Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Mercer County helps the county’s diverse population improve their lives through an educational process that uses science-based information. Rutgers Cooperative Extension focuses on issues and needs relating to five crucial areas:

- Economic Growth and Agricultural Sustainability
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Human and Community Development
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Food Safety and Nutrition

As an integral part of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, RCE provides practical information based on the research programs of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rutgers University, and other Land Grant Colleges and Universities in the United States.

Base programs in Agriculture and Resource Management, 4-H Youth Development, and Family and Community Health Sciences are provided to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County provides informal educational programs through a variety of methods that include:

- Phone and office inquiries from people seeking assistance,
- Lectures to clientele groups, local organizations, and schools,
- Site visits and consultations,
- Newsletters, feature articles, and newspaper articles,
- Cable television, radio programs and interviews,
- Single session, series classes, and home study courses,
- Research and demonstration projects, and
- Service on committees, advisory panels, and boards for local and statewide interest groups, businesses, and governmental agencies.
Agricultural Viability

The Agriculture and Resource Management program assists farmers, growers, and related agricultural and horticultural industries in the development of sustainable business concepts in the food and distribution environment as well as the exploration of non-conventional agricultural practices that promote healthy management of the environment.

Marketing Research and Education

Jhilson Ortiz (pictured below), Senior Agriculture Program Coordinator, assists local and regional producers in the marketing of food ingredients for direct consumption or wholesale. In the marketing programs, farmers have learned a wide range of skills that encompass, but are not limited to: efficient management of business time and locations, customer service skills, employee relations, product pricing strategies and composition, business promotion, product placement, and sales assistance.

Partnerships

RCE of Mercer County works closely with county boards, the Food Innovation Center, the Food Policy Institute, other Extension offices, and many agricultural agencies to plan, develop, and deliver educational programs in areas where we and our partners have more effective reach than a single entity. These collaborations lead to better results on research endeavors, community outreach, and impact.

Education and Outreach

In 2007, over eleven thousand individuals were provided up-to-date advice on topics including Integrated Pest Management (IPM); marketing; home horticulture; insect ID; and turf, landscape, nursery, and farm management. Barbara J. Bromley, Horticulturist (pictured on top of page three receiving an award from Rutgers Dean Robert M. Goodman), continues to recommend environmentally responsible gardening practices including IPM, composting and soil improvement, responsible lawn care, and pest control through lectures; site visits; a series of television Garden Reports; and face-to-face, email, and telephone consultations.

Master Gardener Program

The Mercer County Master Gardeners assist the public on their Helpline (609-989-6853) and at outreach programs by answering horticultural questions, identifying pests and plant materials, and providing information on environmentally responsible gardening practices. The 169 active Master Gardeners volunteered 17,522 hours in 2007 at a value of $388,637 and provided information to over 11,600 residents. Twenty-six Master Gardeners graduated in 2007. Thirty-six (six in 2007 alone) have attained life status by volunteering at least 1,000 hours since their graduation year. Since program inception in 1993, 146,490 hours have been volunteered for a value to Mercer County of $3,249,148.

Special focus for the Master Gardeners in 2007 included improved advanced training for Master Gardeners to keep them up to date on horticultural trends.

Mercer Educational Gardens

The Mercer Educational Gardens feature 21 composting bins, an informational kiosk, and gardens demonstrating the use of compost. Established and currently maintained by the Master Gardeners, the site is used for self-guided tours and is the host of several educational programs.
Master Gardener Educational Outreach

Continuing and expanding on a tradition of educational outreach, the Master Gardeners of Mercer County planned, publicized, and conducted its well-received series of gardening programs. Over 8,000 people attended 116 outreach and educational programs, which were held at local venues, including the Extension Office, the Mercer Educational Gardens, and local schools and libraries (pictured below).

The educational programs included:
- “Insects in the House”
- “Overwintering Tender Plants”
- “Invasive Plants”
- “Bees: Not Just for Honey”

Community events and outreach included:
- Spring Plant Expo
- 5th Annual Insect Festival
- Earth Day at Mercer County Skating Rink
- Mercer County 4-H Fair
- Washington Township Day
- Pennington Day
- Ewing Community Festival
- West Windsor Farmers Market
- Watershed Butterfly Festival
- Communiversity
- Drumthwacket Public Garden Tours

For more information on the Master Gardeners and their programs, visit www.mgofmc.org.
4-H Afterschool Adventure and Horses and Youth (HAY)

4-H Afterschool Adventure provides challenge and adventure programming to youth, ages 9-13, enrolled in the City of Trenton’s after-school initiative, SCOOP, and the Boys and Girls Club of Trenton and Mercer County. The program includes three components: introductory personal development activities, group challenge initiatives, and outdoor adventure activities (horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing, and rock climbing). In 2007, 4-H collaborated with the City of Trenton to complete a low elements challenge course at the West Ward Recreation Center (see left picture on front page). The course will be incorporated into 4-H Afterschool Adventure starting with the 2008 spring program and the newly created summer adventure camps. Horses and Youth (HAY), an outgrowth of 4-H Afterschool Adventure, was completed twice as a 6-week program and once as a week of summer day camp at the Mercer County Equestrian Center during 2007.

Get Moving – Get Healthy NJ

Get Moving – Get Healthy New Jersey was developed to address the growing prevalence of child obesity. The program teaches the importance of healthy food choices and regular physical activity. Through hands-on activities, youth and adults explore a variety of fruits and vegetables, learn how to read nutrition labels, discover the importance of portion sizes, and learn several exercises. In 2007, Mercer County 4-H presented Get Moving – Get Healthy at several conferences for youth educators, teachers, nurses, after-school staff, 4-H volunteers, and teenagers – including RCE sponsored Children Health Summits. It has been delivered extensively as a school enrichment program throughout the county.

Trenton Food and Fitness Ambassadors

Using the Get Moving – Get Healthy (GMGH) curriculum, Mercer County 4-H and members of the state GMGH team trained 20 teenagers as Food and Fitness Ambassadors. As a result, the teenagers (from New Jersey Youth Corps of Trenton, Boys and Girls Club, and a local faith-based organization) planned and implemented six GMGH events for over 300 children collaborating after-school programs sponsored by the Trenton Community Charter School, City of Trenton, Boys and Girls Club, and Lawrence Neighborhood Service Center. The ambassadors promoted healthy eating and physical activity habits with the GMGH activities - Finding Your Pyramid, Healthy Plate, Measure Up, Portion Distortion, Read the Label, Serving Mix and Match, Think What You Drink, What Counts, and Exercise Challenge (see picture below).

Youth Farmstand Program

Fifteen teenagers from New Jersey Youth Corps of Trenton, Mercer County Juvenile Drug Court, and Trenton Central High School completed the Mercer County 4-H Youth Farmstand Program in 2007. The Youth Farmstand is a 6-week summer job readiness program provided in collaboration with the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center and the Rutgers Office
of Continuing and Professional Education. Youth completed a week of initial training, operated three Jersey Fresh farmstands in Trenton, and participated in weekly enrichment activities. Field trips included the Rutgers EcoComplex, Terhune Orchards, Howell Living History Farm, Mercer Educational Gardens, and the Mercer County Equestrian Center. Participants also completed cover letters, resumes, lists of references, and mock interviews prior to interviewing at a large regional grocer (see right picture on front page).

**Junior Master Gardener® Program**

The Junior Master Gardener® (JMG) program teaches children and youth science literacy, horticulture, environmental awareness, and life skill development through hands-on activities on plant growth and development, soil and water, composting and the environment, and insects. In 2007, 65 children from four after-school sites in Lawrence Township and Trenton completed 12-15 week programs and earned JMG Golden Ray certification. In addition, Mercer County 4-H provided two statewide JMG kick-off trainings and two additional JMG trainings for teachers and Extension volunteers through The College of New Jersey’s Teacher Quality Enhancement Program. Two 12-week JMG programs are planned for 2008 at Boys and Girls Club sites. In addition, 4-H is collaborating with the Lawrence Township Recreation Department to offer two weeks of JMG summer camp at the newly established Lawrence Nature Center at Drexel Woods.

**4-H School Enrichment Program**

In 2007, Mercer County 4-H cooperated with 105 teachers to reach 6,855 youth through 339 school enrichment programs at 22 sites (schools, libraries, after-school programs, community centers, and hospitals). Twenty-four topics were presented – most focused on science literacy, environmental education, health and safety, character education, and life-skill development.

**4-H Community Club Program**

In 2007, members of the Clever Clovers, Exploring Nature, Four-Leaf Clover, Mercer Mustangs, Outdoor Adventure, Seeing Eye Puppy, Shelterwood, and Teen Council 4-H clubs participated in Winter 4-H Camp, South Jersey Teen Conference, Junior Breeder Livestock Symposium, Public Presentations, Mercer County 4-H Fair, Summer 4-H Camp, several invitational 4-H events throughout the state, State 4-H Animal Shows, and the annual Mercer County 4-H Achievement Night. Members elect officers and conduct monthly meetings that include presentations, educational and social programming, and community service projects.

**Mercer County 4-H Fair**

In 2007, the Mercer County 4-H Fair was held at the Mercer County Park as part of the Mercer County Freedom Fest. During the fair, 4-H clubs showcased their efforts from the previous year. The Clever Clovers and Shelterwood 4-H Clubs conducted their annual 4-H animal shows. Other clubs set-up displays and exhibited their projects. In 2008, the fair will be held at the Howell Living History Farm, August 2-3 (pictured left on last page).

For more information on 4-H programs, visit www.nj4H.rutgers.edu.
**Family and Community Health Sciences**

Sharese Porter, FCHS Program Coordinator  
Susan Fountain, FCHS Program Associate  
Frank Saez, Maria Zamora, EFNEP Community Assisants  
Andrea Aaronson, Franchesca Ayala-Gutierrez, Tara Reynolds, FSNEP Community Assistants

### Contacts:
- FSNEP Families Served: 301  
- FSNEP Youth Served: 792  
- EFNEP Families Served: 554  
- EFNEP Youth Served: 308  
- *Visions* Newsletter Distribution: 215  
- Cooperating Agencies: 77

### FCHS in Mercer County

The programs and services that are delivered by the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) focus on food, nutrition, health, and wellness. Sharese Porter, Senior Program Coordinator, is increasing the public’s awareness of healthier lifestyles within various settings, populations, and by way of a number of educational methods (pictured middle of following page). In 2007, more than 373 individuals have participated in FCHS activities. Our *Visions* newsletter was distributed to more than 215 individuals. We are available to answer questions, and you may schedule a program or register interested parties for one of our in-house classes by calling 609-989-6835.

### Educational and Mentorship Opportunities

The work of the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences is strengthened through volunteerism. Programming can be expanded by getting communities and educators actively involved in service delivery. In 2007, we hosted an undergraduate dietetic student intern from St. Elizabeth’s College. We look forward to adding to our student intern base.

### Helping to Shape Communities

In addition, the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences is actively engaged in developing communities and lending its expertise in the areas of policy development and implementation and community empowerment through its participation in several county and community based coalitions and committees (picture bottom of page 7). Examples include:

- Building Healthy Kids Coalition of Mercer County (spearheaded by FCHS)
- Mercer County Community Health Improvement Workgroup
- Trenton Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition
- Mercer County Breast Cancer Task Force

### Get Moving - Get Healthy NJ

The 2007 Children’s Health Summit: Fighting Back Against Childhood Obesity hosted by Mercer County FCHS served as the launch of the Get Moving - Get Healthy NJ initiative. A proclamation by the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services highlighted this event. Various components of this initiative have either been launched or are in development including an interactive website www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu and a virtual walking tour program.
Children’s Health Summit

On May 24, 2007 at the NJ Hospital Association in Princeton, a daylong conference for professionals was organized by the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (pictured below and right on back page). Over 100 individuals attended this event to learn about the growing health issue of childhood obesity and ways we can mobilize to help combat this issue. Corporate sponsorships helped to support this conference. Continuing education credits were available for five disciplines including nursing, teachers, health educators, social workers, and consumer science educators. At least 95% of respondents strongly agreed that this conference provided useful information.

Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

EFNEP serves limited resource families and children. Two EFNEP Community Assistants, Frank Saez and Maria Zamora (pictured top), deliver hands-on classes focused on affecting positive behavior change. In 2007, they cooperated with 28 agencies to reach 554 families and 308 youth.

Agencies Served by EFNEP

Brighter Day
Catholic Charities
Children’s Futures
Children’s Home Society
Crisis Ministry
Lawrence Neighborhood Center
Mercer County Community College
Mercer County Project SMILE
Mercer County Technical Schools
New Jersey Youth Corps of Trenton
Trenton Public Schools – Grant Elementary
Trenton Salvation Army
Upward Bound

Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP)

FSNEP also provides nutrition education to limited resource individuals who are food stamp participants. FSNEP also reaches children in schools that have 50% or more of their students receiving free or reduced school lunches. Andrea Aaronson, Franchesca Ayala-Guiterrez, and Tara Reynolds, FSNEP Community Assistants, deliver the programs.
Agencies Served by FSNEP

Home Front (six programs)
Trenton Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services, Welfare and Seniors.
Trenton Public Schools: Grant, Gregory, Jefferson, Monument, Mott, Parker, Parker Annex, PJ Hill, and Rivera Elementary Schools; Trenton Central High School; and five 5 pre-K programs

Focus on Collaboration

In October, with collaboration from the Mercer County Board of Social Services, FSNEP launched the Calcium Campaign in Mercer County reaching 85 participants through 5 workshops. The purpose was to promote the importance of calcium consumption and calcium-rich foods. Our targeted audiences were African American and Hispanic parents and caregivers of infants and children. In addition, February is Heart Health month and every year we collaborate with the Women’s Heart Foundation; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Trenton Alumnae Chapter; the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services; and students at Trenton Central High School to educate women about heart disease and other chronic diseases in our communities. Susan Fountain presented a Heart Healthy food demonstration reaching 300 participants.

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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Back (l. to r.): Chad Ripberger, Altaira Bejgrowicz, and Susan Fountain.