



**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: October 18, 2004  
Contact: Roberta Redfern

---

*"The world owes nothing to any man, but every man owes something to the world."*  
**- Thomas Alva Edison**

**MILAN, OH** – When Mickey Rooney came upon future farmer Zack Jones dressed up as a young Thomas Edison during a Culinary Vegetable Institute event honoring the great inventor, the actor patted the boy enthusiastically on the back and flashed that award-winning smile that distinguishes him as a Hollywood legend.

The connection between Rooney and the young boy occurred October 16 at a reception at the CVI in Milan, Ohio, where Rooney appeared as a guest of honor at events that celebrated Edison's lighting of the world 125 years ago through his invention of the incandescent lightbulb. Rooney, who portrayed a young Tom Edison in the 1940 movie of the same name, honored Northern Ohio residents with his presence at first the VIP event at the CVI and then a 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala at BGSU Firelands.

Zack Jones is the son of one of the CVI's founders, and it was at the facility that the celebration of Edison – called the greatest inventor to date – melded with the innovative environment that embodies the institute. The Jones family and their team practice farming methods of long ago to grow more than 600 heirloom vegetables and greens and more than 500 experimental products at the institute and The Chef's Garden™ in Huron. Their beliefs in growing the most exceptional products in the most natural way possible parallel Edison's love of nature with regard to experimentation – at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers, Fla., Edison and his friend, Henry Ford, grew hundreds of unique plants, flowers and trees in experimental gardens that they used for both scientific investigation and aesthetic reasons.

"Edison was into natural products, so the CVI was the perfect place to have this event. We've come full circle right here at Farmer Jones's," said Edison's great-grandson, David Edison Sloane, who brought his family to the CVI event from Connecticut.

At the reception, nearly 100 guests got to learn more about the institute and its non-profit organization Veggie U; meet the famed Mr. Rooney and relatives of Edison; and sample Chef's Garden vegetables and fantastic hors d'oeuvres created by Lorain County Joint Vocational Chef Tim Michitsch, his culinary students and the CVI staff.

Sloane noted the similarities between his great-grandfather and what is happening at the CVI, a culinary educational retreat dedicated to teaching children healthful eating and providing chefs a haven to experiment with acres and acres of kitchen gardens full of naturally grown specialty vegetables and greens. As an example, Sloane pointed out the time his great-grandfather grew 18-foot goldenrod plants that he used to try to develop a domestic source for synthetic rubber.

Edison, who was born in Milan, Ohio, in 1847, registered more than 1,000 patents in his name during his lifetime. The evening's events at the CVI and Firelands were arranged by many of Edison's relatives who sit on the board of the Edison Birthplace Museum, including David Sloane; another great-grandson, Barry Sloane; and great, great grand-nephew and board president Robert K. L. Wheeler. It was Wheeler who sent a personal letter to Rooney's home and followed up with a phone call, inviting him to participate.

"We realized that we had to do something – that this special time shouldn't go unnoticed," said Barry Sloane, a trustee on the board. "I think the thing Edison taught us most – besides all the great gifts he gave us – is that you, too, can do the same thing. We can all be great."

Rooney, who came to the CVI with his wife, Jan, and his son Chris, was enthusiastic about the event. He spent his time at the institute sampling the vegetables, chatting with guests and signing programs. He even took a moment to play a jazz tune on the piano.

"We're very happy to be here," Rooney said. "This means a lot to us because of the Edison family and their legacy."

Henrietta Holsman Fore, the 37<sup>th</sup> director of the United States Mint, attended the CVI event as well, and was blown away by the exceptional products she was able to see and taste. She presented the Thomas Alva Edison Commemorative Coin later that evening at Firelands.

"I am a lifelong vegetable lover, and I am extra excited to see the colors, vibrancy, the quality, the vast variety, to taste the different flavors ... " she said as she moved over the display of specialty products set up for tasting at the CVI. "This setup here is so very similar to Edison's life – he was always experimenting."

For more information about The Culinary Vegetable Institute and The Chef's Garden™, go to [www.culinaryvegetableinstitute.com](http://www.culinaryvegetableinstitute.com) or call 1-419-499-7500.