



\$40,000 PECO Grant Builds Innovative Aquaponics Curriculum and Grows STEM Education for Montgomery County Middle School Students

*Riverbend Environmental Education Center
1950 Spring Mill Road, Gladwyne, PA 19035*

To reserve your spot at the press conference, contact:
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For Immediate Release

October 28, 2015 Montgomery County, PA – The newly opened aquaponics greenhouse at Riverbend Environmental Education Center gives students the opportunity to learn about sustainable agriculture. Today we celebrate the \$40,000 grant from PECO that developed the aquaponics curriculum and delivers the education program to approximately 500 7th graders at all three Norristown middle schools this school year.

“Riverbend is thrilled to partner with PECO and the Norristown Area School District to launch an innovative, peer-reviewed aquaponics curriculum and education program aimed at fostering STEM education,” said Laurie Bachman, Executive Director of Riverbend Environmental Education Center. “We are deeply appreciative of the generous funding from PECO that makes this project possible. PECO has been a strong partner in our effort to expand environmental education to children in underserved communities in our region.”

Aquaponics is a method of sustainable agriculture in which edible plants grow from nutrient-rich wastewater provided by edible fish. The plants in turn function as bio-filters, releasing freshly cleansed water back to the fish.

While most of the aquaponics education program takes place in the district’s 7th grade classrooms, field trips to Riverbend bring aquaponics learning to life. The program utilizes nine 20-gallon fish tanks and incorporates professional development for science and gifted teachers along with in-school lessons taught by Riverbend educators. A culminating project calls for students to create a plan for sustainable agriculture in their own neighborhoods.

It builds on an already-successful partnership with Norristown Area School District begun in 2006 in which nearly 12,000 Norristown elementary school students have participated in hands-on science and environmental education provided by Riverbend.

“Aquaponics is the perfect tool for engaging inquiry into a wider range of science and environmental topics,” said Janet Samuels, Superintendent of Norristown Area School District, who led the launch of this program in her district. “Not only does this new, dynamic resource address Pennsylvania Academic Standards, it encourages the critical thinking needed to solve the problems of the future.”

“When we expand our view globally, we see bigger problems of food and water scarcity. It’s exciting to note that Aquaponics uses only 10% of the water required by traditional agriculture,” Bachman added. As an environmental education center with a strong track record, we believe Riverbend is uniquely positioned to deliver the models, curriculum and teacher training needed to drive the critical thinking, investigation, and inspiration needed to solve problems. It is our hope that this innovative education program will benefit many more students in the Greater Philadelphia region.

For more information about Riverbend’s Aquaponics Education Program, visit www.riverbendec.org. For questions about the program, contact Laurie Bachman at lbachman@riverbendec.org or 610-527-5234, ext. 109.

ABOUT RIVERBEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Riverbend Environmental Education Center is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located at 1950 Spring Mill Road Gladwyne, PA. Our preserve is located on 30 acres, open 7 days a week for visitors. Riverbend offers a full menu of environmental education programs including school curriculum, teacher training, school field trips, exploration camp, public programs, weekly nature classes and special events.

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