

Group promotes sustainable living at Live Earth event

By Judith Doolin Spikes

A new organization got off to a rousing start Saturday when Sustainable Hastings hosted a Live Earth event in Draper Park that drew more than 150 enthusiastic participants.

The gathering was one of 1,300 held nationwide in conjunction with the worldwide Concerts for a Climate in Crisis that brought together some 2 billion people hoping to trigger a global movement to halt global warming.

Deann Cartwright and Elisa Zazzera, who began organizing Sustainable Hastings in May as a local task force on the environment, pulled the event together in just five days, expanding their e-mail list of kindred spirits through the Internet reach of MoveOn.org and LiveEarth.org.

Picnics and potluck, live music, conversation, and handouts on conservation and sustainable practices entertained the adults from 5 to 7 p.m., while children of all ages frolicked with Frisbees, balloons, and balls of all types, or ran about the wooded perimeter of Draper's grassy fields, engaging in 21st-century versions of cops and robbers — no electronic devices in sight.

At 7, a DVD projected onto an improvised screen brought a message from Al Gore and a "virtual town hall" courtesy of MoveOn, featuring presidential candidates' answers to questions regarding their views on climate change and sustainability. This was followed by brief in-person speeches of solidarity by local officials: Hastings Trustees Diggitt McLaughlin, Jerry Quinlan, Peter Swiderski, and Danielle Goodman;

Dobbs Ferry Trustee Larry Dengler; Irvington Trustee Nikki Coddington, who is also Environmental Coordinator for the Town of Greenburgh; and Town Supervisor Paul Feiner. The evening ended with projected excerpts from the benefit concerts held throughout the day in East Rutherford, N.J. (Giants Stadium), London, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hamburg, Washington D.C., and Antarctica, featuring 100 musical superstars including Bon Jovi, Madonna, the Beastie Boys, the Police, Snoop Dogg, and Garth Brooks. (In order to carry out the theme of a seven-continent series on the date 7/07/07, five members of the British Antarctic Survey formed a band and played to an audience composed of the other 12 members of the survey team — and a flock of penguins.)

How it began

Sustainable Hastings began three months ago after Cartwright and Zazzera independently communicated to the village board their desire to participate in the work of the Conservation Commission. Trustee McLaughlin introduced them to each other, and "the synergy just exploded," she said. "Deann and Elisa have hit on a very good idea to organize people around. People are ready for this — a group focusing both on how government operates and how we act individually."

"The whole point of Sustainable Hastings is to allow people a place to be comfortable with changing habits and



Musician Kevin Galarello



Trustees Larry Dengler of Dobbs Ferry and Danielle Goodman, Diggitt McLaughlin, and Peter Swiderski of Hastings.

Sustainable

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

behaviors that are damaging to the environment," Cartwright says. "We are not just saying do this, don't do that. We are providing resources, networking, information, and support so that you're not alone in it."

Sustainable Hastings "is operating as its own little think tank right now, but there might come a point for it to incorporate as a nonprofit, or to become a village subcommittee," McLaughlin said.

Born and raised in Hastings, the 33-year-old Cartwright (née Gromelski) graduated from Hastings High in 1991. After college and a master's degree in psychology earned at the John F. Kennedy University in Northern California, she came back to Hastings in 1999 intending to help her father through an illness and then return to the West Coast. As fate would have it, she "met a guy" — Scott Henry Cartwright, also a Hastings native and 1987 graduate of Hastings High School. Now, eight years later, they are married, the parents of two preschool-age girls, and living in the house she grew up in. Both are now involved in Green Design & Build Services (aka SHC — Sustainable Home Construction — Designs), based in Hastings.

"At the beginning of May," Cartwright recalls, "I realized I had to practice what we preach." And as a mother, she had become concerned over climate change, wondering, "What am I going to leave for them?"

"I heard people on the playground saying, 'I wish they would do something.' Well, we're a democracy — we are the they. We must pick up the ball where our parents dropped it in the last 30 years —

and it's the biggest ball on earth: the planet."

After becoming a member of the Westchester County Global Warming Task Force, she sent an e-mail to about 20 Hastings residents proposing a "Sustainable Hastings Task Force." "I got an overwhelming response from people saying, 'I've been waiting for something like this to happen!'"

Cartwright and Zazzera met soon after. "I spearheaded it, but Elisa is now my other half, with the same drive and beliefs I have," Cartwright said.

Originally from Northport, Long Island, Zazzera moved from Manhattan to Hastings 18 months ago with her partner, James Dean Conklin — one of the musicians playing at Draper Park on Saturday — and decided to get involved with conservation. "I was having a midlife crisis," the 43-year-old freelance video editor and producer says. "No red Ferrari or liposuction for me — I chose the environment."

Live Earth Hastings

Addressing the assembly in Draper Park, Zazzera noted that the mission of Sustainable Hastings is "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." In a nod to the nearby headquarters of the Hastings Historical Society, she added, "Barbara Thompson, the society's president, told me that they expressed the same sentiment in her day as 'Make Do, Use Up, Wear Out.'"

Allegra Dengler, wife of Larry and herself a former Dobbs Ferry trustee, was busy signing people up for a projected Sustainable Dobbs Ferry, and Coddington was talking about a Sustainable Irvington organization. Sustainable Rivertowns as an umbrella group is a likely next step, Cartwright said.

"Hastings is the place to go for environmental activism," said resident Carla

Poole, attending with a friend from Rye. "I'm here because this is a global event I'd like to support and participate in. It's important for people to come together. It's important to be proactive, and this is a way to stay hopeful and know that change is possible."

Poole also highlighted the presence of "a really diverse group in age — infants, children, parents, grandparents — it's wonderful to see an intergenerational effort to improve the environment."

Mark Schor, a resident of Pelham who grew up in Hastings, said, "Doing something about climate change is essential for my 3-year-old son's future." Schor's father, Robert, noted that he and his wife, Lily, are very concerned about global warming. "The world population is now 6 billion, and probably in a hundred years it will not be 1 billion, because of geographical change," he predicted. "The Alleghenies to the Rockies — the bread basket of the U.S. — will be under 20 feet of water, as well as the rice-growing coastal plains of India. It's a terrible risk."

In a brief public address, McLaughlin put the focus on local initiatives, noting that village-owned buildings and parks "can all be green," as could the school district's "huge physical plants." Swiderski, trustee liaison to the Conservation Commission, observed that the village can "green" its vehicles, pesticides, and building code. Praising "the creativity of the people who live here," Goodman invited citizens to send their ideas to the board. Larry Dengler pointed out that the new public works complex Dobbs Ferry is now building off the Saw Mill Parkway is "green."

Coddington said individuals can contribute by saving energy and supporting renewable energy. "Keep things small and keep them local," she advised.

"Think about the energy implications of the decisions you make. Global warming is a greater threat than anything we have ever faced, and it requires the kind of effort we put into World War II."

Feiner praised the event as "fabulous" and celebrated its "can-do feeling." "We can make a difference — locally, nationally, and internationally." He noted that Greenburgh's new library will use geothermal heating, that town hall uses solar panels to generate electricity, and that the town has mandated energy efficiency in new construction.

"This is more than just a cause," Cartwright said. "This is about being in community, not sitting alone with the TV and e-mail. Go home and do something sustainable in your life!"

What's next

A number of events are planned to keep the momentum going throughout the summer. Film Works on Cedar Street in Dobbs Ferry is holding a screening of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" on July 17. Sustainable Hastings and parks superintendent Ray Gomes invite residents to sign up to help paint recycling bins for the parks. And on Aug. 15, Sustainable Hastings will host a Global Warming Café in the Hastings Public Library's Orr Room to usher in the "low-carbon diet" phase. "We'll be sitting down to have a conversation about how to make specific changes in our own households," Cartwright said. "It will be quick, fun, and measurable — lose 5,000 pounds of carbon emissions in 30 days — and Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, and Irvington will compete to see which community can lose the most."

For more information, visit www.sustainablehastings.org.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25