

Union County Cooperative Extension



2008 Annual Report

Family & Community Health Sciences Department

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed)

- The NJ SNAP-Ed of Union County Program reached over 3,324 youth through 1,734 special hands-on nutrition workshops. Sixty adults and 143 families were reached. The SNAP-Ed Program collaborates with 39 agencies, including schools, daycare centers, the Abbott preschool programs, and other community organizations. In 2008, 119 volunteers have provided program assistance with youth.
- The SNAP-Ed federal grant provides \$424,698 with an additional \$771,740 of match to support nine staff working at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County office. The SNAP-Ed Program collaborates with various agencies, including schools, daycare centers, PROCEED, Community Access, Community Coordinated Child Care (4C's), Division on Aging, and 30 other agencies and organizations.

Senior Meals Program

In a continued collaboration with the Union County Division on Aging to provide a program coordinator for the Senior Meals program; a \$91,000 grant provides funding and allows for continued leadership of the congregate senior meal program at 25 senior cafes throughout Union County.

- Over \$ 60,000 in Farmer's Market coupons were distributed to seniors in Union County through the senior meal program for fresh fruits and vegetables. SNAP-Ed staff assisted the Senior Meal Program Coordinator in delivering the coupons which is sponsored through the federally funded Women, Infant & Child (WIC) program.

Small Steps to Health & Wealth

Karen Ensle, EdD, RD, FADA, CFCS Family & Community Health Sciences Educator and Department Head and Dr. Barbara O'Neill, Financial Specialist co-authors of the book "Small Steps to Health & Wealth" have developed a Challenge pilot walking program and continue to expand the website and work with USDA/CSREES on the topic of "health-finance".

Supersize America: Beating the Obesity Epidemic

This program was developed for training professionals and educating the public on the importance of making healthy food choices, cutting portion sizes and increasing activity levels. In 2008 this program was presented 12 times to over 560 adults at the Garwood library, 22 PTA and Food Services in Elizabeth schools along with United Cerebral Palsy, Cranford; Linden Seniors; TRANE corporate employees; Cranford College Group; Child Abuse of NJ state-wide meeting for staff training and a Children's Health Summit. Program impacts indicate improved intake of fruit, vegetables and reduction in high fat foods. Results have been presented at the American Dietetic Association and Society for Nutrition Education. Since 2004, this program has reached over 5,500 adults.

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Activate Rahway and Get Moving, Get Healthy NJ

The Rahway YMCA and the Family & Community Health Sciences Department of Rutgers Cooperative Extension supported four local programs developed to address child/adult obesity. The Rahway YMCA in collaboration with local schools, their PTAs and RCE provided two "Family Fun Nights". A variety of fitness activities and a healthy dinner were provided to two school groups. In addition, two city-wide events were held that provided local health screenings, health information and family fun activities sponsored by the Activate Rahway committee. Six hundred adults and over 200 youth attended the four events. Survey results show participants plan to eat healthier and engage in more physical activity in 2009.



Bilingual Education

A bilingual immersion process of simultaneously teaching nutrition in English & Spanish has been developed to educate school professionals, food service workers, and parents using double power point presentations in both languages. Nutrition programs and trainings are conducted in both languages by SNAP-Ed and FCHS educator for trainings in the Elizabeth Schools, PROCEED, for Abbott District School Nurses and parent trainings.

4-H Youth Development

4-H Traveling Science Program – Helping Students From Low-income Areas Thrive in School and Avoid Dropping Out

Participating in the 2008 4-H Traveling Science Program were The King's Daughters Day Camp and Neighborhood House (both in Plainfield), the Plainfield YMCA, YWCA of Central New Jersey, The Black United Fund of Plainfield, The United Church of Christ Congregational Day Camp in Plainfield, JFK Community Center of Rahway, The Agape Worship Center, Rahway Housing Authority, Rahway Recreation Department, the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless, and the Westfield Community Center. Altogether, six hundred youth participated in the 2008 Summer Science Program. Each week, for seven weeks, 4-H science teachers visited the above mentioned centers. During those visits the children learned the fundamentals of science through experiments such as building model boats and subjecting them to various loads, creating a new soft drink while experimenting with dilutions,

and working with various foods to develop new and healthy snacks. Visits from Schering-Plough employees allowed the children to meet real scientists. Schering Plough is a co-sponsor of this program. The end-of-program evaluation showed the children were much more interested in science as a study and possible career. Other findings included:

- 90% said they can solve a problem better now.
- 86% said they can observe things better.
- 87% said they can do an experiment.
- 78% said they like science more than before.
- 78% said they would like to learn more about science.
- 73% said they would tell someone what they learned.
- 42% said they would like to become a scientist someday.

Elizabethport 4-H Program – Bringing Activities to Low-income Youth

This 4-H program provided afterschool activities to approximately 40 youth in 2008. Working out of the Elizabethport Safe Haven Building on 1st Street, the program taught children about science and nutrition. This was accomplished through gardening and cooking activities. Previous participants in the program are now serving in the Armed Forces, have completed and/or are attending Rutgers University and Notre Dame, and are gainfully employed.

4-H Clubs – Developing Life Skills in Youth

One hundred forty Union County youth from grades 1 through 12 participated in 4-H clubs in 2008. Each club focused on a specific interest area: small animal care, dogs, horticulture, gardening, and horses to name a few. New clubs in 2008 included a First Grade Pet Club, a Dog Obedience Club, a Living History Club, Beginner Archery Club, Teen Service Club, a Variety Club for 1st through 3rd graders, and a Photography Club. Club members developed leadership and communication skills through participation in the varied club activities, community service, and serving as club officers. Some of the service activities for the year were tree planting, serving at a food bank, and volunteering at pet fairs. Adult Volunteer Leaders are screened and trained by the 4-H office to facilitate the clubs. Volunteers are taught how to use a hobby to teach children team-building, communication, and decision-making skills. There are currently 22 active 4-H Club leaders in Union County.

4-H Public Presentation Night 2008 – Improving Communication Skills in Youth

Presentation Night 2008 was held at the Union County Magnet High School in Scotch Plains. Forty children participated in the event. Each child gave a presentation of at least three minutes in length about their favorite hobby or interest. Using 4-H standards, each child was evaluated by a group of volunteer judges.

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Project Recognition Day- Encouraging Youth to Develop Mastery Skills

4-H recognizes the accomplishments of its club members every year through Project Recognition Day, held at the Union County Magnet School in Scotch Plains. Awards and ribbons are presented for accomplishments in areas such as pet care, displays, crafts, photography, and plant care. Each club member also receives a year-pin representing the number of years they have been involved in the program. Awards are also given to deserving members who achieved perfect attendance at their club meetings.

Union County 4-H Camp Programs – Helping Youth Develop Life Skills and Outdoor Education

4-H Camp Programs are located at the L.G. Cook 4-H Camp for Outdoor Education in Sussex County, New Jersey. In 2008, 45 Union County residents in 4th through 8th grade attended summer camp. This sleep away camp was held from July 16th through 21st, and provided many new experiences for urban youth. Activities include water sports, outdoor cooking, crafts, nature study, archery, air riflery, and evening programs.

4-H Winter Camp Weekend took place in January. Ten Union County teens attended, along with peers from Passaic and Essex counties. Fun activities like sleigh riding, archery, nature hiking, and preparing meals enhance the development of valuable life skills. Newly formed friendships and wonderful memories are a bonus.

Summer Archery Instruction for Grieving Youth

The 4-H Office and 4-H Archery Club provided 5 days of target archery instruction and activities to 15 children attending the Camp Daystar Program. (Camp Daystar, located in Scotch Plains, is run by the Center for Hope Hospice.)

Character Education- Developing Positive Habits and Values in Youth

4-H presented six hours of training for 45 fifth graders at Central Five Elementary School in Union. The topics taught were: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. An end-of-program evaluation showed that:

- 91% will do something new or different
- 74% will change the way they think, act or behave
- 97% will use or share what they learned
- 85% are more interested in the topic
- 97% said the information was useful

Environmental Awareness and Protection – Educating Youth About the Community Forest of Union County

Educating children about trees is the job of the 4-H Master Tree Stewards. Thanks to these 20 volunteers, over 3,300 children learned about one of Union County's most precious natural resources: its trees. The Stewards visited classrooms in 19 municipalities and taught the children about tree identification, biology, and ecology. Educating our youth about trees is crucial to the future of our environment. An end-of-program evaluation showed that: "...as a result of the Rutgers/4-H Class on Tree Appreciation":

- 71% of total students said they were less likely to damage a tree.
- 90% of total students said they were more likely to take better care of trees around their homes.

Cooperative Extension of Union County

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday,
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Dr. Robert M. Goodman, *Executive Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources & Executive Director of NJ Agricultural Experiment Station*

Dr. Bradley Hillman, *Senior Associate Director of NJ Agricultural Experiment Station*

Dr. Larry S. Katz, *Director, Rutgers Cooperative Extension*

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- 86% of total students said they were more likely to take better care of the trees that are around their schools
- 70% of total students said they will observe trees more closely.
- 69% of total students said they are more likely to plant a tree.
- 98% of total students said they learned that there are many different kinds of trees.
- 84% of total students said they were more likely to stop others from damaging trees.
- 78% of total students said they want to learn more about tree care and planting.
- 83% of total students said they will tell someone about what they learned.

Also, working in conjunction with the Union County Shade Tree Advisory Board, the 4-H Youth Development Program worked to make Union County the garden spot of the Garden State. Through the Union County Freeholders Arbor Day Tree Program, we are making a large step in that direction. This program provides training and trees for school children to plant a tree on their school grounds. 4-H played a major role by helping to create and implement this program. In 2008, 40 fourth through tenth graders and 20 adults participated in this program. Together, this group planted 75 trees at schools throughout Union County. These schools involved an additional 1,000 students in the planting and care of these trees.

Children's Gardens – Improved Nutrition and Work Skills

In collaboration with various groups, 4-H established a children's garden at the Kings Daughters Day School in Plainfield and a vegetable garden at the Rahway YMCA. Children who participated in the programs reported eating vegetables they had never tasted before and a greater appreciation for the steps involved in growing food.

RCE, in cooperation with the Union County Public Works Department, offered a safety training program for 60 county and municipal employees. The program, held at Trailside, featured speakers on aerial lift safety, work zone safety and preventing exposure to tick-borne diseases and poison ivy. A crew from PSE&G gave a demonstration on electrical safety.

Agriculture

United States Department of Agriculture National Water Quality Program Grant Brings Rain Garden Education to NJ Landscape Professionals

Union County Agricultural Agent, Madeline Flahive DiNardo, in cooperation with the Rutgers Water Resources Program, received a three-year \$200,000 federal grant from the USDA National Water Quality Program to coordinate rain garden education programs in Union and Gloucester Counties, NJ, Ulster County, NY and Fredrick County, VA.

Rain Gardens are designed to capture stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces, filter-out non-point source pollution, and recharge groundwater resources. Rain Gardens are an accepted best management practice to comply with NJ Municipal Stormwater Management regulations.

One of the objectives of the grant is to train professional landscapers on rain garden installation and maintenance so they can expand their service offerings and help communities meet with municipal stormwater management regulations.

In 2008, ninety professional landscapers participated in the educational program which included five hours of classroom instruction and a half day "hands-on" rain garden installation. The landscape professionals installed community demonstration rain gardens at the Gloucester County Fairgrounds in Mullica Hill and the Union County Vocational Technical School in Scotch Plains. Union County Vo-Tech horticulture students also participated in the training program. A USDA Partners Video Magazine feature of the rain garden installation is available at: http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/partners/fluid_planet.html .

To help the landscapers promote rain garden installation services, they received a certificate of completion. A brochure listing the participants is available for residents who inquire about rain gardens and on the Rutgers Water Resources Program website, www.water.rutgers.edu.

The Master Gardeners of Union County Celebrate 20 Years of Service to County Residents

The Master Gardeners reached a milestone in 2008, the 20th anniversary of the program. Since the first Master Gardener class began training in the fall of 1987, 669 county residents have participated in the program. These volunteers have provided over 114,826 hours of service to the county. The anniversary was celebrated in June with a congratulatory letter from Governor Jon Corzine and resolutions from the NJ State Legislators and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The 20th year was a productive one for the Master Gardeners. The Master Gardeners have a new website, <http://mastergardeners-uc.org>, to promote the program. In 2008, volunteers contributed 8,362 hours of service valued at \$197,510.44 by the Independent Sector (www.independentsector.org).

Master Gardeners Serving the Community

In 2003, the Master Gardeners established a "Sharing Garden" project, in which Master Gardeners grow vegetables for local food pantries. 2008 was a record setting year for the garden. Over a ton of fresh produce was donated to families in need of assistance. The retail value of the 2,180 pounds of vegetables donated is \$4,473.00.

The Master Gardeners grew and arranged into bouquets over 5,000 flowers in their demonstration garden at Trailside in the Watchung Reservation. The bouquets are given to cancer

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patients and survivors cared for by The Wellness Community of Central Jersey, Overlook Hospital Oncology Social Services and the North Jersey Branch of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. These organizations provide support, education and hope to people with cancer and their loved ones.

The "Introduction to Horticultural Therapy" program, in which Master Gardeners teach horticultural skills to people with special needs, was offered at: the Plainfield West Senior Center, Donald Sawyer Pre-School #13 in Elizabeth, the Catholic Community Services Visually Impaired Program in Cranford, Summit Senior Center and ARC of Union County in Roselle.

"Green" Solutions to Gardening Problems

Master Gardener "Helpliners" answered 1,202 phone calls on the county's Garden Helpline, (908) 654-9852. The Garden Helpline provides environmentally-friendly advice for residents on lawn and landscape maintenance and home insect pest control. The Master Gardeners also identify ticks for residents concerned about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. The Helpline assisted 781 visitors and examined 491 plant and insect samples.

To promote the Union County Garden Helpline, Master Gardeners MC Schwartz and James Keane and County Agricultural Agent, Madeline Flahive DiNardo write a monthly feature column "Case Files from the Garden Helpline" in the "Gardener News", a horticulture magazine distributed throughout the state.

Arborists Participate in Tree Safety Program

RCE, in cooperation with the Union County Public Works Department, offered a safety training program for 60 county and municipal employees. The program, held at Trailside, featured speakers on aerial lift safety, work zone safety and preventing exposure to tick-borne diseases and poison ivy. A crew from PSE&G gave a demonstration on electrical safety.

Twenty-eight participants completed a program evaluation and indicated that as a result of the training:

- 93% can take actions to prevent tick bites and are more confident about inspecting aerial lifts.
- 100% can recognize electrical hazards in the landscape, identify poison ivy and are more knowledgeable in general safety practices.
- Safety practices that were new to the audience included: taking more time to set up and secure work safety zones, aerial lift safety check lists and how to remove ticks.

Photo Captions

Page 5, photo 1: PSE&G representatives point out electrical hazards to arborists at a tree safety program.

Page 5, photo 2: Greg Rusciano, Rutgers Water Resources Program explains how to determine the depth of a rain garden.

Page 5, photo 3: The 2008 North Jersey Rain Garden Installation class.

Photo Credits

Page 1, photo 2: Jack Rabin, Rutgers, The State University of NJ.

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