

## CNNJ Board Member Receives NJEF Award

by Barb Conover

At its Annual Conference May 12th at Rutgers Law School in Newark, the New Jersey Environmental Federation (NJEF) awarded four former NJEF "alumni" who have gone on to "do great, amazing work in the environmental arena." One was Gray Russell, a longtime Board Member of the Cornucopia Network of New Jersey.

Currently, Gray is the Environmental Coordinator for the Township of Montclair. It is unusual for a town the size of Montclair to have an Environmental Coordinator, and Gray's expertise and leadership has made Montclair an innovative and enviable "green spot" in the state. Since 2001 he has implemented programs and provided information about sustainability for residents, schools, the municipal government, and businesses in town.

He is the Municipal Liaison to the Montclair Environmental Commission, with whom he co-authored "The Sustainable Montclair Planning Guide" in 2002. As part of the NJ League of Municipalities' Sustainable Communities Working Group he helped forge the innovative new Sustainable Jersey Program; Montclair is a 2009-certified inaugural Sustainable Community.

Through Gray's work, Montclair also won the NJ BPU's first-ever Clean Energy Leadership Award in 2005; in 2010, the US EPA awarded Montclair a prestigious "Climate Showcase Community" grant.

Gray was selected in 2006 by The Climate Project to be trained by former Vice President Al Gore and a team of scientists and educators, to conduct *Inconvenient Truth*-like presentations. Gray has subsequently given thirty presentations on climate change to almost 2,500 people. He re-trained twice with Mr. Gore, most recently in June 2010.

Gray is Vice-Chair of the Essex County Environmental Commission. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of NJ Recyclers, the Advisory Council for the NJ WasteWise Business Network, and the Board of Advisors for Bike&Walk Montclair. His experience with CNNJ was impetus for him to become a founding organizer of the Montclair Farmers Market, now beginning its 20th successful season.

After a 15-year career as a recording engineer in the music industry (including several Gold Record and

Platinum Record Awards [for artists including Blondie, Kiss, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers], so if, like me, you think "this guy's a rock star"—

there's a reason for that!) Gray's first job in the environmental field was with the NJEF, from 1990-93. He started as a Phone Canvass Staff Manager at the NJEF offices in New Brunswick. Two canvass "cross-trains," in Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis, honed his abilities to build consensus on different issues, skills that have helped him throughout his career. Later, he worked as an NJEF Community Organizer in their Montclair offices.

In 1992 Gray participated in The Global Forum at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), "The Earth Summit" in Rio de

Janeiro, Brazil. Gray's trip to Rio was made possible by CNNJ Board member Pat Kenschaft; Gray says he'll "always be thankful to her and CNNJ for that eye-opening and exciting learning experience."

In 2006, Gray was awarded a Fellowship Grant by the British Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; he spent 3 months in the UK studying Energy Efficiency at the Institute of Energy & Sustainable Development, DeMontfort University, Leicester, England.

From 1993 – 2000 he was the Manager of the Bronx Green-Up Compost Project at The New York Botanical Garden, in the Bronx. This urban community outreach program was funded by the NYC Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling.

Prior to his work in Montclair, Gray was Director of the NYC Waste Prevention Program at INFORM, Inc., a national environmental research and advocacy organization in Manhattan.

Gray is an environmental professional whose 22-year career includes work with grassroots community organizations, local government, a state cultural and scientific institution, a national non-profit advocacy group, international research, and entrepreneurial green business. Always humble, Gray said he was "very pleased and honored to be given this award."

NJEF, the largest environmental coalition in the state, celebrated their 40th birthday at this year's Annual Conference, which was titled, "Recharge the Economy, Invest in the Environment." Three others received Alumni awards: Lisa Plevin, USEPA; John Weber, Surfrider Foundation; and Robert Westreich, Esq. ☺

