

# Local green efforts noticed

## Legislation modeled after Sustainable Jersey and Cherry Hill goes national

By **MELISSA DIPENTO**  
*The Cherry Hill Sun*

It was a green team dream come true.

Earlier this month, U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) chose to deliver news about his Sustainable States Act of 2011 at the Camden County Environmental Center Parks Department building in Cherry Hill.

And Menendez had good reason to unveil his new national legislation in the township. After all, the legislation is based on the Sustainable Jersey program, a certification program for municipalities in the state that want to make their communities more sustainable, as well as promote environmental consciousness for future generations.

Cherry Hill is one of 74 municipalities in the state to receive certification. In total, 348 of the state's 566 municipalities are registered members of the program.

"(The legislation) is inspired by the incredible work of Sustain-

able Jersey. Cherry Hill is an outstanding participant in Sustainable Jersey and a model of how a community can take a proactive role in making their community more sustainable," Menendez said.

Mayor Bernie Platt, Sustainable Cherry Hill Executive Director Lori Braunstein, Camden County Freeholder Director Louis Capelli Jr. and former Maplewood mayor and Sustainable Jersey founder Fred Profeta joined Menendez to make the announcement.

Platt, who spoke about the township's recent green efforts, which include joining a green purchasing cooperative, integrating hybrid SUVs into the municipal fleet, implementing the RecycleBank program, and installing solar panels on the Public Works building, thanked the local, regional and national partners Cherry Hill has gained by working to become more sustainable.

"Together, we've put Cherry Hill on the map as a green com-

munity, and while there is still work to be done, when I look back at all we've accomplished, I'm so proud. Throughout all of this, our partnership with Sustainable Cherry Hill and the recognition and support we've received from Sustainable Jersey have been critical in providing needed resources that might not otherwise have been available," Platt said. "Sen. Menendez has helped Cherry Hill secure hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal funding, allowing us to complete many of these projects without putting the financial burden on our local taxpayers."

The legislation, which should be introduced in the Senate next month, would cost about \$5 million to implement nationwide, Menendez said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would fund grants up to \$600,000 over three years to build municipal sustainability certification programs, modeled after Sustainable Jersey, in participating states. The EPA would



MELISSA DIPENTO/The Sun  
Matthew Swartz, left, Ruthie Swartz, Chase Napoli and Julianna Napoli stand proudly by their homemade sign at Menendez' announcement in Cherry Hill.

also make available \$100,000 grants over three years to top performers that are certified as sustainable by their state.

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# Cherry Hill a green model

## GREEN

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Braunstein said the Sustainable Jersey model has served Cherry Hill well and could do the same for other towns nationally.

"Sustainable Jersey gets local governments and community stakeholders to work together to achieve certification," Braunstein said. "Realizing the collective vision of a sustainable future requires such collaboration and

communication, and this strategy has worked beautifully here in Cherry Hill."

The next step to move the legislation forward, Menendez said, is to find a Republican co-sponsor. He said he hopes the legislation will be considered as an amendment to various energy measures that will reach the Senate floor this fall.

For now, Menendez said, he is just excited about the potential for Sustainable Jersey-like programs to reach a national audience.

"We're taking what we've

learned here in New Jersey and taking it to the national level," Menendez said. "We're making good on our obligation to future generations by taking it nationally."



MELISSA DIPENTO/The Sun  
Mayor Platt, Sen. Menendez, Sustainable Cherry Hill's Lori Braunstein and Sustainable Jersey founder Fred Profeta share a laugh.