2017 Board of Agriculture Officers

On September 20, 2016, the Monmouth County Board of Agriculture held a special meeting to elect the officers for the upcoming year. Elected to serve were:

- **President**—Bill McCormack (2nd left)
- **Vice President**—Randy Peck (2nd right)
- **Treasurer**—Gary DeFelice (right)
- **Secretary**—Robin Bruins (left) agreed to serve again with an offer from Meg Whitehouse to help with correspondence.

Farm Bureau Delegates—Robin Bruins, Pat Butch, Bill McCormack, Randy Peck and Anna Trapani

Alternates—George Asprocolas, Gary DeFelice, Dave Holmes, Wicki Hom, Angelo Trapani & Jim Wikoff.

Agent’s Overview

O.K. Halloween is out of the way. Hope it went well with your ag operations, agritourism and personal time. Now finish up those last fields and get ready for a new slew of holidays. One very good treat this season for Monmouth County Extension was the greenhouse approval for construction of aeroponic—hydroponic technology. Phase One of this new, progressive project for the NJAES research greenhouse on the G. H. Cook Campus was implemented October 12 with the delivery, placement, and initial assembly of six aeroponic units for producing high-value specialty crops. Phase Two will be the installation of hydroponic and geoponic systems. Phase Three involves the creation of undergraduate courses and continuing education workshops using these innovative systems as hands-on learning tools and for research in indoor cultivation. Principal investigators are Drs. A.J. Both (extension specialist in controlled environment engineering, Department of Environmental Science), Albert Ayeni (ethnic crop specialist, Department of Plant Biology and Pathology), and agricultural agent Bill Sciarappa (Monmouth County), with support from director of greenhouse operations and planning Joe Florentine.

This research and education team is looking to stay abreast of changing technologies; foster new ag opportunities and solve problems in lighting, fertigation, and crop cultivars. The system supplier, Aero Development Corp., has subsidized their system costs for academic endeavors and sent their Amish construction team from Lancaster, PA to help Rutgers expedite project goals.

Bill Sciarappa
The Asbury Park Culinary School hosted the first-ever Grown in Monmouth culinary competition on Monday, October 17. Each of the three teams consisted of a professional chef, a Brookdale Community College culinary student and a Monmouth County Vocational School District culinary student. A basket of Monmouth County ingredients was presented to each team. Their task was to create an appetizer, entree and dessert course for consideration and tasting by a panel of three local celebrity judges.

Freeholder Director Thomas A. Arnone and Freeholder Lillian G. Burry, along with the Grown in Monmouth Team, conducted a project update meeting at the County’s Agricultural Center. Highlights of the meeting included the announcement of the available Grown in Monmouth marketing logo and the newly designed Grown in Monmouth website www.GrowninMonmouth.com A unique feature of the website is the searchable online directory (SOD) that will allow residents, visitors, restaurants, and commercial consumers to search for agricultural products and activities available right here in Monmouth County. All Monmouth County growers are encouraged to go to the website and register their information on the SOD. This is a great way to market your products to new and existing customers so please visit www.GrowninMonmouth.com and register today!

First-Ever Grown in Monmouth Culinary Competition Highlights Local Food Products

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Freeholder Director Thomas A. Arnone and Freeholder Lillian G. Burry kicked-off the Grown in Monmouth program earlier this year. “Grown in Monmouth is the newest initiative under our Grow Monmouth program,” said Arnone. “This project continues to focus on strengthening all facets of Monmouth County’s agricultural industry and promoting locally grown products. This event marks the harvest season and restates the County’s commitment to assist local and small businesses.”

“This exciting competition has brought added recognition to growers throughout Monmouth County, an important component of the Grown in Monmouth program, said Burry, liaison to the Monmouth County Vocational School District. “We will continue our efforts to promote the local agricultural community and look forward to continued events such as this, as we work to help local farms and the entire agricultural community to prosper and thrive.”

Freeholder DiMaso, liaison to the Monmouth County Superintendent of Schools, shared, “This was a fun and exciting event that recognized the importance of the agricultural industry in Monmouth County. (See photo p. 7).

Guests were served appetizers, soup, salad, entree and desserts while observing the teams at work. The food and service was top notch. In spite of not liking hazelnuts in the past, my personal favorite turned out to be the roasted hazelnuts grown at the Rutgers Rutgers Fruit and Ornamental Research Extension Center in Cream Ridge.

For more information on Grown in Monmouth, visit www.growninmonmouth.com or call 732-431-7470
You may be surprised to learn that two New Jerseyans started our state’s wine industry almost two decades before the American Revolution. At the time, Great Britain was thirsting for good wine in the colonies, and London’s Royal Society of Arts offered a reward to any colonist who could produce wine of the same caliber as vintages from France.

Two New Jersey men, William Alexander and Edward Antill, took the challenge and were recognized by the Royal Society. Since then, New Jersey’s winemaking history has been filled with stops and starts, and ups and downs.

The vineyards planted by Alexander and Antill — located in Basking Ridge and Piscataway, respectively — shut down after their founders’ deaths. Other vineyards were established, but many vines transplanted from Europe succumbed to insect pests in the late 1800s. A few decades later, prohibition crippled the state’s remaining wineries. Even after Prohibition was repealed, strict laws kept the wine industry from growing.

Today, winemaking is enjoying a renaissance in New Jersey, thanks to sturdier hybrid grapes and changes in regulations. The Garden State now has over 50 wineries with more than 80 grape varieties on over 2,000 acres. Not surprising for a state famous for blueberries, peaches and apples, fruit wines are also popular.

“It’s an exciting time for New Jersey’s wine industry,” said Tom Cosentino, president of the Garden State Wine Growers Association. “It takes 30 to 40 years for an industry to take off, and we’re at our infancy stage right now.”

The boom in New Jersey’s wine industry can be traced to the Farm Winery Act of 1981, which abolished an old law allowing only one winery license per million New Jersey residents. Prior to the law, the state had only seven licensed wineries. Cosentino said the most growth occurred in the past 16 years, with the opening of over 35 new wineries. “New Jersey’s wineries now go from the tip of Sussex County all the way down to the tip of Cape May,” he noted. The state includes three designated “American Viticultural Areas” — Warren Hills, Central Del-
Comedian Jon Stewart and his wife Tracey have officially purchased the historic Hockhockson Farm in Colts Neck, New Jersey to expand their work rehabilitating animals with the mission-based Farm Sanctuary organization.

The former "Daily Show" host bought the 45-acre farm for $4 million through JTS Land Trust, property records show, with plans to repurpose its three houses and 12 outbuildings for a variety of farm activities, according to an April report from the Two River Times.

Stewart and his wife have long been dedicated to the cause of animal welfare, including Tracy's authorship of a popular etiquette guide — "Do Unto Animals" — and the establishment of the 12-acre Bufflehead Farm.

This time around, the couple reportedly plans to renovate a visitor's center and create a curriculum that will provide training on animal care and sustainable agriculture. To obtain zoning permit, however, they still need to obtain approval from the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board.

Earlier this year, the family made headlines with their heartwarming purchase of Lily, an Arabian mix horse who was allegedly pelted with paintballs and abandoned at a Pennsylvania auction farm. Sadly, Lily passed away in June, but not before she got some TLC.

The Stewarts provide regular updates on their farm activities through the "Daily Squeal" Facebook page, including afternoon belly rubs.

At Hockhocksen, the couple aims to use 15 acres to grow crops that will feed cows, pigs, sheep, goats, horses and chickens. Most of the abused animals are rescued from slaughter houses, kill piles, live markets and roadsides.

A property listing on Zillow indicates that Hockhockson Farm, located on Route 537, dates back to around 1777.

Jersey Fresh fruits & veggies: At home and at school

New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher announced that 156 New Jersey schools will participate in the 2016-2017 school year’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). The United States Department of Agriculture has allocated $4,335,630 for New Jersey for this school year's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, an increase of more than $163,000 over last year, to provide fresh produce to more than 78,662 students in 15 counties during the school day. The students also will receive nutrition education. The goal of the program is to provide children with healthy foods, increase their fruit and vegetable consumption, and set them on the road to improved lifelong dietary habits.

“The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program not only increases the amount of produce consumed by students during the school day but also creates excitement for the children and teachers,” Fisher said. “We have visited many schools that have this program and students look forward to their healthy snacks and frequently try new things they might not have had access to in any other circumstance. Schools participating throughout Central Jersey include those in Hamilton and Trenton (Mercer County); Carteret, New Brunswick and Perth Amboy (Middlesex County); Asbury Park, Freehold, Long Branch, and Red Bank (Monmouth County); Lakewood and Seaside Heights (Ocean County); and Elizabeth, Plainfield, and Roselle (Union County).
Many of the students living in Helyar House at Rutgers grow plants on their window sills and have “No Farmer, No Food” bumper stickers on their cars. They cook meals for each other, do all the cleaning and grocery shopping, and maintain the building in exchange for scholarships and reduced housing costs. The history of Helyar House – a cooperative living residence hall that opened nearly 50 years ago to provide low-cost housing to agriculture students who couldn’t afford to live on campus – remains an important influence over the people who live there. It’s also the inspiration behind an effort by a group of Helyar House students to grow their own food and raise chickens this year as part of a new Rutgers program called RU Ready to Farm.

“Agriculture is part of the history of Helyar House,” said R. Emmet Brennan, a junior plant science major and president of the governing council for the residence hall which is located on Rutgers University-New Brunswick’s George H. Cook Campus. Brennan had wanted Helyar House to reconnect with its agricultural roots since his first year on campus and found other students who shared his interest in growing some of their own food. But they faced a major obstacle: the academic year does not coincide with the growing season in New Jersey. The students shared their idea with Bill Hlubik, a professor and agricultural agent for Rutgers Cooperative Extension who is an adviser for Helyar House. Hlubik was developing a new program for the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station that would provide research-based classes to New Jersey residents interested in learning about farming. Eventually the two ideas came together. Hlubik found a greenhouse near the residence hall that was available, making it possible to grow food during the school year. He found local farmers who were willing to donate plants and seeds, and enlisted the help of a student who had experience in the building industry to help design a chicken coop. The students are growing kale, Swiss chard, lettuce, lavender, several kinds of mint, basil and rosemary. They plan to grow tomatoes, cucumbers and strawberries and other vegetables and will do research on how the plants thrive and produce in a greenhouse.

“There seem to be a resurgence of young people who are interested in farming and want to know where there food is coming from, but they don’t know where to get started,” Hlubik said. “The average age of a farmer in New Jersey is 58. We need younger farmers or we are in big trouble, so we are trying to take a spark of interest and help it grow.” Hlubik turned the RU Ready to Farm program into a multi-tiered course. Residents of Helyar House and other Rutgers students who want to work in the greenhouse and get involved in research projects can earn 3 credits for their work.

About half of the 40 students who live in Helyar House have signed up for the course and Hlubik said there are still spaces available for the general public. NJAES faculty are working to design two future sessions of the course that will focus on growing specialty products and other aspects of production. “This is so different than the standard college experience,” said Amy Hsieh, a junior environmental science major who lives in Helyar house. “I was just in the greenhouse picking some basil for dinner.” “You don’t how much we spend on groceries every week but it is a crazy amount,” she said. “Having fresh vegetables – instead of frozen that you don’t know where they came from – is so different. Fresh vegetables have way more flavor and watching your food grow is awesome.”

By Andrea Alexander
When officials and staff of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture go to work Thursday morning, Dec. 1, one of their longtime colleagues will not be there. That colleague, Alfred W. Murray, is set to retire Wednesday, Nov. 30, from the department he joined more than 33 years ago where he has served with distinction ever since.

As Murray previously told The Produce News, “I absolutely love this industry and I love what I do. I’ve accomplished all I can here. It’s just time for new challenges and new opportunities,” one person does not a company make. The NJDA has long been an innovative agency with knowledgeable, dedicated individuals, led currently by its outstanding secretary of agriculture, Douglas H. Fisher. But there’s no denying that Al Murray will be missed by his colleagues and friends, both in the state capital at Trenton and far beyond.

Murray, a resident of Audubon, NJ, and who served as mayor of that community from May 1989 to May 1997, joined the NJDA in October 1983 as a marketing specialist. He was named bureau chief of the department’s Bureau of Market Expansion in 1995, and director of the Division of Markets in 2000. He added the title assistant secretary of agriculture in 2007. He currently serves on the Eastern Produce Council’s board of directors. He has served as the New Jersey secretary of agriculture’s representative on the NJ Agricultural Society’s board of trustees for more than 10 years, and will serve again as a private citizen beginning this December.

EPC President Victor Savanello has known Murray for close to 20 years. “One thing you can say about Al — he is a walking, talking resource of knowledge,” said Savanello, who is director of produce and floral at Allegiance Retail Services LLC. “He has been valuable to us” all during his time at the NJDA, and in the future, “we continue to look forward to be able to tap into his extensive knowledge.” Asked what he considers Murray’s greatest strengths, Savanello replied, “His approachability. He’s easy to talk to. That’s what you want in a public servant. He’s very valuable to our industry.”

Tim Wetherbee, sales manager at Diamond Blueberry Inc. in Hammonton, NJ, has known Murray practically since he joined the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. “He’s a fountain of information,” said Wetherbee. “You can go to him whenever you need to get something done. He’s a take-charge kind of guy.” “He’s been a terrific asset for us — both the industry and the blueberry council.”

Murray, 55, and his wife, Meg, have been married for 26 years. They have two daughters: Anne, 24, lives in Japan and works for a translation company; Grace, 22, just graduated from the College of New Jersey and is looking to go into the teaching field in math or science.

Since joining the department, Murray has served three secretaries of agriculture: Arthur R. Brown Jr., the late Charles Kuperus, and Fisher.

Art Brown wanted to stress marketing at the department, which led him to hire Murray. “I always wanted to be able to do something marketing-wise for the farmers of New Jersey,” he recalled. “So we were looking for a strong marketing program. The result of those early efforts, of course, was the Jersey Fresh program, which met with immediate success within the Garden State & adopted in various iterations nationwide.

“Al’s personality is right there at the top,” Brown stated. “He is one of the most knowledgeable you won’t meet a more likeable guy. I’ve never heard anyone say a bad word about Al Murray.”

Brown added, “We’ve always had a very successful Department of Agriculture in New Jersey. Al’s been a good trainer [of new staff], and he’s provided leadership. I can look at him now and 33 years ago. He knows the business. He’s well liked in the business, not just in New Jersey but nationally. He’s represented the New Jersey Department of Agriculture well. There’s going to be a void up there [in Trenton], that’s for sure.”
**CALENDAR**

**Nov. 2016**  
14-15 Farm Bureau Conference — Westin Hotel Princeton  
17-FFA Career Event, Rutgers Cook Campus.

**Dec. 2016**  

**Jan. 2017**  
3,4,5—Northeastern Plant, Pest & Soil Conf. Philadelphia

**Feb. 2017**  
7, 8, 9 New Jersey Agricultural Convention & Trade Show. Harrah’s, Atlantic City. http://njveggies.org/convention.htm  
9-Food Safety Modernization Act – Produce Rule Training.  
2017 NJ Ag Convention 9 am-4pm. register—856-451-2800x1  
24-Central Jersey Vegetable Grower’s Meeting. Ag Building, 4000 Kozloski Rd., Freehold, NJ. Joanne 732-431-7260.

**MONMOUTH COUNTY BOA**  
https://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=3065  
11/15, 12/20, 1/17, 2/21, 3/21, 4/18, 5/16

**BASIC PESTICIDE TRAINING**  
CORE 9 am-1pm - 11/15, 12/6

- Held at Rutgers Cooperative Extension - Ag Bldg.  
4000 Kozloski Rd. Freehold, NJ 732-431-7260

**Changing Times**

Changing Times is produced and edited by Bill Sciarappa and Vivian Quinn  
sciarappa@njaes.rutgers.edu


**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MONMOUTH COUNTY**

New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station  
PO Box 5033, 4000 Kozloski Rd., Freehold, NJ 07728

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Bill Sciarappa, County Agricultural Agent  
Extension Department Head

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**Jersey Fresh**

Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/

Newsletter printed courtesy of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders