



**JERSEY FRESH™**

*Farm to School*

*A Quarterly Newsletter from the NJ Department of Agriculture  
Farm to Everything Program*



**BEST OF FARM TO SCHOOL AWARD  
2022 - 2023**



**“Joseph F. Cappello School”**



In September, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Joseph F. Cappello School in Mercer County with the “Best in New Jersey Farm to School Award” during a visit to the school’s garden and cafeteria. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 13th annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and initial Ag Literacy Week being held September 25-29.

On the big day, balloons, bright flowerbeds, and pink flamingos welcomed guests to the Joseph F. Cappello School. Student ushers waited inside to guide visitors to the garden - the heart of Capello’s Farm to School Program. Here students of all abilities have access to plant and grow food, to share outdoor space, to learn about nutrition, food growing, and the environment. At Cappello, the school garden provides enrichment academically, socially, and even provides fresh grown produce for their school meals, tastings, and as donations for local organizations. Many of Cappello’s students face challenges with mealtime, needing extra assistance, and on this celebratory day, all guests experienced what it means for the students to build a relationship with food. From getting fingers into the soil and harvesting veggies, to preparing their own garden-fresh kale-chips, all could feel the sense belonging, the agency, the learning, and the joy of food that Cappello is fostering for their students academically, in the cafeteria, in the garden, and as a community!



# JERSEY FRESH FARMER AWARD 2023



## “Coombs Barnyard”



New Jersey Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison III recognized Coombs Barnyard in Salem County as the winner of the Jersey Fresh Farm to School Farmer Recognition Award. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 13th annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week being held September 25-29, 2023.

The program is an opportunity for farmers to highlight their Farm to School efforts and to help feature Jersey Fresh produce in local school meals.

“Coombs Barnyard’s focused and enthusiastic mission of educating students and the public about the importance of farming is an outstanding example of how to promote the significance of agriculture,” Assistant Secretary Atchison said.

“The ability to host so many different groups allow more people to gain a better understanding of how a farm operates and enhances the awareness of agriculture in the Garden State.” Coombs Barnyard was started by Amanda Coombs and her sister Jennifer in 2008. Amanda, her family, and staff operate the Barnyard now. The farm features field trips for many different organizations and groups from April through October. The trips include a hayride, agri-education on vegetables, vegetable and pumpkin picking, a corn maze, animal visits, and other farm activities. During the summer months, they feature six weeks of farm day camps for children ages 5-12. All six of the weeks sold out this past summer. In 2015, they started a Farmyard Education Foundation as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit with the mission of educating the community about agriculture through the eyes of children with the hope of empowering people to understand the importance of agriculture.

“Agriculture plays an essential role in producing what we need to survive, and we want to do our part in helping people understand this significant endeavor,” Amanda Coombs said. “The sooner we can educate children and students about farms and their importance increases the chances of them developing a true appreciation for farming.”



# TOP TOMATO WINTER 2023

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THOSE MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE IN FARM TO SCHOOL

“I truly believe that eating fruits and vegetables is a magic pill and if we can get kids to eat them, we could...” said Janet Celi, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Coordinator for the NJ Department of Agriculture, Division of Food and Nutrition.

Janet starts out each of her workshops with this statement and weaves in the possibilities for what could happen when kids eat their fruits and vegetables. During these workshops, food service directors and teachers are donning googly-eyed masks blindly trying a new fruit, running to put in sequential order what they believe is the largest fruit and vegetable crop in NJ, and wondering how cutting and chopping up a mix of rainbow cauliflower, raspberries, peaches, cilantro, basil, and a chili-honey dressing will ever go together. Then the magic happens, and it all goes together.



The room fills with the scent of farm fresh-cut herbs, fruits, and vegetables and folks sit down to sample an array of food they didn't know they would love but end up going for seconds. Jersey Fresh Strawberry Salsa anyone? Perhaps you might want to try the Fall for Cauliflower Salad, Janet promises cauliflower and raspberries do in fact go together. Just as Janet can find a fruit and vegetable to go together perfectly, so too does she collaborate and blend together the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program perfectly with the NJ Farm to School Program. Always blending, a mix of local, recipe collaboration, with a sprinkle of fun Janet Celi lifts up local to a new level and brings her magic wherever she goes.





# FULL BLOOM AWARD 2022 - 2023



## “AGventure Club”

New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Joe Atchison III presented Upper Pittsgrove School in Salem County with the “Full Bloom Farm to School Award” during a visit to the school’s classrooms, garden, and cafeteria. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 13th annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and the initial Ag Literacy Week being held September 25-29.



Upper Pittsgrove Fourth Grade teacher Leevon Cogdill started the school’s AGventure Club in September of 2021. It has led to the growing of produce in the school garden, which has been used for school meals and during the summer the club donates its produce to the local Meals on Wheels organization. Ms. Cogdill led the Assistant Secretary, other NJDA staff, Department of Education staff, and state and local officials on a tour that included classrooms, the school garden and the cafeteria.

for the full article visit:



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

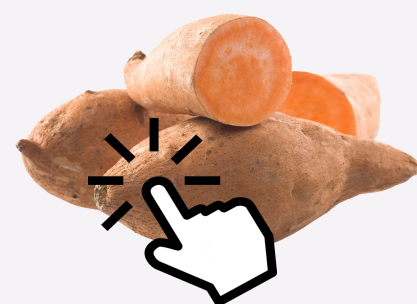
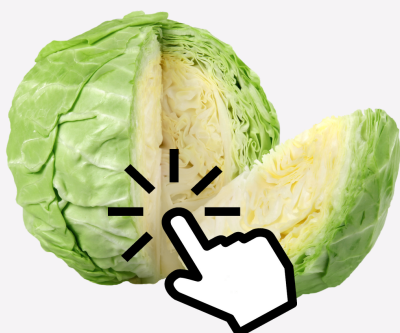


# Jersey Tastes! Monthly Activity Center

December

January

February



NJ DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DIVISION OF FOOD & NUTRITION  
JERSEY FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

P.O. BOX 334  
TRENTON, NJ 08625  
PHONE: 609.292.8662  
EMAIL: NEWJERSEYF2S@AG.NJ.GOV



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