

# 2008 Green Futures Achievement Awards

## Municipality of Norristown: Sullivan "Heels" Gelet and Lt. Patty Simons Fields

This is a story of the dramatic transformation of a former landfill site into a community asset that will be treasured for years to come. Norristown's Elmwood Park is the home of two new softball fields and a woodland path, meandering through mature trees offering beautiful views across the valley to Norristown Farm Park. Dedicated in the spring of 2008, the Sullivan "Heels" Gelet and Lt. Patty Simons Fields are an example of what can happen when creative vision meets determination.

Beginning with the approval of the Green Fields/Green Towns referendum in 2006, Norristown officials worked closely with Montgomery County to provide additional parking at Elmwood Park Zoo, while being sensitive to the community needs of relocating much-loved softball fields. Located in the northeastern section of the park was a former landfill site waiting to be reclaimed for community use. The \$1.2 million dollar project took two years to complete, requiring extensive removal of site debris as well as land stabilization. The fruit of this labor was the creation of two new softball fields and woodland trails. Steps lead from the new ball field area to the original site, which

will eventually be transformed into the Zoo's visitor parking lot. The second phase of this collaborative effort envisions trails linking to a bridge over Stony Creek and connecting to the Norristown Farm Park. This potential greenway could provide an important link between Norristown Farm Park and Elmwood Park, enriching the visitors experience to both recreational areas.

This project provides an excellent example of local partnerships working together to provide solutions that satisfy a wide range of community objectives. The Borough's softball leagues and the Elmwood Park Zoo represent important elements of community life. Norristown Borough officials worked diligently to address community concerns regarding the potential increase in noise and traffic by creating a sensitively located park entrance. Both the County and Borough worked to ensure that the project included aspects of riparian preservation, woodland protection, and pedestrian access to the trails and ball fields. Above all, it was the collective vision and dedication of Norristown Borough officials, the County, and Elmwood Park Zoo staff that led to the creation of this remarkable community asset.



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