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today

DRAFT PICKS

John Holl's weekly column

appears on Wednesdays.

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HORTICULTURAL THERAPY



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA DEPRADO

Produce is prepared for storage and future farm market sale by participants of the Project Grow farm on the West Windsor campus of Mercer County Community College.

Project Grow takes root to help people with disabilities



By Laura DePrado
Writer

WEST WINDSOR — One farm-based horticultural therapy program in New Jersey offers individuals with disabilities an opportunity to receive employment training and horticultural therapy as well as environmental education in a healthy productive environment.

Project Grow is located on the West Windsor campus of Mercer County Community College. It is an innovative farming initiative created by Allies Inc., which operates 24-7 group homes, day programs and supported living serving 300 individuals through 150 programs. The company, based in Hamilton, was founded in 1999, and has grown from two volunteers to 800 employees statewide. It is committed to helping people with disabilities and provides support services to enhance the physical, social and emotional lives of people with special needs enabling them to become active participants in their communities.

Allies Inc. Project Grow and Mercer County Community College (MCCC) have partnered to create a community-integrated program experience for participants with special needs. Program participants learn how to manage a fully operational farm starting with preparing the soil to harvesting and distributing the crops. Through guidance provided by a registered horticultural therapist and an on-site farmer, participants begin preparing the land and planting harvest crops in April. Project Grow emphasizes creating positive relationships, learning employment skills, and gaining a greater sense of self-reliance while experiencing job training in the farming industry.

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COURTESY OF CORNER BAKERY CAFE

Founded in 1991 in downtown Chicago, Corner Bakery Cafe offers its signature breakfast, lunch and dinner fare to diners in over 160 outlets across 17 states and Washington. Its first two locations in New Jersey — in Princeton and Moorestown — opened earlier this year, and a new location in South Plainfield officially opened on Aug. 18.



COURTESY OF CORNER BAKERY CAFE
Diners are sure to enjoy Corner Bakery Cafe's newest pancakes with fresh berries menu item.

CORNERING THE MARKET



The Corner Bakery Cafe offers four different kinds of freshly roasted coffee with free refills, a broad selection of homemade muffins, pastries, croissants, bagels and other baked goods, and an extensive kids' menu.

**South Plainfield
welcomes new
Corner Bakery Cafe
to the neighborhood**

By Susan Bloom
Correspondent

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — It's 5 a.m., and while much of Central Jersey is still sleeping, the kitchen at Corner Bakery Cafe is alive with the clattering of pans and the scent of freshly baked muffins.

"We're all about high-quality, freshly prepared ingredients and we pride ourselves in cooking to order," said Andy Race, operating partner for Garden State newcomer Corner Bakery Cafe, part of a popular national chain that describes itself as a "neighborhood restaurant offering healthy, fresh and delicious food choices."

Following a successful opening day Monday in its new location across from the Middlesex Mall on Hadley Road, South Plainfield is looking forward to its latest dining option, as well as the opportunities the eatery will bring to the 8-square-mile borough's 23,000 residents and hundreds of businesses.

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SHIFTING GEARS

Keep putting on pounds? There are options to help break the cycle

By Susanne Cervenka

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You name the diet, and James Bryant has tried it.

Some of them helped the 48-year-old Wall Township man drop some weight, but only until he fell off the routine and gained it all back.

But Bryant had had enough after he broke his leg and hit his highest weight, 276 pounds on a 5-foot 9-inch frame. At the same time, he saw a newspaper ad from a law firm urging patients of his diabetes medicine — the same one he had been taking at the maximum dosage for 10 years — to contact them for a class-action lawsuit because of elevated cancer risks.

That's when Bryant decided to turn to bariatric surgery, what he calls the only thing for him that was going to stem the tide of yo-yo dieting.

"The fear you have in the back of your mind, you know you're killing yourself being that overweight," said Bryant, who now weighs in at 160 pounds.

"I was realizing, six weeks after surgery, how successful this is going to be, how this is really going to work. That was quite a moment for me."

Bryant's battle with weight loss is not uncommon.

More than 35 percent of Americans are considered obese and almost 69 percent are overweight, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Only about 32 percent of American women and 26 percent of American men are at a healthy weight, the data shows.

"The issue of weight needs to be dealt with and it needs to be dealt with on a much greater scale than it has in the past," said Dr. Matthew LeMaitre, a surgeon at the Center for Bariatrics at Bayshore

Community Hospital in Holmdel.

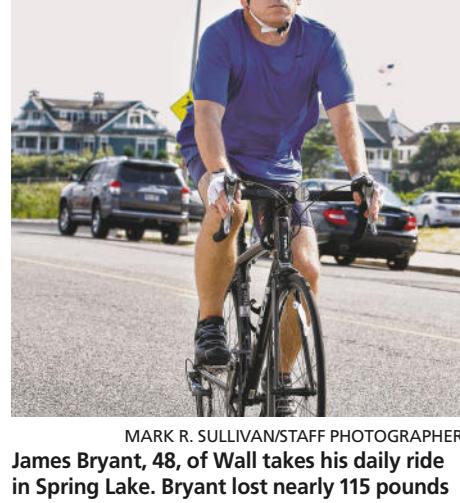
The reason behind America's obesity epidemic is simple: We live in a society of food abundance, but our bodies are programmed to operate in a feast or famine cycle. An overweight person, LeMaitre said, has a body that is just very good at what it's designed to do: store fat.

"What we're finding is America is aware it has an obesity problem, but it's not sure how to solve an obesity problem," LeMaitre said.

No 'silver bullet'

Doctors say there is not one silver bullet to weight loss. All of the key programs work because they create calorie deficits: the person is taking in fewer calories than they expend through their daily activities.

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MARK R. SULLIVAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
James Bryant, 48, of Wall takes his daily ride in Spring Lake. Bryant lost nearly 115 pounds after having bariatric surgery.