



HISTORIC LANDFALL

HEAVY FLOODWATERS SWEEPED ACROSS SOUTHWESTERN JAMAICA AND WINDS TORE ROOFS AS HURRICANE MELISSA CAME ASHORE AS A CATASTROPHIC CATEGORY 5 STORM ON TUESDAY. **C1**

PENNINGTON

Farmer is helping a new generation reclaim their agricultural heritage



Detroit native Tomia MacQueen owns Wildflower Farm, a 42-acre certified organic farm in Pennington.

Tomia MacQueen transformed her health journey into a mission to grow culturally meaningful produce and teach sustainable farming practices.

Vashti Harris For Times of Trenton

For Pennington farmer Tomia MacQueen, teaching others about gardening and farming is like planting seeds. “The beauty of a garden is that you learn all these life lessons just walking around, said MacQueen, owner of Wildflower Farm in Pennington. “You have all these plans, and then nature totally derails you. Yet somehow it comes out beautiful,” she said. “For me, teaching is that way. You get to plant all these beautiful seeds and watch all the diversity and how it comes to fruition.” MacQueen, a Detroit native who moved to New Jersey in 2018, owns a 42-acre certified organic farm that produces and sells vegetables, seeds, organically raised poultry, and pastured lamb. “We produce culturally meaningful produce, which simply means foods that are culturally relevant to a given community,” said MacQueen, who opened her farm in 2019. “For example, I’m African American,



Free-range ducks enjoy the sun at Wildflower Farm. Courtesy photos

so for me, that means turnip greens, mustard greens, collard greens, sweet potatoes, fish peppers (and) okra.” MacQueen said her farm, located at 321 Pennington Harbourn Road, produces crops that can are also found in Afro-Caribbean cuisine, like callaloo, Scotch bonnet peppers, Jamaican pumpkin, Indian peppers and Indian okra. In addition, MacQueen said her farm donates 50 food boxes a week to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in Trenton. “We do a lot of education on farming, so we do a lot of conservation and agriculture classes and workshops to teach people how

to feed themselves and their communities,” said MacQueen. “We also do animal husbandry classes, gardening classes and seed saving classes.” MacQueen said her farm also hosts the Healing Waters Land Access Project, which provides over 3 acres of her land to beginner farmers to help them learn how to get into the farming industry. As a stay-at-home mom for 20 years, MacQueen’s journey into farming started with her wanting to learn organic gardening. “As I started battling scarring alopecia, I dug more into nutrition, the food system in the U.S., and how it works,” said MacQueen. “I realized very quickly that not only did I want to produce food for myself and my family that was nutrient dense, healthy and without chemicals, but I also wanted to be able to produce that for my community.” MacQueen, who had been an edible garden consultant for 16 years, said she founded Garden for L.I.F.E (Love, Inspiration, Faith and Empowerment) in 2013, a K-12 curriculum to educate students about the agricultural system and food systems. “There is something about the ability to pass on the knowledge that you have, and have it well received, taken on board, and ready to pass on to another generation. That is just awe-inspiring to me,” said MacQueen, who travels around the country educating people about farming and gardening. **SEE PENNINGTON, A3**

BAYONNE

Paramount signs 10-year lease for new film studio

Murphy says move solidifies the state as a “global powerhouse” in entertainment industry.

Amy Kuperinsky For Times of Trenton

Another big film and TV studio is settling into New Jersey. Paramount Skydance has signed a 10-year lease for Bayonne’s 1888 Studios. Paramount is set to occupy more than 285,000 square feet of the planned 58-acre facility, which will have 1.1 million square feet of production space and 23 smart sound stages. Among the amenities promised at 1888

Studios: lighting and grip facilities, offices, postproduction space, a five-story parking garage and a 22-acre water backlot. Why is the studio called 1888? That’s the year Thomas Edison filed a preliminary patent for an early motion picture camera. Edison opened Black Maria, the first film studio, in 1893 in West Orange. Later, he opened Edison Studios. Funnily enough, it was Edison’s trust with George Eastman — which charged licensing fees to use cameras made by Edison and film from Eastman Kodak — that drove filmmakers and the New Jersey-based movie industry to Hollywood in the first place. The architecture firm Gensler designed 1888 Studios “to evoke the imagery of

Golden Age Hollywood,” per an announcement of the Paramount lease. Renderings of the studio released in 2022 show palm trees accompanying the Hollywood-flavored architecture. The announcement touted New Jersey’s tax incentives for film and TV production. Those incentives have increasingly driven both large studio titles and indie films to the Garden State. In 2024, productions spent \$833 million in New Jersey, which was a new high. “Thanks to highly competitive tax credit programs like New Jersey’s, the tri-state area is more attractive than ever before for production as we work together to create new jobs and empower more **SEE BAYONNE, A6**

POLITICS

N.J., 24 other states suing over suspended SNAP benefits

The USDA confirmed its position that effective Nov. 1, it will suspend all November 2025 SNAP allotments as part of the ongoing federal government shutdown.

Chris Sheldon For Times of Trenton

New Jersey has joined 24 other states in suing the Trump administration over what they have called the unlawful suspension of funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits during the ongoing federal government shutdown. The lawsuit, which names the United States Department of Agriculture and its secretary, Brooke Rollins, was announced Tuesday by the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office. New Jersey’s nutrition benefits program, widely known as SNAP, is fully funded through Oct. 31, officials from the New Jersey Department of Health said in a statement last week. Hundreds of thousands of New Jersey residents and more than 40 million Americans rely on SNAP benefits each month, authorities said. “The Trump Administration’s failure to fund SNAP during the federal government shutdown is an affront to the more than 800,000 New Jerseyans who depend on these critical benefits to access nutritious food,” New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said in a statement. “I thank Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin for taking action to hold the federal government accountable for their betrayal of America’s most vulnerable working- and middle-class families,” the governor added.

On Oct. 1, the new federal fiscal year began without an appropriation by Congress to fund the federal government, prompting the shutdown. On Oct. 10, the USDA sent a letter to state SNAP agencies saying that if the shutdown continues, there would be insufficient funds to pay full November SNAP benefits, the Attorney General’s Office said. On Oct. 24, USDA confirmed that effective Nov. 1, it will suspend all November SNAP allotments. **SEE POLITICS, A6**



LIFE

Halloween punch

Sweet, tart and neon-bright, this batched coconut-melon daiquiri is upgraded for Halloween — it glows in the dark. **F3**

SPORTS

Eagles are soaring

Already at 6-2 and well ahead of the rest of the NFC East, Philly is poised to shift into another gear after its Week 9 bye. **E1**