Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Erie County

2016
Annual Report
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

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Xyricka Ferry – Nutrition Educator

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CONSUMER HORTICULTURE
Sharon Bachman – Agriculture & Natural Resources Educator

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Tammi Kron – 4-H Livestock Educator
Tessa Matuszak – 4-H Club Management Educator
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Carl Moody – Dairy Processing Specialist

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CORNELL LAKE ERIE REGIONAL GRAPE PROGRAM
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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.
Board President & Executive Director’s Message

We are at the end of another successful year because of our staff, volunteers, participants, collaborating organizations, and stakeholders, who dedicate their time and talent to the Association.

STAFF: After increasing the number of staff the last two years, the Association staff count settled at 20 with a mix of full and part time staff who do a wonderful job supporting the work of the Association.

PROGRAMMING: Our educators continue to develop and deliver high quality, innovative, educational programs in Agriculture & Natural Resources, Nutrition, 4-H Youth Development, and Consumer Horticulture reaching adults and youth in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the county.

VOLUNTEERS: We remain fortunate to have many 4-H volunteers committed to leading and teaching our youth; a dedicated 4-H Alumni group supporting fundraising that benefits all of our 4-H youth; and, Master Gardeners who collectively contribute 5100 hours. The Board of Directors, Program and Special Interest Committee members donate many hours to Association policy management and program development.

CAPITAL PROJECT: This year the Board of Directors hired Fontanese, Folts, Aubrecht, and Ernst Architects and Ted Pietrzak to develop a Capital Project Plan based on input from a variety of CCE stakeholders. To date they have conducted interviews with Board members and staff, held two public meetings, and gathered information with a survey. Stay informed about this process via the Capital Project webpage at erie.cce.cornell.edu.

As we head into 2017, we look forward to another year of programming excellence helping to put knowledge to work to meet the needs of all residents of Erie County!

Estimate of 2016 Operations Funding:

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<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
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<td>STATE</td>
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<td>FEDERAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL OPERATIONS FUNDING</td>
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COUNTY

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<td>Total Federal</td>
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OTHER SOURCES

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TOTAL OPERATIONS FUNDING $2,572,664
Emerald Ash Borer is an expensive problem for homeowners with ash trees.

- WNY EAB Taskforce meetings provide a forum for stakeholders, from private landowners to industry, to share ideas and resources to manage this invasive beetle.

- Members of the Town of Grand Island Conservation Board partnered with the Taskforce to offer two training sessions attracting nearly 80 participants each time.

- Partnering with area conservation boards, the Taskforce has helped area residents and communities make informed decisions about the costs and options available to address EAB.

Interest in growing food in urban locations is on the rise, but past use might contaminate urban soil in some locations.

- To encourage healthy urban gardening practices, CCE has collaborated through a NYS DEC funded Environmental Justice-Green Gems grant to collect and test paired soil and edible portions of garden plants to determine if plants are taking up heavy metals from the soil they are growing in. (Interpretation of the test results is provided by a team of researchers from Cornell’s Waste Management Institute.)

Trees and forested spaces are vital to cities, towns, villages and public spaces helping to clean air and water, cool temperatures, and beautify neighborhoods.

- The inaugural Erie County Communi-Tree Steward (CTS) Class was instituted to provide trained volunteers to help care for trees throughout the county. CCE collaborated with the Buffalo City Arborist, Wendel Companies, and Re-Tree to offer the course to thirteen people.

To combat a pest of late season small fruit growers, CCE completed the fourth year of monitoring for the invasive fruit fly pest spotted wind drosophila (SWD).

- Monitoring (a 4-H alum was trained to assist) allows growers to better time control measures to save money and help prevent insects from becoming resistant to treatments options. Properly timed control measures and best practices for handling following harvest, allow growers to preserve yields.

Agricultural labor availability is a major challenge to growing the U.S. agricultural economy, and if these ag labor trends persist, 1,049 New York farms are highly vulnerable to going out of business or being severely forced to cut back production.

- CCE Erie is addressing this issue locally with the Refugee Onsite Occupational Training program (ROOT) which directly supports both local agriculture labor needs and refugee residents of Erie County employment needs by training refugees and connecting them to local vegetable farmers.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

► In 2016, 39 refugees were employed on 3 Erie County farms.

Over the last 30 years the number of entry level farmers has fallen by 30% since 1987 (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

► A Beginning Farmer Discussion Group offers related workshops about developing business plans to secure funding from ag lending institutions, information on soil health, and exploring retail and wholesale markets including the WNY Food Hub.

► Farmers attending these workshops have reported purchasing property, planting crops, and expanding marketing in Erie County.

A need to help improve economic opportunities for Erie County farmers:

► Hosted hops growing workshops from which a number of businesses evolved via the networking at these workshops: 12 new hops farms, a hops harvesting company, and an expansion of a hops pelletizing company.

► Expansion of MeatSuite.com (a free online directory of regional livestock farms selling meat in bulk quantities) via a ‘Meat’ the Farmer event where 300+ people interacted with Livestock farmers from 4 WNY counties at the Buffalo Downtown Country Market.

► Secured $2000 in funding through the Dairy Acceleration Program for business planning and facility design for an Erie County dairy farm expansion.

► Developed programming with the Cornell Pro-Dairy team and CCE staff from 3 Western New York counties for the Dairy Executives Workshop.

► CCE Erie partnered with Journey’s End Refugee services to provide technical assistance to improve and expand an urban farm for 10 refugees who realized a profit of $6,000 from the farm this year.
Cornell Vegetable Program:
A premier regional agricultural CCE program that provides educational programs and information to growers, processors and agribusiness professionals, arming them with knowledge to profitably produce and market safe and healthful vegetable crops.

Regionally in 2016:
- Over 100 educational events organized by or presentations given by the Cornell Vegetable Program Specialists.
- Over 4,400 people attended meetings and presentations by Cornell Vegetable Program Specialists.
- The Cornell Vegetable Program made nearly 4,000 farm visits and crop consultations.

Erie County in 2016:
- Two student interns visited 22 vegetable farms across western NY to scout crops for diseases, weeds, and insects. The program gave an opportunity for the interns to learn about Integrated Pest Management Practices and how to scout for pests in the field, while expanding CVP’s presence and impact.
- Wildlife, particularly birds and deer, can cause significant damage in vegetable crops. The damage can be more than just economic; wildlife contamination of fresh market vegetables is a food safety issue and potential liability for growers. CVP specialists evaluated the potential of physical and chemical deterrents and provided specific recommendations about timing, placement, and use of the tools on farms throughout the region.

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program:
There are approximately 30,000 acres of vineyards in the Lake Erie region of New York and Pennsylvania grown on 840 farms, making this the largest grape growing region outside of California.

- Of this acreage, 98.5% consists of Labrusca (American Grape) varieties such as ‘Concord’ and ‘Niagara’ which are used for juice, jam and other fresh or fermented products. The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program consists of Extension Educators and research faculty/staff from Cornell University and Penn State University devoted to projects aimed at increasing yields, product quality, diversity and improvement of cultivars, efficiency of production, profitability and adoption of environmentally sound cultural and pest management strategies.

Harvest New York:
An innovative CCE team that focuses on workforce development and business expansion projects that increase profitability and investment in key sectors of New York’s agriculture industry:
- dairy food processing and marketing;
- local food distribution and marketing;
- farm-based beverages;
- livestock processing and marketing;
- farm strategic planning.
The CCE Master Gardener Program builds on community members’ passion for gardening by providing them with environmentally sound, garden-based educational opportunities.

These trained volunteers then share their knowledge with fellow community members. Through the Program, volunteers gain knowledge of and confidence in applying science based gardening practices and then share that information with members of the public, teaching others about environmentally friendly methods for controlling pests and soil testing techniques to allow proper fertilization of lawns, gardens and landscapes.

In 2016, the CCE Erie Master Gardener Program:

- held eight public gardening workshops, reaching nearly 300 individuals with environmental sound gardening best practices,
- staffed a garden question hotline with trained volunteers fielding over 500 questions, conducting nearly 90 soil pH tests and processing over 80 diagnostic samples. Volunteers also coordinate and host a number of soil test clinics at farmers’ markets, libraries and other locations throughout the growing season,
- volunteers conducted outreach at events across Erie County with the two largest being the Fair and Plantasia making nearly 1,800 contacts.

Master Gardener Projects:
- continued a disease resistant vegetable plant project started in 2015 with new varieties of disease resistant tomato and basil. This effort has provided an opportunity to teach plant suppliers and gardeners about the value of disease resistant crops which do not require chemical sprays to remain disease free. Over 25 volunteers participated.
- a partnership with Grassroots Gardens to provide mentors to ten gardens during the growing season.
- exploring ways to work with Cornell to host a Seed to Supper Training which is slated to be offered in February of next year. Seed to Supper is a curriculum developed by Oregon Food Bank and Oregon State Cooperative Extension providing garden education programs which teach community members to grow food from seed and prioritize fresh produce as a part of a budget-friendly and healthy way to build self-sufficiency. Seed to Supper participants learn new gardening and urban farming skills, work outside and meet community members.
- for the first time, awarded two college scholarships to high school seniors planning to pursue a degree in horticulture or similar field. Funds for the scholarship came from a portion of the annual Plant Sale proceeds, as well as generous donations from volunteers, and their friends and family.

The Master Gardener Program by the numbers:
- 77 Active Master Gardeners.
- 21 Program Interns completing the second year of their 2-year internship in November 2016.
- 40 Community Projects.
- 5100 service hours provided to local communities, along with 1320 hours spent completing training to improve as Master Gardeners.
- Volunteer service estimated at over $117,660 in value.
Current urban 4-H programs, including Youth CAN, Farm to School, HYPE, 4-H STEM, Tech Wizards and youth development trainings, offer innovative and place-based approaches to positive youth development that focus on the strengths and interests of youth residing in Buffalo and Lackawanna. A total of 55 youth, 11 adult volunteers, and 100 youth development professionals have benefited directly from urban 4-H programming and training. Youth and adults reported increased knowledge about many topics.

- 36 youth in Youth CAN, a college and career prep and civic engagement program, with partners Global Concepts High School in Lackawanna, Tapestry Charter School in Buffalo, and Buffalo Public School #156 Frederick Law Olmsted;
- 28 mentors working with 76 youth Tech Wizards at the Seneca Babcock Community Center and Seneca Street Church on STEM projects, service learning, and life skills;
- 8 youth involved in 4-H robotics projects;
- 12 youth participating in Healthy Youth Positive Energy (HYPE), an afterschool club focused on promoting healthy eating and active living in Buffalo Public Schools;
- Partner on the Buffalo Farm to School Coordinating Committee, leading youth engagement and educational innovation related to Farm to School through development of classroom lessons and cafeteria taste testing;
- National 4-H Youth Science Day at the Seneca Babcock Community Center that brought youth and adults (mentors, parents, community residents) together to explore STEM activities with a variety of community partners. The National 4-H Motion Commotion experiment provided interactive opportunities for participants to learn how to be responsible “behind the wheel” (biking, driving, etc.).
Public Presentation Days: 4-H members gained confidence and career readiness by developing and enhancing their ability to present and speak in front of others.

- Over 350 4-H youth members expanded their public speaking skills.
- This 4-H program is often credited by Erie County 4-H Alumni as having given them an edge above peers in both college and professional careers.

The Erie County Fair is the highlight and culmination of the 4-H year for many 4-Hers.

- The 2016 Erie County Fair Youth Development Building was home to over 1,000 exhibits.
- 4-H members project work was evaluated and awarded based on their own level of accomplishment, and displayed in the Youth Development Building.

This year 176 county projects were taken to the New York State Fair for further 4-H evaluation.

- Erie County walked away with the most Rosettes awarded to any county. The purple Rosette is the highest, most desired award given at the state level.
- Youth and adult volunteers also attended the State Fair to assist in evaluation, participate in youth competitions, and run free activities for the public.

Tradition is a strong value of 4-H programming, but new ideas are just as significant to offer members. This year the Erie County Textile Committee brought a new and exciting opportunity to showcase clothing and textile interest and skills: Duds to Dazzle.

- 40 4-H members participated in teams that were given the challenge to create a new clothing and textile item with limited supplies, time, and presentation requirements.

The farm community often cites the need to educate youth about agriculture in today’s society:

- Ag Ed program for grades k-5 on a variety of topics. Over 800 youth were educated on topics such as parts of the plant, agricultural careers, and apples. Teachers and students have expressed to CCE how much they enjoy the lessons and hands-on activities that accompany the topic.
- Agricultural Literacy: connecting where our food comes from and the importance of agriculture in our daily lives. 1019 students in grades K-4 in 11 schools learned about the apple industry by enjoying the book “The Apple Orchard Riddle”.

Livestock Program: In 2016 the Erie County 4-H Livestock program worked with 172 livestock members in a hands on learning environment.

- The Dairy and Beef program focused on biology, dissecting a bovine mammary system to observe the various parts of the mammary system.
- The cattle programs learned about meat quality assurance through a partnership with the Beef Council, which covered grades of beef, proper handling of the animals and marketing.
Horse Program: The 2016 Erie County 4-H Horse program totals 137 youth members.

- 4-H members participated in 8 educational clinics offered along with contests that test 4-Hers knowledge of horses and the horse industry: Horse Bowl (a form of horse Jeopardy), Hippology (equine veterinary and management knowledge contest), and Horse Communications (public presentations on horse related topics).

- 72 4-H horse members exhibited at the Erie County Fair with 15 competing at the NY State Fair.

National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program:
Youth under the age of 16 must be certified to operate a tractor or machinery in a job. CCE is helping the next generation prepare for agricultural employment by offering this certification.

- Youth learned, through a structured program, about safety, agricultural hazards, tractors, the proper procedure to connect and use implements, the proper way to handle materials, and silo safety. Youth participants also spent many hours driving and learning how to operate an implement and tractor.

- This year Erie County 4-H partnered with Cattaraugus County 4-H to present the Tractor Safety Certification program to 9 youth, 6 of whom became certified.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households are less likely to consume raw vegetables and whole fruit and slightly more likely to choose less healthy snacks than food secure households, according to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

- Overweight and obesity are critical public health threats, and it is predicted that poor nutrition and physical inactivity will become the leading underlying causes of preventable deaths in the United States.

Eat Smart New York (ESNY), a USDA funded program, provides nutrition education and obesity prevention programming to low-income county residents.

Evidence-based curricula are used to ensure the greatest impact on participants. A multi-level program approach addresses barriers to healthful nutrition and physical activity by focusing on changing low-income residents’ environment in order to create opportunities for healthy eating and a more physically active lifestyle. During 2016, this included:

- Engaging 9,429 contacts in workshops, classes, cooking demonstrations, and grocery store tours lasting 20 or more minutes each;

- Providing nutrition and obesity prevention information through short face-to-face interactions with 16,893 individuals;

- Partnering with community agencies and organizations for sustainable food access-related environmental and policy changes, including Buffalo’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative which launched two stores during the year and has recognized ESNY as its nutrition education provider and subject matter resource;

- Developing At the Stop to Good Health, a wide-reaching social marketing campaign viewed by thousands of low-income residents.

CCE Erie County is the Western NY lead for ESNY, coordinating program delivery in the other 7 counties in our region.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a federally funded nutrition education program for low income families and youth delivered by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

- Through a series of lessons (typically 6-9) in an interactive learning environment, participants are encouraged to improve food and physical activity behaviors.

- The program serves low income parents, caregivers, and expecting mothers.

- In 2016, 212 Erie County adults graduated from an EFNEP series, a 92% graduation rate.

- A few of the many graduate’s comments included:
  - “I give my children more vegetables.”
  - “I drink more water.”
  - “I'm walking every day.”