



About Us - The Mr. Local History Project

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The Mr. Local History project's mission is to promote and preserve local history with a social twist. Based in the Somerset Hills, an area in northern Somerset County, New Jersey, the project is an all-volunteer registered 501c3 non-profit that creates social and educational programs and activities that strive to engage and educate in fun new ways throughout our beautiful and historic "Garden State."

Mr. Local History announced its incorporation as a 501c3 non-profit organization back in 2019. By incorporating, the effort is now recognized as a legal entity to conduct business, organize, and develop fundraising efforts to



support programs geared at preserving and promoting local history across New Jersey.

[**Mr. Local History Privacy Policy**](#)

Brooks Betz (Trustee)



Brooks founded Mr. Local History and the Mr. Local History project. Born in Plainfield, New Jersey, and raised in Westfield, Brooks graduated from Westfield High School in 1980 and later from Bryant University. He and his family owned the Cranford Canoe Club in the 1970s-90s and were part of the Cranford Hockey Club system.

A writer and storyteller at heart, Brooks' contribution will focus on organization, storytelling, social media, and the internet about local history, mainly in New Jersey and places like Westfield, Cranford, Scotch Plains in Union County, Somerset County, and targeted areas throughout the Garden State. He is married to his wife Jill and has three children. He is a former trustee of the Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House in Bedminster, a trustee at the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, and was also the official Town Historian for Bernards Township.

Brooks's favorite quote is, "A wish is just a dream without a plan," he plans to make the dream of strengthening the Mr. Local History Project with a strong plan and attention to community, civility, and service. His favorite book is [The Big Short](#) by Michael Lewis. His favorite historical moment is the [1776 capture of General Charles Lee](#) at Widow White's Tavern in Basking Ridge, New Jersey and the history of the Pluckemin Cantonment.

Jill Betz (Trustee)



Jill Betz joined the MLH Project to focus on community social events and activities. She's also a great "idea person" to create ideas to further the organization's mission. Born in Newark, New Jersey, and raised in Springfield, she is a graduate of Jonathon Dayton Regional High School in Springfield. She met her husband Brooks at the famed "Goal Post turtle races in Scotch Plains," and as they say, the rest is history. She married Brooks (Betz) in 1991. They moved to Basking Ridge in 2003 and have three children: Hunter, Samantha, and Rachel, who attended various grade schools in Bernards Township and all attend or attended Ridge High School. Of worthy note, Jill and her family have moved three times within Bernards Township.

Paula Axt (Trustee Emeritus - Advisor)



Paula brings the energy to the MLH Project with her focus on education, community outreach, social programs, and fundraising expertise. Born and raised in Warren, New Jersey, and daughter of Alvin Florey, the former Mayor of Warren, Paula is a Watchung Hills High School graduate. Paula is married to her husband Gregory Axt, a Ridge High School graduate (1972) who recently retired. She is a realtor and also the owner of the remodeling firm Axt Home Solutions. Paula is also the founder of the [Oak Tree Networking Group](#) here in Basking Ridge.



Paula has three children: Sara Axt Gluckman, Zachary, and Rachel. They also have three grandchildren. Her favorite quote is, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." – Robert Frost. Her favorite book is [Rebecca](#) – Daphne du Maurier. Paula's favorite historic moment.....The Headless Horseman (which happened in Bernards Township).

Paula resigned as a formal trustee and now serves as an advisor. She and her family moved out of New Jersey in 2023.

Meg Wastie (Trustee Emeritus – Advisor)



Meg Wastie joined the MLH project to focus on educational programs for all ages. Born in Long Island, Meg was raised in Westfield, New Jersey, and graduated from Westfield High School. She attended Monmouth University, Kean University, and Seton Hall University, where she earned degrees in English, Education, Guidance Counseling, and Museum Education. Meg was an English teacher at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey, for 32 years.

Her museum experience includes being the Education Curator at the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts in Madison, New Jersey, a Trustee at the Historical Society of Somerset Hills, and a Program Consultant at the [Westfield Historical Society](#). She's retired but still tutors kids around the Bernards Township area.

Meg is married to Hal Garwin and has a daughter, Leigh Garwin, and two grandsons, Drew and Devon Garwin. Hal Garwin is a former Columbia High School wrestling coach, founder, and President of the Community Health Law Project, where he has become New Jersey's most prominent legal advocate for the disabled.

Meg formally resigned in 2022 as a voting trustee and has since moved out of the area.

Larry Terricone (Trustee Emeritus – Advisor)



Larry Terricone became a Board of Trustee member, bringing a wealth of historical excellence, humor, and connections to the Mr. Local History Project. Larry loves dogs and is a professional judge. He is a Navy veteran and a board member of the Friends of the Ross Farm in Basking Ridge.



Robin Marion (Advisor)



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Robin officially joined the Mr. Local History Project with her fun “alter ego” Bitmoji. A longtime resident of Basking Ridge, she was a local historical society board member and secretary for over two decades before retiring. She is currently a member of the Friends of the Lord Stirling Stable so we hope to work with them in the future. Her favorite book is “Katherine” by Anya Seton, and her favorite quote is “I think, therefore I am by René Descartes. Robin is also a global traveler, and we mean an international traveler.





Behind the curtain, Paula, Jill, Brooks, Meg, Robin, and Larry are a family committed to preserving and promoting local history with a social twist.



The Mr. Local History Gang of Six Board of Trustees – Mr Local History Project 2020



Mr. Local History Scholarship Fund



“The Founding Foursome” (Autumn style) signers of the 501c3 non-profit founding Mr. Local History Project. We introduce Paula Axt, Brooks Betz, Jill Betz, and Meg Wastie in our signature caricature fashion. All residents of the Somerset Hills are on a mission to develop programs focused on education and local history.