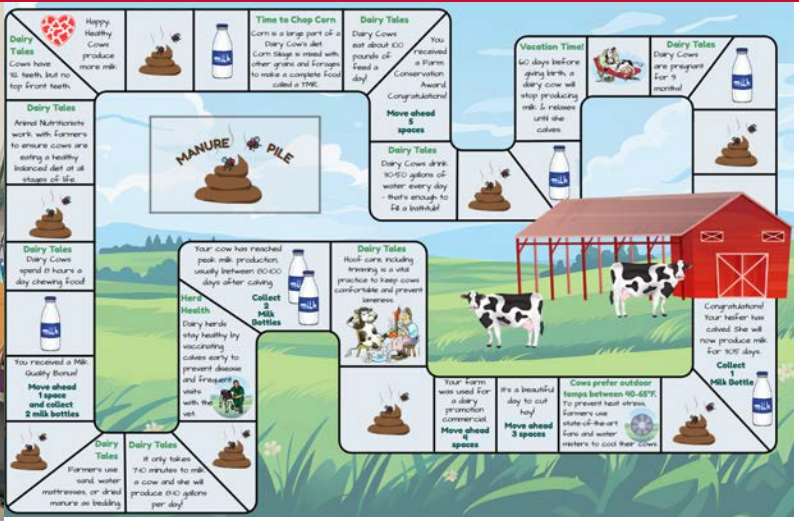


# Program Highlights



Cornell Cooperative Extension  
**Cayuga County**

**2025**  
 Annual Report

Cover Credits: *Clockwise from top left, students at Genessee Elementary play the “Dairy Tales” game in class; the “Dairy Tales” gameboard; students make dairy-based fruit smoothies at Cato-Meridian Elementary School; a student churns ice cream by pedalling the Dairy Bike at Booker T. Washington Community Center summer youth program. See our article on this program inside on page 9.*

*Our Mission: To strengthen youth, adults, families and communities through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work.*



## Dairy in the Classroom

Our Educator created a fun new board game to teach kids that dairy farming is hard work, and it's a big hit!



## Great Pumpkins!

The winner of our 2nd Annual 4-H Great Pumpkin Growing Contest grew a pumpkin that weighed 86.5 pounds!



## GIS & Drones Class

Our staff partnered with Cayuga Community College faculty to offer a one-day, hands-on workshop on these emerging technologies.

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Foxes Drone Services LLC

# (2) 2025 CCE CAYUGA TEAM

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work!

## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tricia Kerr, *President*

Dee Dee Schenck, *Secretary*

Katie La Fave, *Vice-President*

Sue Bowers-Hodson, *Treasurer*

Susan Bowers-Hodson

Alexis Boyce

Jason Cuddeback

Chelsey M Hipkens

Rachel Liseno

Monika Salvage

Derek Simmonds

Ben Vitale

Renee Mooneyhan, *Extension Representative*

Tim Winslow, *Legislative Representative*

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## OUR STAFF

### Administrative Staff

Dan Welch, *Executive Director*

Keisha Dutton, *Operations Coordinator*

Jean Marie Zilnik, *Finance Specialist*

Sandy Repp, *Communications Coordinator*

### Educators

Cyle Abbott, *SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator*

Frank Clarke, *Agriculture Educator*

\*Ron Kuck, *Agriculture Educator*

Sara Wagner, *4-H Program Lead*

Erin Humphrey, *Dairy-in-the-Classroom Educator*

\*Becky McCormick, *SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator*

Ryan Staychock, *Environment/Natural Resources Educator*

### Taste NY Market

Heather Ward, *Taste NY Market Manager*

Colby Bastian, *Taste NY Clerk*

Jordan Thomas, *Taste NY Clerk*

Morgan Jones, *Taste NY Clerk & Social Media*

### SCNY Regional Dairy & Field Crops Team

Janis Degni, *Team Leader, Field Crop Specialist*

Betsy Hicks, *Dairy Specialist*

\*Retired in 2025

To contact individual CCE Cayuga staff members, please visit: <https://ccecayuga.org/staff>.

For Regional Team member contact info, visit: <https://snyderdc.cce.cornell.edu/>.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension**  
**CAYUGA COUNTY**  
**2025**



## WELCOME MESSAGE

This past year, Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County put knowledge to work by bringing together local experience and research-based solutions to help Cayuga County families and communities thrive. As we help others navigate our rapidly changing world, your extension association is also adapting to continue our legacy of delivering relevant programs in agriculture, natural resources, and 4-H youth development.

Early in 2025, CCE Cayuga moved back to what was the extension building on Grant Avenue in Auburn. Originally designed and built as the Cayuga County Farm, Home, and 4-H Center, it served as the headquarters for extension for sixty years before being gifted to Cayuga Community College. Over three years the building was extensively remodeled, and all mechanical systems were updated. Now known as the Workforce Development Center, the building also houses the Cayuga Community College Office of Workforce Development and Community Education, the Cayuga County Employment and Training Department, and the local office of the NYS Department of Labor.

In 2025, we launched several new initiatives under our program areas. The 4-H program started two new SPARK clubs in Auburn and Moravia. A SPARK Club is led by a 4-H educator and features a different activity each month. In the Natural Resources area, the first group of Cornell Climate Stewards from Cayuga County graduated in 2025. Climate Stewards are volunteers who use their training to educate communities on strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation. A new addition to the agriculture program is the Horse Farm Improvement Program, which offers an on-farm evaluation of horse farms to identify strengths and possible ways to increase farm viability. While not new, CCE Cayuga reached over 3,500 youth in the county through the Dairy in the Classroom and Agricultural Literacy Week programs.

2025 was not without its challenges. In the middle of the year, all CCE offices were notified that federal funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) was eliminated. SNAP-Ed provided nutrition education to adults, youth, and families in Cayuga County for over 30 years. While we hope this is only a temporary pause in our nutrition education work that began in Cayuga County with Home Bureau agents a century ago, it is a significant break in the continuity of this program area. We also sustained a significant budget cut from the County heading into 2026, which led to the difficult decision to end participation in the South-Central Dairy and Field Crop Program effective October 1, 2026.

Despite these challenges, we are excited for the future and looking forward to the year ahead. CCE Cayuga will continue to invest in our staff and programs, maintain and build new community partnerships, and remain a trusted source of research-based information for the residents of Cayuga County.

Tricia Kerr  
*Board President 2025*

Daniel Welch  
*Executive Director*

#### (4) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT >>

## Epsilon Sigma Phi Recognizes Milk Bar Team

A unique workforce development program, staffed and managed by Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County, has received the 2025 Distinguished Team Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi, Lambda Chapter. The award recognizes professional excellence in Cooperative Extension programs.

Based in one of the largest milk producing counties in New York State, CCE Cayuga was tapped in 2022 to run the iconic Milk Bar at the New York State Fair in nearby Syracuse. With input from Cornell University Cooperative Extension, the team reimagined this popular Fair attraction as a youth workforce training program. Funded by the New York State Dept. of Agriculture & Markets, the Milk Bar now provides marketable first-job experience for Central New York teens while introducing them to NY State's important dairy industry through classroom study and visits to dairy farms and processing facilities.

In 2025, forty-three teens ranging in age from 14 to 19 were recruited primarily from Cayuga and Onondaga Counties, to sell and serve more than 285,000 cups of cold refreshing milk to fairgoers. For most, working at the Milk Bar had been their first job experience. Supervisors Heather Ward of CCE-Cayuga and Jacob Maslyn of CCE-Ontario provided the teens with pre-Fair training that included basic application steps, team building and customer service skills, and general workplace expectations. Three days of field trips to dairy farms, sheep dairies, and to Cornell AgriTech in Geneva exposed them to many career pathways and opportunities that involve milk processing, farming, and food research and also equipped them to share information they had learned with their Milk Bar customers.

The 2025 Distinguished Team Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi, Lambda Chapter recognizes the NYS State Fair Milk Bar Team's work, as having "exemplified the spirit of Cooperative Extension—addressing critical issues through collaboration, innovation, and education." Team members Dan Welch, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County; Victoria Giarrantano, Assistant Director of CCE Administration, Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development; Heather Ward,



*Team award recipients, clockwise from top left: Dan Welch, Heather Ward, Jacob Maslyn, and Victoria Giarrantano,*

Taste NY Market Manager (CCE Cayuga County), and Jacob Maslyn, Agricultural Economic Development Educator (CCE Ontario County) were acknowledged "for their ongoing work to develop and implement a sustainable model that reestablished the Milk Bar as a cornerstone of agricultural education and community engagement and reimagined it as a comprehensive youth workforce development project."

The New York Lambda Chapter of Epsilon Sigma Phi is part of a nationwide network of professional development organizations serving Cooperative Extension. Learn more at: <https://portal.espnational.org/>. For more about CCE-Cayuga, visit: <https://ccecayuga.org/>. Find Cornell Cooperative Extension online at: <https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension>.



## CCE-CAYUGA ANNUAL MEETING FEATURES NY FARMNET SPEAKER



The 2025 Annual Meeting of Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County was held on Thursday, October 23rd from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Sennett Volunteer Fire Department Hall in Auburn. Forty-one attendees sampled appetizers and desserts as they viewed displays and socialized with staff members who shared information on the programs, services and resources they provide on topics in agriculture, environmental issues, gardening, 4-H youth clubs and activities, as well as sales and events at the Taste NY Market, which is staffed and managed by CCE-Cayuga in the NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center in Auburn.

This year's featured speaker was Adam Howell, New York FarmNet Outreach Director, who talked about the resources his organization offers to help farmers and their families manage stress, anxiety and depression, including free and confidential mental health counselors and financial advisors. Executive Director Dan Welch and Board President Tricia Kerr provided updates on program accomplishments during 2025. Cayuga County residents in attendance voted to elect several new community members who will serve on the Board of Directors beginning in January 2026. ☀



Scenes from the 2025 CCE Cayuga Annual Meeting, clockwise from top left: attendees socialize while viewing program displays; Adam Howell, NY FarmNet Outreach Director, addresses the gathering; new board member Maeve Kilcer with Celeste Carmichael; Executive Director Dan Welch gives a review of 2025.

## (6) 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT >>

# 4-H Youth Programs: *To Make the Best Better!*

4-H is thriving in Cayuga County! 4-H membership continued to grow in popularity in 2025, with 84 enrolled members, up from 60 in 2024, and we expect even more participants in the coming year. Bigger doesn't always mean better, but expanding our annual 4-H Youth Fair to include Seneca County 4-Hers this past August resulted in a more robust and richer experience for those who were involved. We had 102 4-H participants, 293 animals shown across 8 different species, 216 static projects and over 800 visitors in attendance! Seventeen 4-Hers auctioned 58 animals for over \$65,000 at our 3rd Annual Market Livestock Auction. Again this year, volunteers contributed countless hours to our 4-H Club and Youth Fair programs, and donors stepped up to ensure the success of our 4-H Youth Fair, with 88 donors giving \$22k in cash and \$15k of in-kind goods and services. Thanks to you all!



*4-H members rest with their project animals at the 2025 4-H Youth Fair*

Beyond these achievements in fundraising and membership, our staff is developing and delivering quality programs that meet unaddressed needs and interests of youth in our county. On the following pages, you can learn more about new staff-led 4-H SPARKS clubs we are piloting in Moravia and Auburn, creative ways that our Dairy in the Classroom program is getting elementary school children excited about dairy farming, and a new animal care clinic that helps youth completing 4-H animal science projects to thrive. These efforts all benefit from the support of 4-H parents, volunteers and the community, and we appreciate your ongoing interest and involvement. ☀

## *A Selection of 2024 Programs:*

- 2025 Cayuga & Seneca County 4-H Youth Fair
- 4-H Crochet Program
- 4-H Clubs (for youth aged 8 to 19)
- Cloverbud Clubs (for youth aged 5 to 7)
- Cattle, Dairy, Livestock & Poultry Showmanship Clinics
- Dairy-in-the-Classroom Programs
- 4-H Dog Obedience Classes & Show
- Fabius Christmas Tree Farm Virtual Field Trip
- 2nd Annual 4-H Giant Pumpkin Contest
- Livestock Photography Workshop
- 4-H Market Poultry Show
- 3rd Annual Market Livestock Auction
- NEW! 4-H SPARKS Clubs in Moravia & Auburn
- Owasco Meat Company Tour
- Plants & Pollinators at Casey Park
- Produced In New York Competition & Showcase
- 4-H Public Presentations
- Rabbit & Cavy Clinic
- 4-H Recognition Dinner
- Basics of Raising Backyard Chickens Pheasants
- Youth Quality Care of Animals (YOCA) training
- Youth Tractor Safety Certification Class



*Rosa Staer (left) and Harper Yousey (right) make waffles in the 2025 Produced in New York Competition and Showcase event.*

## (7) 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT>>

# ANIMAL CARE CLINIC CONNECTS YOUTH, VETERINARIANS & FARMERS

The 4-H Animal Science program in Cayuga County has increased significantly in popularity over the past few years, with more youth completing projects across a wider variety of species at our annual 4-H Youth Fair. While in 2022 only cavy, chickens, dairy cattle and rabbits were shown, animal auctions were added in 2023, and by last year large livestock --including beef cattle, sheep, goats and swine -- had become major project categories.

Additional education about the project animals and their care helps 4-Hers to complete their fair projects at the most sophisticated level they are able to achieve, and ultimately benefits their livestock farming experience in the long term as well. To support this growth, the CCE Cayuga 4-H staff organized and hosted a free Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certification course for the first time on-site at Carovail on April 14, 2025.

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) is a national education and certification program for youth aged 8-to-21 who produce and/or show the many species mentioned here. Designed by extension specialists and national livestock program managers, YQCA was developed to improve participant compliance with regulations at youth fairs, to increase youth knowledge about animal health record keeping,



*Participants and parents gather to review materials at the 4-H Skillathon at Caravail.*

to improve livestock skills and knowledge, and increase skills and confidence when communicating with the public about youth's animal projects.

All 4-H members in Cayuga and Seneca Counties were invited to this educational clinic. Youth participants received their YQCA certification and took part in a presentation and Q&A with Dr. Rebecca Goodale, the state veterinarian for our region. Although no live animals were present at the event, a "Livestock Skillathon" featured stations staffed by farm parent volunteers, practicing challenges such as identifying various livestock tools, farm tools, feedstock, and retail meat cuts. Youth also completed writing exercises to help them complete professional and compelling buyer letters as they recruit buyers for their auction animals.

Twenty-eight youths participated in the clinic. More than 200 animals were shown by 4-Hers at the Youth Fair that summer. Clinic attendees were much more likely to successfully complete their record books, reach out to potential bidders and buyers for auction animals, and all the animals they brought to fair met all the health and identification standards.

To reflect the increasing sophistication of youth projects, this year we offered training in both financial and health record keeping at our Animal Care Clinic. Interest in this topic was great enough that we offered the training on two dates, one by zoom, to increase accessibility to all of our youth and families. We also had one youth successfully compete in the Finger Lakes District Livestock Skillathon, earning herself a place in the state-wide competition at the 2025 New York State Fair.

For more information, contact Sara Wagner, 4-H Team Lead at [smw352@cornell.edu](mailto:smw352@cornell.edu) or (315) 255-1183. ☀



*Ron Kuck, CCE Cayuga Ag Educator, quizzes participants on various dairy feeds at the Skillathon.*

## 4-H Pilots New SPARKS Clubs in Moravia and Auburn

Cayuga County 4-H is reaching new youth audiences with the introduction of 4-H SPARKS Clubs in Moravia and Auburn in 2025. Unlike a traditional 4-H meeting led by a parent or other adult volunteers, the SPARKS Club is a new type of staff-led program that enables youth to experience 4-H and investigate their “SPARKS” -- or new areas of interest -- in situations where a volunteer may not be available to organize and host a club. “We often get calls from families who recognize the value 4-H provides but cannot personally commit to managing a club for their children,” says Sara Wagner, Cayuga County 4-H Lead. “4-H SPARKS Clubs are a new offering that can help meet this need,” she concludes.

4-H Educator Katy Drake coordinates the two new clubs, and reports that the new format and offerings have been well received since their introduction in October 2025. Each month a new subject and activity is covered. Topics for both clubs for 2025-2026 will include: Learning about the life cycle of plants and making a pressed leaf and flower lantern; basic bird identification and using hand tools to make a bird feeder; building code to run a Lego robot; and planting and growing an edible herb garden.

The 4-H SPARKS Clubs are free and open to any interested youth aged 5-to-18 years, and all materials are provided. Youth may attend one, some, or all meetings and may start attending at any time during the year. The Moravia SPARKS Club meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 4:00-5:00pm at the Moravia Masonic Lodge at 59 Main Street. The Auburn SPARKS Club meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday from 5:30-6:30pm at the CCE-Cayuga offices at 248 Grant Avenue. While enrollment in 4-H is encouraged, it is required



Auburn 4-H SPARKS Club members Courtney and Yanna with Legos

only for youth who choose to enter their club projects in the 4-H Youth Fair, or who use their 4-H experience on an application. Youth under the age of 14 should be accompanied by an adult. Parents in both clubs have been active in running the monthly activities and in suggesting upcoming “SPARKS” topics.

In addition to her work with the 4-H SPARKS Clubs, Katy coordinates a 4-H Fiber Arts Club at Sew What in Auburn that started in November and now meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month. She hopes to host a “Learn to Use a Sewing Machine” 5-week series in Fall 2026. For more information about these offerings or the 4-H SPARKS Clubs in either location, please contact Katy Drake at [kmd324@cornell.edu](mailto:kmd324@cornell.edu) or call her at (315) 255-1183. ☀



Some participants show their work from a 4-H Plants & Pollinators workshop at Booker T. Washington Community Center, November 2025.

## “COW TALES” GAME SHOWS KIDS THAT DAIRY FARMING IS HARD WORK

How do you get kids excited about what happens on Cayuga County’s dairy farms? That’s the challenge for Erin Humphrey who, as our Dairy in the Classroom Educator for three of her six years at CCE-Cayuga, consistently has come up with creative and tasty ways to engage local elementary school children on a wide variety of dairy-related subjects.

Erin visits schools and summer programs across Cayuga County throughout the year, sharing grade-appropriate lessons and activities that illustrate the journey of milk from the cow to our tables. Children learn what dairy cows eat, how they are cared for, the nutrients that are in their milk and why it’s good for our bodies, how milk is processed, and they sample and learn to identify many different products made with milk. Other lessons cover dairy farm operations, and environmental subjects such as the water cycle and the importance of pollination.

It’s the unique, hands-on activities that really make these lessons sink in, however. In Mrs. Minnoe’s 4th grade classroom at Genesee Elementary School, for example, students learned about how a dairy farm operates then were asked to describe and draw what their farm would produce for its animals, and how they would shelter and care for their animals if they were dairy farmers. The students also enjoyed a snack of fresh New York apples with a maple-yogurt dip.

This year, Erin introduced “Dairy Tales”, a Monopoly style board game she created to show kids that dairy farming is hard work. Players use a cow as a token, and



Fourth graders in Mrs. Minnoe’s class at Genesee Elementary School learn about farming by playing the “Dairy Tales” Game.

their cow must have a calf to get out of the barn and start the game. As players move around the board, they learn what happens throughout a year on a dairy farm, such as cutting hay, hoof care, handling cow heat stress, chopping corn and more. Along the way they collect milk bottles as rewards, and learn facts about dairy farming. However, if their cow lands on the image of a “pile of poop”, their token is sent to the “Manure Pile”, and they learn about some negatives as well as positives that can happen on a dairy farm.

“The kids have so much fun. It is really exciting to see them,” Erin says. “I demo’ed Dairy Tales with Dairy Educators at a statewide in-service last year, and asked them all to play the game to be sure it would work. They really liked it so I sent copies for them to use in their own programs. Katie Carpenter who manages New York State’s Ag in the Classroom program also took the game to their funder to show what program educators are doing,” she said.

This past summer, Erin visited 4 different summer programs where she showed youth how to make whipped cream, ice cream and smoothies. In a new and very popular feature introduced this year, kids took turns pedaling a stationary bike to churn fresh homemade ice cream make smoothies or in an attached churn or blender.

The program began in just 29 classrooms, and in 3 years has grown 365%. During the 2024-2025 school year, Erin made 6 or 7 visits to each of 95 individual classrooms, reaching 1564 students and sharing 7660 samples of dairy products. The Dairy in the Classroom program is offered free of charge to schools and nonprofits, and is funded by a grant from the Dairy Promotion Advisory Committee. For more information, contact Erin Humphrey at [emw54@cornell.edu](mailto:emw54@cornell.edu) or (315) 255-1183 ext.105. ☀



Dairy in the Classroom Educator Erin Humphrey (standing) talks with students about their designs for farms at Seward Elementary School .

# Agriculture: A Focus on Education, Research & Sustainability

## About Cayuga County Agriculture

The CCE-Cayuga Agriculture Program works to anticipate and address the needs and interests of commercial farmers, municipalities, and rural residents of Cayuga County. Members of our Ag staff consult individually on specific farming issues and soil and watershed health; conduct local research; and partner with CCE work teams, Cornell researchers, and other agricultural organizations to connect our farmers with current research, experimental trials, and with continuing education on topics to support their economic success.

We also encourage the next generation of local farmers, through Ag staff involvement in 4-H programs in dairy, livestock and field crops for youth, the 4-H Youth Fair and Market Livestock Auction and youth tractor safety classes.



Cow in the Cornell Teaching Dairy Barn (Lindsay France, Cornell University).

## Selected Programs Offered in 2025

- CCE Shop Meeting: “*Weed Seed Movement, Equipment Clean Out and Herbicide Resistant Weeds*” with Mike Hunter, CCE North Country Regional Ag Team; Cornell Plant Pathologist Dr. Gary Bergstrom; and Janis Degni, Field Crops Specialist; Hosted by SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team at Raymond Donald & Sons farm in Moravia (1.8.25)
- CCE Beef Producers Shop Meeting: “*What is finished? Managing Cattle to Optimize Carcass Value*” with Dr. Adam Murray, Cornell Beef Cattle Extension Specialist, PRO-LIVESTOCK, at Minturn Farms in Auburn (2.12.25).
- Cayuga County Dairy Days: “*Raising Dairy Replacements, Improving Land Use, and Managing Home Grown Grains*” with Cornell PRO-DAIRY and the SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team at Potter’s Farm to Fork (2.26.25)
- CCE Shop Meeting: “*Licensing & Legal Aspects of Agricultural Transportation*” at Raymond Donaldson & Sons Farm in Moravia (3.17.25) and Kyle Farms/Preferred Grain Systems in Cato (3.18.25).
- Transition Calf Workshop in English and Spanish, with Cornell PRO-DAIRY and the SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team at Patterson Farms, Inc. in Auburn (3.27.25).
- Planter Clinic Tune-Up: “*Planter Clinic Tune-Up*” with Shawn Brossard, Director of Ag Operations, Cornell Ag Experimental Stations, at Musgrave Research Farm in Aurora (3.28.25).
- Cayuga County Pasture Walk at Simme Valley Simmentals, Groton with SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team (6.30.25).
- Cayuga County Fall Farm Tour / Dairy Systems & Technology Showcase at Spruce Hill Farm and Dumond Farm in Union Springs, led by CCE Dairy Specialists, PRO-DAIRY, and other industry experts (10.29.25).

## Research Projects

- Our Ag staff again worked with NYS IPM at Cornell on their Field Corn Pheromone Trapping Network Project which monitors Black cutworm (BCW) and true armyworm (TAW) moth flights and movements across the state. CCE-Cayuga Ag Educators Ron Kuck and Frank Clarke set, monitored, and reported the data for 6 traps placed in locations around Cayuga County, They also deployed 4 yellow sticky traps this season to monitor corn leafhopper (CLH) distribution and populations in the statedue to the finding of CLH and Corn Stunt for the first time last fall.
- CCE-Cayuga partnered with SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team to monitor and provide weekly reports on alfalfa heights to help predict quality and %NDF.

(11) AGRICULTURE >>

## **Eight Teens Graduate from 2025 4-H Youth Tractor Safety Certification Course**

Agriculture is the most hazardous industry in the nation according to the National Safety Council. The Hazardous Occupation in Agriculture Law requires tractor safety and maintenance training for youth aged 14-16 in order to drive a tractor on a farm other than that owned by their parents. Our 4-H and Agriculture staffs coordinate and support this annual safety training course.

In 2025, 8 teens from Cayuga and Onondaga Counties successfully completed the 8-week (24 hour) safety certification class, passing the required Skills, Written, and Driving Tests.

Thank you to the many professionals who helped educate the next generation of safe farmers including NYCAMH, Dean & Cindy Whitten; Greg Rejman; Cayuga Onondaga BOCES (Cale Jirinec, Jordan Anderson, Ty Gardner, Connor Glanville & Bryce Jirinec); Dave Newert. Cayuga County Fire Services; Dave Perkins, Aurelius Fire Department; and Cayuga County Sheriff's office. ☀



2025 teen graduates: Avery Sedorus, Colleen Kilcer, Deyviaun Morales, Jacob Todd, Liam Thibado, Reilly Sedorus, Stephani Diaz Cabrera, and Trevor St. Martin. The instructor is Cale Jirinec of Cayuga Onondaga B.O.C.E.S.



Betsy Hicks, SCNY Team Dairy Specialist, at "Livestock Handling Skills for Youth" at Conquest Cattle in Conquest (6.27.25).

## **SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team**

Cayuga County leads New York State agriculture as its top dairy producing county. In 2023, CCE-Cayuga joined Cornell's SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Regional Agriculture Extension team to bring added support, education and applied research to our local producers in addition to that provided by our local Agriculture staff members.

The SCNY Regional Dairy & Field Crops website at <https://scnydfc.cce.cornell.edu/> provides research-based information, events, workshops, a newsletter, and other resources. Janice Degni, Team Leader & Field Crops Specialist, and Betsy Hicks, Dairy Specialist, are based at CCE Cortland and may be reached at (607) 391-2660. ☀

## **'Managing Your Farm Woodlot' Winter Shop Meeting Held at Sterling Nature Center**

Woodlots are often underutilized or overlooked in farm management plans, but with the right practices, these areas offer both valuable timber and firewood and significant benefits to the overall health of the farm ecosystem. More than 25 people attended this Winter Shop Meeting held on January 30 at the Sterling Nature Center, coordinated by Ag Educator Ron Kuck. Presenters included CCE staff, the NYS DEC Forester, CCE Master Forest Owner Program Regional Director, and a representative of Woodmizer of Hannibal, NY. Program topics included Determining the Value of Your Trees; Forest Stewardship Plans; Master Forest Owner Overview; and Portable Sawmill Demonstration. This workshop was offered in Seneca County last September and hosted here by Ryan Staychock, former Environment/Natural Resources Educator for Cayuga, Schuyler & Seneca Counties. ☀



Winter Shop Meeting Participants watch a portable sawmill demonstration at Sterling Nature Center following discussion of effective woodlot practices.



## ***Agriculture Educator Ron Kuck Retires***

CCE-Cayuga offers thanks and fond good wishes to Ron Kuck upon his retirement as our Agriculture Educator in Fall of 2025. After holding the same position at Cornell Cooperative Extension Jefferson County from 2007 to 2018, Ron came out of retirement to work part-time at CCE-Cayuga, supporting our Agriculture program through Dan Welch's transition to Executive Director beginning in October 2019. Ron's expertise in dairy production and his commitment to the next generation of farmers through his ongoing involvement with and support of our 4-H program (particularly our successful 4-H Market Livestock Auction) were most appreciated by both Cayuga County youth and farmers alike. We wish Ron a rewarding and well deserved retirement! ☀

## ***4-H Giant Pumpkin Growing Contest***

Our 2nd Annual 4-H Giant Pumpkin Growing Contest was held on Saturday, October 18th at the Ward W. O'Hara Agricultural Museum in Auburn. The event drew a crowd of 20 or more entrants and spectators. Four pumpkins were entered, with three being grown by individuals and a fourth by a group of nine 4-Hers. Holly Janssen raised a pumpkin weighing 86.5 pounds, making her the 2025 4-H Giant Pumpkin Growing Contest winner and earning her a prize of a gilded pumpkin and gardening supplies. 4-H staff gave out other gardening supplies like seeds, potting soil, and seed starting trays to attendees at the concurrent Old Fashioned Halloween event, and Katy Dake offered a pumpkin papercraft that attendees could take home. ☀



## ***Seymour Library Partners on Gardening Programs with CCE Cayuga***

Auburn residents are "growing together as a community" at the Seymour Library through gardening programs offered in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County. A "Seed Library" in the main lobby, started in 2024 by former Horticulture Educator Lisa Woodruff, was relaunched

last April with Frank Clarke, CCE Cayuga's Agriculture and Horticulture Educator handling program content.

Twenty-three residents attended the reopening hosted by the Friends of Seymour Library in April, a total of 164 visitors came throughout the spring, and more than 2130 seed packets were distributed for the 2025 gardening season. The Seed Library allows visitors to "check out" and keep free packets of vegetable and flower seeds (while supplies last). No library card is needed, gardeners just sign the visitor log at the main desk during regular hours. Free handouts of gardening information are available next to the seed drawers, and visitors can write their gardening questions on cards and receive a response from Frank.

To support this effort, Frank offered garden-related classes at Seymour Library, including a Container Gardening and Composting Demonstration on Earth Day (4/22); Pollinator Workshop (6/17); Seed Saving Workshop (9/12); and a Garden Cleanup Workshop (10/7). He also took part in the Friends of Seymour Library Garden Tours and Plein Air event in June. Find more garden workshops and events on our calendar at <https://ccecayuga.org/events>, or the Seymour Library website at <https://seymourlibrary.org/>. ☀



## SENIORS GROW VEGETABLES IN SEED 2 SUPPER PROGRAM

In May 2025, 16 members of the Senior Citizen Program at Booker T. Washington Community Center became the first group of Cayuga County residents to take part in NYS Seed 2 Supper, a free four-week course that trains novice gardeners to grow a portion of their own food on a limited budget.

Led by CCE Cayuga Educator Frank Clarke, the participants learned how to plan what they would grow, start seeds, and care for and harvest vegetables, preparing them to continue gardening in the upcoming growing season. At the end of the course, participants took home four containers planted with seedlings they had started themselves, as well as potting mix, seed starting kits, and hand tools to support their continued gardening efforts.

The curriculum focused on container gardening to best match the group's existing resources. With limited supermarket and transportation choices, city residents with low or fixed incomes often have few options for accessing reasonably priced, locally grown foods. As in many cities of this size, Auburn has little or no public space for residents to garden, and poor access to pollutant-free (e.g., lead) soil or funds to build raised beds, making container gardening a popular entry point to home gardening for many urban residents.

According to end-of-course surveys, all participants reported that they learned something new from the course, and agreed that they are more confident about growing their own food. The course was funded by a \$1500 mini-grant from the Cornell Garden-Based Learning program. This is the first Seed 2 Supper program held in Cayuga County however it won't be the last. Clarke is planning to offer a second series in 2026 in Cato at an apartment complex for residents with limited incomes. He also is training a new cohort of Master Gardener Volunteers during the coming



Members of the Senior Program at Booker T. Washington Community Center examine Seed 2 Supper gardening supplies.

winter months, and hopes that some of those new trainees may want to do some community outreach and education as part of their final project. For more gardening offerings in Cayuga County, visit [ccecayuga.org/gardening](https://ccecayuga.org/gardening).

New York State Seed 2 Supper (S2S) is a beginning gardening curriculum that originated with the Oregon Food Bank, and is offered here in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and community-based host agencies throughout New York State. Learn more about NYS Seed to Supper and Cornell University's Garden Based Learning Program at <https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/adult-programs/new-york-state-seed-to-supper/>

Collaborators on this project were staff at the Booker T. Washington Community Center in Auburn, and Rebecca McCormick, CCE Cayuga SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator. ☀



A visitor selects seed packets from the Seed Catalogue at the Seymour Library in Auburn.



CCE-Cayuga Educator Frank Clarke leads a Seed 2 Supper workshop.

## TASTE NY AUBURN MARKET HELPS BOOST AG BUSINESSES

Now in its eighth year of operation at the NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center & Auburn Welcome Center, the Taste NY Market is staffed and managed by CCE-Cayuga and funded by a contract with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. As one of 70 Taste NY Markets across the state, our store's high visibility location helps it to promote and showcase a diverse selection of value-added farm products to visitors in our area, while also contributing to the economic vitality of Auburn's downtown business district.

Since opening in November 2018, the Auburn Taste NY Market has offered more than 600 specialty products

made by over 145 local and regional NYS vendors. Items sold at the store range from maple syrup and candies, jams and jellies, baked goods and mixes, oils, dairy products and snacks, to local craft items, greeting cards, gift baskets and more. Often products are identified and sold by one Taste NY Market location, and then are picked up and carried by other stores in the statewide network. In this way, Taste NY Markets can serve as an informal incubator and means of exposure for small agricultural businesses, helping them to get started in direct-to-consumer sales

As described in our last annual report, in March 2024 we hosted a free session in partnership with the NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center to share information on NY State's Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Certification Program that was attended by 25 existing or aspiring small business owners from our region. We are especially pleased that, in 2025, we added products from 20 new women or minority owned regional businesses to our store's inventory (See the list in the box below).

The new vendors all are based outside Cayuga County, but Auburn Market manager Heather Ward hopes one day to increase the number of specifically local products that her store carries. "Aspiring local food entrepreneurs can get help refining their recipes and production methods from Cornell Agri-Tech in Geneva," she says. "However, the challenge they face here is having little or no access to certified commercial kitchen facilities where they first can develop, and later produce their products locally."

While some local churches, fire departments and non-profits have certified kitchens, a dedicated facility for this purpose would provide consistent access to the commercial equipment that is needed to develop and support multiple new and successful local food vendors.

Prospective vendors of local products who are interested in selling in the Auburn Taste NY Market are encouraged to contact Heather Ward, Manager, at [hab27@cornell.edu](mailto:hab27@cornell.edu) or 607-229-3650 for more information. ☀



*New Hope Mills is a local agricultural business whose products are sold at the Auburn Taste NY Market.*

### 20 New Regional Vendors at Taste NY Auburn Market

- (W) Brooklyn Brittle-Bayside
- (W) Burning Asphalt/Twisted Vine Garden - Forestville
- (W/M) Flatbush Granola - Brooklyn
- (W) Honey Gramz - Great Neck
- (W) Hudson Valley Marshmallow Company- Beacon
- (W) Hunter & Hilsberg -Tully
- (W/M) Mama Lams - Queens
- (W) Montour Falls Tea Company- Montour Falls
- (W) Rachel's Pots - Brooklyn
- (W) Sundaes Best - Saratoga Springs
- Bonbon NYC - Brooklyn
- Clean Slate Farms - Tully
- Crown Maple - Dover Plains
- C.Howard - Brooklyn
- Perry's Ice Cream - Akron
- The Piergie Guy - Rochester
- Ric Orlando's Sauces - West Hurley
- Rob Salamida - Johnson City
- Saratoga Garlic - Saratoga Springs
- Whole in the Wall Pesto - Binghamton

**(W) = WOMEN OWNED (W/M) = WOMEN/MINORITY OWNED**

# Federal Cuts Eliminate SNAP-Ed Program



For more than 30 years, CCE Cayuga's Food & Nutrition Program has offered local residents free, community-based nutrition education, funded by the U.S.D.A.'s SNAP-Education program. Established in 1992 as a complement to SNAP benefits - or Food Stamps -- SNAP-Ed served local residents with limited resources who had to meet strict NYS income eligibility requirements in order to enroll (see specifics in footnote #1).

In keeping with the program's main goals, free SNAP-Ed classes focused on healthy eating while on a budget, smart shopping for vegetables and fruits, healthy meal planning, basic cooking and food safety skills, weight control and physical activity. Strong community partnerships enabled educators to serve participants in their own neighborhoods, while evidence-based curricula developed at Cornell and other Land Grant universities were chosen to help participants achieve meaningful results. Although funds for this program were stripped from the federal budget in July 2025 and services ended on September 30th in most parts of NY State, CCE-Cayuga's nutrition education work has delivered value to our county residents since the inception of the SNAP-Ed program.

As in past years, Nutrition Educator Becky McCormick offered programs in 2025 at locations in Auburn and Port Byron that serve youth, families and seniors with limited resources who comprised SNAP-Ed's target audiences. While we do not yet have full 2025 breakdown of service figures for Cayuga County, data from 2024 for the following programs for youth and seniors helps to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of this work.

**1) Nutrition Education for School Aged Youth.** In early 2024, we worked with 343 students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at Herman Avenue Elementary, using the 6-week "Choose Health-Fun, Food and Fitness" (CHFFF) curriculum. We later used the "Growing Healthy Kids" gardening nutrition curriculum there with 38 second graders, incorporating the school's garden in our lessons.

**2) Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program.** In 2024, we offered the Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) at six different locations in Cayuga County: the Vineyard Food Pantry, Calvary Food Pantry, Cayuga Community Action (CAP), Choices for Change, the Port Byron Library, and at Stryker Homes. In total, 91 people attended the six-week series focused on feeling better by adding more fruits and vegetables to their diets. At every session they attended, participants received a \$15 voucher to use at farmers markets, farm stores, and grocery stores to buy

vegetables and fruits, for a total economic impact of over \$8,000. It is important to note that the FVRx Program served SNAP-eligible people who had (or were at risk of developing) conditions such as diabetes, pre-diabetes, heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and who were referred to this program by their

healthcare providers. The program empowered participants to make behavioral changes that supported healthy living and alleviated pain and healthcare costs. This model had been adopted across NY State by other SNAP-Ed programs.

**3) Farmers Market Nutrition Program.** CCE-Cayuga has partnered with the Cayuga County Health Department Women Infants Children (WIC) program to distribute Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons at the Auburn Farmers Market, and provides nutrition education to WIC participants while at the market. Since Becky began partnering with WIC, local redemption rates for the FMNP coupons increased to be one of the highest rates in New York State!

**4) Summer Nutrition Education for Youth.** In 2024, our SNAP-Ed program used the "Growing Healthy Kids" gardening nutrition curriculum with 91 youth at Booker T. Washington Community Center Summer Day Camp.

CCE-Cayuga is proud of the work accomplished over the past 30 years and hope that we may again one day offer nutrition education to the residents of Cayuga County ☀



Former SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator Becky McCormick retired in Fall 2025 when funding ended for her position, after 23 years of providing outreach and education in Cayuga and Seneca Counties. Becky was a familiar and smiling face at food pantries, farmers' markets, schools and community centers, sharing a positive nutrition message wherever she went. We wish Becky a happy and fulfilling retirement and offer our continuing thanks for all her work in the community!

#1. In 2025, New York State (NYS) SNAP eligibility required households to meet income and resource tests, with gross monthly income generally below 130% of the federal poverty level (200% of federal poverty level (FPL) for households containing senior or disabled members or that have out-of-pocket dependent care costs) As of October 1, 2025, the gross monthly income limit was \$2,608 for one person, \$3,526 for two, and \$5,358 for four people.

# Respecting the Environment and Protecting Our Resources

## About CCE Cayuga's Environment Program

Our staff offers Cayuga County residents free or low-cost programs on a wide range of topics including composting, solid waste and recycling, forest resources, watershed protection, invasive species, and more. We also engage and partner with agencies, municipalities, schools and other community groups to present community events that advance practices to help our environment and protect our watershed. Below we list a selection of programs offered during 2025.



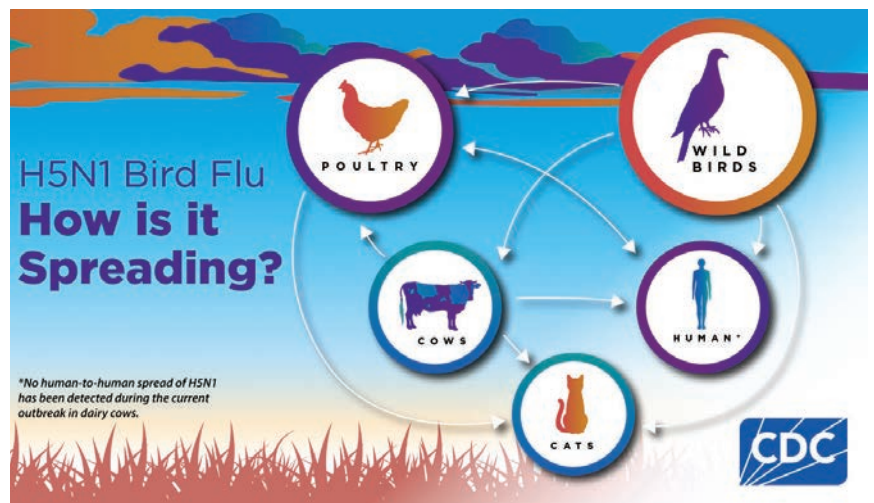
Adult monarch butterfly on swamp milkweed, by R. A. Nonenmacher CC (Wikimedia Commons).

## Selected 2025 Environment Programs

- Managing Your Farm's Woodlot (Winter Shop Meeting)
- Basics of Raising Chickens and Pheasants
- Bird Flu Updates: Impacts on Poultry & Wildlife
- GIS and Drones: Learn the Tools for Smart Mapping
- Cayuga County Compost Bin Sales Event
- Shiitaki Mushroom Log Inoculation Workshop
- Spotted Lanternfly, Grapes & Tree of Heaven Class
- Partnered with local agencies on Electronics, Household & Hazardous Waste, and Tire Recycling Events
- Private Forest Owner Visits & Stewardship Plans

## Multicounty Collaboration Broadens Access to Bird Flu Education

“Bird Flu” or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is an extremely contagious disease that continues to affect both domestic poultry and wildlife across New York State. Recognizing the need for coordinated education on this topic across our region, Cornell Cooperative Extension associations in Cayuga, Schuyler and Seneca Counties partnered to offer a free program, “Bird Flu Updates: Impacts on Poultry and Wildlife” via Zoom on March 24, 2025. Local residents could watch the presentation on their own devices, or join others at their local CCE office to view the facilitated webinar hosted by the lead educator, Ryan Staychock, Environment/Natural Resources Educator at CCE Cayuga County.



Addressing HPAI effectively requires bridging agricultural and natural resources perspectives because disease transmission affects domestic poultry production, wildlife populations, and overall ecosystem health. A panel of experts from Cornell University, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the New York State Department of Health Communicable Disease program provided updates on HPAI, explained the reporting process, answered questions, and offered best practices for prevention, reporting and more. Presentations covered poultry health, wildlife interactions, and public health considerations, and helped participants to understand how HPAI affects farms, wildlife populations, and community well-being.

The hybrid delivery model adopted for this presentation enabled our panel of experts to deliver a coordinated program simultaneously across three counties, ultimately reaching 80 participants in and beyond our primary service area. By expanding access to science-based information at the intersection of agriculture and natural resources, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Seneca, Cayuga, and Schuyler Counties support public health, protects poultry and wildlife, and strengthens regional resilience to emerging disease threats.☀

## GIS & DRONES: LEARNING THE TOOLS FOR SMART MAPPING

Job opportunities are growing in many sectors for individuals with training in drone technology and Graphic Information Systems (GIS). To introduce possible career and educational pathways that use these emerging technologies, Ryan Staychock, Environmental/Natural Resources Educator for CCE-Cayuga, partnered with Cayuga Community College faculty to present a one-day workshop titled “GIS & Drones: Learn the Tools for Smart Mapping”. Held at the college on August 5, 2025, the workshop included presentations by college faculty and GIS professionals, as well as hands-on experience in using mapping software, and an opportunity to fly drones in a safe and supervised environment.

After an overview of the day’s schedule by Ryan Staychock, Amanda Forney, GIS Analyst with the Seneca County Department of Planning described her experience working with GIS and shared examples of the types of projects she normally is involved with in her job. The group then moved to the college computer lab, where Dr. Abu Badruddin, Professor of GIS at CCC, discussed “What is GIS?”, explained the software that is used, and described how GIS is employed in many scientific fields. Dr. Badruddin, Amanda Forney and Ryan Staychock then worked with students individually in the computer lab as they extracted GIS information from data and made their first maps with GIS.

After lunch, Maylin Murdock, Ph.D. student in Cornell CALS School of Integrative Plant Science, gave a presentation on how drones are used in agriculture and shared how she uses drones in her doctoral research. She also covered the basics of drone operations, and the types of drones, sensors and user roles that are involved. The workshop concluded with students going outside for hands-on drone operation under the guidance of Ryan Staychock. “This program was designed to provide a general understanding of how drones help us make good decisions about soil, water, crops, and forests,” said Staychock. “It is also a great career exploration opportunity for youth,



*Dr. Abu Badruddin, professor of GIS at Cayuga Community College, instructs participants in an assignment in the college computer lab.*

enabling them to learn how geospatial tools like mapping, remote sensing, and spatial data analysis are used in agriculture, environmental science, and more. Everyone likes drones, and this is a way to experience them in a quasi-academic setting,” he added.

Registration was free for current Cayuga Community College students, and area high school students entering their junior year and older, and \$20 for others. Seventeen people attended the workshop, including high school and college-bound students, farmers, educators and some professionals who wanted to learn more about GIS and drones.

Cayuga Community College offers a GIS associate in science degree that prepares students to transfer to 4-year colleges and pursue a bachelors in GIS or other science majors. For more information, visit <https://www.cayuga-cc.edu/gis/>. ☀

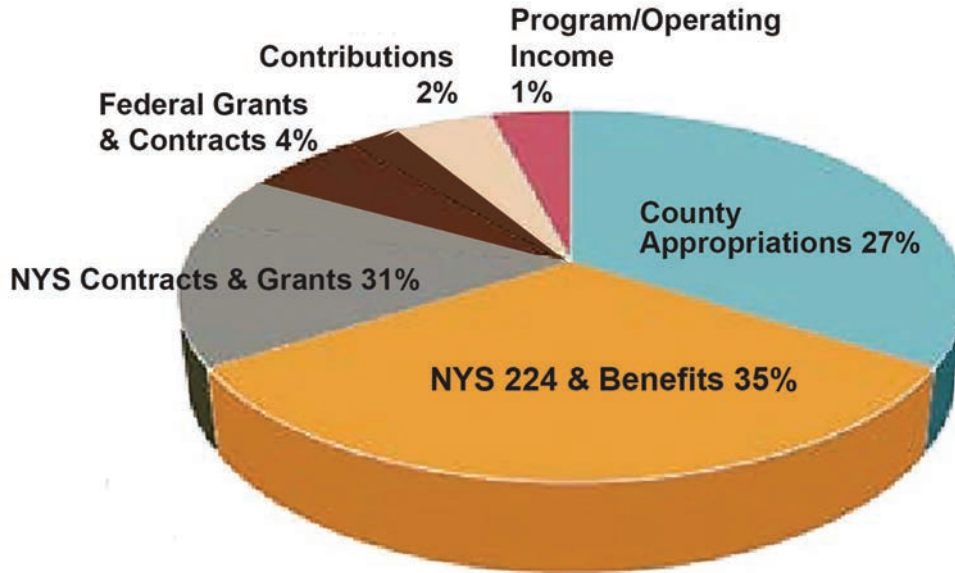


*Ryan Staychock, right, helps a participant prepare to launch a drone.*



*Participants work on a GIS mapping exercise in the college computer lab.*

# 2025 FINANCIAL SUPPORT & FUNDING SOURCES



## CCE Cayuga Financial Support 2025 **\$1,274,442**

County Appropriations	\$349,000
NYS 224 & Benefits	\$442,463
NYS Grants & Contracts	\$398,624
Federal Grants & Contracts	\$52,900
Contributions	\$28,219
Program/Operating Income, other grants	<u>\$8,236</u>
	<b>\$1,274,442</b>

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Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

# LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

(19)



@ccecayuga



@CCECayuga

@4-HCayugaCounty

@Taste NY at the NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center

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## *Thanks for your support!*

CCE Cayuga has served our local community for more than 100 years and we plan to be here for another century! Our programs demonstrate our commitment to offering high quality and innovative programs that deliver value to our county's agricultural producers, our communities, families and youth.

We rely on a variety of funding sources from County, State, and Federal government, as well as nonprofit grants and events. Private support from the community is especially meaningful, and helps us to continue our mission of *Putting Research, Experience & Knowledge to Work* for all Cayuga County residents! Your cash or in-kind gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law, and we will send you a letter to use for tax purposes.

To donate now, scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/CCECayugaDonate> to give with a credit card via our PayPal account. You also may make a tax-deductible donation by sending a check made payable to CCE Cayuga County and mail it to: CCE-Cayuga, 248 Grant Avenue, Auburn, New York 13021 For more information, please call 315-255-1183 ext.2871, or email Executive Director Dan Welch at [dlw56@cornell.edu](mailto:dlw56@cornell.edu). ☀



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**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**



**Photo: Preston Keres, USDA**