

Somerset County Cooperative Extension



2007 Annual Report

Master Gardeners Keep Somerset County Green and Growing

Since 1992, Somerset County Master Gardeners, trained and certified by RCE of Somerset County, have volunteered by:

- Staffing the Rutgers Master Gardener Helpline that provides individualized information and problem solving for the general public.
- Harvesting produce and assisting with research projects headed by Rutgers personnel at the Rutgers Snyder Research and Extension Farm.
- Expanding their expertise through advanced training.
- Involving children in hands-on gardening projects.
- Collaborating with other volunteer organizations.
- Providing expert advice to and developing programs for County facilities.

The Rutgers Master Gardener Program of Somerset is a thriving and very well received program, as documented by:

- Presented 32 formal educational speaking events to 797 clients.
- Volunteered 7,938 hours, valued at over \$173,680.
- 1,556 volunteer hours were donated to staffing the Rutgers Master Gardener Helpline of Somerset County.
- Collaborated with Habitat for Humanity in Bernardsville, NJ, landscaping two duplex homes and educating the new owners about lawn and garden care.
- Contributed 17 newspaper articles.
- Introduced vegetable gardening to 235 children and 36 parents in the "Seed to Salad" program.

Human Issues in Horticulture

Master Gardeners and the Allies organization developed a weekly horticulture program at a group home in Bridgewater, NJ. Allies Inc. is a not for profit organization which serves the needs of people with disabilities and their families. In 2007, Master Gardeners planned and built eight raised beds to grow vegetables throughout the season; Allies was able to install a fence to keep the deer and other animals out of the area. During the growing season, the residents enjoyed planning the garden, planting, harvesting, and of course eating a wide variety of vegetables. In the fall of 2007, various spring flowering bulbs were planted inside the fence so the garden would have a three-season interest. The Allies residents and Master Gardeners see this garden as a work in progress that will provide something new each year.

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New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Cooperative Extension of Somerset County
310 Milltown Road
Bridgewater, NJ 08807-3587

<http://somerset.njaes.rutgers.edu>

Family Community and Health Sciences

Get Moving Get Healthy NJ

Get Moving-Get Healthy NJ! is a statewide initiative to encourage people to live a healthy lifestyle. This new, state-wide project includes a website, school and community-based programs, and more. Somerset County families benefited from these GMGH programs offered by Family and Community Health in 2007:

School Wellness

- Provided six GMGH educational programs in four Branchburg Public Schools, including a parent seminar, two school assemblies, and in-class student workshops.
- Trained teachers about teaching nutrition and healthy lifestyles using hands-on learning techniques.

Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles

- Founded the Building Healthy Kids Coalition. Goal is to collaborate and network to promote healthy lifestyles in children.
- Taught healthy eating seminars including workshops on the functional foods - tea, chocolate, and mushrooms. Functional foods provide health benefits when eaten as part of a healthy diet.
- Taught ongoing lessons in nutrition, food safety and parenting skills for targeted groups such as: Somerset County Senior Centers, Agape House, Work First, Great Expectations, ESL Groups (Hillsborough, North Plainfield, Somerville), and Crawford House.
- Held the FCHS Advisory Council's Annual *Living Well Conference* featuring a presentation on the importance of family health history.
- Conducted food safety training for Richard Hall Mental Health Center staff.
- Taught about hand-washing at Weston School, Manville, for their student health and safety day.
- Had a display on the amount of sugar and caffeine in popular beverages at the *Somerset County 4-H Fair*. The exhibit was eye-opening to youth and adults!

Learn more at the GMGH Website:
getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu

TOPS Camp Offers Fun and Learning

Somerset County has about 70% of school age children living in homes where either both parents work or the single parent works. Parents say finding affordable, high quality educational programs for youth in the summer is a high priority. Since 1993, RCE faculty and staff in Somerset County have conducted a weeklong day camp.

TOPS (Totally Outrageous Programs for Summer) is a week-long day camp run cooperatively by RCE of Somerset County. The camp is open to youth in grades 1-6 with counselors and CIT's in grades 8 and up. In 2007 there were 80 campers and 20 counselors. Activities held during camp include science, healthy snacks, crafts, games, and more. On the last day of camp, the counselors lead the "4-H day" where the clubs that the counselors were a part of were highlighted. They brought in their projects and conducted hands-on activities with the campers, relating to the 4-H projects. This included livestock, dogs, small animals, reptiles, model airplanes, rocketry, double Dutch jump rope, and more.

Evaluations completed by parents, show that:

- 100% felt the camp was very valuable or valuable in helping their child develop an interest in learning.
- 100% felt the camp was very valuable or valuable in helping their child develop an interest in science.
- 97% felt the camp was very valuable or valuable in helping their child develop an appreciation for the environment.
- 91% felt the camp was very valuable or valuable in helping their child develop self-confidence.
- 91% felt the camp was very valuable or valuable in helping their child get along with other people.
- 100% felt the total camp experience had been a very valuable or valuable been for their child.

Agricultural and Resource Management

Quick Facts

- 45 ARMA sessions were taught, totaling 81.0 hours to 1,698 attendees.
- Lawn and Garden Frequently Asked Questions on NJAES Website, njaes.rutgers.edu/garden/faq.asp, totaled 52,761 page views.
- Online Pesticide Safety Training. Online CORE recertification credits through recert.rutgers.edu totaled 25 commercial applicators. In addition to the online self-

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instruction, 105 commercial and agricultural licensed applicators were trained in 2007 using the online learning module in a group teaching format.

- The *Green and Growing* Newsletter created and edited by Nick Polanin, Agricultural & Resource Management Agent, strives to reach both the agricultural and non-agricultural reader.

Green and Growing is available exclusively online at somerset.rcrc.rutgers.edu and to subscribers of the Somerset County newsletter web site, service.govdelivery.com. 2007 online subscribers total 260, while 844 downloads of 2007 issues were recorded from the website.

The New Jersey Youth Corps Urban and Community Forestry Academy

In partnership with the NJ Youth Corps and the NJ Department of Labor, Polanin facilitated 4 sessions for 118 youth throughout the state. Classroom and hands-on field training included basic tree biology, basics of tree care and landscape maintenance, general safety and personal protective equipment, landscape ecology, climbing and bucket work, tree identification, chipper use, tree fertilization, and spraying techniques. One 2007 participant has been accepted for employment by a national line clearance tree trimming company.

Improving the Marketability of Sun Flowers Through Extension Research

A statewide ARMA team, J. Carleo, N. Polanin, and P. Nitzsche, conducted trials of 14 varieties of sunflowers chosen for direct market sales potential at Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown and two commercial farms in Cape May. Varieties exhibiting 'traditional' characteristics of yellow ray flowers and dark brown disc flowers were highly preferred by customers (85% of sales), while other more colorful varieties were not. The volume of sales based on pricing provided evidence that sales increased when flowers are sold in bunches rather than individual stems. Cape May growers agreed on the potential to further increase income by extending the cut flower market season into the fall.

4H Youth Development

Quick Facts

- School Enrichment – 5472 youth
- 4-H Club membership – 1674 youth members in 70 Clubs
- Short term and special interest activities – 537 youth
- Camp programs – 173 youth

- Total number of youth served – 7856 youth
- Volunteers and Educators Trained – 219 adults, 209 teens
- Total volunteers working directly with the 4-H program – 52

School Enrichment

4-H staff and volunteers reached 5,472 youth through 272 programs at schools throughout the county in 2007. Fifteen different topics were offered, including nutrition, composting, astronomy, environmental science, and dinosaurs. These programs compliment the learning experience offered by the schools with hands on activities that engage the youth in a manner that relates to real life situations.

Short Term and Special Interest Programs

In 2007, 537 youth participated in 7 different programs such as Science-sational day, cultural education and art workshops during the year, and activities at the fair. These educational programs are open to both 4-H members and nonmembers and include science activities, clothing and textile projects, and nutrition education all presented in a fun, hands-on manner.

4-H Clubs

The 4-H club is the foundation of the 4-H program. 1674 youth participate in 70 clubs run by volunteer leaders. In clubs, youth gain life skills that will help them as they mature. These include goal setting, public presentation skills, mentoring, teamwork, leadership skills, and work-force preparation. Project areas can include astronomy, go-karts, clothing and textiles, nutrition, horses, small animals, rocketry, cultural education, livestock, and much more.

Volunteers make a difference!

Research cites the importance for youth to have long-term consistent relationship with adults. In 2007, 161 adults and 179 teen volunteers were trained to deliver 4-H programs. These include the club leaders, camp counselors, workshop presenters, and presentation judges. In addition, 98 educators from other youth serving organizations (teachers, DYFS, park commission, etc.) received specific training to implement other educational programming such as Family ASTRO, Project WET, Project WILD, True Colors, and Character Counts.

Camp Programs

173 youth participated in overnight and day camps sponsored by Somerset County 4-H in 2007. These include Teen Winter Camp, Family Camp, Club Camp, and RCE Summer Day Camp. During these camps youth are introduced to a wide variety of activities including boating, hiking, fishing, environmental and earth science, and nutrition.

Somerset County Cooperative Extension



Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County

Family and Community Health Sciences

Helps people eat well, stay healthy, enjoy life, and be active. Many of today's health problems—obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer—can be reduced through good nutrition and a healthy life style. FCHS applies the latest research with practical advice to help families and individuals make personal choices to live a healthy lifestyle.

4-H Youth Development

Uses a “learn-by-doing” approach to enable youth to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to become competent, caring, and contributing citizens of the world.

Agriculture and Resource Management

Addresses agricultural, environmental, and ecological concerns; fosters education, volunteerism, and horticultural awareness through the Master Gardener program. Focus areas include agribusiness viability, watershed management, urban and community forestry, and new partnerships to enhance local and regional environmental resources.

2008 Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Peter Palmer, Director
Jack Ciattarelli
Robert Zaborowski

Rick Fontana, Deputy Director
Patricia Walsh

How to Reach Us

Agriculture & Resource Management

908-526-6293

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4-H Youth Development

908-526-6644

Lisa Rothenburger, 4-H Agent

Carol K. Ward, 4-H Agent

Family & Consumer Sciences

908-526-6295

Daryl L. Minch, FCHS Educator

Nancy Rosa-Mejias, FCHS Program Coordinator

Address:

310 Milltown Road
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TDD: 908-231-7168, & leave message

Hours: M-F 8:30-4:30

Cooperating Agencies Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.

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