

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
June 2017



**Kenneth McKeever**, professor in the Department of Animal Sciences and associate director of research at the Rutgers Equine Science Center (ESC), was elected president of the Equine Science Society in June. The society is the preeminent international body of equine researchers, teachers, extension specialists, and industry representatives whose focus is to promote quality research in equine science. McKeever will serve a two-year term as president, after previously serving on the society's Board of Directors as secretary/treasurer and vice-president. **Carey Williams**, associate professor in the Department of Animal Sciences and associate director of outreach at the ESC, was elected to the society's Board of Directors, on which ESC director, **Karyn Malinowski**, already serves.



*Live classes were video-taped for online access.*

The paper "Comparing Conventional, Hybrid, and Distance Learning Courses in Horticulture" [HortTechnology 26(5):667–682] by Monmouth County agricultural agent **Bill Sciarappa**, program associate **Vivian Quinn** (recently retired), and extension specialist **Dan Ward**, Department of Plant Biology, has been named the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) Outstanding Education Publication Award winner for papers published in 2016 in the journal, *HortTechnology*. The team compared three formats of Sciarappa's undergraduate "Organic Farming and Gardening" class taught over 10 consecutive years as a conventional class, hybrid, or fully online. The team compared student academic performance, student satisfaction, and instructor evaluations. Due to high demand and insufficient classroom space, the conventional curriculum was reformatted with identical course content into both a hybrid and a fully online version. While evaluations of the formats ranked similarly, registration numbers indicated an overwhelming preference for online education. The award-winning team will be honored in September at the ASHS Annual Conference.

The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) allocated more than \$6.6 million in grants nationwide in FY 2017 to combat childhood obesity, a public health issue affecting one in five school-aged children. One of the NIFA grants included \$800,000 to Rutgers to support an online educational program to help parents promote healthy eating and home environments among preschool-age children. The funding is made possible through NIFA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The AFRI Childhood Obesity Prevention Challenge Area supports projects to gain a better understanding of the factors behind childhood weight gain, to develop effective interventions, and to train more parents, caregivers, and educators to promote childhood obesity prevention.



The national society for extension agents, Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP), is dedicated to fostering standards of excellence in the extension system and developing the extension profession and professional. State 4-H agent **Jeannette Rea-Keywood** and extension specialist **Robin Brumfield**, Department of Agriculture, Food, and Resource Economics, have been honored with 2017 ESP national recognition for the Northeast Region. Rea-Keywood (Distinguished Service Award) and Brumfield (International Service) will be recognized at the National ESP Conference in North Carolina this fall.

The USDA Northeast Climate Hub sponsored a webinar on June 15, called “Energy Strategies for Farm Resilience in the Northeast.” The webinar was presented by **Zane Helsel**, emeritus extension specialist in agriculture energy, and Daniel Ciolkosz, assistant professor, Penn State University. Changes in climate, technology, economic environments, and level of understanding have led to improvements in addressing the energy needs of and impacts on the agricultural sector. The webinar discussed the changing farm energy needs and offered strategies to improve a farm’s energy resilience. The webinar can be viewed at [www.climatewebinars.net/webinars/energy-strategies-for-farm-resilience-in-the-northeast](http://www.climatewebinars.net/webinars/energy-strategies-for-farm-resilience-in-the-northeast).

The 2016 Good Food Org Guide was developed by The James Beard Foundation and Food Tank, along with a prestigious advisory group of food system experts. The annual publication focuses on national and state nonprofit organizations that are working to create a better food system. In the national section, the Ethnic Produce Production & Marketing Working Group ([www.worldcrops.org](http://www.worldcrops.org)) led by **Rick VanVranken**, Atlantic County agricultural agent, was included as one of the exemplary food organizations in the U.S. working to build a better food system. This group of researchers and extension workers from Rutgers, UMass, Penn State, and University of Florida studies new and emerging ethnic foods. Its goal is to create growing and marketing resources about alternative crops that can help sustain East Coast vegetable and herb farmers so they can cater to the culinary demand of growing ethnic communities in the region.

#### In Memoriam:

**Stuart Race**, extension specialist in entomology at the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and Cook College from 1965 to 1993, passed away May 31, 2017, at the age of 90. Race, who published many research studies, was well known among the New Jersey farm community for his advice on insects affecting vegetable and field crops, tree fruits, poultry, and livestock. Race received both his M.S. degree (1955), and his doctorate in entomology (1957) from the Graduate School–New Brunswick at Rutgers University.

#### Events:

National Extension Tourism Conference August 8 – 10, 2017, Nassau Inn, Princeton, NJ. Experience tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in New Jersey and engage with current research, program models, and business development in tourism. Hosted by Rutgers NJAES. This conference is an opportunity for Extension professionals and others working in tourism and recreation – including tourism service providers and businesses – to share programs, initiatives, research, and success stories, and to network with other professionals. <http://extensiontourism.net/conference>.

