

Dear colleagues,

Here is the latest edition of my “news and achievements” message. As usual, the grants listing is appended as an excel file.

Animal Sciences Professor **Carol Bagnell** is the recipient of a generous donation from Dr. Bernard and Jane Steinetz to support her research program and graduate students studying endocrinology in animal sciences. The Bernard and Jane Steinetz Research Fund will be supported annually for 15 years beginning in 2006 from the Bernard and Jane Steinetz Charitable Lead Unitrust (which is valued at over \$1 million). Interest from this trust will provide financial support for Bagnell’s research program and for the Bernard and Jane Steinetz Endowed Fellowship in Endocrinology in the Department of Animal Sciences at The Graduate School–New Brunswick. Bagnell is a reproductive endocrinologist whose research focuses on the biology of the hormone relaxin. Steinetz, who earned his Ph.D. at Rutgers University and is currently on the faculty at NYU, has had a lifelong interest in relaxin and other hormones of pregnancy and published some of the first papers on the physiology and pharmacology of this hormone in the late 1950s.

**William Meyer**, professor of Plant Biology and Pathology and director of the Turfgrass Breeding Program at Rutgers, was selected as a recipient of the 2007 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Distinguished Service Award. Bill will officially receive this award, which is conferred to someone who has made outstanding and significant contributions to the advancement of the golf course superintendent profession and to the game of golf, at the GCSAA Education Conference in Anaheim, California this coming February. The complete press release may be found [here](#).

**Eleanor Bochenek**, a marine scientist at Rutgers’ Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, has been elected by the Jersey Coast Angler’s Association as their Sportsperson of the Year. She joins a distinguished list of past recipients that include state and federal legislator, newspaper reporters, environmentalist, and sportsperson volunteers. She was nominated for this award by the Newark Bait and Flycasting Club.

**Richard J. Buckley**, coordinator of Rutgers Plant and Soil Testing Services, was presented with the Rutgers Turfgrass Alumni Association Achievement Award during the 17th Annual Graduation Ceremony for The Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School and Turfgrass Student Awards Banquet, held November 4. This honor was initiated in 1990 by the Association to recognize individuals who have made a significant contribution to the turfgrass industry in New Jersey and have provided outstanding service to the turfgrass program at Cook College.

**Karyn Malinowski**, associate director of NJAES and director of NJAES Cooperative Extension, has been chosen as a distinguished alumna of the Graduate School–New Brunswick. She was chosen for the award, which recognizes a lifetime of distinction, based on her leadership in her field and contributions to equine science and Cooperative Extension. The award will be presented at a celebratory dinner on March 2. Also, Karyn’s research is featured in *The State of the Garden State*, a new book published by the Hall Institute of Public Policy–New Jersey. The 295-page hardcover book includes a chapter that Malinowski authored on the preservation of agriculture and open space in New Jersey.

**Kevin Lyons**, formerly associate director and researcher at the Rutgers EcoComplex, won in the Leadership category of Governor Corzine’s Environmental Excellence Awards. The award

recognizes outstanding environmental performance, programs, and projects in the state, and was made at a gala ceremony held recently at Drumthwacket.

**Barbara O'Neill**, a specialist with NJAES Cooperative Extension, was recognized as a recipient of the 2006 Excellence in Extension Award by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy at the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges' 119<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Houston, TX. This honor is awarded to those individuals who have dedicated their careers to enriching lives through their extension programming. Barbara O'Neill's high-impact financial work with New Jersey residents was acknowledged as one of the most impressive Extension programs in the Northeast region of the United States.

**Thomas Leustek**, a professor in the department of plant biology and pathology and **Andre Hudson**, a postdoc working in Leustek's lab in Rutgers' Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment, have discovered that the bacterium *Chlamydia* shares an evolutionary heritage with the plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The results of this discovery were published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences' Online Early Edition the week of November 6. The press release on this finding can be found [here](#).

**Bill Hallman** (along with Noel Brewer of UNC–Chapel Hill) had the lead article in the December issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases* (2006; 43:1379–86). The article is titled “Subjective and Objective Risk as Predictors of Influenza Vaccination During the Vaccine Shortage of 2004–2005” and can be found [here](#).

On November 27, the *Washington Post* published a report on an anti-inflammatory substance under investigation in the lab of Biotech faculty member **Ilya Raskin** (Plant Biology and Pathology). The substance comes from the African plant *Aframomum melegueta*, a member of the ginger family, and has antimicrobial as well as anti-inflammatory properties. Native African healers treat infections with Aframomum, and gorillas feed on the shoots and seedpods of the West African plant. Raskin is hopeful that the powerful anti-inflammatory properties of Aframomum will not cause the side effects experienced with the drugs Vioxx, Celebrex, and Bextra. Patents are pending on Raskin's discoveries, which have been licensed to Phytomedics, Inc.

Food Policy Institute (FPI) staff participated in an apple gleaning at Giamarese Farm in East Brunswick as part of the New Jersey Agricultural Society's Farmers Against Hunger program on October 2. The event was organized by **Brian Schilling**, vice president of the NJAS, and produced more than 1,100 pounds of apples that were later distributed to hungry families in the Trenton area.

FPI hosted an Avian Influenza Tabletop exercise on Cook Campus for the New Jersey supermarket industry on October 4. The program, developed in partnership with the New Jersey Food Council, New Jersey State Policy, and New Jersey Department of Agriculture was designed to assess preparedness efforts, communication plans, and interagency coordination in the event that the H5N1 avian influenza virus is detected in the United States. More than 70 private and public sector participants and observers attended, including Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus and Commissioner of Health and Senior Services Dr. Fred Jacobs. **Bill Hallman** and **Brian Schilling** were on the event design team.

FPI, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and NJAES Cooperative Extension released a new statewide website for agritourism promotion and marketing on October 5. This innovative

website ([www.visitnjfarms.org](http://www.visitnjfarms.org)) allows farmers to announce and update on-farm products and activities that are available to the public. It also provides the public with a user-friendly search engine to locate local farm products or plan farm visits. **Brian Schilling** and **Lucas Marxen** led the development of the website.

**Anne Bellows**, research associate at FPI, was an invited speaker at the Policy and Leadership Discussion Series. This student-organized series was established to discuss connections between gender, public policy, leadership, and scholarship with featured policy makers. Anne was also a panel participant at the "Farm to Table Event" at Elijah's Promise Jobs Culinary School. Anne is also on the Advisory Board for the *Global Grassroots Leaders in Residence Program*, which will be hosting seven grassroots farmers from the Global South to New Brunswick campuses between September and December 2006.

**Carol Byrd-Bredbenner**, Extension specialist in community nutrition, with D.A. Grasso and J. Maurer, was the recipient of the Excellence in Clinical Research Award from the American Dietetic Association for "Avoid Triggering Food Allergic Reactions: The Development and Evaluation of a Fact Sheet For Food Service Operations." The award was presented in Honolulu in September.

Distinguished Professor of Food Science and Nutrition **Tung-Ching Lee** has been invited to be the keynote speaker for the 5th International Congress on Food Technology to be held in Thessaloniki, Greece, March 9–11.

**Marilou Rochford** (team leader), **Sharon Blase**, **Karen Ensle**, **Daryl Minch**, **Kathleen Morgan**, **Maria Young** (implementation team members), **Lydia Blalock**, **Annette Devitt**, **Nurgul Fitzgerald**, **S. Fountain**, **Bill Hlubik**, **Dianne Lennon**, **Barbara O'Neill**, and **Janet Williams** (project support) were recipients of the 2006 Rutgers Cooperative Extension "Best of the Best" Team Award for the Children's Health Summit: Fighting Back Against Childhood Obesity. The award was presented Rutgers Cooperative Extension Annual Conference, September 13, 2006.

**Thomas J. Montville**, distinguished professor of food microbiology, and **Karl Matthews**, associate professor, received \$153,000 for "Multi-sector Training of Doctoral Candidates in Food Safety Microbiology" from the USDA CSREES National Needs Fellowship Program. The grant will provide support for two doctoral candidates.

Phytomedics, Inc., a biopharmaceutical company merging health care and plant biotechnology, has renewed its support for 5 more years of plant-based pharmaceutical research in the laboratory of **Ilya Raskin**, Biotech Center faculty member (Plant Biology & Pathology). This critical support provides \$5.4 million over the next five years for the discovery and development of bioactive products from plants. The collaboration to date has yielded four botanical products which are being commercialized by pharmaceutical and consumer health care companies, as well as an anti-arthritis botanical drug which recently completed a successful Phase II clinical trial. Launched in 1996, Phytomedics is a privately owned company located in Jamesburg, NJ. Most of the company's R&D takes place at the Biotech Center at Rutgers University, under the leadership of Ilya Raskin, a company co-founder. Phytomedics signed a broad research and licensing agreement with Rutgers University that allows the company to exclusively license its core technologies and products.

NSF/USDA recently awarded a grant to **Don Kobayashi**, PI, and Biotech faculty member **Michael Lawton**, Co-PI, (both Plant Biology & Pathology) to support the sequencing of the

genome of the bacterial pathogen *Lysobacter enzymogenes*, which is emerging as a model pathogen of lower eukaryotes. This work will provide an important foundation for future studies that address mechanisms of pathogen virulence. The project was funded at \$540,255 for two years beginning November 1.

Two awards from CAFT's industry-sponsored research program were recently confirmed to Biotech Center members. **Nilgun Tumer** (Plant Biology & Pathology) and Research Assistant Professor **Rong Di** were funded for \$14,000/yr on a three-year project entitled "Detection of Shiga-like toxins in food using surface plasmon resonance biosensor technology." Rong was also funded for a second project at \$13,000/yr on a three-year project entitled "Anti-inflammatory and anticarcinogenic activities of mogrosides and momorgrosvin from the fruit of Luohanguo." Rong is collaborating with **Chi-Tang Ho** in CAFT and Mou-Tuan Huang in Pharmacy on the second project.

Research Assistant **Hemalatha Saidasan** won a prestigious fellowship to attend the 24th Stadler Genetics Symposium on the "Genomics of Disease" held at the University of Missouri–Columbia, Oct 2–4. Hemalatha presented a poster of her research entitled "*Physcomitrella patens*: A genetically tractable system for studying Fusarium Head Blight." Hemalatha works in the laboratory of **Michael Lawton**.

Animal Sciences Associate Professor **Sarah Ralston** presented three lectures at the Association Veterinaire Equine de la France (French Equine Veterinary Practitioners) Conference in Versailles, France, on October 13: "How to feed the aged horse," "When to call a nutritionist," "The digestive ecosystem: How it works, how it dysfunctions and clinical recommendations" (in collaboration with Veronique Julliard of France).

**Gloria Kraft**, Burlington County 4-H agent, received \$7,500 for REAL 4-H! Community Grant—Refreshing the Environment with Action Leaders, established by Coca-Cola through National 4-H Council.

**Cara Muscio**, Ocean County Marine Extension agent, and **Bill Sciarappa**, Monmouth County agricultural agent, were co-recipients with a team of investigators of a \$1.2 million dollar restoration grant from NJ Department of Environmental Protection. The project will focus on the reduction of sedimentation, excessive nutrients and bacterial loads in fresh water streams flowing to the ocean from the Wreck Pond watershed in Monmouth County New Jersey. Muscio and Sciarappa serve as members of both the general committee and technical advisory board.

**Chris Obropta**, specialist in Water Resources, \$303,200 to develop the Tenakill Brook-Watershed Restoration Plan, and \$317,955 to develop the Musquapsink Brook-Watershed Restoration Plan. Both grants were from the NJDEP 319 (h) Program. Chris also received \$544,498 from the USDA-CSREES for Regional Coordination within USEPA Region 2.

**Don Schaffner**, specialist in food science, (Co-PI), and **R. Bruins** (PI), received \$146,715 for Defining the growth–no growth boundary for *Listeria monocytogenes* in shelf-stable pocket sandwiches. Don also received \$130,017 for a Food Microbiology Risk Reduction Project from Rutgers Division of Dining Services.

**William Franke**, PI, Center for Advanced Food Technology, and **Ken McKeever**, Animal Science, were awarded a Department of Defense contract entitled "Combat Ration Supplements for Improved Cognitive and Physical Performance," \$300,000, for year 1, renewable at \$450,000 for year 2. William Franke also received \$15,000 over 3 months for phase 1 of the development

of a Korean rice-based beverage for EP Partners. William also received \$1,000 from Masterfoods to put together focus groups.

**George Carman** and **C-T. Ho**, both faculty of the Food Science Department, were appointed to the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Lipid Research* and the *International Journal of Food and Nutrition*, respectively.

**Gary Rose**, Governor Corzine's advisor on economic growth, and **Jane Oates**, the Governor's advisor on higher education, were accompanied by President McCormick and Executive Vice President Furmanski for a brief visit to our campus on December 7<sup>th</sup>. They visited with **Paul Falkowski**, **Michael Pazzani**, **Art Brown**, **Scott Glenn**, **Josh Kohut**, and **Bob Goodman** about some of the contributions being made toward growing the economy of New Jersey in areas such as alternative energy, coastal observing, fisheries, turf, and nursery.

**Fred Grassle** was featured in a front page article in the Star-Ledger yesterday, December 11<sup>th</sup>. The article focused on the International Census of Marine Life in which Fred heads the scientific steering committee.

Finally, please join me in offering sincere congratulations to **Dan Rossi**, Senior Associate Director of NJAES, who has been selected to be the next Executive Director of the Northeastern Regional Association (NERA) of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors. He will assume his new responsibilities effective February 15, 2007. Dan's predecessor at NERA has been based at the University of Maryland. Negotiations have resulted in a plan for Dan to be based here at Rutgers, and office arrangements are being discussed now.

This will be the last of these messages for 2006. Look for some changes in the format and appearance of these messages for 2007.

I want to wish everyone a joyous, safe, and restful holiday season. I am looking forward optimistically to 2007, and I hope you are too.

Kind regards,

Bob

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