

LOCAL NEWS

Montgomery County celebrates Earth Day with Sustainability Marketplace

'I hope people will see this and really start thinking about ways that they can help their own community.'



A stretch of Swede Street in Norristown is closed to traffic on April 22, 2026 as vendors participate in the Montgomery County Sustainability Market. (Rachel Ravina – MediaNews Group)

NORRISTOWN — As the saying goes, “April showers bring May flowers,” and attendees of Montgomery County’s Sustainability Marketplace braved the rain Wednesday morning to shop small along a stretch of Swede Street in Norristown.

The free environmentally friendly event marked [Earth Day](#) festivities in Montgomery County as organizers encouraged the more than 30 vendors and visitors in attendance to learn about related offerings available throughout the region.

“I would say that sustainability means that we are thinking about the planet and our ecology, but also incorporating people. Since we live in our environment, we must take care of our environment,” said Desiree Stevens, assistant growing manager at Martha’s Community Farm in Audubon.

Meeting people’s needs

Much of the produce from the farm goes toward helping sustain the Martha’s Choice Marketplace in Norristown, according to Stevens, who stressed paying close attention to the needs and providing “culturally relevant foods” to the food pantry’s clientele is crucial.

“We definitely believe in building community through food,” Stevens said.

Cilantro, parsley, peppers, and tomatoes are among the crops grown at the “regenerative farm,” as Stevens noted, between 40 percent and 60 percent of food pantry recipients are Hispanic. Stevens emphasized reducing stigma surrounding food pantries and bettering the overall experience remains

“Because people already feel some type of shame when they’re coming to a pantry,” Stevens said. “They’re very vulnerable at that time. So if you’re able to give them food that is clean, healthy and not rotting, it really helps their experience.”

The Montgomery County farm was among more than 30 vendors at the county’s inaugural marketplace event, which aimed to promote renewable practices. Participants included artisan shops, farms, eateries, green energy organizations, grocery stores, and nonprofits.

“They really range in sector, but what they have in common is a belief in sustainability and bringing sustainability into the real practice of their day-to-day businesses,” Montgomery County Chief Sustainability Officer Devi Ramkissoon told MediaNews Group.

Sustainability as goal

Ramkissoon defined sustainability as “balancing equitable economic growth with community resilience and a healthy environment.” Ramkissoon noted the event took around four months to organize, but it was time well spent.

“I put this on today because I wanted everyone to see that sustainability is accessible and very doable for everyone, that it doesn’t have to be about major infrastructure projects, that it can be about small swaps and changes that everyone can do in their daily lives,” Ramkissoon said.

Montgomery County Commissioners’ Chairwoman Jamila Winder agreed, emphasizing the importance of thinking green, but pointed out it doesn’t necessarily require a “Herculean effort.” Instead, she said that mindset can form by incorporating minor changes.

“We have a responsibility to protect the world that we’re living in, and one way that individuals can get involved in this work is thinking about small ways in your everyday lives to implement sustainable practices,” Winder told MediaNews Group, adding “it’s all of us as individuals being part of a collection of solutions to protect our environment for the next generation.”

Winder also said it’s “just great to uplift local businesses that care about this work” during the inaugural event.

“I’m a local Philly florist, and in our industry, something that a lot of us think about is how much waste there is, especially when you’re talking about [the] busy season with weddings,” said Shelby Brisbane, co-owner of the Philadelphia-based Fruitcake Floral Studio.

Brisbane said flowers are often discarded almost immediately after an event. But Brisbane saw another opportunity to transform them into dried flowers, which can last for around one year.

“So we try our best when we have extra florals to dry everything [so] that we can reuse them and give them new life,” Brisbane said.

It’s a similar mentality Mainline SHIFT co-owner Kimberley Bezak has had over the last five years growing a business in Narberth that allows consumers to refill household products, ranging from dish soap to body wash to shampoo, and even dog treats.

“And to date, we’ve diverted over 85,000 containers from a landfill,” Bezak said.

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“Earth Day is every day at the shop,” Bezak said. “That’s what we say, but it is really people having it at the forefront of their minds, and when you start introducing some really simple solutions, it becomes much more in reach for a lot of people.”
