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Jen Quinn and Joe Richardson with windmill in background.

I am always inspired when I meet people like Joe Richardson, owner of Bar-T after-school program for kids and Mountainside Ranch in Urbana.

Joe bought a farm and altered it to become a place where adults and children alike can learn environmental stewardship hands-on and see alternative energy sources in use. Some land is still farmed by a local farmer.

From the windmill in the middle of the parking area, the solar panels on the main office area, the new rain gardens just recently planted to improve drainage issues, to a native plant project that is in the works, the whole farm is being used as a model to educate and incorporate environmentally conscious practices.

Jen Quinn and I went to meet Joe and his staff at the Mountainside Ranch in Urbana because the Go Green Group, a Kentlands Community Foundation-sponsored program in Gaithersburg, Md., had invited Joe to speak about his use of wind power and the installation of the windmill on the ranch. (Joe and other local residents and local business owners came to speak about the use and installation of alternative energy sources at a meeting on Oct. 21.)



We then found ourselves walking through the numerous acres to see all the other innovative projects Joe has put in place, much of it with grant monies.

We happened to be there as members of the Environmental Protection Agency, Maryland Department of the Environment, and Frederick County Government Watershed Management all came to take a look at Joe's various projects.

With a large group in tow, we looked at a unique Swedish aeration pump in a pond that has cleared the algae and then headed to an area of the farm, a marshy area with tall trees that is being restored to become a wildlife sanctuary for native birds. Next to these areas are Yurts, large tent-like structures used by campers in Bar-T's various programs.

We left the farm knowing that Joe and his staff have developed a place that I am sure will teach many of us and possibly inspire us to either think of using alternative energy or to incorporate native plants in our own landscape practices.

Questions, comments? Please e-mail Alex Stavitsky-Zeineddin GO GREEN co-chair [greengaithersburg@gmail.com](mailto:greengaithersburg@gmail.com).