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Transition Cheltenham to present honors at event

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Transition Cheltenham's mission is to foster a resilient, sustainable and connected community to face economic, environmental and energy challenges.

In keeping with that theme, the group recently named six groups that are already under way in these endeavors. They will be honored March 13, at Transition Cheltenham's launch party, a potluck banquet with music and learning activities.

"These individuals and their groups do a great deal to enrich our community" said Bill Mettler, founding member of Transition Cheltenham. "We hope to match our efforts with theirs."

Olga McHugh, of the Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens, said her group formed initially around the SEPTA garage issue at the Jenkintown-Wyncote station. "After experiencing that process, we believe that there is a crucial need for citizens to have more meaningful participation in the decision making that ultimately effects the quality of their lives." Working across many issues, CCC advocates for transparency and responsive representation in local and regional matters.

To further improve awareness and involvement, Steve Strahs has just launched Citizens Call (www.citizenscall.net), an online community news site. Citizens Call invites citizen participation and covers all facets of community life in order to inspire community dialogue and promote more accountability in governance, including, for instance, election reform.

Diane Williams, as acting president of the La Mott Community Garden Group, is working with the group to preserve this nearly 2-acre community garden in the nationally recognized historic district of LaMott. "The LaMott Community Garden is a significant green space worthy of protection and a major thread woven into the fabric of the La Mott community" Williams said. Shared by more than 63 families, the land is a non-contiguous lot, deeded and taxed separately from the larger parcel Temple currently has for sale. The group is working to secure the land via Neighborhood Gardens Association, a Philadelphia Land Trust, and continues to appeal to Temple University to recognize the 80-plus years of tradition, while also encouraging Cheltenham Township officials to pursue open space and zoning measures to preserve and protect the garden tract.

Susan Myerov accepted the visionary award on behalf of Sarah RobbGrieco for the Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership. Connecting residents, businesses and government as neighbors and stewards of this local watershed is their goal. Ninety-eight percent of Cheltenham is in this critically important watershed and TTF works to restore its health, using educational, outreach and networking programs effectively.

John Dunphy and his colleagues at We the People of Cheltenham have begun to demonstrate to township residents some of the ways to have a stronger voice in local government. Because

Cheltenham's Home Rule Charter provides the tools that allow residents to participate directly in their government, We the People has twice brought questions to voters and plans to be active in that arena for many years to come. The group works to educate the community about history, the need to be informed and heard, and participation in local government.

Arts in the Park is a an event featuring largely local artists. Cynthia Blackwood, co-chair of the Friends of High School Park event, accepted the award for her group. In addition to the arts and artisans, juried shows and crafts, residents will enjoy the food, music, plant and gardening features.

The public is invited to applaud these community visionaries March 13 at Transition Cheltenham's launch party, 4 to 8 pm at the Cheltenham High School, 500 Rices Mill Road. For more information visit www.transitioncheltenham.org.

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