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PRESS RELEASE

Contact Information: **Sheryl Weinstein** Public Relations 973-596-3436

Organic Garden To Grace NJIT Rooftop Thanks to Efforts of Chef and Others

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Up on the roof of the NJIT Campus Center, NJIT award-winning chef Peter Fischbach eyes a new crop of green goodness. In about two months, Fischbach hopes a bounty of wholesome organic winter veggies--from kale to arugula--will be ready to harvest into mouth-watering, organic greatness in his kitchen.

Not a difficult stunt for a young chef, who for three consecutive years has numbered among the top winners and judges of the Great American Seafood Cookoff, held annually in New Orleans. Earlier this month, Fischbach, of Toms River, tied for third-place for the King of American Seafood.

Of course anybody who eats regularly in his NJIT dining rooms will tell you there's no contest when it comes Fischbach's repertoire, from seafood chowder to Thai coconut - red curry crusted mahi. Can you imagine what magic he'll concoct, wonder those who know him, with his own green bounty?

The same thoughts must have occurred to the young chef, who since his arrival at NJIT in 2006 to run Gourmet Dining Services has dreamed of turning the 400-square-foot rooftop garden, originally designed for grass and a few flowers, into a rich organic and delicious vegetable and herb heaven for all to enjoy in the cafeterias below.

This month Fischbach's vision has already begun sprouting. With help from NJIT students, volunteers and Gourmet Dining colleague Julia Aiello, Fischbach will weed and water the new bounty spread in two-foot raised beds across more than 100 square feet. Fall vegetables will include spinach, kale, Swiss chard, collard greens, lettuces, greens, arugula, carrots, and beets. Only inches from the beets one will find another university green project: An array of 160 solar panels installed in 2004 which have helped save on electric bills for the 190,000 square-foot Campus Center.

(ATTENTION MEDIA: To interview Fischbach and others tending the new garden, call Rosalyn Roberts, 973-596-3433.)

“The idea is to harvest through late November if the weather remains mild with no snow,” said Fischbach. A spring garden will then be planted at the end of March 2011, if there is no snow and the soil temperature rises above 45 degrees.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to provide organic, fresh vegetables and herbs to the faculty and student body,” he added. “I’ve wanted to grow food on campus and I’m excited to see my vision come alive.” To learn more about sustainability initiatives and NJIT’s “Green Gourmet” plan through [Gourmet Dining](#).

This garden will also become an outdoor classroom for the department of biological sciences. “We will be using this garden to provide inspiration and hands-on learning for our students,” said Daniel Bunker, assistant professor. “We are studying the role of biodiversity in ecological systems and the rooftop garden will serve as an outdoor lab and classroom for us, where we can integrate garden activities, events and projects directly into our curriculum.”

The garden also represents an ironic example of the old adage you reap what you sow. Wanda Knapik, founder of [My Local Garden](#), Bernardsville, who designed and created the oasis, also is an NJIT alumnus. “I’m grateful to partner with and give back to NJIT, by creating a beautiful rooftop garden, that will provide abundant harvests for years to come,” she said.

Tagged: [peter fischbach](#), [department of biological sciences](#), [gourmet dining](#), [great american seafood cookoff](#), [executive chef](#), [green](#), [daniel bunker](#), [organic](#), [rooftop garden](#), [vegetables](#), [julia aiello](#)

NJIT, New Jersey's science and technology university, at the edge in knowledge, enrolls more than 8,400 students in bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in 92 degree programs offered by six colleges: Newark College of Engineering, College of Architecture and Design, College of Science and Liberal Arts, School of Management, Albert Dorman Honors College and College of Computing Sciences. NJIT is renowned for expertise in architecture, applied mathematics, wireless communications and networking, solar physics, advanced engineered particulate materials, nanotechnology, neural engineering and e-learning. In 2009, Princeton Review named NJIT among the nation's top 25 campuses for technology and among the top 150 for best value. U.S. News & World Report's 2008 Annual Guide to America's Best Colleges ranked NJIT in the top tier of national research universities.