

Monmouth Mayors Rally at Brookdale to Shape Region's Future



Brookdale Community College held its 2nd Annual President's Summit of Monmouth Mayors, bringing together leaders from across Monmouth County for a day of collaboration, strategy, and forward-thinking dialogue focused on the region's future.

Held during Community College Month and in alignment with the New Jersey League of Municipalities' Local Government Week, the Summit united mayors, educators, state and county officials, nonprofit leaders, business innovators, and students around a shared goal: strengthening communities and advancing economic opportunity across the county.

A Vision for Regional Growth

This year's Summit was themed "Harvesting Opportunity: Connecting AgriTech, AgriTourism, and Main Street for Regional Growth." The initiative calls for aligning agriculture, food systems, tourism, hospitality, workforce development, and technology to create a more connected and resilient regional economy.

The Summit featured remarks from Monmouth County Commissioner Director Tom Arnone; New Jersey Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison; New Jersey Conference of Mayors President Mayor Jason Cilento; and Assemblyman Alex Sauickie, representing the New Jersey Legislature, along with student leaders from the Monmouth County Vocational FFA Program.

Keynote: A Farm-to-Shore Future

A keynote address by Jack L. Harris, Ph.D., a sustainability expert from Rutgers University, set the tone for the day with a compelling call to action: build a "Farm-to-Shore" food system that connects Monmouth County's agricultural base with its coastal economy.


Harris outlined this regional model to link agriculture in the western part of the county with coastal communities, tourism, and hospitality industries, thereby creating a more integrated and resilient local economy. "Communities thrive when institutions listen, collaborate, and build capacity with intention," Harris said, pointing to the opportunity for Monmouth County to lead with a coordinated, forward-thinking approach.

Joe Atchison, Assistant Secretary, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, highlighted the importance of access, noting that "we don't have a food availability problem, we have a food access problem," pointing to the need for stronger systems that ensure residents can reach fresh, nutritious food.

Mayor Jason Cilento reinforced the role of municipalities in shaping outcomes through planning and infrastructure. "We need to think about how people get food through walkability, transportation, and smart zoning," he said.

Together, the panel highlighted key priorities, including stronger coordination across municipalities, workforce pathways aligned with emerging industries, improved food access, and the revitalization of Main Street through entrepreneurship and innovation.

A Regional Call to Action

The Summit concluded with a collective commitment to continue building a coordinated, countywide ecosystem, one that supports agriculture, innovation, tourism, and workforce development while ensuring equitable access and opportunity for all residents. 

June

10 Mini Conference

Conference Center at Mercer, West Windsor

Visit www.njlm.org/Seminars or contact dholland@njlm.org or 609-695-3481, Ext. 118.



Dunellen Mayor Jason Cilento, former Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, and Owner & CEO Marilyn Group Food for Thought by the Sea Marilyn Schlossbach



Mayors participating with panel.

NJ Knowledge Answers:

1. The Colonial House, Cape May
2. Potter's Tavern, Bridgeton
3. Gabreil Daveis Tavern, Glendora
4. Indian King Tavern, Haddonfield
5. Cedar Bridge Tavern, Barnegat
6. The Village Inn/Davis Tavern, Englishtown
7. Allen House/Blue Ball Tavery, Shrewsbury
8. Barnsboro Inn, Sewell
9. The Black Horse Tavern & Pub, Mendham
10. Lyons Ordinary, Newark