

News from the

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**AG SECRETARY, EDUCATION COMMISSIONER CELEBRATE OPENING  
OF NEW AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION CENTER IN WARREN COUNTY**

(WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP) – New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher and Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy today helped to cut the ribbon on a new state-of-the-art agricultural education facility at Warren Hills Regional High School.

“Warren Hills historically has had one of the most successful agricultural education programs in the state,” said Secretary Fisher. “This new center will carry on that tradition by opening the door to a future in agriculture and its related fields for generations of students to come.”

Fisher, Davy and other officials toured the facility, which includes an over-sized classroom, storage room, animal/floral room and a greenhouse. The center was a component of a three-year school expansion project. Students moved into the classroom in March.

“This is a great example of the kind of secondary school program that prepares students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy,” said Commissioner Davy. “Like most industries, agriculture has changed dramatically thanks to technology and scientific advancements. Students who are interested in working in this field have to leave high school with the real world experience to help them meet the complex challenges of employment or college. The Warren Hills program gives them the tools they need to do that.”

Agricultural education prepares students to enter careers in the business, science and technology of agriculture. Agriculture is an almost \$1 billion industry in New Jersey.

Warren Hills has one agricultural education teacher, Marilyn Patterson, who teaches Environmental Science, Plant and Soil Science, Horticulture and Animal Science and Floral Design. Students earn science credit for full-year laboratory courses. Floral Design is the program’s only half year course.

Prior to the expansion, the agricultural education courses were taught in a small barn. There also were two outdated greenhouses, which were not part of the main school building.

This year, there are 120 students enrolled in agriculture courses. About 80 percent of the program’s graduates are employed in the agricultural industry or have gone on to secondary schools for agriculture-related majors.

“We are very fortunate at Warren Hills to have strong program support from our administrators, members, parents and agricultural community,” said Patterson. “We are optimistic that our enrollment will grow with the additional space/seating in the new facility and hopefully we can expand our program selection and get an additional agricultural teacher when the enrollment warrants.”

(MORE)

The school's FFA chapter dates back to the 1930's. It had its first woman member, Shirley Sigler, the current chapter president's mother, in 1970. Currently, there are 61 members. The school has had many State FFA officers and presently has one National Officer Candidate, Alison Keggan, who is studying abroad with Cornell University in New Zealand this semester. In addition, Nancy Trivette, New Jersey Department of Agriculture Agricultural Education State Program Leader and State FFA Advisor, is a graduate of Warren Hills' program.

Patterson said she presently has officers whose grandparents were in the Warren Hills FFA Chapter when they attended High School.

FFA is a component of an agriculture, food and natural resources program of instruction. There are 37 FFA chapters in New Jersey with more than 1,950 members. FFA is a national youth organization of 507,763 student members with 7,439 local chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

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