

A MESSAGE FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

August 2007

**Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments**

Cablevision Media aired a segment from the Rutgers Turf Research Field Days (RTRFD) on August 20. RTRFD provides the turfgrass industry with access to the latest turf breeding and management research. The program is divided into two days—one day for golf course superintendents and others interested primarily in bentgrass research, the second day for landscape, sports, and utility turf interests. **William Meyer** (Plant Biology and Pathology), **Bruce Clarke**, director of the Center for Turfgrass Science, and Chris Carson, president of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association, were all interviewed for this cable segment.

On August 13, **Chris Huch** and **Mike Kennish** (both of Marine and Coastal Sciences), **Al Clericuzio**, horticultural consultant with Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Ocean County, and William deCamp, Jr., executive director of Save Barnegat Bay, were featured in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for their efforts to save the Barnegat Bay ecosystem. Excess nitrogen in the water has facilitated the overgrowth of algae and diminished the growth of the sea grass beds. Scientists and advocates have been working to restore Barnegat Bay by educating the public and seeking state regulations for the amount of nitrogen used in fertilizer. The complete article can be found [here](#).



**Rutgers Gardens** became one of 100 sites around the nation to be included in Bartlett Tree Experts' "100 Trees in 100 Days" commemoration of their century of scientific tree care. On July 24, Bartlett Tree Experts representatives planted an Accolade Elm in the Rutgers Gardens. Bartlett Tree Experts has also just added Rutgers to its growing list of colleges and universities to which it awards annual \$2,000 scholarships. Bartlett Tree Experts personnel provide outreach by conducting demonstrations, career days, and lectures at the colleges and universities. They also offer internships to students and careers to graduates. (Photo l. to r.: Charles King,

arborist representative, Thomas Purtell, arborist representative, Matthew Rodda, local manager, and Wayne Dubin, vice president/division manager, all of Bartlett Tree Experts.)

The State FFA, Agricultural Education Organization, awarded the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Union County their 2007 Distinguished Service Award for the Master Gardeners support of the Union County Vocational Technical School Horticulture program. The award was presented to **Madeline Flahive DiNardo**, Union County Agricultural Agent, at the State FFA Convention Banquet on May 24.

Jersey Fresh Skim Free, a new skim milk product, is now on the market through a partnership between five southern New Jersey dairies and Consolidated Dairies, the brand's marketer and distributor. Jersey Fresh Skim Free is the result of a partnership between **Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension** and Jersey Dairy Products, Inc. More information on this new product can be found [here](#).

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**Alexandra Greci**, FCHS Educator for Hunterdon County, was elected Region 2 co-chair for the 2007–2008 term at the New Jersey Dietetic Association (NJDA) Board Meeting on June 2, 2007, in Trenton.

**Scott Glenn** (Marine & Coastal Sciences) and **Oscar Schofield** (Marine & Coastal Sciences) were recently awarded the Technology Collaboration Award by the Naval Research Lab at the Stennis Space Center.

One of the **Rutgers Coastal Ocean Observation Lab's** (COOL) gliders made a trip down the Atlantic coast from New Jersey to the Outer Banks and was picked up in Virginia by researchers at Old Dominion University. Rutgers COOL gliders will make similar trips for the next three years, under the Mid-Atlantic Regional Coastal Ocean Observing System, which was funded by Congress at about \$11 million per year. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration disburses the money for the gliders and their upkeep. Rutgers COOL is working with a consortium of other mid-Atlantic universities on this project. More information on this project can be found [here](#).

**Brian Schilling**, associate director of the Food Policy Institute (FPI) and **Lucas Marxen**, an FPI research analyst, created a website on ag-tourism in New Jersey and entered it into the 20th Annual New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Mapping Contest that took place on April 25. Their website was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Internet Mapping Application category.

### Student Activities and Accomplishments

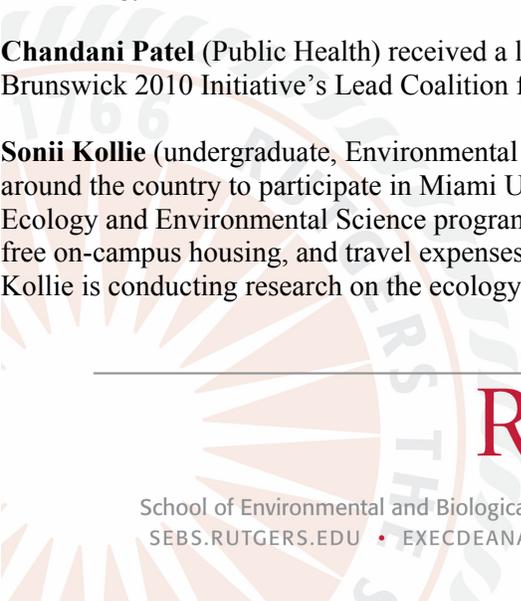
The following students won Institute of Food Technologists student awards: **Meenakshi Khurana** (graduate program in Food Science) won first place in the poster competition of the Nonthermal Processing Division; **Kasi Sundaresan** (graduate program in Food Science) won second place in the Dairy Division Manfred Kroger oral competition; **Katy Nolan** (undergraduate, Exercise, Science and Sports Studies) won first place in the Pangborn oral paper competition of the Sensory Evaluation Division; and **Didem Icoz** (graduate program in Food Science) won second place for her presentation in the Carbohydrate Division.

**Stacey Lettini** (graduate program, Ecology & Evolution), was awarded Best Student Presentation for her talk titled “The energetic costs of parasitism in an intermediate host” at the American Society for Parasitology held in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico from June 21–25.

**Chandani Patel** (Public Health) received a letter of accommodation and gratitude from Healthier New Brunswick 2010 Initiative's Lead Coalition for her efforts on compiling the Lead Compendium.

**Sonii Kollie** (undergraduate, Environmental Sciences) has been selected as one of 12 students from around the country to participate in Miami University's Research Experience for Undergraduates in Ecology and Environmental Science program. The 10-week program offers 12 hours of academic credit, free on-campus housing, and travel expenses to attend the Ecological Society of America annual meeting. Kollie is conducting research on the ecology of human-dominated landscapes.

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## Grants and Fundraising Efforts



to r.: Ken Karamichael, OCPE; Mayor Booker; Mark Hoover, executive director, the Nicholson Foundation. Photo credit: Shawn Tucker.)

Newark Mayor Cory A. Booker and Deputy Mayor Margarita Muñiz received a check for \$25,000 from the Nicholson Foundation to help fund grassroots programs that help juvenile ex-offenders rejoin society and rebuild their lives. The money will be dispersed through **Rutgers T.E.E.M. (Transitional Education and Employment Management) Gateway**, a juvenile mentoring and support organization, to six neighborhood groups. Entitled “The Juvenile Mentoring and Support Services Initiative,” the programs provide meaningful rehabilitation opportunities for juvenile ex-offenders. These include job training, mentoring, counseling, anger management, life skills, and family development, as well as GED preparation and literacy classes. (Photo l.

The Department of 4-H Youth Development has received an initial gift of \$40,000 of an approximately \$160,000 settlement from the estate of Nelson Doland, Jr.

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services awarded \$425,000 to **William Hallman** (Food Policy Institute) and other researchers for their study “Efficiency, effectiveness and birth outcome evaluation in the New Jersey special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.” Funding is for March–December 2007.

**B.J. Webersinn**, Cape May County 4-H Agent, is a member of the Atlantic Cape Safe Youth Partnership and a partner in a grant of \$350,000 to Richard Stockton College and Atlantic Cape Community College for Building the Capacity of Community Collaborations.

**Gef Flimlin** and **Cara Muscio**, Ocean County Extension Agents, received \$17,500 from the United States Environmental Protection Agency/Barnegat Bay National Estuary Program for 2006–2008 and \$20,000 from the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders for the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Project.

**Bruce Barbour**, County Agricultural Agent, received a \$3,000 gift from the Garden Club of Princeton to assist with development of a state invasive species website in collaboration with Professor **Joan Ehrenfeld** and the NJ Invasive Species Council.

**Wes Kline**, Cumberland County Agricultural Agent, received \$3,781 from the Agricultural Agents’ Association of New Jersey Research, Group Study, and Professional Improvement Grant Program for “Determination of Fecal Coliform, *E. coli* and Salmonella Contamination of Irrigation Water Sources.”

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**Jeannette Rea-Keywood**, Cumberland County 4-H Agent, received \$50,000 in funding as part of a Lawrence Township 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant valued at \$700,000 from the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Chad Ripberger**, Mercer County 4-H Agent, and Christine Cardinal, Mercer County Equestrian Center manager, received \$3,000 from the Dorothy Katz Reading and Recreation Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation for 4-H After-School Adventure—2007 Week of Summer Day Camp. Ripberger also received \$1,500 from the Educational Information and Resource Center to train staff at the New Jersey After 3-sponsored PEACE After-School Program at Lindenwold School #4.

### Publications and Editorships

The American Vegetable Grower national trade magazine featured two bonus coverage articles by **Andy Wyenandt**, Assistant Extension Specialist in Vegetable Pathology, and his colleagues on managing fungicide disease resistance.

### Conferences, Seminars, and Other Events

**\*The Great Tomato Tasting at Snyder Research and Extension Farm has been canceled** due to crop damage from a localized severe storm that occurred on Friday, August 17.\*

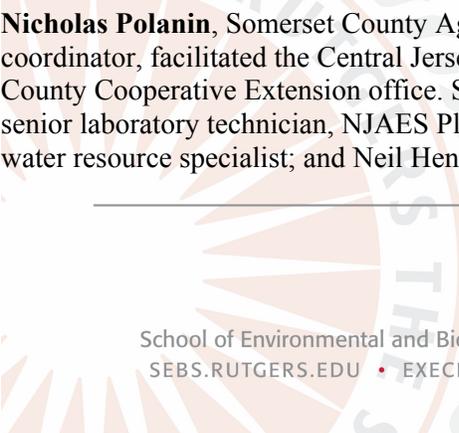
Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center in Bridgeton held a Jersey Tomato Taste Testing on August 8. Chefs and the public were invited to taste classic and heirloom variety tomatoes, as well as to take wagon tours of vegetable and fruit projects at the research farm.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Bergen County held its annual Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Twilight Meeting at Demarest Farm in Hillsdale, New Jersey on June 13, 2007. The educational event featured presentations by Win Cowgill, Hunterdon County Agricultural Agent; Peter Nitzsche, Morris County Agricultural Agent; and Joel Flagler, Bergen County Agricultural Agent.

The first graduation/certificate award ceremony that will certify full Rutgers Environmental Stewards (those that have completed both lecture and intern obligations) is scheduled to be held at Duke Farms on August 25. A new county-based program began in Cape May County on June 21. County Agricultural Agent **Jenny Carleo** is collaborating with **Bruce Barbour**, director, on an Environmental Stewards program focusing on coastal issues. The Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor is a major external collaborator. In addition, Ocean County Marine Extension Agent **Cara Muscio** is developing a partnership with the Atlantic County Utility Authority for a coastal version of the program.

**Nicholas Polanin**, Somerset County Agricultural Agent and Statewide Master Gardener program coordinator, facilitated the Central Jersey Master Gardener Helpline Training session at the Burlington County Cooperative Extension office. Speakers included **Rich Buckley**, director, and **Sabrina Tirpak**, senior laboratory technician, NJAES Plant Diagnostic Labs; **Chris Obropta**, Cooperative Extension water resource specialist; and Neil Hendrickson of Bartlett Research Labs.

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## DEAN'S CORNER SPOTLIGHT ON....*Stacy Bonos*



Is switchgrass the answer to our energy needs?

Stacy Bonos, a researcher at Rutgers' Center for Turfgrass Science, thinks it might be. She is identifying and breeding native perennial grass crops to be grown specifically in the Northeast. Her work with switchgrass shows promise as a homegrown source of alternative energy.

Most of the research on renewable bioenergy crops has been conducted in the Midwest region of the United States. However, the cost of transporting biomass from the Midwest to the Northeast is prohibitive and growing Midwest-bred bioenergy crops locally may not be an option as most do not do well in northeastern climates.

Bonos has identified experimental germplasm sources with higher biomass yield, greater seed yield, and improved performance, mainly from collections along the Eastern Seaboard. Working with these experimental germplasm sources, Bonos is locating genes associated with traits that will improve selection efficiency. Having located these gene markers, Bonos has precise information that guides her as she creates new switchgrass varieties. This method enables her to hone in on desired genetic traits, such as higher biomass yield, much more quickly than would be possible through traditional plant breeding. This means that new varieties may be available to farmers, scientists, and breeders in less time than traditional methods of plant breeding would allow.

Switchgrass presents a strong opportunity for non-corn-based ethanol production in the Northeast. Because of its perennial growth habit and ability to maintain high yields with few added inputs, it is about three times more efficient as an ethanol source than corn. Also, switchgrass is environmentally friendly as it doesn't require a lot of irrigation or fertilizer, and it can be grown on marginal land not suitable for traditional agricultural crops. It also serves as habitat for wildlife. For these reasons, switchgrass is expected to take a leading role in the movement toward cost-effective, renewable energy sources.



W. E. Wilco

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