

In Memory of Samuel Leon (1925-2010)

Much like Clifford and Melda Snyder, New Jersey farmer Sam Leon believed in education, hard work, honest dealings and civic service. This was evident in his service in the army in World War II, on the Kingwood Township Committee, its planning board, and several years as mayor. A hard worker, Sam led by example, expecting his family to invest carefully and wisely in their sod business. As founder and owner of Leon's Sod Farm in Kingwood Township, he planted the sod at the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island. Leon's sod also has gone to numerous other places including North Hunterdon High School, Johnson & Johnson properties, Foster Wheeler, Warner Lambert, golf courses, cemeteries and numerous large developments, ever a reminder of the great extent of his achievements. He was a member and past president of the NJ Turf Grass Association and was inducted into its Hall of Fame. But, work and social obligation never interfered with what meant most to him...family and friends. Sam was a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather and loved spending time with his beloved great grandchildren. He enjoyed playing baseball and bowling at one time and was a member of the American Legion in Flemington and the Flemington Elks. His commitment to what is truly important is a reminder to all that greatness comes in the ordinary done with an extraordinary spirit.

Sam's work ethic and beliefs are alive and well at the Snyder Farm, which provides training in lawn and garden care, natural grass sports fields, youth development, and water quality. The Snyder Farm aims to keep New Jersey farmers profitable while at the same time striving for environmental and community responsibility. Sam Leon kept a lifeline to Rutgers, both to improve his knowledge and his business. His granddaughter, Jamie, and her husband, Rudy, learned alongside Sam, completing summer internships at Snyder Farm during their youth. Early in 2012, Rudy and Jamie made a gift to remember their beloved Sam Leon that will allow Rutgers to teach turfgrass management in a new way. Most Hunterdon County home lawns are substantially larger than typical New Jersey lawns due to zoning ordinances for environmental preservation. Addressing turfgrass management for large lawns is a unique need that's met by Snyder Farm since information for homeowners generally does not address lawn size. The gift, in memory of Sam Leon, will support low maintenance turfgrass sites used for hands-on training at the Snyder Farm for both homeowners and Rutgers Master Gardener volunteers, who answer helpline questions from homeowners regarding lawn care.

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