

Somerset County toolkit available

SOMERSET COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership recently introduced "Amazing Things Are Happening In & Around the Regional Center Toolkit," a comprehensive marketing package that focuses on the benefits, amenities, and advantages available to Somerset County businesses and residents in and near the Somerset County Regional Center.

The Regional Center is the strategic center of Somerset County. The area consists of 12.6 square miles encompassing Raritan, Somerville, and a portion of Bridgewater. The center is the focal point of county government and the regional economy and is bisected by Route 206, Route 202, Route 22, Route 28, and I-287 with comprehensive public transit options.

The "Amazing Things" Toolkit includes video & powerpoint components that function as a marketing tool to support the business attraction and retention needs of developers, the tourism industry, realtors, human resource professionals, educators, residential and commercial real es-

tate professionals, economic development professionals, and others who desire to explain the benefits of the county and communities in the heart of Central New Jersey.

The package of materials, available to the public on DVD or thumb drive, includes two powerpoint presentations, one that explains what a Regional Center is and what the designation enables the communities to accomplish, while the other details the "Amazing Things" that are found in and around the communities of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.

In addition, the toolkit includes a series of videos that highlight the history of the region and the seven virtues of the Regional Center while outlining the significant quality of life amenities including natural features and attractions; cultural attractions, programs and events; access to services and resources; major economic initiatives and major infrastructure investments.

The Toolkit showcases the Regional Center as a highly attractive location to work, live, shop and for recreation.

Freeholder Pat Walsh,

The "Amazing Things" program will be supported by social media outreach featuring the events happening every day that make the Regional Center special.

liaison to the Regional Center, opened the program by telling the 80-plus people in attendance that the Somerset County Regional Center is the model for inter-jurisdictional cooperation in New Jersey and is one of the 24 Somerset County Priority Growth Investment Areas as defined by the County Investment Framework adopted earlier in 2014.

Troy Fischer, Chair of the Regional Center Partnership, explained that the toolkit coordinates "all the marketing pieces from municipalities, the county, and advocacy organizations into to one comprehensive marketing initiative."

Raritan Mayor JoAnne Liptak praised the Regional Center Partnership for providing the opportunity for the three communities to work to-

gether rather than independently, encouraging communication and interfacing on common issues.

She noted that over the years that the Regional Center has been operational, the borders between the 3 communities have become blurred. Among the advantages that she has seen for Raritan are the numerous grants that the borough has received that they otherwise would not have attained and the opportunity to market the community as part of a larger initiative.

Somerville Mayor Brian Gallagher praised the Regional Center Partnership for providing the opportunity for a diverse group of public and private sector representatives to regularly sit around a table, all with equal influence in the dis-

ussion. He outlined the "Three C's" of the Regional Center: Connections – the opportunity to discuss social and municipal impact of issues; Communication – everyone equally seated at the same table; Cooperation – figuring out "how to" instead of "why not;" Construction – ability to take action and get things done.

Following this introduction, an aggressive marketing effort will communicate the availability of the free resource. It will be made available on disk and thumb drive and will be structured so that component parts may be extracted by the user to allow development of a customized program for any particular use.

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A web site, www.rcponline.org features the entire Toolkit which is also available on disk or thumb drive by contacting the Regional Center Partnership by email at info@rcponline.org with name, organization, address and request for DVD or thumb drive.

Novel

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"As a journalist I learned to write anywhere, including crafting a story while dictating information over a phone, in the back on a pick-up with a computer plugged into the cigarette lighter, and nearly anywhere it was possible to stand for a few minutes," he said. "But writing, in the end, is not a social process, so I tended, even as a reporter, to work in quiet spaces, though I wrote stories in restaurants and libraries. It is about being able to focus, shut out the noise, and write. Learning to write on deadline helps."

Now, a full-time freelance writer, he works out of his home in Warren County. "I sit facing a wall covered with a calendar and printouts of assignments and photographs of my grandson," Daigle said.

"The Swamps of Jersey was published Nov. 1 by Imzadi Publishing of Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is available in e-book form and paperback at Amazon.com and the Barnes & Noble website.

Information about the book and contact information is available at the website, www.michaelstephendaigle.com.

Travel

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Students also can take advantage of their college's specific scholarships, such as these offered for Rutgers University students, as well as these national study abroad scholarships that can be utilized by all students. The thought of a child traveling internationally unsupervised can lead to severe parental anxiety. But Americans are 20 times more likely to die from a violent crime in the United States than are citizens of other developed countries in their nations, according to a 2013 report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Throughout Asaro's 14-year career in study abroad, she said that the extent of dangerous outcomes has been "a very minor injuries."

Kyle O'Grady of Edison, who studied abroad in Florence as a Marketing and Finance major in 2013, said that she never felt unsafe abroad.

In my experience, students who keep safe during their international studies utilize common sense, such as sticking to well-lit streets, traveling with at least one other per-

Undoubtedly, studying internationally is a large undertaking.

son and keeping a low profile — no extreme safety precautions required. It's no surprise that 46 percent of all New Jersey post-graduates under 25 were unemployed or underemployed in 2012, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

Global Human Resources News conducted a study in which 73 percent of human resources executives cited study abroad as an important factor when evaluating job candidates for junior positions.

Plus, according to a 2012 Rutgers University report, 95 percent of study-abroad students found a job within one year of graduation, compared to 49 percent of the general population of graduates.

Megan Holt of Bridgewater, who studied abroad in Aix en Provence, France, as an International Business major in

2012, thinks that her study-abroad experience was the key to her current job with a French luxury brand that she landed within two months of graduation.

"Being able to tell my interviewer about my experience living with a French family helped assure them that I was accustomed to the culture," she said.

Parents often worry that they could end up contributing to an expensive semester devoted to partying. However, being immersed in a new culture is the best way to learn a language and pursue other academic endeavors, plus most international schools offer exclusive classes.

Undoubtedly, studying internationally is a large undertaking. But hopefully, with the dissolution of these myths, more than 1 percent of American students will be able to enjoy what could be the most rewarding experience of their lives.

Jenna Intersimone's "Life Aboard The Traveling Circus" column appears Tuesdays. Her "Life Aboard The Traveling Circus" blog is at MyCentralJersey.com, as well as LifeAboardTheTravelingCircus.com. Tweet her at @JIntersimone or email her at JIntersimone@MyCentralJersey.com.



COURTESY OF KYLE O'GRADY

Kyle O'Grady of Edison, shown in Venice, Italy, says that she never felt safer than during her time studying abroad.

Nature

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who is retired from the Chicago Tribune resides in the mid-west. Socially isolated, the client had not been outside in months because she was afraid to leave her home. The agency called upon my services, on behalf of the legal guardian, an attorney working with the client's niece, who could not get her to take interest in, or engage her in any activities.

This month we achieved 200 horticultural therapy sessions together and she has purpose in her days. We have three sessions weekly with session time running anywhere from 90 minutes to two and a half hours in duration each time. We have spent more than 600 hours together. Our activities take place in her indoor "garden" she grew with plants at every stage of development. She is getting nature inside. She has created countless flower arrangements, propagated plants by cut-



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA DEPRADO

A socially isolated 88-year-old with dementia inspects a leaf she pruned from the Dish Garden she created using Dracena, Silver leaf Fern, and to grow fresh air indoors.

tings, and division, started plants of vegetables, herbs and annuals from seed, drying flowers, caring for indoor house plants, both flowering and nonflowering, enjoying and responding to blooms, colors, fragrances, anticipating things to come. She is nurturing dozens of plants. Every session is customized with goals, a planned activity, or activities, activities completed, documented objectives and outcomes and recommended activities for the next session. Every session now begins with a sensory stimulating "warm up" to engage her

mind, her muscles, her expression and communication, and her senses. She feels safe. She is empowered every step in the customized program process. She is successful. She is proud.

Research by Dr. Garuth Chalfont on "The Power of Nature and Outdoors: Architecture, Nature and People" was presented at the 42nd Annual Conference of the American Horticultural Therapy Association in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania in October. Chalfont shared that through science and research, as well as anecdote, we now un-

derstand much more fully the importance of connection to nature for people with dementia. Establishing and maintaining a connection is vitally important. Plenty of evidence exists about the benefits for older people and those with dementia. For instance, nature and being outdoors provides sensory stimulation, improves orientation to time and space, helps regulate circadian rhythms, lowers blood pressure, improves attention and focus, and also stimulates communication by enhancing and facilitating social interaction.

Research also shows that contact with nature and being outdoors helps to reduce agitation and aggression. Exercise and movement outdoors has been shown to improve sleep patterns, mood, memory, appetite, strength, agility and balance. We now also know that nature contact and being outdoors contributes to emotional and spiritual well-being, and provides cognitive stimulation. These are some of the reasons why a lifestyle that includes nature

and outdoors delays the onset of dementia for people living at home. What was once intuitive is increasingly evidence-based.

Like Chalfont my approach with individuals and groups with dementia and dementia-related and non-related illness is to engage and stimulate the senses in ways that interest the client.

"Gardening has been a part of my aunt's life for years," her niece said. "In June, 2011 my aunt had a stroke. Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey on October 29, 2012 and on the 30th my aunt was removed to a shelter. For 14 days and she was away from her home. All of her plants died. She didn't speak, she was depressed. She was anxious. She was despondent. She was not going to leave her home again."

Through Supportive Architecture, as referred by Chalfont, windows and doors have a role to play in moderating sunlight and daylight for my client and making possible a horticultural area for growing plants and growing nature inside. Our sessions take place in the parlor (which

at one time was used for gatherings and entertaining guests). Her bay windows deliver light in, and I have set up "stations", where we conduct our activities: The first station is in front of the large bay windows where many plants of herbs, geraniums, orchids and cacti are getting plenty of full sun. The second station is at the Activities table, where we engage in Supportive Nature, connecting in seasonally-related planting, transplanting, seed starting, flower arranging, pressing and arranging flowers, and problem solving when nature isn't growing the way you like.

"I am amazed to see what my aunt can accomplish in the horticultural therapy sessions," her niece said. "I know it makes her happy and alive again, and the act of creating something is hers."

The agency working with the client also is pleased with her progress.

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