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Melissa Velez-Morales

From:	Masser, Michelle
Sent:	Friday, April 15, 2016 2:47 PM
To:	Harris, Laura
Cc:	Gouveia, Susan; Melissa Velez-Morales
Subject:	FW: NJDEP Press Release - DEP Partners with Groundwork Elizabeth for Community Based Sustainable Agricultural Initiatives
Attachments:	Groundwork Elizabeth -- P23.pdf

CORRESPONDENCE

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From: Rogers, Joseph [mailto:Joseph.Rogers@dep.nj.gov] **On Behalf Of** Randazzo, Cindy
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2016 2:09 PM
To: Randazzo, Cindy <Cindy.Randazzo@dep.nj.gov>
Subject: NJDEP Press Release - DEP Partners with Groundwork Elizabeth for Community Based Sustainable Agricultural Initiatives

Dear Municipal Clerk;

Please see the attached NJDEP Press Release concerning the partnership between NJDEP and Groundwork Elizabeth for a community based sustainable agricultural initiative.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Cindy W. Randazzo
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DEP NEWS RELEASE
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Chris Christie, Governor
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor
Bob Martin, Commissioner

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2016
www.nj.gov/dep

Contact: Caryn Shinske (609) 984-1795
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DEP PARTNERS WITH GROUNDWORK ELIZABETH AND KEAN UNIVERSITY FOR COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

PROJECTS THROUGHOUT UNION COUNTY WILL PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES THAT LEAD TO HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

(16/P23) TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection is working with Groundwork Elizabeth and communities in Union County to transform brownfields and underused properties into healthier, sustainable areas through an initiative focused on environmental stewardship efforts, Commissioner Bob Martin announced today.

Deputy Commissioner David Glass was among the featured speakers today at a celebration to launch the initiative, known as Permaculture Education Agricultural Systems (P.E.A.S.), during an event at Liberty Hall Farm at Kean University in Union Township, Union County.

Sponsored in part by the DEP, the P.E.A.S. initiative promotes three key tenets of permaculture: environmental stewardship, social and cultural revitalization, reinvestment and recycling. Together, these efforts aim to improve access to healthy foods, strategies to build sustainable agricultural systems, development of green-focused career opportunities, and quality of life in socially and economically-challenged areas of the City of Elizabeth, Union Township, and other urban sections of Union County.

"Focusing our environmental efforts on improving the quality of life in urban communities is an important and continuing goal of the Christie Administration," Commissioner Martin said. "By transforming brownfields and underutilized properties into gardens and places where people can get outdoors and enjoy physical activity, these types of urban agriculture partnerships ultimately benefit the greater community."

DEP's Office of Environmental Justice is coordinating the P.E.A.S. program's oversight with Groundwork Elizabeth. Overall, the DEP has provided $250,000 toward the $403,125 initiative to improve community sustainability within the City of Elizabeth and neighboring Union Township in Union County.

"Groundwork Elizabeth's mission and goal is to build a healthy, sustainable community, and our work with the "More P.E.A.S." initiative directly speaks to this issue of sustainability," said Jonathan G. Phillips, Executive Director of Groundwork Elizabeth. "Permaculture addresses the

restoration of our physical environment by promoting care for the earth, care for people, and prudent use of recycling; we are thrilled to have the DEP as a key partner as we move forward."

The Elizabeth-based nonprofit organization is part of a National Network of Groundwork Trusts called Groundwork USA, sharing the common challenges of brownfield properties, vacant land and environmental justice.

The permaculture initiative is comprised of six separate projects:

- Two agricultural demonstration and learning laboratories to serve school-age students. One would be located at the Portuguese Hydroponic Greenhouse in the City of Elizabeth, the other at Kean University's Liberty Hall Farm in Union Township.
- Two fully irrigated community plot gardens, in the City of Elizabeth.
- A long-term permaculture plan that will include the 10-acre Liberty Hall Farm, as well as 20 partner gardens, where residents can learn all aspects of healthy and sustainable food production.
- Six mini agricultural demonstration and learning laboratories featuring storage, shelter and gathering opportunities at partner gardens in the City of Elizabeth. Each lab will be made from either recycled shipping containers from the Port of Elizabeth or from traditional timber structures. This component would be done in collaboration with Kean University's new Michael Graves School of Architecture.
- A website that will host an online video learning library demonstrating Best Management Practices focusing on urban agriculture goals.
- A Farm and Garden Coordinator position to manage the overall permaculture plan.

In addition to Deputy Commissioner Glass, other speakers at today's event included City of Elizabeth Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, District 20 Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, Kean University President Dawood Farahi, Groundwork Elizabeth Board President Gregory J. Waga, Groundwork Elizabeth staff members Jonathan Phillips and Jackie Park Albaum, and members of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Project partners include the City of Elizabeth, Portuguese Instructive Social Group, Gateway Family YMCA of Elizabeth and Union, First Baptist Church and Josephine's Place, Sonic Elizabeth, Union Township Fire Department, Jewish Family Services, Elizabeth Housing Authority, United Way of Greater Union County, Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Rutgers Master Gardeners of Union County, Union County College, Liberty Hall Museum, Garden State Urban Farms, Happy Harvest Hydroponics and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

To learn more about the DEP's Office of Environmental Justice, please visit: www.nj.gov/dep/ej/

For more information about the P.E.A.S. initiative, please visit: www.groundworkelizabeth.com

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