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Earth Day 2013: MCIA Makes Strides with Eco-Centric Programs

MIDDLESEX COUNTY – For more than three decades, April 22 has been a day for the international community to stand in solidarity, pledging to live greener and more responsibly and to further a modern environmental movement.

But for Middlesex County's many programs and operations, each and every day is Earth Day, a chance to improve upon and protect nature's often limited resources.

As its name suggests, the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA) and the various operations that fall under its umbrella, to include recycling, community affairs, financing, economic development, open space preservation, two long-term care center locations and four golf courses, aim to improve the lives of County residents.

Certainly, one of past year's crowning achievements was Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge receiving the distinction as the first Gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified long-term care facility in the state, subsequently raising an entire industry's bar. The U.S. Green Building Council uses this designation as a measure of a structure's eco-friendly design, construction, operation and maintenance.

In the case of the County's newest nursing home, more than half of its construction waste was recycled, the building outfitted with insulated solar reflecting window glass and shingles and an irrigation system designed to save 63 percent of potable water usage installed in the landscape. In reference to the County's historic site, Roosevelt Care Center at Edison, efforts to recycle food waste and cooking oils and expand electronic medical records usage is both intensive and ongoing.

Another County irrigation system receiving some praise is located at The Meadows at Middlesex golf course in Plainsboro, where the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection more recently applauded staff's use of treated waste water as an irrigated supply. The department deemed it a sound reuse of water and commended this methodology for providing some relief to municipal water sources.

"The Middlesex County Improvement Authority is not only promoting environmentally conscientious practices, it's advocating for a greener lifestyles in our day-to-day operations," stated MCIA Chairman Leonard J. Roseman in his latest letter addressed to residents. "We are setting an example for the change we want to see in a healthier world."

While the MCIA recycling divisions continually helps the County exceed state mandated goals, in the year to come, it will also be promoting the release of *The New Reuse-It Book*, a revised and regional guide to "freecycling."

Similarly beneficial is the MCIA's due diligence within the County's Open Space Program, which has been credited with protecting more than 7,500 acres from development. The Economic Development Program has proved an invaluable resource as well, retaining upwards of \$2 million in grant money to fund municipal studies of contaminated sites and further remediation progress.

Lastly, 2012 marked another record-breaking year of donations for the Community Affairs-run Middlesex County Food Organization and Outreach Distribution Services. MCFOODS, the County's official food bank, is responsible for feeding any number the region's hungry by making use of food that may otherwise, have gone to waste or rather into a local waste stream. Furthermore, the program continues to supervise M.C. Blue, a recycling robot that has brought environmental education to more than 200,000 audience members to date.

"We not only want our residents to know how we serve them in our everyday capacities, but how with every advancement and new step we take, we're pushing measures to reduce our impact on the environment," said Freeholder Carol Barrett Bellante, a liaison to the MCIA.

For more information on the Middlesex County Improvement Authority log onto www.mciauth.com or call 609-655-5141.

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