SOMERSET COUNTY FARMER GAINS SEAT ON STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

(TRENTON) – Farmers from Somerset and Burlington Counties have been sworn in as the two newest members of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture. Roger Kumpel of Southampton, Burlington County, and William Randolph of Montgomery Township, Somerset County (pictured below), were seated during the Board’s annual reorganization meeting at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Columbus on September 27. They were selected for the positions at the January State Agricultural Convention and later nominated by Governor Corzine and confirmed by the State Senate.

“Both Mr. Kumpel and Mr. Randolph bring a wealth of experience in New Jersey’s agriculture industry to the Board,” said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus. “They are leaders in their fields and well respected for their knowledge and innovative thinking. Their work on the Board will be crucial in formulating policy for the Department of Agriculture that will help the industry grow and thrive.”

Randolph is founder of Millstone Valley Nursery, which recently became a part of Summit Plants and Flowers and Montgomery Gardens of Belle Mead. He is a graduate of the first class of the New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program and a past President of the Somerset County Board of Agriculture and alternate director of New Jersey Farm Bureau. Randolph currently is a member of the Princeton Agricultural Association, Montgomery Township Agriculture Advisory Committee, and First Pioneer Farm Credit Customer Service Council. He also is a trustee for the New Jersey Museum of Agriculture and New Jersey Agricultural Society. Randolph, his wife, Betsy and their four children live in Montgomery Township.

The State Board of Agriculture, comprising eight members, is the policy-making body of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and at least four of its members must represent the top commodity groups in the state. Members serve for four years. Congratulations to Bill and Roger!
“VISIT NJ FARMS” WEB SITE LAUNCHED!

Through a cooperative effort between Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the Food Policy Institute a new web-based marketing tool for farmers to promote farm visits has been developed. The website, www.visitnjfarms.org, will provide farmers the ability to post information about their farms and events being held at their farms in real-time, while providing consumers the ability to search for farm operations based on location and the activities and products they offer. This website will be the first of its kind in the nation and will provide New Jersey farmers a unique opportunity to attract visitors to their farms.

“New Jersey is home to some of the most beautiful farmland and hard working farmers in the region. And, on many of those diverse farms, there are things to do and learn that the whole family would enjoy. It is what we call agricultural tourism, or agri-tourism in New Jersey. There are many opportunities for affordable, family-oriented recreational and educational activities where visitors can learn about the production of food and agricultural products and the state's rich farming heritage while helping to encourage the preservation of agricultural lands. Activities include hayrides, corn mazes, pick-your-own operations, farm stands, school tours, farm festivals, and winery tours. There are four seasons of fun on New Jersey's farms. You don't have to live on a farm to enjoy New Jersey agriculture! Come out for the day. There's always plenty to do!” – Charlie Kuperus, NJ Secretary of Agriculture

Farmers from Somerset County and all across the state are invited to participate in the website, by entering your farm operation information and dates and times of your public events, tours, and other happenings. Consumers can utilize user-friendly search engines to explore the web site listings via county or location, as well as by the following categories: On-farm Activities, Pick you Own, Farm Market products, Farm Facilities, Private Arrangements, and Special Events. Please feel free to explore the website, and forward any questions to Lucas Marxen at The Food Policy Institute at 732-932-1966 x3114.

2007 Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program

The Rutgers Environmental Steward program provides training and experience that will equip you to contribute effectively to the process of finding solutions for environmental problems in your community.

Graduates become knowledgeable about the basic processes of earth, air, water and biological systems. You could increase your awareness of the techniques and tools used to monitor and assess the health of the environment and gain an understanding of the research and regulatory infrastructure of state and federal agencies operating in New Jersey that relate to environmental issues.

Our 60+ hours of training does not replace a degree in science, but helps non-scientists fill in the gaps when confronted with real world problems.

Communication, conflict resolution and leadership skills are also taught to better enable you to be effective in the real world of community action and political discourse, where many of our environmental issues ultimately play out.

The program will be offered regionally at three locations from January to June in 2007 - The Essex County Environmental Center in Roseland, Duke Farms in Hillsborough, and the Rutgers EcoComplex in Columbus.

For further information or to apply for a class, go to: www.rcre.rutgers.edu/envirostewards/.
This two-year professional development opportunity is designed specifically for individuals in farming and agribusiness. Through a series of seminars and workshops, all NJALDP participants explore various agricultural topics; debate key issues; sharpen public speaking skills, and establish an extensive agricultural network.

NJALDP participants develop skills in a variety of areas including marketing, decision-making, negotiating, and business and personal leadership. The skills which participants acquire improve their own business and personal lives and enhance involvement not only in agricultural organizations but also community and civic groups, governmental bodies or school and youth programs.

Through a competitive process, a limited number of participants will be selected to participate in this two-year program, set to start in fall of 2007. The application deadline is March 30, 2007. Participants are expected to commit a total of approximately 40 days to program activities over the two-year period. Cost per participant is $3,000. Details and applications are available through Mary Nikola, Director at (732) 932-5000, x 611 or online at www.njagsociety.org/njaldp/njaldp.htm.

IS YOUR FARMLAND RIVER FRIENDLY?

The River-Friendly Farm Program seeks to recognize farms that, through good management, help to protect water resources within the watershed. The voluntary River-Friendly Farm Program was initiated to address water quality concerns within the Raritan River Basin. Details on this program are available online at www.njriverfriendlyfarm.org or by contacting Jason Smith at the North Jersey RC&D, 908-735-0733 x 125 or jsmith@northjerseyrcd.org.

Program Goals Include:
- Publicly recognize and reward farmers who do an outstanding job of managing their farms in an environmentally sound way that protects and improves water resources within the Raritan River Basin
- Publicize and promote agricultural best management practices that help improve water quality while maintaining and improving agricultural viability of New Jersey farms
- Increase public awareness of farmers' voluntary contributions to resource protection

Benefits of becoming a River-Friendly Farm
- Provides public recognition for implementing and maintaining stewardship practices
- Increases availability of funding sources for conservation practice implementation
- Creates an avenue for increased marketing strategies with River-Friendly Farm label
- Provides access to free technical assistance from a conservation planner
- Improves water quality in streams while maintaining productive farmland
- Promotes more efficient use of fertilizers and pesticides
- Provides a healthier soil structure

Initial project areas will focus within the South Branch, Spruce Run, and the Neshanic Watersheds. The Neshanic Watershed is located within Flemington Borough, Raritan, Delaware, East and West Amwell Townships in Hunterdon County, and in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County. It includes Back Brook and the First, Second, and Third Neshanic Rivers. This target area extends east from Sergeantsville, Hunterdon County, to Montgomery, Somerset County, and runs from Hunterdon County Route 612 to Route 579 just south of Ringoes.
Robert Puskas of Middlebush Farms Named to the New Jersey Fish and Game Council

(TRENTON) Robert Puskas was recently named to the NJ Fish and Game Council, joining a growing list of Somerset County farmers and agribusiness leaders who have lent their expertise to regional and statewide agricultural issues and planning.

Bob Puskas is the farmer representative for the central region of NJ, including Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset and Union Counties. He is very familiar with wildlife population dynamics and land use decisions affecting available habitat and prey / predator relationships. He has first hand experience with wildlife damage to crops, forests, and landscapes, the management strategy options available to landowners and property managers, and has been instrumental in local wildlife management decision-making. He is currently co-owned and operator of Middlebush Farms, a dairy, poultry and crop farm in Franklin Township, NJ. Bob has previously served as President of the Somerset County Board of Agriculture, and on the Deer Management Taskforce for the 550-acre Rutgers Hutcheson Memorial Forest. Bob is currently a member of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and Open Space Advisory Committee of Franklin Township.

The Fish and Wildlife Councils and Committees of the State of New Jersey have a unique role in the management of our fish and wildlife resources. Members of the councils are appointed by the Governor and function as unpaid volunteers who act in the best interest of the state's fish and wildlife resources on behalf of the public. The councils help create and finalize each year's hunting and fishing regulations and enable the professional and scientific management of our resources.

The Fish and Game Council, appointed by the Governor, oversees the operations of the Division of Fish and Wildlife within the NJDEP, and appoints a Director (subject to the Governor's approval). Created by law in 1945 (N.J.S.A.13:1B-24), the council is composed of three farmer members, recommended to the Governor by the agricultural convention; six sportsmen members, recommended to the Governor by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs; and two commercial fishermen.

The next meeting of the NJ Fish and Game Council is set for November 14, 2006. A complete listing of meetings is available online at http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/fgncmlntg.htm. More information on the NJDEP’s Fish and Game Councils and Committees is available online at http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/councils.htm#fishandgame. Additional information about the NJDEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife can be found online at http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/.

Despite being the most densely populated state in the nation, and the fifth smallest in area, New Jersey provides habitat for an incredible number and diversity of wildlife species. There are more than 400 species of vertebrate wildlife which can be found within the state, due in large part to the state's geographic position within North America, as well as 134 freshwater fish and 336 marine finfish.

New Jersey lies at the southern edge of the range of many "northern" species and the northern edge of the range of many "southern" species. With hundreds of miles of coastline and five physiographic regions and the Pine Barrens area, NJ continues to support a diverse and abundant wildlife resource.

Wildlife management in the state is not without challenges. Management of both game and nongame species includes the common goals of protecting and managing habitats and wildlife populations and maintaining wildlife diversity, all within the context of public health, safety and welfare.
Rutgers NJ Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension of Somerset County (RCE) announces an anticipated opening in our 4-H Youth Development program. The position includes responsibilities for assisting in the coordination of educational events for the 4-H Youth Development Program with regular supervision from the county RCE Faculty.

The successful candidate will assist in volunteer recruitment and training and provide educational programming to youth and their families, members of County government and local municipalities, businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, etc.

Excellent written and oral communication skills, and computer literacy are also sought. Evening and weekend hours may be required when necessary. The current deadline for all applications is Nov. 15.

Please visit us online at either www.co.somerset.nj.us/joblist.htm for a complete position description and online county application procedures, or http://somerset.ree.rutgers.edu/4h to learn more about 4-H Youth Development with RCE.

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HORSES 2007 CONFERENCE

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ- "Horses 2007," scheduled for Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1, 2007, will create a learning event that will appeal to new or prospective horse owners as well as seasoned professionals, including veterinarians and veteran horse owners and farm operators.

The event is a collaboration between Cornell University, Rutgers University/Cook College, the University of Vermont, Centenary College, and Delaware Valley College and will take place at the Rutgers University Cook Campus Center. Full details and directions will be posted on the Equine Science Center website - www.esc.rutgers.edu - this fall.

The information-packed agenda is divided into two days of education. Saturday will focus on the concerns and questions of individuals who have recently bought a horse or horse farm or are thinking about doing so. It also will appeal to youth of middle school age or older and even to experienced horse people who are looking for refresher knowledge or who are interested in science-based answers to typical horse-related questions.

On Sunday, presentations will be geared to equine industry professionals and will take a deeper look at equine behavior, hay analysis, feeding-related problems, toxic plants, techniques and tools for diagnosing lameness, alternate therapies, rehabilitation, and a special look at policy issues and regulation. The Sunday session also will provide continuing education credits for veterinarians and vet techs.

Attendees at both day-long sessions also will be invited to observe a demonstration of the high-speed equine treadmill and hear a hands-on presentation by the Young Horse Teaching and Research Program.

On the same weekend, an intensive workshop on environmental best practices for operating a horse farm will also take place on the Cook campus - this time at the Ryders Lane facility. Enrollment in the two-day short course is limited to 80 participants to allow ample time for questions and hands-on learning. For more details, consult the Equine Science Center's website (www.esc.rutgers.edu) or the Office of Continuing Professional Education (www.cookce.rutgers.edu).
DO YOU KNOW
NEW JERSEY FARM BUREAU?

The mission of the New Jersey Farm Bureau (NJFB) is to represent the agricultural producers and enterprises of New Jersey at all levels of government - local, county, state, federal and international. This representation includes the influence on regulations and laws, the creation of positive public relations, and the seeking out of initiatives, activities and ventures to help the profitability of the producer members. NJFB strives to remain faithful to the democratic policy development process managed by representatives from every part of the state.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a member organization of more than 16,000 farmers and farm-related entities within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass-roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community’s policies and positions.

A survey conducted in late 2005 by Fairleigh Dickinson’s PublicMind Polling Institute showed that farming and issues that impact it continue to rank exceedingly high in public awareness. The survey was commissioned by the New Jersey Farm Bureau to determine how much New Jersey residents know or care about issues that the Farm Bureau views as key to the continuing viability of farming in the state.

Why New Jersey is called "the Garden State" elicited 70% responding "because of farming." Nearly 80% of respondents shopped at roadside stands or farmers markets. Forty-seven percent had heard about eminent domain, but when asked about four acceptable reasons for implementing it (forcing the sale of houses and shops to build a new school; forcing the sale of dilapidated properties to renovate neighborhoods; forcing the sale of middle-class housing to replace with upscale condos and shops; forcing the sale of active farmland to build new school or ball field), the only accepted use by a majority of respondents (54%) was to replace dilapidated properties with better housing and shops. 73% of respondents said that taking active farmland, even for a new school or recreation, was not acceptable.

For further information, please contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; or www.njfb.org.
Staying Healthy, Raising Healthy Kids, Eating Right - Living Well!

The Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) program within Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County focuses their community outreach on encouraging today’s busy families and individuals to make healthy choices. Research shows that many of our chronic diseases - obesity, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and some cancers - could be prevented through healthful eating and regular physical activity. Healthier families, individuals, and communities will allow people to enjoy life, stay active, and reduce health care costs. FCHS combines research and practical advice to improve your health for a better tomorrow.


Please contact Ms. Daryl Minch, FCHS Educator, at 908-526-6295 or visit our web site, http://somerset.rcre.rutgers.edu/fchs for additional information on these and other programs in nutrition and wellness areas.

NEW JERSEY SEEKING OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMERS!

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture is now accepting applications for the Year 2008 Outstanding Young Farmer (OYF) Award. The submission deadline for nominations is January 15, 2007. The award recognizes the outstanding achievements of a young Garden State farmer who is an upstanding leader, respected agriculturalist and is active in community or church organizations.

“By recognizing a young person engaged in farming for his or her efforts, we hope to encourage them to continue to farm and contribute to the community and industry to help sustain agriculture in the future,” said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus. “Today’s farmer is a skilled entrepreneur in a complex business world who must understand all aspects of farming, including production, processing, marketing and distribution, plant or animal technology, economics, mechanics and engineering, natural resources and environmental technology, politics, sociology and in some cases, international relations and trade.”

Nominees must be actual farm operators, deriving a minimum of two-thirds of their income from farming and must be between the ages of 21-40, not becoming 41 prior to January 1, 2008. Any individual or organization can nominate deserving young farmer’s names. Persons who have been nominated in the past or previous state winners who went to the National competition but did not receive a National OYF Award can be re-nominated.

Since the US Jaycees bestowed the first award, four New Jersey farmers’ names have been added to the National OYF Honor Roll. They include Abbott Lee (1985), James B. Giamarese (1989), Robert Von Thun, Jr. (2001) and Jeffrey VanderGroef (2005).

The OYF program is the oldest farmer recognition program in the United States, selecting its first group of national winners in 1955, and is administered by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce. The National OYF program is sponsored by Deere & Company, supported by the Outstanding Farmers of America (OFA) Fraternity and the National Association of County Agriculture Agents (NACAA), and administered by the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce.

The Official State Nomination Form can be accessed on the NJ Department of Agriculture’s web site at www.nj.gov/agriculture/about/sba/cover.html.

If you have any questions on the OYF program or the nomination procedure or need a nomination form, contact Karen Kritz, New Jersey OYF Program Manager at (609) 984-2506, by facsimile (609) 341-3212 or e-mail at Karen.Kritz@ag.state.nj.us.
CHOOSE AND CUT CHRISTMAS TREES IN SOMERSET COUNTY

Christmas Trees, a renewable resource, are grown as a crop: planted, sheared, cultivated, and harvested for your enjoyment! Where each tree is cut and wherever losses occur from insects, diseases, wildlife or other factors, a new seedling will be planted. Christmas tree farms provide beautiful greenbelts throughout our State. One acre of Christmas trees produces the daily oxygen requirement for 18 people. Please visit the NJ Christmas Tree Grower’s Association, PO Box 211, Stockton, NJ 08559, (609) 397-0096, or online at http://www.njchristmastrees.org/ for more information and growers.


Dower Tree Farm, Peapack, NJ. 908-781-5407. 4 Todd Avenue. 500 trees; Norway spruce, Douglas fir, Concolor Fir, and Canaan Fir. Open 10-4 (Sat & Sun), Dec. 9 & 10.


Shadow Hill Farm, Skillman, NJ. 609-466-3596. 213 Grandview Rd, Skillman. 400 trees; Blue Spruce, Norway Spruce, Douglas-fir, and Concolor Fir. Open.9-5 (Sat & Sun), Dec. 2 - Dec. 17.

Wolgast Tree Farm, Somerset, NJ. 732-873-3206. 176 Bennetts Lane, Franklin. 300 trees; Norway Spruce, Douglas-fir, and Canaan Fir. Open...9-5 (Sat & Sun), Dec. 2 - Dec. 24.

Each year 30 million American families bring a natural Christmas tree into their homes. Providing New Jersey families with the best Christmas trees that man and nature can devise is a big job. Most Christmas tree farmers agree that it is a good life, if one is willing to work year round, on a crop that needs tender loving care for at least five years before it becomes a marketable product. So, please visit your local grower, support Somerset Agriculture, and have a TREE-mendously enjoyable experience. Happy Holidays!

The New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers' Association (NJCTGA) is a State organization of growers, professionals and allied industry leaders dedicated to the advancement of the latest information in the production, promotion and marketing of Christmas trees and related products.

The Association, organized on September 19, 1950, in Cranbury, New Jersey and incorporated in 1967, is comprised of over 300 members throughout New Jersey and the United States.