

# OUR COUNTRY HOME

SUSTAINABLE LIVING ISSUE



BEECHWOODS  
House of Glass

**DECORATE**

*new uses for old treasures*

**A LIVING LEGACY:**

Delaware Highlands Conservancy

FARM MARKET

**RECIPES**

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Mary Greene  
Section Editor

“Achieving sustainable development is perhaps one of the most difficult and one of the most pressing goals we face. It requires on the part of all of us commitment, action, partnerships and, sometimes, sacrifices of our traditional life patterns and personal interests.”

—Mostafa Tolba, *Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development*

This issue of **Our Country Home** is devoted to promoting sustainability. As winter moves into spring and the economy straggles along, there are many things we can do to keep spirits up and make a difference. Our featured home is located outside Callicoon, NY and designed by green architect Michael Chojnicki, who also lives there with his family. The “Beechwoods House” incorporates design elements that keep heating and electric costs down, techniques Chojnicki was exploring 20 years ago when the house was built, and “the principles have not changed,” he says.

We also introduce you to Barbara Yeaman, who at age 70 founded the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, a land conservancy organization that has put thousands of local acres into trust.

This issue offers several more voices from the community: Martin Young of Gravity Sun Power shares his passion for solar energy, and local farmers share their recipes using ingredients found at the local farmers markets. Finally, we invite you to browse our regional antique and vintage stores when decorating or redecorating your home, and to find new uses for old treasures that you may already have.

The staff of **Our Country Home** is thrilled to launch the online companion to this magazine, where visitors can see many more photographs and peruse a lot more decorating ideas, recipes, gardening tips, community member profiles and links to useful sites. The **Our Country Home** blog has many resources and links that will inspire and connect you to faces and places in the Upper Delaware River valley, making it your go-to spot for ideas, inspiration and action. Visit <http://ourcountryhome.wordpress.com> and let us know what you think.

*Mary Greene*

Mary Greene  
Section Editor

# OUR COUNTRY HOME

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Publisher: Laurie Stuart  
Section Editor: Mary Greene



Assistant Publisher/  
Executive Director:  
Danielle Gaebel ext. 21  
ads@riverreporter.com



Creative Director:  
Lori Malone ext. 22  
lorimalone@riverreporter.com



Senior Sales Executive:  
Emily Grillo ext. 34  
emily@riverreporter.com



Communications Director:  
Jennifer Bitetto ext. 25  
jennifer@riverreporter.com

Production Manager: Connie Kern

Advertising:  
Danielle Gaebel  
@ 845-252-7414, ext. 21 or ads@riverreporter.com

Distribution:  
Would you like copies for your place of business?  
Jennifer Bitetto @ 845-252-7414, ext. 25 or  
jennifer@riverreporter.com

Editorial: Have an idea for the magazine?  
Mary Greene @ 845-252-7414, ext. 30 or  
marygreene@riverreporter.com

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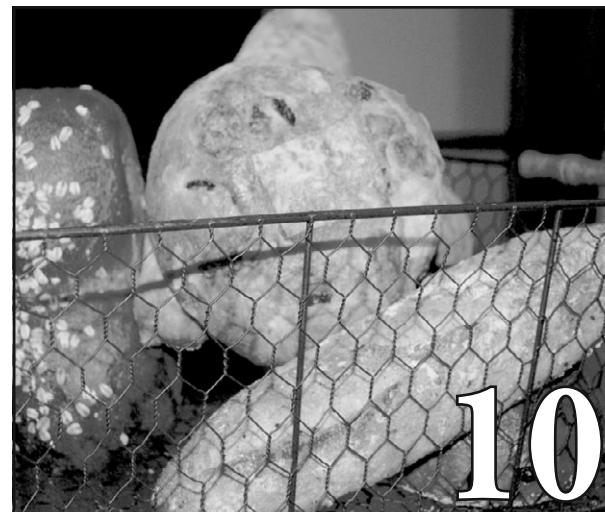
Mailing Address:  
PO Box 150, Narrowsburg, NY 12764  
Phone: 845-252-7414 • Fax: 845-252-3298

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Photograph by Erin Vanderberg

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# House of Glass

## [Beechwoods House] combines modern design with passive engineering

Text | Photographs: Erin Vanderberg

Around 1980, architect Michael Chojnicki moved east from his native Ohio, settled in Inwood, NY and took a job at a Manhattan architecture firm, RKT&B. Like many New Yorkers before him, he discovered the Catskills, and the course of his life was forever altered.

His first weekend home was an old farmhouse outside of Barryville, NY, where he spent the better part of the '80s. When he was ready to relocate to the area fulltime, Chojnicki set his sights on a patch of farmland in the Beechwoods area, just above the Villa Roma resort outside Callicoon, NY. With an investor, he purchased 60 acres divided into eight lots of around seven acres each, and set about

building his home on one of these lots. In 1990, Chojnicki moved into the Beechwoods House, a structure of his own design that incorporates green principles ahead of its time, representing Chojnicki's long-practiced sustainable design aesthetic. The contemporary home is built into a hillside with glass along the entire southern face.

He and his family have been appreciating the views ever since.

"What's wonderful about this house," said Chojnicki, "is that you experience the entire day, all day long, no matter what kind of day it is. It's really nice to have that attachment with the outside even when you have to work inside."

*Continued on page 4*



**Portrait (left):** Architect Michael Chojnicki shares the Beechwoods house with his wife, artist and graphic designer Karen Macbride; step children Turner Roth, a junior at Bard College, and Ada Roth, a junior at Honesdale High School; dogs Maggie and Maxie; and a cat, Myshkin, named after a character in Dostoevsky's "The Idiot."

**House (right):** The Beechwoods House sits on the crest of a Catskills foothill above Callicoon, NY. Succulents and other flora grow large under windows and skylights. The light switches are rarely flicked on during daylight hours at the Beechwoods House. Shots here show exposed beams, the bedroom and kitchen areas, and the bust of Alfred DiLascia, grandfather of Turner and Ada, who has taught philosophy at Manhattan College for 60 years.



*"I'm a strong believer when I practice architecture in thinking about possibilities for both the present and future."*

—Michael Chojnicki



## On the level

There is nothing dark about the Beechwoods House. In addition to all the glass and the many skylights, Chojnicki designed the floor plan to be open throughout. In nearly every room of the house, there is a way to loop back around into another room, a feature Chojnicki says is very popular with youngsters. “Kids love this house,” he said. “No dead ends!”

On the basement level, where the house is bermed into the hillside, two bedrooms, an atrium and the office open directly to the outside. Only one bathroom and a storage area are closed off from the light. A second bathroom downstairs has a special built-in skylight bumped out to allow for sunlight. The bathroom also has a unique deep tile tub tucked behind a stone fireplace.

On the main floor, the living and dining areas extend the length of the house, opening onto a wraparound deck. The kitchen sits behind a living area, its southern wall a window through the living room. On the north side, a large bluestone foyer with a sky-lit garden area greets visitors from front and side entrances. A laundry area and bathroom occupy the center of the house, a hallway tunneling through, so that every walkway leads to another room.

Up a narrow staircase is the master bedroom, that Chojnicki calls the “aerie.” Indeed, the turret-style room offers a bird’s eye, 360-degree view, opening out onto a rooftop deck lined with thick rubber rollout roofing and crafted with built-in drainage. On many summer nights, Chojnicki can be found outside there, sleeping on an air mattress under the stars.

## Dollars and sense

Constructed over 20 years ago, there are no solar panels, no geothermal wells and no wind turbines at the Beechwoods House. Yet through passive solar design, radiant heat flooring and energy conservation, Chojnicki’s family uses about 350-400 kilowatt hours of electricity per month for their 3,800-square-foot home that includes his architectural office. An average monthly electric bill at the Beechwoods House is just \$45. A “passive” design utilizes natural advantages. It pays off in spades at Chojnicki’s house. The abundance of windows makes the flicking of light switches a nighttime-only activity. The substantial amounts of concrete and stone in the walls and floors act as

a thermal mass to retain heat during the day and emanate it back in the cooler hours of the evening. The bermed basement design takes advantage of the earth’s consistent temperature of about 56 degrees to add warmth to the house. Finally, pocket doors allow heat zoning in an otherwise open floor plan. The potential for a summer greenhouse effect is averted through the open floor plan, leading up to the bedroom aerie that exhausts the hot air. Adding to these energy-efficient design elements are very conscious energy conservation efforts by Chojnicki and his family. They reduce phantom energy loads by use of power strips, compact fluorescent light bulbs and thermal curtains.

## Incorporating possibility

Chojnicki’s business, **MJ Chojnicki, Architect, P.C.** ([www.thebeechwoodshouse.com](http://www.thebeechwoodshouse.com), 845/887-4181) has been in steady demand for designs that are remarkably open, yet cozy and livable, structures that play to the strengths of their surroundings and utilize passive sources of energy. “I’m a strong believer when I practice architecture in thinking about possibilities for both the present and future, and I incorporate a way of making these possibilities easily implemented down the road.”

Over his 25-year career, Chojnicki has completed about 250 design projects, including new design, additions, barn conversions and renovations. The mainstay of Chojnicki’s work is residential, including last winter’s featured **Our Country Home**: the Wesley Barn in Forestburgh, NY. Commercial examples of his design can be seen at The Fat Lady Cafe in Kauneonga Lake, NY and the Wurtsboro Shopping Plaza in Wurtsboro, NY, to name just a few. He has continued to earn certifications in sustainable design and alternative energy, and has taught the subject at BOCES.

Now, Chojnicki is setting his sights on evolving his practice as a sustainable design consultant by assisting clients in understanding the various renewable energy options: what they do, how they work and what their true costs are. “You don’t want to put every single sustainable design idea, principle and technology—geothermal, passive solar, solar voltaic, wind turbines—into your house. You must study, assess and determine the most efficient way to suit your particular situation,” said Chojnicki.

## Michael Chojnicki’s Three A’s of Sustainability

- **Attitude: Realization of and commitment to being more energy conscious**
- **Awareness: Understanding your built environment through education**
- **Action: Implementing the knowledge gained into practice and becoming involved**

## Local Resources:

**Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Design (SASD):**  
[www.sasdonline.org](http://www.sasdonline.org) or  
845/482-4764

**Sustainable Energy and Education Development Support (SEEDS):**  
[www.seeds.blogspot.com](http://www.seeds.blogspot.com) or  
570/224-0052

**Sullivan County BOCES Adult Education Program:**  
[www.scbores.org](http://www.scbores.org) or  
845/791-4070

**Community Action Commission to Help the Economy (C.A.C.H.E.):** <http://www.sullivancountycache.org/energyservices.htm> or  
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# NEW USES FOR OLD TREASURES

Repurposing what you have



Text | Photographs: Lori Malone

We all have those odd pieces of furniture we relegate to the basement or the attic—too precious to get rid of, but too out-of-date and unappealing to use. Well, here is an alternative use for an old family heirloom—a bookcase—that will have you looking at your castoffs in a new light.

## Sentimental pull

I am a strong proponent of repurposing and reusing furniture for a number of reasons. In addition to the cost effectiveness of using what you already have, your decor will seem more balanced, richer and warmer if you have older pieces mixed with new ones. Older furniture has character, patina and detail that new furniture does not. Most times, it is also better made, using finer woods and hand-rubbed finishes that would be costly to replicate in today's market. It helps the environment to keep these outdated furnishings from ending up in landfills. And most importantly, if you're hanging on to it, it probably has a sentimental pull.

That was the situation with my old bookcase—I loved it; I just never knew where to put it. It was languishing in a secondary room and when I moved, it wound up in storage. That's where I noticed it—upside down on top of my old buffet. The lines of the piece, which I always liked, were clean and modern. Its only downfall was the color, a dark mahogany.

## Repurposing

I thought of painting the bookcase white. I also thought about stripping it and liming the wood. However, because my great grandfather made it, and because the finish was applied by hand (including the thin gold piping detail), I decided not to. I left it dark, cleaned up the nicks and scratches with a translucent ebony stain and repurposed it as a china cabinet. The sturdy shelves hold my stacked tableware nicely, and the sliding glass doors are ideal for the narrow room.

I can't imagine another or newer piece of furniture in its place now. The dark color actually helps anchor the room and is a great backdrop for my collection of white dishes.

As for my old buffet, it may wind up in the master bedroom as a dresser. I'll keep you posted.

*continued on page 8*

## Planning on buying something new?

Planning on buying something new? Before you do, look carefully around your home for pieces that you can reinvent. By thinking creatively and looking at your old treasures with new eyes, you may be able to imagine them in new ways and update them with new hardware and a fresh coat of paint.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



I love my new “old” china cabinet. I started by removing the wax with a soft cloth and rubbing until clean and smooth. Next, I gently sanded—just enough to let the stain seep in. Then, I applied an ebony stain with cheese cloth—wiping the stain on, then quickly wiping it off to ensure it wouldn’t get too dark or cover the detailing I wanted to preserve.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



This piece was a \$15 yard sale find. I liked the carved legs and detailing. However, I was not in love with the “Shabby Chic” finish. I painted it black using matte finish spray paint. I replaced the old knobs with pewter ones. It took about 20 minutes to lightly sand and spray paint—a quick and inexpensive fix.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



My Aunt Emma’s sewing chair was another family treasure I wanted to reuse. First, I sanded off the old thick brown paint to reveal the beautiful grain of the oak, then I applied some white pickling stain sparingly to achieve a liming effect. I covered the seat with a vintage feed bag I bought from River Market’s antique shop in Barryville, NY. The old chair now has a weathered farmhouse charm.

## Here are some clever uses for a number of things you may already have.

**TV armoire:** convert it into a kitchen pantry and microwave center.

**Small dining table:** cut the legs down to a suitable height and use it as a coffee table.

**Dresser:** convert it into a bathroom vanity. This may take a carpenter to retrofit, but in the end you’ll have a one-of-a-kind piece that is guaranteed to get noticed.

**Wire basket:** turn it upside down and cut out an opening for a pendant light to fit through—instant industrial chic.

**Artist easel:** a sturdy easel with adjustable clamps is a great way to display a plasma TV. You can also place a mirror on a French-style easel and use it as a dressing table in a bedroom.

**Fabric shower curtains:** reuse the fabric for outdoor cushion covers.

**Vintage table linens:** a large table cloth can be used as a bed coverlet. If it’s stained you can place it under your mattress and let it hang over your box spring as a dust ruffle. Linen napkins draped diagonally over a curtain rod make a nice valance.

**Broken china and tiles:** create a mosaic table top or serving tray inlay with the pieces.

**Clipboards:** use as picture frames. Use several old clipboards painted a contrasting color to your wall and hang in a group. The clip will secure photos, prints or children’s drawings and allow for easy changes.

**Collections:** hang straw hats, hand mirrors, plates, keys, knobs, hooks or most anything else in groupings on a wall for inexpensive, yet visually impactful, found object art.

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For more decorating tips, Before and After projects and resources, check out Our Country Blog at <http://ourcountry.wordpress.com>.



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# Farmers' Market Recipes

{EAT}

These regional recipes feature products that can be found at our local farmers' markets, and all the recipes have been contributed by local farmers. The trend to shop local is here to stay, so get out your apron, your sense of adventure and

prepare to dazzle your friends and family with something delicious, nutritious and totally new.

More farmers' market recipes and a list of farmers market locations can be found at <http://ourcountryhome.wordpress.com>.



## Goat Cheese, Bacon & Mushroom Tart

Linda Smith, Sherman Hill Farmstead

Pre-heat oven to 375.

### For the crust:

- 2 cups flour
- ¼ cup chevre, broken into small pieces
- ½ cup chilled unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 4-5 tablespoons ice water

In a food processor, combine flour, cheese and butter and pulse 6 to 8 times, until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add ice water 1 tablespoon at a time, pulsing until mixture just begins to clump together. Remove dough from machine. Gently shape into a disc, refrigerate at least 1 hour and up to 2 days.

To blind bake crust: Roll out chilled crust and fit into 10-inch tart pan. Cover with parchment paper, aluminium foil or wax paper and fill with pie weights, dried beans or pennies. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes; gently remove paper and weights and return to oven for an additional 10 minutes or until golden. Cool before filling.

### For the filling:

- 6 slices bacon
- ½ pound mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 2 small leeks, thinly sliced
- 8 ounces chevre
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 large eggs, beaten

Sauté bacon till crisp, set aside. Sauté mushrooms in bacon drippings till they have released all of their excess liquid. Sauté leeks in drippings till softened, about 5 minutes. Combine leeks and chevre and blend well. Add lemon juice, thyme and season with salt and pepper. Stir in eggs one at a time, blending well.

Fill crust with ½ chevre mixture, cover with mushrooms and bacon and top with remaining cheese mixture. Bake 30-40 minutes or until set.

## No Boil, No Toil Mac n' Cheese

Mary Tonjes, Tonjes Farm Dairy

Preheat oven to 375.

- 1 8-ounce container Tonjes Fromage Blanc
- 2 cups milk
- 8 ounces Tonjes Rambler cheese, grated; reserve handful for topping
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- ½ pound dry elbow pasta
- Butter

Combine all the ingredients except macaroni and the handful of reserved cheese. (You can use the fromage blanc container to measure the milk.) Mix in the macaroni and toss into a 9-inch buttered baking dish; top with reserved cheese. Cover tightly with foil and cook 30 minutes. Remove foil and return to the oven for an additional 20-30 minutes.

## Braised Rabbit with Gingered Pears

Denise Warren, Stone & Thistle Farm

Serves 4

- 2 young rabbits, each cut into 6 to 8 pieces
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 3 cups dry red wine
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Scant 1/8 cup preserved ginger, sliced
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup lemon or orange juice
- 4 firm, not hard but not overripe, pears, skin removed, cored and halved
- 3 tablespoons chilled butter

Season rabbit pieces and dust lightly with flour. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and saute for 3-4 minutes. Add rabbit pieces and brown each evenly. Add wine, broth, vinegar, sugar, bay leaves, rosemary and salt. Bring to a boil; then reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Combine ginger, sugar, lemon or orange juice in a large skillet; bring to boiling, stirring constantly. Add pears. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes, or until tender but still firm enough to hold their shape. Drain syrup from the pear and cook syrup 15 minutes longer, or until reduced about half. Pour over pears. Add gingered pears to the pan, cover and simmer for 30 minutes more. Remove rabbit and pears and arrange on plates. Remove bay leaves and rosemary from pan. Whisk in butter until melted and spoon sauce over rabbit.

## Braised Chicken Thighs Over Root Vegetables

Jennifer Clark & Andrew Scott, Eminence Road Farm Winery

- 6 chicken thighs (skins removed)
- 2 medium potatoes
- 2 carrots
- 1 celeriac root
- 1 leek
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup water or stock
- flour for dredging
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- Seasonings

Heat large sauté pan to medium high, add butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Coat chicken thighs in flour; add to pan and brown on both sides. Remove chicken and set aside. Reserve one tablespoon of pan drippings and add one tablespoon fresh olive oil. Chop vegetables into ½-inch pieces and add to pan over medium heat. Sauté until leek has softened. Deglaze pan with white wine, allowing all alcohol to evaporate; then add water or stock. Place browned chicken on top of vegetables, add a bay leaf, cover pan and reduce heat to low. Cook for about 45 minutes or until chicken pulls easily from the bone. Be sure to check pan frequently to make sure there is enough cooking liquid; if it starts to dry out, add more water or stock. Season to taste with salt and pepper, chervil, paprika or whatever you like.

## Speedy Chevre Cheesecake

Linda Smith, Sherman Hill Farmstead

Preheat oven to 350.

Have on hand a prepared graham cracker crust in 9-inch pie pan.

- 8 ounces chevre
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 eggs

Blend chevre and sugar on medium speed. Add vanilla and lemon juice. Blend in eggs one at a time. Pour into prepared crust and bake at 350 for 30 minutes or until set.

Top with sour cream mixed with sugar and vanilla to taste.

### Variation:

To make Pumpkin Chevre Cheesecake, replace lemon juice with ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spices and 1½ cups pureed pumpkin or winter squash, or a 15 ounce can of unsweetened pumpkin.

More recipes online at  
[OurCountryHome.wordpress.com](http://OurCountryHome.wordpress.com)

# A Conversation with Gravity Sun Power's Martin Young

Text: Cass Collins

Although sun lover Martin Young of Gravity Sun Power and Gravity Ice Cream in Honesdale PA spends part of his winters in Jamaica, West Indies, **Our Country Home** was able to catch up with him to get his views and hear his advice on solar power installation. Young has since returned to his home in Northeast Pennsylvania.

## Here is our conversation.

**OCH:** I'm curious about the name of your company, Gravity Sun Power. What's the origin?

**MY:** We named our company Gravity Management after the old Gravity Railroad system in Honesdale [see Editor's Note]. We began with Gravity Bowling, which is a public bowling alley, and the ice cream shop, Gravity Ice Cream. The solar energy company was a natural extension of that.

**OCH:** How did you become interested in solar energy?

**MY:** I've always been interested in it. When the SEEDS group [Sustainable Energy Education and Development Support] offered courses in wind and solar power, I signed up. In order to qualify for the Pennsylvania State Sunshine Program, you have to have a certified installer. The only way for Pennsylvania residents to get rebates under the program is to have an approved installer submit an application to the state. [Editor's Note: the maximum incentive for a residential Photovoltaic system is the lesser of \$7,500 or 35% of installed costs.] I had enough free time, unlike many contractors in the area at the time, to take these courses and I got the first certification under the state program. Only a few local contractors have it.

**OCH:** What do you like about solar power?

**MY:** Besides its environmental benefits, it's just a good investment. The only drawback is the big first step, the initial cost.

**OCH:** How good an investment is it?

**MY:** In this economy it's better than a CD or the stock market, even. The recoup of investment is five to six years in Pennsylvania, with a 15 to 18% return over the life of the system.

**OCH:** How long do the systems last?

**MY:** There is only one moving part and that's the inverter, which has a 15-year warranty. The panels are guaranteed for 25 years. It's a solid system economically, with new technological advances in manufacturing capability, meaning larger production volumes. The prices dropped dramatically over the last two years. For one thing, contractors are able to buy larger quantities to keep costs down.

**OCH:** Where are the panels made?

**MY:** All over the world, in Asia, the U.S., Germany. German products are the most mature. We use a lot of German-made panels because of the quality and track record.

**OCH:** How do I know if solar power is a good choice for me?

**MY:** We come out to your house and do a site analysis. You need a south-facing area that gets clear sun from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It also depends on what your goals are—full offset of energy costs or credit as income. That determines the design. We can do roof-mounted or ground-mounted panels. We give you a cash-flow proposal with alternatives.

**OCH:** Who are your customers?

**MY:** Generally, they are more mature homeowners looking for a green investment that makes good financial sense.

**OCH:** Do you do installations in New York?

**MY:** The New York incentive program is not as good as Pennsylvania's.

**OCH:** How does solar energy work?

**MY:** Solar panels gather DC power from the sun. An inverter changes the DC power to AC and it is fed into the main electrical system during the daytime. If the panels make more power than is used,

the meter turns backward, generating a credit to the homeowner.

**OCH:** What about batteries?

**MY:** You don't need batteries. In fact, back-up batteries decrease output by 10%. A back-up generator is a better bet for power outages.

**OCH:** What kind of commitment would I have to make to get an estimate for a solar power system?

**MY:** You have to commit to be there when I get there [laughing].

**OCH:** Anything else you'd like to say to people who are thinking about solar energy?

**MY:** Educate yourself. There is lots of good information out there. The SEEDS group in Tyler Hill, PA is a community-based information organization ([seedsgroup.blogspot.com](http://seedsgroup.blogspot.com), 570/224-0052.) Solar energy a great thing, but each project has to make financial sense.

**Martin Young and Gravity Sun Power, 106 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Honesdale, PA 18431, can be reached at 570/243-1786 or [www.gravitysunpower.com](http://www.gravitysunpower.com). This address is also houses Gravity Alley and Gravity Ice Cream.**

All the businesses at 106 6<sup>th</sup> Street are powered by solar energy panels placed on the rooftop.

[Editor's Note: According to the Minisink Valley Historical Society's website, the D&H Gravity Railroad carried cars from Carbondale, PA, through Waymart, to Honesdale where it delivered them to D&H canal boats. The D&H Canal Company planned to transport coal from the mines in Carbondale to the Hudson River entirely by canal. However, the availability of water at the summit and the number of locks needed to scale the Moosic Mountains between Carbondale and Honesdale precluded this plan. A "gravity railroad" was the solution, and construction began in 1827. Designed by D&H Chief Engineer John B. Jervis, it utilized a series of inclined planes and steam engines to pull carloads of coal up and over the Moosic Mountains, a rise of almost 1,000 feet.]

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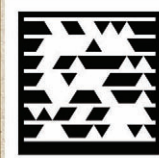
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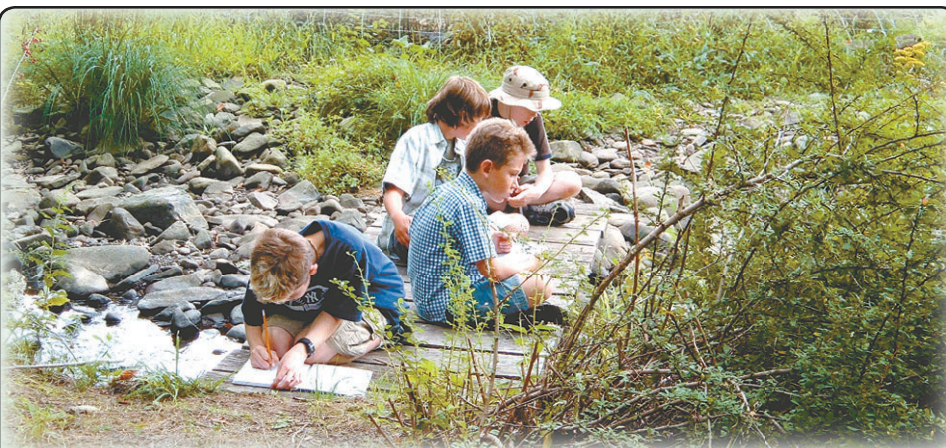


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# A Living Legacy

*Delaware Highlands Conservancy founder Barbara Yeaman*

Text | Photographs: Sandy Long



Barbara Yeaman

“I have a magnet that says, ‘Never, never, never give up.’ You never know what might be possible.”

—Barbara Yeaman

Barbara Yeaman eases her kayak into the clear waters of the Upper Delaware River, a river she cares deeply about, and one she has worked hard to protect. Eighty-seven years of living haven’t diminished her desire to be on the water she loves; in fact, her determination to do what she can to conserve this magnificent resource has only increased and inspired others to join the cause.

As Yeaman paddles she makes steady progress, much as she does in the conservation work she began more than 17 years ago when she realized that in order to protect the Upper Delaware River, she would need to first protect the lands comprising its watershed.

Yeaman knew she would have to make strong strides against the tide of development sweeping across the region. She explored establishing a land trust—an organization that permanently protects land by working with landowners willing to donate or sell their development rights, thereby placing a conservation easement on their property, a legally binding agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows landowners to continue to own and use their land, as well as sell it or pass it on to heirs.

## The beginnings

In the early 1980s, when Yeaman bought her home on the Delaware River in Wayne County’s Milanville, PA, the National Park Service was drafting its management plan for the Upper Delaware River and encountering strong private property rights opposition. Some residents feared their properties would become worthless. Yeaman believed that preserving special lands, wildlife habitats and prime scenic parcels would make the region more attractive, but sensed the need for a unique preservation tool. She felt that starting a land trust was the answer.

“I was waiting for someone else to do it. But that didn’t happen,” says Yeaman. Instead, in 1994 at the age of 70, she was nudged into action following a cancer diagnosis, which caused her to reevaluate her priorities. “I made a list of what was important to me, and starting a land trust was on the top of that list. I knew it could work.”

With the help of a dedicated group of volunteers, Yeaman founded the **Delaware Highlands**

**Conservancy (DHC)** and immediately put its mission into practice by placing a conservation easement on her own 12 acres. “We cut our teeth on my easement, to prohibit further subdivision,” she says.

## Positive impact

Today, the conservancy works with willing landowners to conserve the natural and cultural heritage—including forests, farms, water, scenery and open space—of the Upper Delaware region. Through conservation easements, it has protected more than 13,000 acres in the Upper Delaware River Region.

In response to overwhelming interest from regional landowners, the DHC now maintains offices in Hawley, PA and Monticello, NY.

Yeaman has continued to lead and serve the DHC in multiple ways over the years, from president to land protection chair to publicist to graphic designer. For nine years, an all-volunteer board of directors managed the DHC. As the organization has grown, an executive director was hired, followed by two land protection specialists and a stewardship and education coordinator.

Yeaman’s positive impact on the Upper Delaware region, and its land, has been enormous and continues to grow. In 2010, at the vibrant age of 86, Yeaman became active once again on the DHC’s board, serving as the organization’s vice president and volunteering on its outreach and development and gas committees. She has continued to meet with prospective supporters of the DHC and landowners considering conservation options, and she helps to monitor easements.

Yeaman remains active by maintaining a commitment to conservation that would exhaust someone half her age. “One of the most satisfying rewards is the sense of awe and gratitude that comes from seeing the natural beauty and unspoiled views that still exist along the Upper Delaware River and within its surrounding counties,” she notes. “I just feel so good about how far we’ve come in such a short time. I’m quite sure that it will continue.”

The DHC’s accomplishments under Yeaman’s inspiring leadership are significant—a group of volunteers led by an inspiring senior creating a regional land trust from nothing, working to

*continued on page 16*



protect thousands of acres, hosting educational programs, assisting in regional planning and increasing awareness about the conservation options that will protect quality of life throughout the region.

In addition, the DHC maintains The Butterfly Barn, a nature center in Milanville, where programs educate children and adults about how to care for the land and waters of the Delaware Highlands. An avid puppeteer, Yeaman hosts interactive children's programs that teach about the region's flora and fauna. The DHC also awards two college scholarships to local high school students interested in environmental studies.

To recognize Yeaman's significant work, in 2007 the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission bestowed on her its Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award, the highest recognition provided by that organization to persons distinguishing themselves in the cause of conservation.

The founding of the DHC birthed the legacy Yeaman will leave for generations well beyond her lifetime. Continuing to set an example by "walking her talk," the indefatigable senior had solar panels installed on the roof of her lovely old farmhouse in 2010. "I have a magnet that says, 'Never, never, never give up,'" she says. "You never know what might be possible."

Yeaman was born near Pittsburgh, PA. Her career took her across the U.S. before bringing her to the Upper Delaware River region 25 years ago. She has two children, son Bill and daughter Suzanne.

## Looking forward

According to Greg Belcamino, president of DHC's board of directors, the past year saw the organization take two major steps forward. "Our efforts were directed toward several projects that are not reflected in our usual metric for success," he says, "which is the number of

acres protected across Wayne and Pike counties in Pennsylvania and Delaware and Sullivan counties in New York."

The conservancy updated its strategic plan for the next five years, addressing significant new challenges in the geographic area it serves. "One of the new challenges we face is the spread of exploration and drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale formation," says Belcamino. "In 2011 the board is committed to clarifying how the organization will address gas in the context of its easements."

The second major effort focused on achieving accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA), which, according to Belcamino, involved "adopting a series of policies governing its finances, recordkeeping, potential conflicts of interest and other subjects, that bring us in line with the highest standards and best practices of land trusts nationally." If all goes well, the DHC will receive accreditation in late 2011.

"Being an accredited land trust will help us in applying for grant funding, will ensure that we are operating in compliance with the best practices of land conservation, will aid in fundraising and will give us credibility within the land conservation community and with our current and potential partners," says Belcamino.

In addition, the DHC closed on a new easement of 104 acres in Sullivan County and has completed substantial work on several others expected to close in 2011. It also sponsored or helped coordinate over 40 initiatives over the past year, including producing the third edition of the "Shop Local, Save Land Guide to Farms and Farm Markets" ([www.shoplocalsaveland.com](http://www.shoplocalsaveland.com)).

Looking forward, the DHC is planning to add an outreach and development director to its small staff. "With nearly 13,000 acres protected since we accepted our first conservation easement in 1995," says Belcamino, "we have outgrown our resources, and must sometimes pass up opportunities because we lack staff or funding."

The DHC welcomes new members and is seeking volunteers to support its work conserving the Upper Delaware River region. Opportunities exist to organize outings, assist at events, map and monitor easements, draft grant proposals, write newsletter articles and press releases, sponsor fundraising events, provide general office support and more. Visit [www.delawarehighlands.org](http://www.delawarehighlands.org) or call 570/226-3164 for more information.

## Upcoming DHC events

**March 24 - Volunteer Training**, Sullivan County, NY, 7-9 p.m.

**March 26 - Volunteer Training**, Wayne County, PA, 9-11 a.m.

Learn about the important roles and responsibilities that the "stewards of the land" have in making the DHC a successful organization. New and old volunteers, current board of directors and land protection committee members will learn to monitor properties, as well as the policies and procedures of the conservancy.

**March 30 - Financial Benefits of Land Conservation**, Hawley, PA 7-9 p.m.

**March 31 - Financial Benefits of Land Conservation**, Bethel, NY, 7-9 p.m.

Landowners will learn how to keep cherished lands in the family and protect the landscape in perpetuity. Information on conservation and agricultural easements will be presented.

**March 31 - Realtors Workshop**, PPL Learning Center 8 a.m. - noon.

The workshop is specifically geared toward the real estate professional and will provide information on septic systems, wetlands and floodplains as well as information on impacts of land development on water resources, protecting drinking water and planning initiatives that are ongoing in PA's Pike and Wayne counties. For more information or to register call 570/251-9335 or 570/296-4042.

**April 2 - Emily Dickinson's Garden**, PPL Environmental Learning Center, Hawley, PA 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Join naturalist Ed Wesely for a virtual tour of the fields and streams that Emily Dickinson knew around Amherst, MA, and of the spring wildflowers that inspired her.

**April 16 - Pike/Wayne Earth Day at PPL**, Hawley, PA 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Join the DHC and other local conservation groups for activities, entertainment and educational programs for kids and adults to celebrate Earth Day. Visit [www.pikewayneearthday.org](http://www.pikewayneearthday.org).

**April 30 - Foods of the Delaware Highlands Dinner**, The Settler's Inn, Hawley, PA, 6 p.m.

This popular annual dinner celebrates the Upper Delaware River region by featuring delicious cuisine prepared with locally grown and produced organic ingredients, paired with appropriate fine wines.

**May 6 - Spring Skies Star Watch**, The Butterfly Barn, Milanville, PA, 8:30 p.m.

Local astronomers will share their telescopes and sky charts to observe deep sky objects and locate the constellations. Bring binoculars and folding chairs.

**May 16 - On the Course for Conservation** - 3rd Annual Golf Tournament  
Join the DHC at Woodloch Springs for this fun—and fund—raiser.

## Noteworthy DHC news

**1999 - DHC receives Volunteer of the Year Award from the Upper Delaware Council**

**2003 - Barbara Yeaman awarded an Environmental Partnership Award by Pennsylvania Environmental Council**

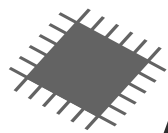
**2004/2005 - DHC becomes official sponsor of the Forest Legacy Program in Pike and Wayne counties**

**2006 - DHC's work with the Alliance to Keep Pike Green wins Environmental Partnership Award**

**2007 - Number of conservation inquiries increases rapidly (70 this year alone). By year's end, the DHC closed on nearly twice as many easements as any prior year.**

**2007 - DHC featured in the documentary, "Nature's Keepers," examining Pike County, PA's conservation legacy.**

**2008 - Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission selects Barbara Yeaman to receive the 2007 Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award. Yeaman is only the second woman ever to receive this prestigious recognition.**



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<p><b>Blog Feature</b> The Right (and wrong) Stuff: Youth activists foster a mission in Pike County</p>	<p><b>Tastemakers</b> A conversation with The Cutting Garden's Anne Hart</p>	<p><b>Home Matters</b> Living Sustainably: Tips for everyday living</p>
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