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Jeremy Samuelson Becomes First Executive Director of the Concerned Citizens of Montauk

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Jeremy Samuelson

For the first time, the Concerned Citizens of Montauk, a 40-year-old nonprofit group geared toward environmental advocacy and preservation, has appointed an executive director to lead its organization.

Jeremy Samuelson, a well-known local environmental expert who has worked as an advocate with the Group for the East End, was tapped by the Concerned Citizens of Montauk to serve at the helm of the organization. Mr. Samuelson, who started last week, will be working out of the group's new office in Montauk on South Elmwood Street.

"We are thrilled that Jeremy has agreed to be our first executive director," said Dr. Robert Stern, the president of CCOM, in a statement announcing the appointment last week. "His knowledge and professionalism are critical to CCOM's efforts to face the increasingly complex threats to Montauk's unique environment."

The appointment and the new office mark a new, more professional direction for the group. It's a shift away from its earlier days when CCOM's environmental preservation efforts were mainly supported by a volunteer effort, said Mr. Samuelson.

"Forty years ago, challenges were very different," said Mr. Samuelson in an interview last week. "You could stand there and look at 1,000 acres and say, 'If we don't act, this is going to become 1,400 tract homes.'"

As executive director, Mr. Samuelson's role will be to carry out the group's mission statement—facilitating the preservation and protection of Montauk's ecology, through education, advocacy and grassroots citizen action.

The new office will serve an important role as the environmental hub of Montauk, said Mr. Samuelson. People can walk in, request maps, find out about trail walks—all while looking at samples of rocks, sand and seaweed collected from the surrounding area.

"We really want to become a community resource for anyone who wants to engage with the natural world," said Mr. Samuelson.

Mr. Samuelson has already been working with CCOM under a partnership with the Group for the East End since 2009. Through that partnership, he helped CCOM establish a new internship program for East Hampton High School students to learn how to

lead bilingual trail walks on the East End.

As executive director, Mr. Samuelson said he'd like to host similar educational programs, including working with local students on a water quality monitoring program for Fort Pond in Montauk. He said he'd also like to do a series of presentations and discussions at the new office.

Striking a balance between development and the environment is one of the most important goals Mr. Samuelson sees for the group.

"The challenge at this point is that now that we're all here, how are going to make this into a sustainable community?" he said. "My mantra is the economy of Montauk is the environment."

Before working with the Group for the East End, Mr. Samuelson covered ecological issues for The New York Times and The East Hampton Star, according to a statement from CCOM announcing his appointment. He graduated from Southampton College with a degree in cultural ecology—a point his father, Bill Samuelson, recently brought up to him.

"He said to me, 'I always knew what you were studying in college I just never knew people got paid to do it,'" Mr. Samuelson joked.

To start, Mr. Samuelson said he will be earning a salary in the low \$50,000 range, and roughly equal to about how much he made at the Group for the East End. In a few months, he said he'd like to revisit the salary figure based on his performance.

Mr. Samuelson, 37, lives with his wife, Carissa Katz, and their children, Jade and Jasper, in East Hampton.