

8th Annual Environmental Health Summit
What's in our Food
October 10, 2025

Bios

(In order of appearance)

Panel and facilitated conversation: What's in our Food?

Moderator: -Shereyl Snider, Program Coordinator, East Trenton Collaborative

Shereyl joined the East Trenton Collaborative (ETC) in 2019 as a Community Organizer. She is a long-term resident of the East Trenton neighborhood but is originally a New Yorker who moved to Trenton in 2003 to take care of her father. Shereyl's responsibilities with ETC include outreach, resource and referral, leadership development, and organizing issue-based campaigns with residents.

While in New York, Shereyl worked as a travel agent for over 15 years. After moving to Trenton, she earned an associate's degree in early childcare from Mercer County Community College and worked as a substitute teacher at the Hamilton School District for 5 years. As a neighborhood resident and volunteer at the East Trenton Collaborative, she learned how to organize in her community. In addition to her work in the East Trenton neighborhood, Shereyl is also a member of Galilee Baptist Church where she is a choir member and President of the Missionary Ministry.

Rob Laumbach, MD, MPH – Associate Professor, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Justice, Rutgers School of Public Health

Dr. Laumbach is an occupational and environmental physician and scientist who studies the human health effects of chemical contaminants in air, water, and food here in New Jersey to assist communities and policymakers to develop evidence-based solutions. He is the Director of Community Engagement for the Center

Joshua W. Miller, PhD, DFASN, Professor and Chair, Department of Nutritional Sciences, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Dr. Miller earned his doctorate in Nutrition at the Tufts University School of Nutrition in 1993 and then completed consecutive post-doctoral training experiences at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging in Boston and at Duke University.

In 1997, Dr. Miller was recruited to a faculty position in the Dept. of Medical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine in the School of Medicine at the University of California, Davis. He came to

Rutgers in the fall of 2012 and assumed his current position as Dept. Chair in July 2013. Dr. Miller's research has focused on the relationships among vitamins (folate, B12, B6, D), homocysteine, and various conditions and disorders, including cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias; cancer; and more recently blood pressure. His research has also focused on interrelationships between genetic polymorphisms and vitamin B12, as well as novel strategies for assessing vitamin B12 status and absorption. He has extensive experience with inducing B vitamin deficiencies in rodent models, as well as measurement of various biomarkers of B vitamin status in both animals and humans, including large-scale epidemiological studies. He currently serves as co-investigator on an NIH-funded clinical trial to assess the effect of vitamin D supplements on cognitive decline in older adults

Mark Gregory Robson, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Distinguished Professor, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education, Rutgers School of Graduate Studies

Dr. Robson's research includes the study toxic effects pesticide and exposure reduction here in New Jersey and globally. He serves on many national and international health committees. Dr. Robson served as the Chair of the Public Health Standing Committee on the NJDEP Science Advisory Board (SAB), and as chair of the NJ Drinking Water Quality Institute. Dr. Robson has over 170 peer reviewed papers, numerous book chapters and is the editor of the most widely used textbook in risk assessment for public health. His many honors include a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Fellow of the Collegium Ramazzini and a Fellow of the Academy of Toxicological Sciences. Dr. Robson serves as the Editor in Chief of The Journal of Human and Ecological Risk Assessment and is the associate editor of the Mindanao Journal of Science and Technology, the European Journal of Oncology, Occupational and Environmental Health, and the Journal of Higher Education Research Disciplines.

Donald W. Schaffner, Ph.D. – Department Chair, Distinguished Professor, Extension Specialist, Department of Food Science, Rutgers University

Dr Schaffner's research interests include quantitative microbial risk assessment, predictive food microbiology, handwashing and cross-contamination. Dr. Schaffner has authored more than 190 peer-reviewed publications, and numerous book chapters and abstracts. He has been the recipient of more than \$9 million in grants and contracts, a majority in the form of competitive national grants.

Dr. Schaffner has educated thousands of Food Industry professionals through numerous short courses and workshops in the United States and dozens of countries around the world. Dr. Schaffner was awarded the International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) Elmer Marth Educator Award in 2009 for outstanding service to the public and IAFP in the area food safety and food protection education. He was also awarded the IAFP Maurice Weber Laboratorian Award in 2020 for outstanding contributions in the laboratory, recognizing a commitment to the development of innovative and practical analytical approaches in support of food safety.

Panel and facilitated conversation: What's in our Children's Food?

Moderator: Nikki Baker, Organizer, New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC)

Nikki Baker joined the New Jersey Work Environment Council as the Healthy Schools Now Organizer in April 2022 after more than 20 years in education with the Paterson Public Schools District. Most recently, Nikki sat on Paterson EA Professional Rights and Responsibilities and NJEA ESP Committees, Members of Color Network (MOC,) the Racial Equity Affirmation & Literacy (R.E.A.L.) Member Advisory Council and was a PCEA Equity Seekers Co-founder. She was also a Passaic County Co-Captain for New Jersey's Education Support Professionals Action Network (ESPAN).

Nikki is an outspoken advocate for safe working and learning conditions in her former school district. Prior to her position at WEC, Nikki previously worked with WEC on a number of workshops for members on economic justice and received the WEC 2021 Adrienne Rosner-Markowitz Rising Star award.

Emily S. Barrett, PhD, George G. Rhoads Endowed Legacy Professor, Vice Chair, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Rutgers School of Public Health

Emily S. Barrett is Professor and Director of the Epidemiology concentration in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Dr. Barrett is a member of the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute, where she co-directs the Maternal-Child Environmental Health Lab and the Human Exposures and Outcomes Research Core. Dr. Barrett received her doctoral degree in biological anthropology from Harvard University and completed post-doctoral training at the Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities at University of California, Los Angeles.

Mackenzie Ferrante, Ph.D., RDN – Assistant Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Dr. Ferrante earned her PhD in Food Science and Human Nutrition from the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Colorado State University and master's and dietetics degrees from the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Idaho.

As an interdisciplinary behavioral scientist and registered dietitian, her research has focused on: (1) understanding the predictors of young children's eating behaviors beginning early in life, and (2) using this information to develop innovative obesity preventive interventions that promote healthy dietary habits in a variety of naturalistic food environments.

Marion Williams, Chef, National Program Director, Wellness In the Schools

Marion Williams currently works as a Chef & National Program Director for Wellness in the Schools, an organization dedicated to inspiring healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for children in public schools. She received her degree as a Chef from Peter Kump N.Y. Cooking School in late 80s. She enrolled in the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts to specialize in healthier way to prepare foods. As a Chef, she has worked with Whole Foods Market, James Beard Foundation, City Harvest and several Catering Facilities. She has worked in the food industry for more than twenty years.

Her professional career outside the culinary industry includes a degree from College of New Rochelle as a Paralegal. As a paralegal, she worked for a private law firm and the Social Security Hearing and Appeals Office. Marion continued her education in nutrition with programs at the University of Pittsburgh and University of California, San Francisco, with studies focusing on Nutrition & Physical Activity as it impacts health. Marion's other pursuits include volunteering with churches, Slow Food NY, Chef's Move to Schools, NYCEN (NYC Nutrition Educator's Network), and being a member of BCA Global mentoring students of color in the food service industry. Continuing to educate, support and mentor the South Bronx community in which she was raised is high priority in her life's goal.

Keynote: Norah MacKendrick, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University

Norah MacKendrick is an associate professor of sociology at Rutgers University whose research and teaching span environmental health, gender, food, consumer studies, and science & technology studies. Her scholarship critically examines how risk is individualized in the context of widespread environmental pollution. As scientific and technological advances reveal contaminants in air, water, soil, and food, MacKendrick explores how women—particularly mothers—are held responsible for shielding children and future generations from chemical exposures.

In her book *Better Safe than Sorry*, she illustrates how this responsibility manifests in women's everyday lives, including during pregnancy and breastfeeding, as they shop for their children, prepare family meals, and manage their children's health. Her work also investigates gender and health, with a focus on how "hormone balance" is conceptualized within the self-help landscape.

MacKendrick's current research centers on the lived experience of poor air quality under a changing climate. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in environmental health, social inequalities, gender, food studies, and research methods.

Tobias A. Fox, Facilitator of Newark Community Food System

Tobias Fox is the Founder and Managing Director of the community-driven, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. Aside from being a writer and having ten years of independent publishing experience, Fox is a Professional Organizer, Urban Farmer, Photographer, and Coordinator of an annual Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference. He conducts various community events, presentations, and workshops on sustainable living practices and has assisted numerous urban farmers and gardeners with the cultivation of their agricultural space.

Plastics in Food

Rebecca Florsheim, MD, MPH, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, NYU Grossman School of Medicine

Dr. Rebecca Florsheim is an Assistant Professor at NYU Grossman School of Medicine. She is a physician-scientist boarded in internal medicine and preventative medicine, with a clinical and academic focus on environmental health. Clinically, she works with patients affected by environmental pollutants at the Bellevue asthma and World Trade Center clinics. Her research centralizes on mitigating the human health risks and outcomes of these exposures. Recently, she has focused on the human toxicities associated with micro- and nano plastic particle exposures and the patterns of accumulation in mammalian tissues.

Panel and facilitated conversation: Creating Access to Healthier Food

Moderator: Heather Sorge, Program and Community Organizing Manager, Lead-Free NJ

Prior to joining New Jersey Future, Heather was the organizer for Healthy Schools Now with the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), a coalition of over 80 organizations representing a diverse set of stakeholders dedicated to ensuring all New Jersey children and school employees learn and work in safe, healthy, modernized school buildings.

Additionally, Heather worked as a paraprofessional in the Holland Township School district for over ten years, and as well as an Organizational Development Consultant with the New Jersey Education Association. Sorge has been a strong advocate for New Jersey's public schools specializing in anti-privatization efforts and campaign promotions. She was an active member of the Holland Township Education Association, Hunterdon County Education Association, and the New Jersey Education Association, serving as her local Legislative Action Team chair, Association Representative, and Grievance Team member in her district.

Heather has presented at national and regional conferences, facilitating workshops supporting NJEA members professional development. Heather served as a regional lead in the NJEA Summer Fellows programs and is a proud graduate of the NJEA Apprentice Program. She is also

an active member of the Holland Township Agriculture Committee. Sorge graduated from Churchman Business School with a degree in Accounting Finance.

Alex Caroleo, Farm Market Director, City Green Inc.

Alex has worked in food access since 2019 after starting a job as a gardener at City Green, a nonprofit farming and food access organization in Clifton. She is now City Green's Farm Market Director and manages their farm stand and Community Supported Agriculture programs. Through her work, she enjoys being able to share her passion for growing, eating, and providing access to fresh foods.

Cara Cuite, Ph.D. – Associate Extension Specialist, Associate Professor, Undergraduate Program Director, Department of Human Ecology, Rutgers University

Dr. Cara Cuite serves as an Associate Extension Specialist/Associate Professor and the Undergraduate Program Director in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers University. She is a health psychologist who studies food security and risk communication. She leads the research program on basic needs insecurities among Rutgers students and works closely with community partners on food security projects across New Jersey. She serves as the lead for the Food Security Community Learning Table for the Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health. Her risk communication research and outreach focus on food safety, genetically engineered foods, and weather-related emergencies. She has conducted risk communication trainings both within the US and internationally. Dr. Cuite's research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. She serves on the Advisory Committee of the New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative and the Board of Directors of Meals on Wheels in Greater New Brunswick. She completed her Ph.D. in Psychology at Rutgers University, and a B.S. in Psychology and Modern Languages from Union College.

Nurgul Fitzgerald, Ph.D., MS, RD – Associate Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Assistant professor/extension specialist at the Family and Community Health Sciences Department and the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences; she is also a registered dietitian.

Dr. Fitzgerald's expertise involves type 2 diabetes and its risk factors. She examines the associations of obesity, and lifestyle (physical activity, diet), socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics in relation to diabetes prevention and control. Acculturation, food insecurity, community health worker (peer counselor) models among Hispanic populations, and epidemiologic approaches using national databases are some of the specific areas of her research.

Alicia Newcomb, Executive Director, C.R.O.P.S. (Communities Revolutionizing Open Public Spaces)

Alicia (Lisa) Newcomb is the Executive Director of C.R.O.P.S. Born and raised in Atlantic County, NJ, she has spent over a decade working in the nonprofit sector and the last 7 years working to build a healthier food system in NJ. She started with C.R.O.P.S. as a volunteer and fell in love with NJ farmers and the idea that everyone should have fresh, local food available to them. Lisa

is a founding member of both the NJ Food Democracy Collaborative, the only statewide independent food policy council, as well as the Green Coalition of Atlantic City, a coalition focused on improving the lives of those living and working in Atlantic City by preserving open space, conserving natural pollinator habits and spaces for food production. She is a Board Member for the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce as well as the Atlantic County Agriculture Development Board. Lisa strives to be a connector in her community, aiming to bring people together to work on large initiatives that can better our communities and to share resources that others can leverage to make positive change.

Panel and facilitated conversation: On Local, State and Federal Food Policy

Amy Goldsmith, New Jersey State Director, Clean Water Action

Amy Goldsmith has been a professional environmental activist since 1979 starting with nuclear waste issues in the Midwest. She joined Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund in 1985, first in New England and since 1992 as NJ State Director. Expertise in waste, waste, energy, toxics, climate, environmental justice issues, as well as efforts to make democracy work to protect public health and the environment.

Serves on many boards including founding chair of Coalition for Healthy Ports, NJDEP's Clean Water Council, NJ Work Environment Council, Sewer Free Streets Advisory Committee and Jersey Water Works State Lead Task Force. Previously coordinated Public Health Institute's (PHI) Jobs and Environment Training Consortium bringing union workers, communities and environmentalists together to find common ground.

Ms. Goldsmith has a BS in Land Use Planning from the University of Minnesota and served for three years as a research scientist with the U of M's Entomology Department.

She received 2004 Environmental Achievement Award.

Jackie Bavaro, MPH – Senior Policy Analyst, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

Jackie Bavaro joined FRAC in August 2023 as the Project Manager of the New Jersey Food Security Initiative (NJSFI). She now serves as the Senior Program Manager. In this role, she is

responsible for facilitating community-centered and collaborative efforts to increase food security and advance health equity in New Jersey.

Bavaro previously worked with the NJ YMCA State Alliance managing their SNAP-Ed, SNAP Navigator, and other community food programs. In this capacity, she provided training and technical assistance to a variety of diverse community partners and coordinated efforts with NJ State Agencies. She is a certified instructor for Adult Mental Health First Aid and the Cost of Poverty Experience. Bavaro has received the YMCA of the USA's 30 Under 30 Award for her project leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

She has a B.S. in Dietetics from the University of Delaware and a Master of Public Health from Montclair State University.

Charlie Kratovil, – Organizer, Food and Water Watch

Charlie Kratovil made New Brunswick his home 18 years ago. He looks back at his beginning years in the city and remembers how tough it was to survive. The cost of living left him financially insecure. With the care of the New Brunswick Community, he could get through those hard times. Since then, he's been helping the most vulnerable survive here and empowering the people through organizing, education, and exercising democratic rights. Whether it be creating the first bilingual newspaper in New Brunswick or establishing school board elections here in the city, Charlie is a tireless advocate for truth, community, and democracy here in the Hub City.

Marta Young, Zero Waste Specialist, Clean Water Action

Marta was raised in the Washington DC area but has lived in a variety of places, now calling the Jersey Shore home. After college, she traveled the country as a math and science teacher, including beautiful places such as the Navajo Reservation in Arizona and Puerto Rico.

Later, she became a project manager for a large engineering firm as an environmental geologist, investigating and remediating contaminated sites. These experiences bring a wealth of knowledge and passion as the NJ Zero Waste Specialist. From her work with ReThink Disposable, she was named 2024 Honorable Mention Activist of the Year for Upstream Solutions and in 2025, was asked to be on Break Free from Plastic's Movement Support Team.

In Marta's spare time, she enjoys traveling with her husband and two children, taking long walks, gardening, cooking for large groups, and wood/rock working. She also works with a school and orphanage in the Dominican Republic where she provided the technical support to install two wells, allowing readily access to drinking water.

