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Thurmont ramps up 'green' programs for residents

By Sylvia Carignan scarignan@newspost.com Jan 28, 2016

Green Team survey

Thurmont's Green Team is surveying residents on the sustainability issues they see in town and the activities they would like to see. Visit the town's website at <http://www.thurmont.com/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=62>

to take the survey.

Thurmont's "Green Team" has a lot on its plate for 2016, including the creation of a community garden, new native vegetation plantings and a speaker series.

The Green Team formed last May to pursue a certification in the state's "Sustainable Maryland" program.

Under the program, municipalities organize environmentally conscious events, plan green improvements and create "green teams" to earn points toward certification, all with the goal of saving money and ensuring better quality of life over the long term.

Existing green activities, such as Thurmont's farmers market, earn the town points. Jim Humerick, Thurmont's chief administrative officer, said the town's farmers market gained popularity after it moved into the town's municipal parking lot last year.

"We have a lot better turnout from both visitors and vendors," he said.

The biggest green project for Thurmont this year is the new community garden, Humerick said. The first-come, first-served plots will be up and running by the spring.

Registration for those plots, which will cost \$25 for a 9-by-11-foot space, starts Feb. 1. The plots are already in place, he said.

The town is hoping the community garden will help fund the Thurmont Green Team.

“The thought is that the fees brought in will be put into an account for the Green Team to do upkeep,” he said.

Green Team members are also helping to plant native vegetation, including butterfly-friendly plants, along the Maryland Midland Railway, which passes through Thurmont.

Since the railroad’s operators use herbicides to control invasive species growing near the tracks, the native vegetation would help keep the invasive species out and cut the use of herbicides.

At Thurmont Regional Library, the Green Team is organizing a speaker series where residents can talk about the environment and nature topics with members of the Frederick Forest Alliance, master gardeners and other groups.

The program, “Think Green, Be Green: A Community Conversation,” is scheduled to start in April, in conjunction with Earth Day.

Emmitsburg, Frederick and Brunswick have already earned Sustainable Maryland certification. Thurmont, Walkersville, New Market, Burkittsville and Middletown are still pursuing it.

The certification is a collaborative effort between the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland and the Maryland Municipal League (the organization of cities in the state) to replicate the success of a similar program in New Jersey.

Municipalities must pass a resolution to state their intent to pursue Sustainable Maryland certification. Certain actions, such as creating a “green team,” are required, though most others are at the discretion of the municipality.

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