

News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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October 1, 2015

Freeholders Join RVCC & Rotary in Breaking Ground for Enabling Garden

Raritan Valley Community College, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Branchburg, broke ground on an Enabling Garden, October 1, at the College's Branchburg Campus. The Rotary Club of Branchburg Foundation provided \$3,500 of "seed money" for the 5,000 square-foot garden, which will be located next to RVCC's Conference Center.

The Enabling Garden is one of several such gardens in Central New Jersey created as part of a partnership between Rotary International District 7510 (Central New Jersey) and Rutgers University and its entities, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) and Cooperative Extension.



Freeholder Director Mark Caliguire (back row, third from right) and Freeholder Deputy Director Patricia Walsh (front row, center) take part in the Enabling Garden groundbreaking ceremony at RVCC.

Launched in 2011, the "Rotary and Rutgers: Growing Lives One Seed at a Time" initiative features barrier-free, accessible gardens, and/or activities, provided with modifications to be enjoyed by people with disabilities. Nine pilots, through the "Growing Lives" project in Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset, and Union counties, promote the benefits of working with plants for people of all ages, regardless of their physical or mental challenges.

At RVCC, the project will feature a variety of plants providing sensory stimulation for smell, sight, touch, taste, and sound.

Based on seasonal availability, plants could include: Wild Geranium, Large Beard-tongue, Foxglove Beard-tongue, Fall Phlox, Sweet William, Creeping Phlox, Turk's Cap Lily, Swamp Milkweed (to host Monarch butterflies), New England Aster, Switchgrass, Big Bluestem grass, Black-eyed Susan, Jewelweed, Woolly Ragwort, Blue Waxweed, Purple Tridens grass, Spearmint, Peppermint, Oregano, and Sage.

"The Enabling Garden project, with RVCC as our host, exemplifies sustainable collaboration and offers a wonderful opportunity to fulfill one of Rotary International's six avenues of service: Education. The Rotary Club of Branchburg is committed to many areas of community service. This project enables us to create a garden that connects people and plants, as well as mentor and work with representatives from the Boy Scouts of America, RVCC students and Rotaract club members, Rutgers students, and RVCC faculty and staff," said Laura DePrado, Rotary District 7510 Coordinator, Enabling Gardens.

The garden is being created in part as an Eagle Scout project by Patrick O'Rourke of Pittstown. The 15-year-old, who is the son of Brian O'Rourke, RVCC Executive Director of Facilities & Grounds, is working on the project in partnership with the Rotary Club of Branchburg.

Planning of the RVCC Garden has taken place over the past eight months with input from The Enabling Garden Committee representatives from The Rotary Club of Branchburg, the RVCC student Rotaract club, College faculty, and Rutgers University Department of Landscape Architecture by way of Design Workshops. The RVCC garden is expected to be completed in the spring.

Raritan Valley Community College's main campus is located at 118 Lamington Road in Branchburg, NJ. Serving Somerset and Hunterdon County residents for close to 50 years, RVCC is an educational and cultural center that is nationally recognized for its innovative programming, service to the community and environmental leadership. The College offers more than 90 associate degrees and certificates, as well as career training, professional development and personal enrichment courses.

The College also has a performing arts center and planetarium. RVCC is committed to offering a quality and affordable education through effective teaching, liaisons with the community's businesses and state-of-the-art technology. For further information, visit www.raritanval.edu