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NJ 4-H Prepares Next Generation of Urban Food and Agriculture Changemakers



Marissa Staffen, 4-H agent of Essex County, at 4-H summer camp in Montclair.
Photo: Nick Romanenko.

Over the next five years, a new generation of food and agriculture changemakers will be prepared to lead urban agriculture activities, better understand food systems, and address social justice issues in Jersey City and Camden. [A \\$638,144 grant awarded to RCE's Department of 4-H Youth Development](#) by the USDA-NIFA for the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) program, will launch a pilot program in the spring for teens to participate in *Changemakers*, a leadership and skills-building program to engage urban teens in community-based food systems education and urban agriculture.

Guide to Help NJ Municipalities Develop Flood-Resilient Landscapes

The guide, *“Creating Flood-Resilient Landscapes: A Primer for New Jersey Communities,”* was developed [to help municipalities redesign flood-prone landscapes](#) in an effort to best protect the communities they border from the ravages of swollen brooks and rivers and rising seas. The guide is the product of eight years of research by ecologist **Brooke Maslo**, associate professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources, and her resilience team, which includes an interdisciplinary group of collaborators from both Rutgers and South Dakota State University. The need for technical guidance was identified through the DEP Resilient NJ program, which is an assistance program to support local and regional climate resilience planning, and the Blue Acres program, a flood protection program that includes relocating families whose homes are subject to repeated flooding and acquiring flood-prone property for use as natural flood storage, parks, and community open space.

Rutgers Role in the 2024 New Jersey Agricultural Convention

Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) plays a leading role each year in developing and hosting the educational programs for the New Jersey Agricultural Convention and Trade Show. The annual event is a collaborative effort among RCE, the Vegetable Growers Association of NJ, and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. RCE's educational programs at the 2024 convention, themed “Pathways to Grow Farm Viability,” are led by co-chairs and RCE agricultural agents **William Bamka** (Burlington County) and **Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester County). In addition to Bamka and Infante-Casella, an outstanding core of Rutgers personnel, among them several RCE county agents, serve as chairpersons for convention sessions and workshops. They include, in alphabetical order: **A.J. Both** (Greenhouse Extension Specialist), **Kate Brown** (Program Associate, Burlington County), **William Errickson** (Monmouth County), **Hemant Gohil** (Gloucester County), **Patricia Hastings** (Integrated Pest Management Program Associate), **Kristian Holmstrom** (Integrated Pest Management Program Associate, Vegetable), **William Hlubik** (Middlesex County), **Stephen Komar** (Sussex County), **Meredith**

Melendez (Mercer County), **Megan Muehlbauer** (Hunterdon County), **Stephanie Murphy** (Director, Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory), **Peter Nitzsche** (Director, Snyder Farm), **Gary Pavlis** (Atlantic County), **William Sciarappa** (Agriculture and Natural Resources agent), **David Specca** (Assistant Director, Rutgers EcoComplex), **Timothy Waller** (Cumberland County), and **Andrew Wyenandt** (Extension Specialist in Vegetable Pathology). Rutgers personnel are involved in a wide variety of convention topics, including soil health, hemp production, basic wine grape production, tree fruit orchard establishment, vegetable topics, high tunnel production, nursery and ornamentals, strawberry production, transition to organics, blueberry production, food safety, retail marketing, new agricultural technologies, and pest problems.

Of Interest

The following fact sheets are available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[FS575: Prevent Weight Gain After You Stop Smoking or Vaping](#)

Zellers, C. and Ensle, K.

[FS1355: Reducing Black Bear Damage to Farm Operations](#)

Paulin, J.

[FS1356: 2024 Vegetable Integrated Pest Management Delivery Program](#)

Hamilton, J. and Holmstrom, K.

Rutgers to Launch New Wind Energy Test Center

A [Rutgers research project focused on offshore wind energy](#) is poised to make New Jersey a global leader in the field in a little more than a decade. Rutgers researchers include **Josh Kohut**, professor in the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences and co-Chair, Rutgers Offshore Wind Energy Collaborative, who is co-principal investigator. The project includes two key components: the design of a so-called Net-Zero Wind Energy Test (WET) Center, a warehouse-size testing facility to be potentially located somewhere close to the Jersey Shore; and the creation of a much smaller WET Lab, which will be located on the Rutgers University–New Brunswick campus. The venture aims to address scientific and engineering challenges in testing a floating offshore wind turbine and will position Rutgers at the center of what is expected to be one of the most ambitious wind power research projects in the U.S.

Recent Hire

Ruth Carll [was appointed the State Leader for the RCE Consumer Horticulture and Master Gardener programs](#), effective January 2. In this role, she provides statewide leadership and collaboration across working groups, stakeholders, and RCE departments and specialists in support of improving and expanding consumer horticulture outreach, education, and engagement. Carll is an innovative leader in the botanical garden and preservation community, with extensive experience and success in the development and expansion of community engagement.

Recent Honor

Lily Young, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences, [received the Daniel Gorenstein Memorial Award for outstanding scholarly achievement and exceptional service](#). Young has held several leadership positions in a stellar career spanning more than 30 years at Rutgers, including associate dean for graduate studies at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), chair of the Department of Environmental Sciences and dean of international programs at SEBS, and provost for faculty development and excellence at Rutgers University–New Brunswick.

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