New Communities Project

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension *Cultivating Youth and Communities for Positive Futures* New Communities Project builds the capacity of children and youth to become healthy and contributing citizens of their local communities. Extension professionals in youth development, family and consumer sciences, and agriculture, work together to develop and deliver hands-on educational programs in partnership with local schools and community organizations. Youth participants learn and practice skills which improve workforce readiness, promote healthy lifestyles and demonstrate civic responsibility.

Two major projects, *Seeds to Success* in Gloucester County, and *Roots of Knowledge* in Atlantic County, provide programs for youth in horticulture and gardening, food and nutrition, and entrepreneurship. A special mini-project in Mercer County, *Outdoor Adventure Education*, provides youth opportunities to develop goal-setting, teamwork and communication skills.
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Seeds to Success is an in-school gardening and nutrition education program combined with summer farmstand and gleaning programs. This project teaches Bankbridge School students from Paulsboro and Woodbury to cultivate agricultural products for use in meal preparation. The summer youth farmstand and gleaning segments of the program provide participants hands-on opportunities to learn and practice workforce readiness skills and civic responsibility.

Roots of Knowledge teaches youth from the urban communities of Atlantic City and Pleasantville basic life skills and workforce readiness skills. This is accomplished by blending plant science, human nutrition, and character education into hands-on educational experiences for children in afterschool programs. Youth enrolled in programs such as Youth Corps and the Regional Day Program learn and practice workforce readiness skills through a youth farmstand program and related activities.

Outdoor Adventure Education is conducted in collaboration with the Trenton Weed and Seed Safe Haven Program. This special initiative provides an opportunity for youth from this inner city area to increase self-esteem and confidence, as well as to develop an appreciation for the environment and natural resources. This is accomplished through a series of challenge initiatives and outdoor adventure activities offered to teens enrolled at the Safe Haven Program site.

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For more information, visit [www.cyfar.rutgers.edu](http://www.cyfar.rutgers.edu)