

PITTSBURGH CONNECTION

URBAN TREE FORGE is a creative studio based in Pittsburgh that specializes in the use of locally available and sustainably acquired natural resources, particularly wood, to create value-added products—such as unique cabinetry and doors.

“We use fresh wood from Pittsburgh’s urban forest and recycled wood from various sources within our community to make furniture, sculptures and other artistic products,” said John Metzler, the company’s owner. Recently Metzler approached The Penn State Center: Engaging Pittsburgh for help in developing a kiln drying system—necessary to convert wood into other products.

The new center, an effort of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Outreach’s Cooperative Extension unit and led by Deno De Ciantis, aims to connect businesses like Metzler’s and other organizations to Penn State programs that can help them. While Penn State outreach activities in the Pittsburgh area have already been long established, the center aims to elevate the profile of Penn State in the area by bringing under one roof as many Penn State programs—virtual or physical—as possible. These programs focus on providing solutions for not only sustainability efforts, including alternative fuel exploration, but also for challenges ranging from corporate research and devel-



Deno De Ciantis (right) at a community garden outside of Pittsburgh

opment to workforce and community development.

According to De Ciantis, by improving Penn State’s outreach services in the Pittsburgh area, the University can “enhance its recognition as a local resource and as a part of the fabric of that community. Pittsburgh has a metropolitan area population of about 2.5 million people. Our center complements local institutions in the Pittsburgh area helping to provide solutions to many issues facing the region.”

For more information, contact De Ciantis at **412-263-1000** or **dwd5@psu.edu**.



NEW LIFE FOR THE DODGE NEON

ERIC BYRNE, SUPERVISOR of the mechanical laboratories at Penn State Berks, is working with a group of Penn State students and eCycle Inc., a company that specializes in electric motor technology, to convert a 1995 Dodge Neon into a hybrid car that achieves 80 miles per gallon. “This project is teaching students the concepts behind building a hybrid vehicle, and along the way they are helping to preserve our environment through ingenuity,” said Byrne, who expects the project to be completed by the end of the spring semester.

Students brainstorm for parts in an effort to make a hybrid out of an old vehicle.