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Partners for Climate Action announces 10 accepted applicants for “Local Champions”

HUDSON VALLEY, NY: [Local Champions](#), a program of [Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley](#), accepted ten volunteers to be part of a cohort for its second cycle. Each volunteer has stepped up to lead their municipality’s Climate Smart Communities Task Force, in partnership with their town or village boards. All will participate in a multi-month program of training and technical assistance as they jumpstart their municipalities into the [NY State Climate Smart Communities program](#). The Local Champions program runs from August 2022 through April 2023. Those for whom money is a barrier to participate will receive an \$8000 fellowship. PCA accepted the following applicants from their four target counties in the Hudson Valley:

Columbia County:

1. Town of Chatham: Deborah Conrad
2. Town of Kinderhook: Melissa Miller
3. Village of Kinderhook: Bill Mancini
4. Village of Philmont: Thomas Paino
5. Village of Valatie: Meg Todisco

Greene County:

6. Catskill Village: Margaret Tomlinson

Dutchess County:

7. Town of Amenia: Stacy Mantel
8. Village of Millbrook: Genevieve Glasson
9. Town of Stanford: Theodore Secor

Ulster County:

10. Town of Shawangunk: JoAnne Warren

Local Champions, a free support program, brings non-profit funding to direct climate action. It assists volunteers who endeavor to work at the local level. The program has been designed with the partnership of leading regional organizations Cornell Cooperative Extension, technical advisors; Capital District Regional Planning Commission, technical advisors; Tighe & Bond, an engineering firm specializing in green infrastructure; and RUPCO, who will coach cohort members on grant writing and management. These partners will provide a broad range of support for individuals appointed by their municipality to serve as Climate Smart Coordinators. The cohort will meet via Zoom and in person, when possible, guided by staff from Local Champions and partner organizations.

PCA co-founder and Austerlitz, NY CSC Task Force member, Paige Ruane says, “New York State offers millions of dollars to help communities lower carbon emissions and prepare for the hazards of climate change, but it’s difficult for short-staffed municipalities to even know where to begin or how to take advantage of resources. This requires dedicated time and expertise—a hurdle for most municipalities. The Local Champions program sets Hudson Valley cities, towns, and villages on a powerful path, enabling them to capitalize on the wealth of available NY State support and save money.”

PCA co-founder and Austerlitz, NY CSC Task Force member, Paige Ruane says, “The work we support through the Local Champions program not only helps improve health, safety and quality of life for residents of each municipality, it also saves taxpayer dollars and unlocks access to considerable grant opportunities. Participation triggers a real time and cascading return on investment in a number of categories.”

Local Champions Co-Director Vanessa Bertozzi, who serves as CSC Task Force Coordinator for the Village of Rhinebeck, says, “Our pilot of the Local Champions program, which included the towns of Copake, Union Vale, Rochester, Hurley, Germantown, and North East, supported them in gaining momentum and getting a lot done. We were moved to see just how much peer support they were able to offer each other the more they learned the ropes. We’re excited to launch our second cycle and to be able to accept ten municipalities into this next cohort.”

PCA is building a strong network of support across the Hudson Valley, of which the Local Champions cohort will be a part. The [Hudson Valley Climate Action Network \(HVCAN\)](#), is a regionally-focused community of practice and communication network which will launch in the fall. It will be open to elected officials, municipal volunteers, and grassroots climate leaders who are working on climate adaptation, mitigation and advancing ecological repair in Putnam, Orange, Ulster, Dutchess, Greene, and Columbia counties. Additionally, nonprofit organizations and municipalities in the same counties are invited to apply for [Ecological Restoration Grants](#), as well as other support, like intern matchmaking.

Applications for Cycle 3 of Local Champions will open again in March of 2023. The program is for cities, towns, and villages within Dutchess, Columbia Greene, and Ulster Counties. For more information, consult the Local Champions website at www.localchampionshv.org.

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