



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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USDA AWARDS \$497,906 IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR EDUCATION SERVICE

Bridgeton, NJ Oct. 15, 2004— Andrew M.G. Law, State Director, USDA Rural Development, today presented a check to the Food Innovation Center, Rutgers University, for a Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant totaling more than \$497,000, providing greater educational opportunities to rural residents in New Jersey.

Associate Administrator for USDA Rural Housing Service, Rodney E. Hood, stated “This grant will serve as a catalyst in helping meet the new communication needs of southern New Jersey and will insure that no rural resident – from students to parents and teachers—will be left behind in this century”. Hood said “We will bridge the education and digital divide in rural America and help southern New Jersey reach it’s full, unlimited potential.”

“The Bush Administration is committed to supporting rural communities by investing in technology,” said Law. “Information technology is critical to rural Americans. It significantly improves the quality of their health care and their ability to gain access to educational programs that better prepare them to compete in a global marketplace,” Law said.

This marks the first time New Jersey has been awarded a grant from this program. The Food Innovation Center will serve as the hub for distance learning and will be linked to county offices of Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Atlantic, Cape May, Gloucester, Mercer and Salem counties and the Rutgers EcoComplex facility in Burlington County.

In total, 40 distance education grants for \$17.1 million, and 22 telemedicine grants for more than \$7.5 million were selected for funding. The education projects will help schools provide students with educational tools to better equip them for the global digital economy. Additionally, rural residents will have access to better, faster and more modern health care through medical service facilities.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nj>

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