

Monmouth County Cooperative Extension



2010 Annual Report

Our Vision

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County helps individuals, groups and organizations to address their needs, problems and concerns. We identify issues and provide the leadership, organizational skills, and commitment to develop appropriate solutions through the educational process.

Our Mission

We aim to assist the diverse population of Monmouth County adapt to a rapidly changing society and improve their lives by applying current science-based information. Our focus is on issues and needs relating to agriculture and the environment; management of natural resources, food safety, quality, nutrition, and health; family stability; economic security and youth development.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Links the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers - The State University, The School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, and New Jersey county governments to provide practical education for all people. While our name changed slightly again, our mission remains focused on key extension issues. RCE faculty and staff provide outreach programs in Agriculture and Resource Management, Sea Grant Extension, 4-H Youth Development, and Family and Community Health Sciences.

Our staff is supported by dedicated groups of trained volunteers who serve on advisory boards and increase our educational outreach and services to Monmouth County.

This annual report highlights some of our program outreach in 2010.

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Agriculture and Resource Management

The Monmouth County clientele base includes commercial agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, homeowners, governmental agencies and natural resource interests. Agricultural Agents Richard Obal and William Sciarappa, Horticulturist Diane Larson and Program Assistant Vivian Quinn reached record numbers of clientele in 2010 through new programs, services and applied research activities. Our agents provide technical and educational programs on a regional basis in the fields of vegetable, nursery and greenhouse production. We work with USDA-NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Freehold Soil District and Shade Tree Commission, all within the Agricultural Building to efficiently serve county clients.

Despite the economic downturn, the agricultural industry in Monmouth County is still very diverse, dynamic and economically strong. Total farm sales (excluding equine) in 2009 was estimated at \$84 million (5th in State) on 54,966 acres of land. Statewide the county ranks first in equine breeding and training facilities, roadside and community farmers markets and pasture acreage; second in nursery and floriculture crop production, horse farms, Asian vegetables and pumpkins; third in sweet corn, sod production and Christmas tree farms; fifth in alfalfa, soybean, pepper and tomato production; sixth in hay and forage.

Extension Outreach

Agribusiness in Monmouth County provides food, forage, fiber, feed, ornamental products and services. Our educational programs enhance the financial viability of these operations and help preserve our environment. Outreach topics were landscape, greenhouse and nursery production, sustainable and organic farming practices, specialty crop production, equine pasture management, animal waste management, bio-energy and sustainable energy resources, pesticide use, pest management, farm viability, regulatory matters and agricultural methods.

- 24 meetings held with 1,256 farmers, horticulturists, educators, environmentalists and general public
- 39 educational presentations to 1,397 participants
- Communication categories totaled 1,185 phone responses and 872 client emails.
- 10 county wide/ agricultural interest newsletters and program announcements with a total circulation of over 800 farm readers each
- 125 farmers were trained in the best practices in animal waste management.
- 18 community gardens and public rain gardens were provided with direct technical and planning assistance during the construction process.
- 100 Rain Garden Specialists trained.

Farmland Preservation

Cooperative Extension has played a prominent educational and advisory role for municipal and county boards and the farming community in preserving the agricultural land base. A total of 12,912 acres of farmland on 175 farms have been permanently preserved. This represents nearly 20% of the agricultural land in the county.



The USDA People's Garden Big Impact Award was received for the three garden system behind our Extension office

Resource Management

Resource management programs had a banner year in Monmouth County. Rapid development and landuse changes have put our water quality and quantity at risk from many sources of pollution. Extension programming in cooperation with Monmouth County Watershed Partnership has communicated to citizens' effective ways to protect our water supplies. Highlights included rain garden construction for water recycling and assessing the financial value of environmental benefits for farmland and open space. Constructing a total of 35 public rain gardens and over 150 private rain gardens helped recharge over 5 million gallons of stormwater runoff. We are well on our way to our goal of 1,000 county rain gardens by 2015.

Marine Extension Program 2010

Marine Extension Agent, and now Full Professor, Gef Flimlin is working to develop individual farm plans for shellfish growers through the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association, a group he helped form about eight years ago. For the past four years, he and some colleagues worked to develop a Code of Practice and Best Management Practices manual for shellfish farmers. It can be found on www.ecsga.org. The next step is to get the farmers to record how they manage their farms in an environmentally sound way through the creation of their own individual farm plan, develop their promotional brochures and begin the task of documenting crop losses.

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Master Gardeners

Twenty-five Monmouth County residents successfully completed the Master Gardener program in 2010, which entailed 60 hours of formal training, followed by at least 60 hours each of community volunteer service. Monmouth County has trained a total of 343 Master Gardeners since the program's inception in 1999, retaining 175 active Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners provided 21,176 hours of volunteer service in 2010, and responded to over 2,364 gardening inquiries from the public on the Helpline. Of the total hours of volunteer time, 4,234 hours were spent performing consultation and diagnostic duties at Helpline events, 7,382 hours were spent performing Community Outreach where the public was educated on horticulture on an informal basis, and 822 hours were spent formally teaching the public through the Speakers Bureau. These volunteer areas alone, totaling 11,698 hours, which calculates into a cost factor of \$327,544.

Community Projects

- Master Gardeners continue to participate in the development and/or continuing efforts of eleven Community Gardens throughout the county. These gardens are in Wall, Middletown, Freehold, Keyport, Tinton Falls, West Long Branch, Belmar, and Allentown.
- The Master Gardener Horticultural Enrichment Committee provided therapeutic activities at twelve sites including senior centers and rehabilitation facilities.
- The MG Speaker's Bureau presented 39 programs at 44 different venues, reaching over 800 people.

Educational Outreach

- Monmouth County Master Gardeners had Educational displays at 16 public venues. Outreach displays included using native plants in the landscape, attracting beneficial insects, gardening with less pesticides, butterfly gardening, and composting.
- Spring Garden Day held in May developed into an educational outreach program in addition to a fundraiser. Six free garden talks were given to the public, and a helpline table was set up for garden questions.

2010 Highlights

- The fifth year of the Jr. Master Gardener program began in April, with 16 children involved in eight indoor and outdoor classes, eventually harvesting 1,365 pounds of produce.
- Plant a Row for the Hungry garden behind the Agriculture Building yielded over 2,300 pounds of produce that was donated to Open Door Food Pantry in Freehold.
- Children's Committee organized their second 'Bugs, Birds, and Beyond' children's educational day in cooperation with 4-H in September, with over 250 people in attendance.



- Two scholarships totaling \$1,500 were awarded to two high school seniors who plan on studying a field in plant science in college.
- The Master Gardener working gardens located on the grounds of our Agriculture Building were officially designated as 'The People's Garden', a federal initiative that began in 2009 at the USDA headquarters in Washington DC to encourage the implementation of sustainable gardens on public sites. Our 'Plant a Row for the Hungry' garden, 'Junior Master Gardener' garden, and Rain Garden were included in this title, giving Monmouth County the distinction of having the first 'People's Garden' in New Jersey. The three criteria that qualified us for this distinction were growing food for people in need and/or growing native trees, shrubs, and flowers for wildlife, demonstrating sustainable practices that nurture, maintain, and protect the health of our soil, water, and air, and finally, providing a beautiful place to gather, learn, share, and enjoy.

Family & Community Health Sciences in Monmouth County



FCHS... Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities

Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) helps people stay healthy, enjoy life, be active, and reduce health care costs. Many of today's health problems--obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer--can be reduced through proper nutrition and a healthy life style. FCHS encourages today's busy families and individuals to learn more and make personal choices to improve health through research and practical advice.

Partnering with organizations such as: Senior Centers, the Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, and the Monmouth County Vocational School, enables us to reach a variety of students, individuals, families, and communities to provide educational materials and presentations. In addition, other events and demonstrations at Monmouth

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County Wellness Day and the Monmouth County Fair give us the opportunity to improve overall health and well being.

The FCHS department maintains *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education* (SNAP-Ed), a federal grant that offers nutritional education to culturally diverse and food stamp eligible residents, including youth, adolescents, adults and senior citizens within Monmouth County. The desired outcomes

of our education are as follows: increased knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition; increased ability to select and buy foods that satisfy nutritional needs; improve practices in food production, preparation, storage, safety and sanitation; and increased ability to manage food budgets and related resources. Overall, the goal of this program is enhancing knowledge and skills necessary to achieve proper diets while contributing to food security along with the ability to improve family nutritional welfare.

FCHS collaborates with the Keansburg School District in supporting the *21st Century Community Learning Center* grant. The department continues to provide nutrition education to youth, parents and families through after school activities, lectures, summer programming and supermarket tours. This program offers a multi-faceted approach to promote better nutritional choices and healthy lifestyle behaviors.

The *Get Moving – Get Healthy New Jersey* is a major initiative adopted by the department to highlight all programming. This objective encourages a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and physical activity, educational programs, an interactive website which included a virtual walking program, and publications and targeted marketing campaigns. For more information visit www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu.

Functional Foods for Life Educational Programs: These programs offered by FCHS are educational seminars that focus on a variety of functional foods and their specific health benefits. A functional food is defined as ‘one that has a potential



benefit on health when consumed as part of a varied diet’. Program topics include Chocolate, Tea, Coffee, Vegetable, Fungi and Berries.

Our educators encourage today’s busy families and individuals in making personal choices to improve health. Being healthy also means being knowledgeable in Food Safety. The FCHS programs teach food handlers to safely handle food to prevent food borne illness.

The on-going *New Jersey School Wellness* policy requires nutrition instruction for schools in all districts throughout the state. Our department is able to provide this education free of charge. We incorporate concepts of health and physical activity into the academic curriculum and overall school environment through our SNAP-Ed program as well as specific programming to administrators, staff, and parents at all educational levels.

Our *Visions* newsletter and many other *RCE Publications* help people stay healthy, enjoy life, be active and reduce health care costs. In 2010, individuals participated in FCHS activities as well as various seminars, programs, trainings, in-services, and health fairs. Through all of these services we have had a combined audience total of over 3,500 individuals with approximately 700 meetings. In addition, the *Visions* newsletter, published four times a year, was distributed to more than 750 individuals per issue. FCHS continues to provide nutrition education to promote good health and develop partnerships in building healthy lifestyles.

Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County

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Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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4-H Youth Development Program

The 4-H Youth Development Program of Monmouth County offers youth a fun, non-formal educational environment – a place where they can feel both connected and valued. In 2010, over 1,100 youth in Monmouth County grades K-13, participated in a variety of opportunities including 4-H clubs (754), school enrichment programs (144), special interest groups (481), after-school programs (107), and local, state and national events. Participation in the 4-H Program helps youth master life skills and gain a deeper understanding of generosity by becoming active, engaged citizens. There are also continuing opportunities for youth to become proficient in leadership skills while achieving a great deal of personal growth and independence.

Volunteers

Caring adult volunteers are an essential component of any 4-H program. In Monmouth County, adult volunteers contribute by leading community and project-based clubs, directing dynamic advisory groups, and leading special interest programs such as community service events and camping weekends. This year, 94 adult volunteers donated, on average, 220 hours preparing for club meetings and guiding youth in the program. According to the Independent Sector, the latest estimate of the value of volunteer time in New Jersey is \$25.20/hour. This translates to a donation of more than \$521,000 in service to our Monmouth County 4-H Program. Youth volunteers are also significant contributors to our program. This year seven teen volunteers shared their skills with younger 4-H members and other local youth. This type of informal mentoring of younger members is an invaluable asset of the 4-H Program, and often occurs naturally in the 4-H club setting.

Clubs

4-H clubs meet at various locations throughout the county in rural, suburban and urban settings. Trained 4-H club leaders worked with 36 4-H clubs in 2010, serving as instructors and mentors. Our mission is to implement a youth development hands-on learning approach that meets the needs of young people in a positive way – we call it “*learning by doing*”. Youth develop many life skills by participating in specific project areas of their choice such as leadership and citizenship, environmental science, animal science, expressive and performing arts, healthy living, and engineering and technology.

Service

The 4-H Program has a long history of engaging young people, both individually and collectively, in problem solving and making a difference in their own communities. Monmouth County 4-H members are actively involved in the planning and implementation of various community service and service learning projects, such as beach clean ups, clothing collections, food and toy drives, and more. Service learning takes community service one step further by joining service with education, focusing on specific community issues. This deepens the experience of the youth involved and multiplies the benefits within the community.

Faculty and Staff

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Monday - Friday 9am – 4pm
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For more info visit our website:
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Go to Departments - Rutgers Cooperative
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Grants

Monmouth County 4-H Youth Development collaborated with several afterschool sites within the county on 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. Rutgers Cooperative Extension provided programming and activity related services to the youth at each site. 4-H programming at these sites included instruction on nutrition and physical activity, engineering and technology, and environmental sciences.

Collaborations

For over 35 years the Monmouth County 4-H Youth Development Program has worked cooperatively with the Monmouth County Park System, partnering to present the Monmouth County Fair. This collaboration has been a positive, productive effort, benefiting not only Monmouth County, but thousands of other people who visit and enjoy the Fair each year. The Park System also works with 4-H to provide camping facilities so many of our 4-H youth, teens and families can enjoy outdoor, educational opportunities in Monmouth County.

Other community agencies that are valued partners to Monmouth County 4-H Youth Development Program are the United Way of Monmouth County, Monmouth County Workforce Investment Board, school districts throughout Monmouth County, the YMCA of Western Monmouth County, and the National 4-H Council.

Photo credits: Front cover (l. to r.) Bill Sciarappa, Sandy Wolfe, Bill Sciarappa
Inside page 2 Vivian Quinn; inside page 3 Rich Obal; inside page 4 Rachel Tansey
Back cover (l. to r.) Kate Everett, Kate Everett, Bill Sciarappa

For a comprehensive list of our publications visit www.njaes.rutgers.edu.

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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