



# In Common



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As we focus on aspects of UMass Extension programs that are critical to our constituents, to our communities and to the research capacity of UMass Amherst, we sometimes forget that our work brings a good deal of pleasure to our faculty, staff, partners and participants. Put simply, many of our initiatives are a lot of fun.

Perhaps we shouldn't admit it, but this issue of *In Common* has been fun. It started with immersing ourselves in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of Massachusetts' very vibrant Brazilian culture. In part because of our well-established Portuguese-speaking communities, the state has seen a steady influx of new residents from South America's largest country. Frank Mangan and his team are exploring a whole new market in homegrown Brazilian crops, and in doing so, are allowing us to relish and embrace the culture.

We also got to spend a day with Carol Childress and Bob Levite wandering through one of the state's most beautiful natural enclaves, just as others will now be able to enjoy it in perpetuity — despite rapid development — thanks to the Opacum Land Trust. Then, of course, there was a rousing community celebration with the Kokoski clan; and we don't think we have ever seen anyone over the age of eight take more joy in discovering new caterpillars than Bob Childs.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have.

## Cultivating a Taste for Brazil

There's a taste of Brazil in Massachusetts . . . in Boston, Whately and Dracut, where you will find crops like *jiló*, *maxixe*, *couve* and *quiabo* . . . in Framingham and Hyannis, where Gol Supermarkets offer new opportunities for the distribution of Brazilian crops . . . and in restaurants like the Midwest Grille in Cambridge where those crops go into increasingly popular Brazilian dishes.

Bringing it all together are 250,000 Massachusetts *Brasileiros* — along with the UMass Extension team, which is attempt-

ing to meet their nutritional needs and to boost the profitability of the state's farms.

Professor Frank Mangan of UMass Extension's Vegetable Team and the UMass Amherst Department of Plant, Insect and Soil Sciences had spent years researching the cultivation and marketing of a variety of "ethnic vegetables" when he had a chance to import some *jiló* (gec-LO) seeds in 2001. He had heard about

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Sílvia Moreira and Maria Da Mota

# People



## A New Look, A New View

Angelica Paredes calls it "The Look."

It may be the flash of an eye or the flicker of a face muscle. But when she gets "The Look" from a teen in trouble, Angelica believes she is making progress. And it makes her day.

Left: John and Elaine Kokoski, with daughters Jessica Dizak and Jennifer Zina Right: Angelica Paredes

## The Kokoski Tradition

**At Mapleline Farm you can't really separate the individual from the family, the family from the farm, the farm from an extended community, or the community from a long, successful tradition.**

On June 19, the Kokoski family celebrated the 100th anniversary of Mapleline Farm with the inauguration of an on-farm milk processing facility. Hundreds of well-wishers attended the event and toured the post card-perfect spread on Comins Road in North Hadley.

The people were notable. State Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative John Scibak were there. So was Doug Gillespie, state agriculture commissioner, and Cecil Curran, of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with UMass Extension folks. So, too, were hundreds of neighbors and customers of the Mapleline Farm's home delivery service.

Most notable, however, was the fact that they all came as friends.

"They treat their customers as friends," said Cecil who is a customer, friend and

collaborator through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

"They take care of the land and of the cows," USDA's Curran added, praising the Kokoski's state-of-the-art nutrient management system that mixes manure with milk processing wastewater to reduce both waste discharge and the use of chemical fertilizers.

Doug Gillespie, another old friend, said the Kokoskis are about to protect 55 acres of prime land under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR).

Heading it all are John and Elaine Kokoski, but family heritage is everywhere. With the exception of the founder, John's great-grandfather Stanley, grandparents, aunts and uncles still dot Comins Road. Son Paul runs the home delivery business, and, most fortunately for UMass Amherst, daughter Jessica Dizak is working as an Extension development associate.

"I just look around, and there is my family," noted Jessica, "I love it." ■

As an Extension Educator in the Communities, Families and Youth program, Angelica runs small-group workshops in North Adams for people 12 to 17 years of age who are under supervision of the juvenile justice system. Groups meet weekly, focusing on issues ranging from world hunger to anger management. After completing ten sessions on character building, the older teens return for a job readiness workshop with the goal of finding a summer job.

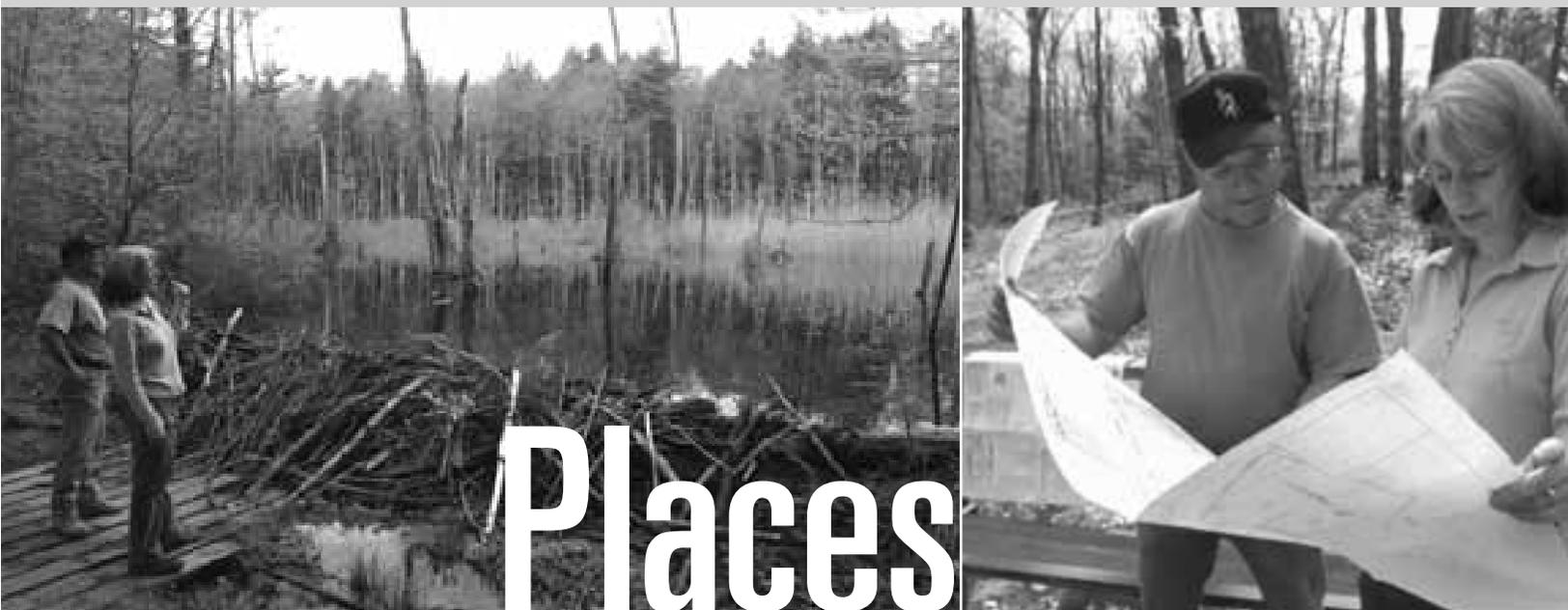
For some, this is a first experience in exploring different viewpoints.

"They've never been given the chance to contemplate," says Angelica.

During the workshop, the young people become more confident and verbal. They also learn — sometimes with difficulty — to gain respect for the opinions of others.

Angelica takes a firm stand. "I put my cards on the table and I don't change. I'm a constant in their lives," she says. Before joining UMass Extension six years ago, she worked with young people in residential treatment programs and as an advocate for families receiving public assistance. Although she is not new to this troubled world, she admits "the heaviness" sometimes gets her down.

Then she sees "The Look," and it all makes sense. "My heart goes out to them. I see hope," she says. ■



Bob Levite and Carol Childress

## Places

### Conservation and Development on the Margin

The bulldozer that rumbled onto Carol Childress's Sturbridge property in 1998 created a path that threatened to lead straight to the destruction of hundreds of acres of undeveloped old-growth forest and wetland habitat.

Thanks to an unlikely but highly effective partnership of talents and interests, however, the path led instead to the protection of 266 acres of that habitat — dubbed Opacum Woods — and to the creation of the new Opacum Land Trust, which now promises to protect even more land in a dozen towns along the frontier of development that stretches out along the Massachusetts Turnpike. It lies at the heart of the Quinebaug and Shetucket River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which straddles Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Wandering along ancient woodland trails, along ponds studded with beaver lodges, a visitor is only barely aware of the nearby turnpike, or the luxury homes that loom now and then through the trees. It is even harder to imagine that this nearly became a golf course.

Here's what made the difference: Carol Childress's anger at being invaded, her love of the land, and her determination to save it; developer Bob Moss, who was willing to buy into that determination; the talents of a committed board of directors for the new land trust; and Bob Levite of

UMass Extension's Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (NREC) program, who helped bring it all together.

The star of the show, however, was *Ambystoma opacum* — the Marbled Salamander. When Carol tripped over a rock along the path left by the errant bulldozer, she discovered one of only 38 breeding sites in the state for the threatened species.

"In the beginning," Carol Childress recalled recently, "we knew nothing about salamanders, land trusts or vernal pools. And the town planning board and conservation commission didn't really understand a lot of what we were trying to do."

Carol Childress teamed up with Westborough developer Bob Moss who took advantage of delays in the golf course and offered to buy the entire parcel. Moss won subdivision approval for 70 half-acre lots at one end of the 300-acre parcel — an area that Carol Childress says is "least intrusive in terms of endangered species and archeological features." Bob Moss donated the rest of the land to the newly-formed Opacum Land Trust — and Opacum Woods was born.

The effort earned Bob Moss and Carol Childress the 2004 Environmental Award sponsored by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and Worcester Business Journal.

Extension's Bob Levite, an attorney, was integral to the process that included more than a half-dozen public, private and educational entities, including the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and the Sturbridge Planning Board and Conservation Commission.

"It was Bob's mediation that brought it all together," said Carol.

The project highlighted important lessons. The town asked Bob Levite to organize a series of five public forums on planning, smart growth, and biodiversity. The series included a presentation by UMass Extension NREC director Scott Jackson, and drew on the resources of Extension's partners in Green Valley Institute, including University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension.

"This really has mushroomed, and is a great example of developing what should be developed, and conserving what should be conserved," notes Bob Levite. "It's one of the largest blocks of protected undeveloped land in Central Massachusetts. And it all started with Carol tripping over a rock."

For more information, check [www.opacumlt.org](http://www.opacumlt.org) and [thelastgreenvalley.org/gvi](http://thelastgreenvalley.org/gvi). ■



## Budding Nuisance

Call it *The Year of the Caterpillar*.

That's what Deborah Swanson and Bob Childs of Extension's Landscape, Nursery and Urban Forestry Team are calling it. They've been unfolding a detective story that began a decade ago with an outbreak of what seemed to be fall cankerworms in southeastern Massachusetts, where Deborah heads Plymouth County Extension.

"Populations have a way of blowing up for a couple years, and then crashing. I told Deborah they'd go away," recalls Bob.

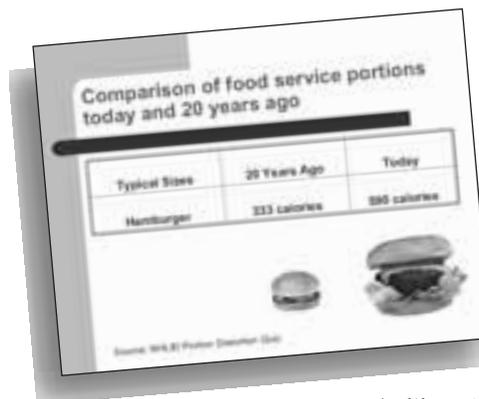
In fact, they weren't cankerworms, and they didn't go away. Instead they returned with a vengeance, and spread, leaving the May foliage looking more like December's. It wasn't until recently that the pair, working with UMass Amherst forest ecologist Joe Elkinton and George Boettner of the UMass Amherst Department of Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences, identified the culprit as European Winter Moth.

"It was the first time this critter has been seen east of the Mississippi," says Bob. "The problem is that nothing con-

trols them here naturally."

Dormant oil sprays are effective, but only before the newly hatched inchworms make their way into a maple tree's bud, where they begin a well-protected feast. Don't look for them now, though. Having hatched on April 18, the caterpillars have gorged themselves and fallen safely into the soil, from which they will emerge as moths next fall. And that's just the beginning.

"Along with seeing many familiar caterpillar species in high numbers this year, there are also a phenomenal number of caterpillars in new places this year," says Bob Childs. He adds that it's likely there's more than one cause, though wet springs may be part of the problem. The solution? For now, says Bob, try to avoid chemical sprays. Biological controls like *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) should control many species. ■



## Weighty Research

Adolescents and fast food. They go together — increasingly, with obesity.

It's odd, then, how little we know about what influences teen food spending, and how to help them choose wisely, says Professor Jean Anliker, of UMass Extension's Nutrition Education Program.

That may change with a four-year study, *Tween POWER: Preventing Obesity through Wise Expenditures of Resources*, being conducted by Jean and Professor Elena Carbone of the UMass Amherst Department of Nutrition under an \$800,000 USDA grant.

Fifteen percent of children and teens are obese today, double the rate in 1980. Teens spend about \$27 billion a

year, much of that on food and beverages, and the food industry spends \$33 billion a year on advertising and promotions.

"There has been a lot of finger-pointing at fast food without much data to back it up," notes Jean

Anliker. "Nobody has studied what teens are buying, or what goes through their minds when they make choices. We must know these things to stop the obesity epidemic."

"Tweens" in the study — 11 to 14 years old — will "think out loud" into tape recorders as they make food choices. Professor Shirley Mietlicki of Extension's Communities, Families and Youth Program will help link the study with teen participants, and Professor Sheila Mammen will collaborate on consumer issues. In a second phase, the team will develop and test an innovative program to improve "tween" buying practices. Researchers in Connecticut and Maryland are also participating. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the small, slightly bitter eggplant from his Portuguese teacher. Since then, he has visited Brazil, learned more Portuguese, honed his taste for things Brazilian, and sparked a new interest in Brazilian crops around the state.

Frank recruited Maria Moreira of Lancaster, a native of the Azores and a veteran of UMass Extension's effort to help Laotian Hmong farmers grow and market Southeast Asian vegetables, and her sister-in-law, Silvia Moreira of Lowell, who hails from Brazil. Residents from Brazil, the Azores, the Cape Verde Islands and Portugal have made Portuguese the second language of Massachusetts, notes Silvia Moreira.

"Many stay for several years, and return to Brazil, but they can't make enough to feed their families. So they come back to the U.S.," says Silvia, who is the "eyes and ears of the project."

"Silvia and Maria are key to this project," says Frank Mangan. "Silvia knows the Brazilian community, and what it wants. Farmers have to be able to get crops to people who want them, and without community support, this won't work."

At the 130-acre Allandale Farm, the only working farm in Boston, manager John Lee agreed three years ago to grow some of the *jiló* seedlings that Frank had started at the UMass Amherst Research Station in South Deerfield. He quickly discovered that *jiló* grew well and was easy to pick.

"*Jiló* does well in dry soil, and we think it will be great in rotation," says John Lee, who also grows *couve* (CO-vey, a variety of collard), *maxixe* (ma-SHE-shee, a cucumber), *quiabo* (kee-A-bo, okra) and three varieties of Brazilian squash.



Dave DeWitt and Victor Lopez-Matute of Allandale Farm inspect *jiló* with Silvia Moreira.

### "It's the way to save the farm. This is the year of *jiló*."

Even more important, John Lee found that *jiló* sold well at several times the 50-cents per pound wholesale price of eggplant. This year, Allandale is raising over 3,000 *jiló* plants, which will produce over 1500 pounds of this type of eggplant a week. Lee hopes to get as much as \$4.50 a pound.

"Success means doing something that other people haven't figured out yet," says John Lee. "It's the way to save the farm. This is the year of *jiló*. It's our first big wholesale crop."

João Araujo and Maria Da Mota are crucial to that success. The couple own four Brazilian markets, including Gol Supermarket in Framingham. Their Rainbow Trading Company is a wholesale distributor for 150 other markets and restaurants. Frank Mangan introduced João to John Lee and helped initiate a promising agreement to distribute Allandale's *jiló* crop.

Brazilian culture envelops Gol Supermarket, from the mural of Ipanema Beach to the fresh-baked *pão de queijo* (cheese

bread). A visit turns into a rapid-fire exchange of recipes, nutritional tidbits, geography and language. Maria Da Mota tells Frank that Gol has already sold all of the *jiló* seedlings produced by Allandale at its farm stores. She is looking forward to the Brazilian vegetable that Allandale will begin picking in early August.

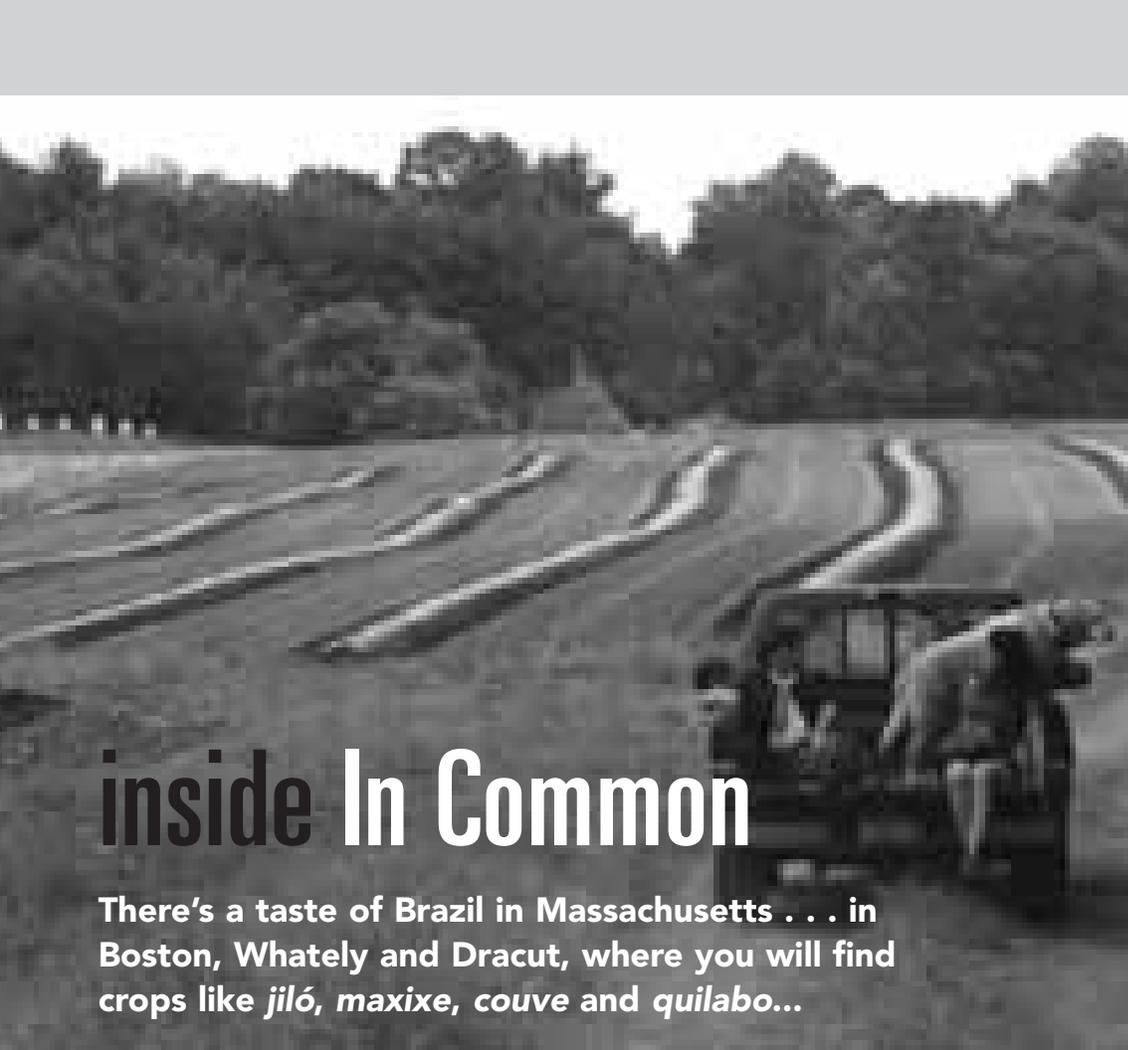
"We've been getting *jiló* from Florida. But it's already yellow and costs \$6.50 per pound,"

says Maria Da Mota. "Our customers want it green, and they want it fresh." Harvest Farm in Whately is hoping to forge a similar agreement with a New Jersey supermarket chain.

With a distributor like Gol, the *jiló* grown at Allandale, Harvest Farm, or Brox Farm in Dracut, may well find its way into a popular Brazilian restaurant like the Midwest Grille near Inman Square in Cambridge. There, surrounded by the sounds of samba and bossa nova, you will find *jiló* and sautéed *couve* in an extensive buffet — which also includes *feijoada*, a rich meat and bean stew, which is a Brazilian favorite.

"It's really exciting to be able to identify an opportunity and get Massachusetts farmers in at the beginning," says Frank Mangan.

Frank and his team see the success of this *jiló* growing season to be critical to the future of the Brazilian crop market in the state. Already, however, they are looking ahead. Frank wants to explore the local potential for preserving and packaging *jiló*, and he is hoping to win federal and state support to explore new trade opportunities between Massachusetts and Brazil. ■



# inside In Common

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- Extension Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
- Extension Nutrition Education
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