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Ecology experience helps woman on tree commission **By John Davis** ***Poughkeepsie Journal***

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HYDE PARK - Jennifer Rubbo works quietly behind the scenes, planting and caring for trees throughout town.

As a member of the Hyde Park Shade Tree Commission for two years, she has played a major role in promoting an appreciation for tree-lined streets and shaded school grounds.

"She organized Arbor Day at Violet Avenue Elementary," commission Chairwoman Margi Delafield said of the Hyde Park public school on lower Route 9G.

The volunteers on the town commission in April planted a Linden tree at the school.

Rubbo also organized an Arbor Day poster contest for the fifth-graders at all town schools. A total of 57 fifth-graders from Hyde Park's public schools, Regina Coeli and the Anderson School participated.

Rubbo even picked the panel of judges who selected the winning posters - which were on display at the Henry A. Wallace Center.

Delafield said Rubbo carries through on her ideas without creating a lot of fanfare.

"She's very knowledgeable and able to be a big help in doing things correctly," Delafield said. "She has a lot of innovative ideas."

Rubbo, who has an advanced degree in ecology, is focused on raising her two young children.

She wanted to stay involved, though, in a way that drew on her education and interest in plants, trees and nature.

Joining the shade tree commission gave her that opportunity.

"I wanted to use my education and background in some way," Rubbo said. "I was interested in doing something that was hands on."

The Hyde Park town board appoints the members of its shade tree commission.

The commission is charged with planting and taking care of the roadside trees and shrubs in Hyde Park.

Rubbo and her husband, Michael, share a similar passion for ecology.

They both attended the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry School at Syracuse.

"We met as undergrads doing our bachelor's (degree) work," she said.

Later, they spent a couple of years in Lafayette, La., where Michael Rubbo earned his master's in ecology.

They then moved to State College, Pa., where he earned his doctorate and she her master's in ecology.

Both have volunteered to participate in a new project in Hyde Park: to map the environmentally significant habitats in a 7,000-acre area of town.

The arrival of two separate grants is providing necessary funding.

Michael Rubbo is donating his professional time to the project. And Jennifer Rubbo is one of several Hyde Park residents who have agreed to be trained in biodiversity assessment.

The mapping, being coordinated by the Hyde Park Conservation Advisory Council, will guide the planning board in approving new construction and steering it away from rare plants, trees and wildlife.

Neighbor appears each Monday. To suggest a candidate, phone 845-437-4877. Reach John Davis at jpdavis@poughkeepsiejournal.com or 845-437-4807.
