Chester County Citizens for Climate Protection

- 4CP
- Focus: Climate Action/education
- Promotes actions that cut back on emissions
- Focal Point: for engaging citizens/remedial actions
- Newsletters, community events
  - <http://chescocooler.org/online/>



# Plastic-Free Please Action Group

- Mission: education WC businesses and residents about the harmful effects of plastic use.
- Focus: single use plastics
- Plastic Bag/Straw Ban
- Improve recycling
  - Terracycle - <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US>
  - 91% of plastic is not recycled



# Ready for 100

- Branch of Sierra Club
- 133 United States cities are committed to cleaner air and a more sustainable future
- Focus: push for 100% renewable energy (wind, solar, etc) by 2050 or sooner
- Targets local officials
  - #Mayors4CleanEnergy
  - Photo Petition



# Why Interns?

**West Chester Green Team**

**GROWING RESISTANCE**





# Why Interns?

Pesticide Spraying....

Renewable Energy...

Climate Protection...



....are global issues that require major outreach and networking!

....are ultimately in the hands of millenials and younger leaders!

# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

- Created and led by intern Courtney Bodle
- Previous tours involving gardens focused too much on flowers and landscaping
- Need for sustainability
  - Minimizes harmful effects on the environment
- West Chester University Gardens - research, teaching, volunteering, experiential learning, service learning, and recreation.
  - North Campus Garden
  - South Campus Garden
  - Tanglewood Garden

# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

## AUDIENCE QUESTION:

What practices are considered sustainable?

West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

BETTER YET....

Why *is* sustainability important in the practice of gardening?

# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

## ANSWER:

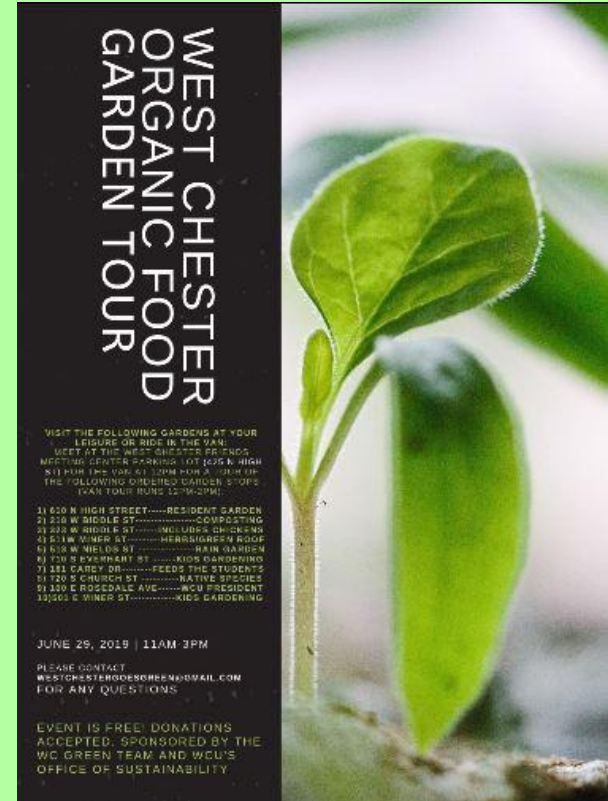
- Sustainability is important in gardening because it reduces the need to consume frivolous resources (water, fertilizers, construction materials, seed sharing, equipment that runs on electricity)
- Sustainability is about maintaining *what already works* (respecting extant ecosystems)
  - Pest & disease control, crop variety, native plants
  - Nature is always right

# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour



# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

- Need for education and exposure
  - Design
  - Purpose/Mission
  - Organic gardening Methods
  - Admire local talent/network
- 10 gardens in the borough, including those at the University
- Sponsored by WCGT and WCU Office of Sustainability
- 40 volunteers, including local officials
- ~100 person event





# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour



- Each of the gardens was open to the public for 4 hours total
- Director of Sustainability, Brad Flamm, volunteered by driving a van which had its own route
- Pictured: Borough councilwoman and University professor Denise Polk shows off her garden
  - Vertical Design
  - Honey Bees
  - Donations



# West Chester's First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour



Pictured: Daily Local writer Bill Rettew snaps a photo of Courtney talking about the medicinal herb garden of Susan and Dale Frens.

Susan and Dale also have a garage roof garden

# West Chester First-Ever Organic Food Gardens Tour

Final thoughts:

- Success!
- An opportunity for more future garden tours
- Still a need for exposure to sustainable, organic gardening
- Tour on bicycle?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: What would inspire you to join us for a garden tour?  
What other types of gardening education do you wish were made accessible to the public?

# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program

- Created and led by Courtney Bodle
- Need for exposure and education
- All-Organic
- Sustainable
- All ages
  - Originally geared toward older children
- Focus on youth
  - Mission of the WCGT

WEST CHESTER GREEN TEAM

# ROOTS AND SHOOTS: KIDS GARDENING PROGRAM

KIDS 6-11 YEARS OLD LEARN HOW TO  
GARDEN ORGANICALLY AT 2 BOROUGH  
LOCATIONS!

- PLANTING
- WEEDING
- WATERING
- ENGAGING IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE  
ENVIRONMENT

## OFFERING 4 2-WEEK SESSIONS:

**Session 1: weeks of June 17-29**

Session 2: weeks of July 1-12

Session 3: weeks of July 15-26

Session 4: weeks of July 29-August 9

For More Information, including registration and times,  
contact Courtney at [westchestergoesgreen@gmail.com](mailto:westchestergoesgreen@gmail.com)



# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program



There are currently about 10 children enrolled in Roots 'N' Shoots Youth Gardening Program

“ It’s critical that kids are exposed to organic and sustainable gardening practices so they can see the steps involved in producing fresh, organic nutritious food”

Pictured: A captioned photo that made the Daily Local

# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program



Once a week, Roots 'N' Shoots is proud to harvest self-grown organic fruits and vegetables

# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program



Putting together a cucumber trellis from locally sourced bamboo, a sustainable natural resource



# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program



Counselor-In-Training Mateo and the children composting independently

Pictured: Children with our C.I.T., Mateo, learning about composting.

- Children dug holes and covered them with their own stepping stone
- Kitchen scraps from home and weeds from the project

“This way, each participant feels a personal sense of contribution when the compost is used on plants”



# Roots 'N' Shoots Children's Gardening Program

## Final Thoughts:

- Gardening represents work
- Drop out rate
- Future collaboration - less rigorous
- Sensory

AUDIENCE QUESTION: How do you think this program could have been improved?

# Courtney's Personal Growth

- I DID WHAT I LOVED!
- I used gardening as a way to talk about big issues like access to organic food and pesticide spraying
- I am inspired to take my experience into the field of dietetics
- I made connections in the community
  - Residents
  - Green Team
  - University
  - Children

# Hot Button Talk

- **Climate Action and Today's Youth**

- **Focused on our panel of 3 local youth member, where we got their opinions on climate issues and what needs to be done**

~**Greta Thunberg**: Swedish teenager global awareness on the climate crisis

~ **Green New Deal**

~ **The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**

# Little Faces

- ❑ Local Child care center in downtown West Chester
  - Reading: 2-5 year olds
    - ❑ Spark interest
    - ❑ Educate
  - Activities: 6-10 year olds
    - ❑ Engage in the environment
    - ❑ Longwood Gardens trip
    - ❑ Mini garden tour
  - ❑ Composting/ recycling game
    - ❑ Went to local parks



- ❑ Getting kids outside and to care/ be aware of the world the live in

# *National Solar Tour*

## **Chester County Clean Energy Tour**



- The Tour brings together clean energy supporters, home and business owners, and community members to celebrate and help grow renewable energy in their communities.

### Process of organizing a tour

- Endorsers, sponsors, municipalities, mayors and community members

**October 19th 10-4pm**

<https://www.nationalsolartour.org/>

# My Experience

- ❑ Multitude of experiences
  - ❑ Larviciding and mosquito research
  - ❑ Canvassing
  - ❑ Tabling
- ❑ Engaged my interest in the environment
- ❑ Got to get involved in the community
  - ❑ Town Hall
- ❑ Learned a lot along the way

# Plastics Ordinance

- Why are plastics bad?
- Plastic Free Please
- Our Ask: Ban single-use plastic straws and single-use plastic bags in the borough, with very little exceptions
- Public Hearing
  - 200+ turnout!
  - Decision: Council passed the ordinance despite state law, and the ordinance will take effect in 2020



# Background: Why are pesticides (specifically Deltamethrin) bad?

- Deltamethrin: the active ingredient in Deltagard, which the county sprays from spray trucks to eliminate adult mosquitos
- Myth: The effectiveness of mosquito adulticides
- Myth: The threat of West Nile Virus in our area
- Negative effects
  - Deformities in fish and other aquatic wildlife
  - Chemical traces found in human breast milk and urine of mothers and children
  - Link to autism spectrum disorders and other cognitive disorders



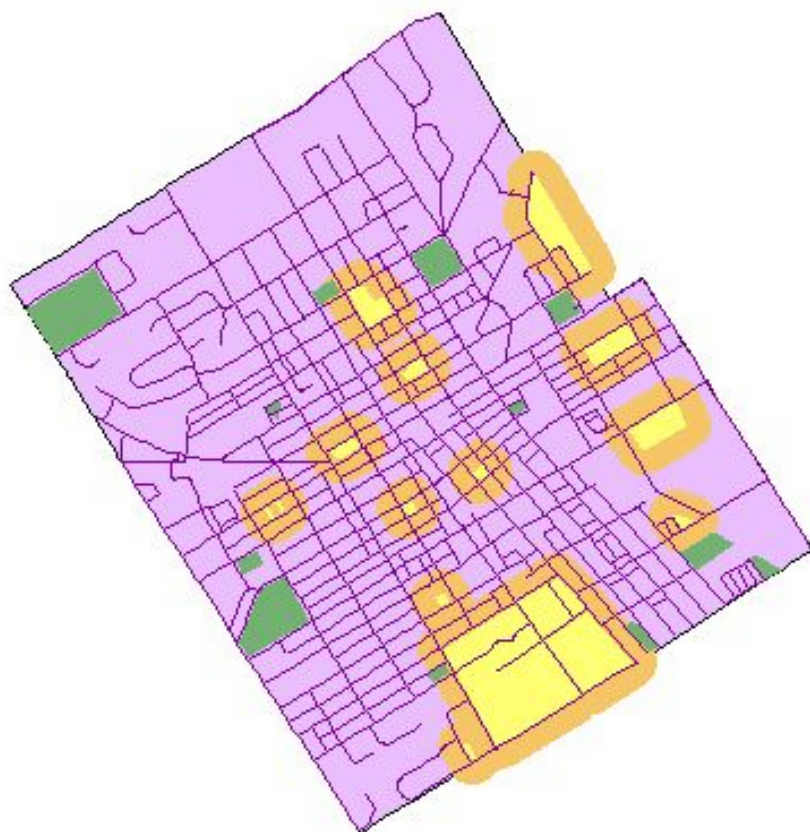


# Buffer Zones around Schools and Daycares

- Background
  - Why are pesticides (specifically deltamethrin) bad?
  - History of spraying in the borough
  - The current imaginary buffer around public schools
- Our Ask: treat private schools/daycares the same way that public schools are treated under state law
- Progress:
  - Support of Borough Sustainability Advisory Committee and Borough Public Works Committee
  - Issue will be moved along to Public Works worksession
  - Current motion is to ask Chester County commissioners to recognize state law for all schools, including private schools, daycares, and other childcare centers

## Legend

- wc streets
- wc parks
- Harmony Companion
- wcu
- Henders on
- WC Head Start
- Sankofa
- Bucket School
- CC Family Academy
- Nazarene
- YMCA
- Melton Center
- UMC Preschool
- Calvary Lutheran
- WC Daycare
- St Agnes
- Little Faces
- WC Friends
- wc borough



# My Personal Growth

- I got to work on issues that I'm passionate about
- I experienced how change can be effected at the local level
  - Everyone has a voice - and everyone can make a change!
- New experiences
  - Public works, SAC, and borough council meetings
  - Watching ordinances initiate, grow, and be enacted
- Constantly learning
  - Mosquitoes, pesticides, chemicals
  - Gardens
  - Local government
  - Plastics

# Looking Forward:

Sep, 14th - CCEA Strategy Session

Sep, 19th - Environmental Film Series

Sep, 21st - Climate Action and Peace March

Oct, 19th - Chester County Clean Energy Tour

*Thank You !*