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([HTTPS://MYGREENMONTGOMERY.ORG/CATEGORY/GREEN-PROJECTS/](https://mygreenmontgomery.org/category/green-projects/))

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The Power of Energy: The new Residential Energy Program Manager blows into the County with some bubbly ideas

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Guess what's new in Montgomery County? I am!! Not only is my position brand-new, but I am a new resident and very excited to be living in such an amazing county. As the new Residential Energy Program Manager I have been tasked with... well, anything energy! But I don't want to bore you with my job description so please feel free to contact me at larissa.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov (mailto:larissa.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov) if you have specific questions.

This blog is an opportunity for me to let you know why **ENERGY** is so important to me and how I hope to make the county an even more amazing place!



Larissa Johnson, the new Residential Energy Program Manager

Energy = Human Right

For as long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with the democratic process. In fact, my first career goal was to be President of the United States! But because I fell asleep in all of my Political Science classes in college, I decided to go a different route, and received my B.A. in English and Sociology from Tufts University.



In Germany, exploring their clean energy projects through POCACITO, June 2016

Although I didn't go into politics, my soul is still fueled by the notion of equity, and to me, **energy is a human right**. We need it for transporting and cooking our food, heating and cooling our rooms, manufacturing, lighting, and entertainment (just to name a few things). Despite these necessities, our electricity bills are often a huge proportion of our total income. Some people actually have to choose among heating their homes, rent, and medicine. (<http://ieer.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RenMD-EnergyJustice-Infographic-Oct2015.pdf>)

One of my hopes as the Residential Energy Program Manager is to make sure all residents know about the energy-saving programs (<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/energy/home-incentives-projects.html>) the county offers because they can help us reduce our costs!

Energy = Food

Prior to moving to Maryland, I worked in California in the public health arena and what I learned was that the environment is at the center of literally everything we do in life. Without clean air to breathe – how do we stay healthy and combat preventative illnesses? Without clean water – how do we grow nutritious, locally produced food? And without green spaces – how do we learn to play and enjoy the outdoors?



You are what you eat, quite literally!

This concept of **interconnectivity** (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interconnectivity>) became quite apparent to me so I went back to get my MPA in Environmental Science and Policy from Columbia University. Now I am ready to bring this notion of connected-ness to the county and start working with partners to connect all of our worlds.

Energy = Electricity

Before coming to Montgomery County, I worked for a few different groups in Maryland. In fact, I was working for the Maryland Climate Coalition when offshore wind energy legislation passed in the state, and I created characters called **The EmPOWERS** (http://www.madeclear.org/site/assets/files/2924/empowers_kit2.pdf) who were named by students. Characters like these are one way that I hope to help teach students of all ages (1-101) about our electricity choices in the county.



With a 4th grade class in Baltimore, as my alter ego, Plantasia.

Energy = Movement

When you meet me you will most likely notice that I rarely sit still. I have been dancing my *entire* life, and I now use my energy and excitement to engage my community around energy topics.



I have been tapping away since I was a toddler

I'm even certified to teach Zumba to Aqua to Pilates to Body Pump, to...Jumping Fitness (yes, on the trampoline!!). I promise to bring kinetic energy to all the work I do throughout the county!

Energy = Me 😊

As you can see, I am pretty passionate about all things energy whether it's radiant or chemical or electrical or potential, I love it in every form. My big vision for the county? Like the "farm to fork" concept, I would like to see the same thing happen to the energy sector or a "source to socket" movement, if you will (copyright pending), where we recognize the interconnected nature of all our energy sources from food to fuel to electricity.

I look forward to working with and for the residents of Montgomery County and remember, I am only a phone call/email away!

Larissa Johnson, Montgomery County's Residential Energy Program Manager, can be reached at larissa.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov (<mailto:larissa.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov>) or 240-777-7711.



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