

connecting to
the natural world

grass
roots



Get outside

Celebrate National Trails Day Saturday by exploring new trails in Morris, Sussex counties. **Page B3**

REWILDING

In quest for purity, water from the source

By Lorraine Ash
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Daniel Mbugua of Hopatcong can't help but smile as his jug fills with crystal clear water flowing from a pipe at Spring Hill Artesian Spring.

It's a sunny Saturday morning in Mine Hill, and the fresh smell and spray make him happy.

"I use a well in my house and it's not so good," Mbugua said. "This tastes so good, though, and I'm sure it's far much better than the water in my house."

John Paschal, a hay and vegetable farmer whose family has owned the spring on Canfield Road for more than four decades, believes in his water, too. It's been flowing from a crack in a nearby granite ledge since the Ice Age, he explained.

"The water is 49 degrees all year round," he said, adding that it always tests as the best around, a fact that draws hundreds of people to the spring, some from as far as New York, Pennsylvania, South Jersey, and the Bronx.

Paschal has it tested at regular but varying intervals for coliform, nitrates, synthetic compounds, and volatile organics.

Public thirst for fresh local water tends to wax and wane, observers say. These days, it's waxing, and there's a reason for that, according to Daniel Vitalis of Maine, the grassroots organizer of www.findaspring.com, a user-built worldwide database of springs that includes Spring Hill Artesian Spring.

"People are waking up to the idea that the water they have been drinking is as processed as the food they grew up eating," Vitalis said. "Even when there is a relatively clean source of water, it is typically delivered to us chlorinated, fluoridated, pH modulated, filtered, ozonated, bottled or through aging and degenerating steel pipes networks built during the Lincoln Administration."

Vitalis blogs and travels throughout North America to find new springs and speak about "rewilding," a term he uses for people getting back in touch with natural elements of the earth. When people visit a spring to gather water, he said, a transformation occurs: the source of the water that goes into their bodies shifts from the marketplace to the Earth.

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Spring Hill Artesian Spring in Mine Hill is one of eight natural springs listed in New Jersey serving untreated local water. Daniel Mbugua of Hopatcong fills up 5-gallon jugs at the Canfield Avenue spring. KAREN MANCINELLI/FOR NJ PRESS MEDIA

LEARN MORE

Explore these three New Jersey springs, each stewarded by families for generations:

- » **Belmar Spring Water**, Glen Rock (Bergen County), www.belmarspringwater.com
- » **Kepwel Natural Spring Water**, Ocean Township (Monmouth County), delivers to Ocean, Monmouth, and Southern Middlesex counties, www.kepwel.com
- » **Spring Hill Artesian Spring**, Mine Hill (Morris County), www.springhillatcanfield.com

Learn more about Daniel Vitalis and FindASpring.com:

- » Daniel Vitalis of his www.FindASpring.com team are fundraising for \$75,000 to overhaul the site by including interactive mobile apps, geocaching, and an online community for users. More information at www.danielvitalis.com and www.gofundme.com/findaspring



John Craven, 28, of Wharton, assistant camping manager at Ramsey Outdoor in Succasunna, demonstrates how to purify water with a SteriPEN, a portable system that uses ultraviolet light to destroy waterborne microbes.

BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

FOOD ENTREPRENEUR

Spreading the love of great beer

Grassroots is asking emerging food entrepreneurs we've met at the Morris County Sunday Supper Series about how they are transforming New Jersey's food economy. This week, we asked Joe Fisher of Lebanon Township about his homebrewed beer. A computer programmer by day and homebrewer after hours, Fisher started brewing in 2008. He needed a label for his bottles, and Man Skirt Brewing Co. was born.

Grassroots: How did you become a food systems entrepreneur?

Joe Fisher: I have always had a strong desire to learn how to do new things, and making beer was no exception. I dove in with both feet, started talking with farmers and using more local ingredients from small farms and ap-

How are you working to change the foodspace?

I like to think I'm doing my part by being passionate about small brewers, and getting others excited about it. I'm educating myself on brewing laws, and learning what I can do to change them for the better here in New Jersey.

What makes your beer so special?

I think all of the beer brewed by New Jersey home and small brewers is equally special. Small brewers love their beers like children, and it shows in their product. We feel it's a product we need to get behind and help grow. I need to make it easier for a young entrepreneur like myself to bring his product to market, especially at a very small scale.

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Joe Fisher started brewing beer from his home in Lebanon Township in 2008. COURTESY OF JOE FISHER