Funds will bolster local food marketing efforts

CCE-Steuben’s project to increase farm profitability and consumer access to local food was selected by the Agricultural Marketing Service to receive federal funding through the 2014 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant program. The $91,000 grant was sponsored by Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Board and aims to increase farm profitability while increasing consumer access to locally-produced foods.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the award of over $52 million in support of the growing organic industry and local and regional food systems. “Local and regional food systems are one of the pillars of our efforts to revitalize rural economies,” said Secretary Vilsack. “Consumers are increasingly demanding more local and organic options. Investing in local and regional food systems supports the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers, especially smaller operations, while strengthening economies in communities across the country.”

The funding will be used to create a local foods program at CCE-Steuben. A new local foods educator will work to increase farm profitability through programs like Marketing for farmers, Farm to Restaurant events, and the Local Food fest. This educator will also help to increase access to local foods through the establishment of a Winter Farmers’ Market in Bath, implementing EBT use at winter markets, and increased advertising and awareness of how and where to buy local foods throughout the year.

CCE-Steuben assisted with the startup of a new farmers’ market located in Painted Post in 2014 that proved to be highly successful. Vendors had reported numerous requests from the central Steuben County area for development of a farmers’ market that operated on a Saturday.

CCE staff met with the market manager, the village of Painted Post, and volunteers to find a suitable location and begin market promotion. It was an instant success, participation grew to include ten vendors, and the market season was extended through October. CCE continually strives to meet the needs of the local food audience throughout Steuben County, by helping to establish and broaden access to local foods!

The successful Corning Winter Farmers Market initiated by CCE-Steuben runs November through April and has a waiting list for new vendors.
Dear Friends of Extension:

What a difference a year makes. Last year at this time I wrote about changes and challenges that created so much uncertainty for Cornell Cooperative Extension programs in 2014. The erosion of federal formula funding resulted in reduced support for local and statewide energy programming. The future of county-based nutrition and food safety programming was in question as a result of restructuring and regionalization of SNAP-ED and EFNEP, our two USDA-funded nutrition programs. The cost of participation in a new regional business and administrative structure placed additional demands on core funding that remained level, making it impossible to replace retired staff. In view of all of the stressors on the CCE system in its current structure, a strategic transition from local programs to regional program networks was slated to occur in early 2015.

Realistically, the sustainability of Cornell Cooperative Extension will likely depend on significant restructuring, but developments in 2014 will enable us to maintain strong local programs while carefully evaluating regionalization options that best meet the needs of our constituents. Dr. Chris Watkins, the new Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, has rescinded the target date for implementation of regional program networks and indicated that the transition will be thoughtful and cautious. A new cost allocation formula has reduced CCE-Steuben’s financial obligation to fund the Finger Lakes Shared Business Network by 27%. CCE-Steuben has been retained in both the restructured EFNEP and SNAP-ED programs, with local budgets modestly (EFNEP) and substantially (SNAP-ED) increased from previous years. A new Farmer’s Market Promotion Program grant will enable us to expand local foods initiatives, providing additional opportunities for consumers and increasing profit potential for agricultural producers.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Steuben County, it is our pleasure to present the 2014 Annual Report. We look forward to providing programs in 2015 that prioritize sustainable development, utilizing our resources in such a way as to enhance our economy, increase food and energy security, and protect our environment for future generations.

Sincerely,

Dave Dockstader
President, Board of Directors

Thomas N. Tomsa, Jr.
Executive Director
CCE-Steuben

Meet our Staff...
Staff Phone numbers changed in 2014!
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Kim Randall, 4-H Educator 607-583-3185
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Jenny Groen, 4-H Educator 607-583-3245
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Improving food access for consumers and sales for farmers

One highly successful project CCE-Steuben has been involved in this year is the Finger Lakes Meat Project (FLMP) whose primary goal is to increase the number of Finger Lakes consumers buying meat from local farms. Sales of meat by the whole, half, or quarter animal is not only more affordable in dollar per pound than grocery store meat for the consumer, but bulk sales are also a more profitable market for the farmers. The FLMP combines improved food access with farm viability, strengthening our whole region.

How does the FLMP work? First CCE-Steuben helped create the www.meatsuite.com website, a directory of farms that sell meat in bulk quantities. It has individual farm profiles with practices, prices, products, and contact info listed. Second, we provide educational events and classes, such as our popular “How to Buy Local Meats” class where we address terminology, production, pricing and how to prepare unfamiliar cuts of meat. Finally, we helped establish the Meat Locker, a rentable freezer space so people can store their bulk meat purchases in a convenient, affordable way and access meat as needed. More information can be found at www.fingerlakesmeatproject.com

This combination of an internet farm directory and rented freezer storage space makes buying locally-raised meat in bulk a possibility for more consumers. Bulk sales of locally-raised meats are a “win-win” for consumers and farmers. Bulk meat prices are lower, in dollars per pound, than grocery store meats when compared pound for pound and cut for cut. While farms are able to offer bulk meat at affordable prices, they still receive a premium above commodity prices when selling this way.

The Meat Locker is grant supported and will be maintained via grant writing, fundraising events, and member rents. This project got underway with funding from a USDA Farmers’ Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant for $81,000. The Ithaca Meat Locker opened in April 2014, six months behind schedule. The Corning location is one year behind schedule due to selecting a suitable location. The freezer unit purchase will be covered by the grant, however, additional fundraising will be required for costs such as installation including electrical, plumbing and security contractors.

Helping consumers find local products

CCE ag staff and volunteers helped recruit and refresh the Steuben County farm guide for 2014. Since its last publication in 2009, the guide has added 16 farms, 10 more wineries, three new farm markets, and has four new breweries all located across Steuben County. 5,000 guides were printed, and nearly all have been distributed in four months. CCE plans to continue to recruit farms and reprint the farm guide for 2015.

Introducing farmer to buyer

For the fifth year CCE-Steuben hosted a well-attended Locally Grown Food Festival in Corning as a way to promote buying local throughout the year.

The annual event both highlights and celebrates our area farmers. This year 20 farms participated in the event including vineyards/wineries, livestock, poultry, vegetable, fruit, cheese, honey and herb producers. Over 400 people enjoyed meeting local farms and sampling the diverse array of local grown products.
Hands-on nutrition classes in the grocery store

Eat Smart New York nutrition educators introduced a new class, *Cooking Matters at the Store*, for participants to visit local grocery stores in Steuben County. The class location reinforces strategies for choosing healthy and inexpensive foods. The program helps families who are on a limited budget sharpen their shopping skills.

Lower income families reported that the cost of healthy groceries is the main barrier to making healthy meals at home. Since skills like smart shopping can help overcome that barrier, this 90-minute tour focuses on four key food shopping skills to help stretch those food dollars:

1.) Reading food labels to choose foods that are higher in fiber, vitamin A and C, calcium, and iron and lower in sugar, salt and fat,
2.) Using the shelf tag to compare the unit price of different brands,
3.) Locating whole grain foods by using the ingredient list on food labels, and
4.) Identifying three ways of purchasing fruits and veggies to get the best seasonal price.

Following the *Cooking Matters at the Store* tour, each participant is challenged to “Take the $10 Challenge,” an activity where participants use the skills they’ve just learned to buy a healthy meal for a family of four or purchase healthy foods from each of the MyPlate groups, using only $10. The group then meets to compare what each person purchased. Participants take home the $10 worth of healthy groceries that they chose in a reusable grocery bag as well as a booklet with recipes and shopping tips.

Wegmans partners to celebrate healthy habits

CCE-Steuben recently completed a successful *Cooking Matters For Teens* program in the Hornell Middle School. Youth learned how to select nutritious, low-cost ingredients and prepare them to be tasty and healthy. In one session they received a behind-the-scenes tour of the Wegmans store in Hornell where Wegmans Chef Ken demonstrated how to prepare a stir fry meal. In their final celebration class, the Wegmans sushi chef showed them how to prepare rice and vegetable sushi and gave each student a bag of groceries to take home. The program was sponsored by a 21st Century Afterschool Grant and a Carol M. White PEP grant. Cooking Matters is nationally sponsored by the ConAgra Foods® Foundation, Walmart, and Share Our Strength.
CCE Nutrition Education programs restructured for 2014-2015

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Eat Smart New York Program (ESNY), staples of CCE-Steuben’s Family and Consumer Science program area, will continue in 2015 with increased budgets and new administrative structures.

The EFNEP program will be administered as a regional program covering western New York and employ two part-time educators in Steuben County.

The ESNY Program is New York’s educational component of the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-ED). Formerly a county-based CCE program, the state restructured it to a regional program open to a competitive grant process. CCE-Steuben partnered with four other CCE associations to develop a successfully-funded proposal for an 11-county Finger Lakes region. CCE-Steuben will house two front-line nutritionists and a supervising nutritionist.

Exploring renewable energy options for Steuben County

CCE-Steuben found numerous venues to showcase the benefits of renewable energy options and encourage energy efficiency. Energy educator Nancy Reigelsperger displayed solar panels for Corning Community College students at an Earth Day celebration and organized an interactive energy display at their Steuben County Fair booth. Executive Director Thomas Tomsa provided wind and solar energy exercises as part of the after-school youth programming in the local school districts.

Reaching across Steuben County with financial education

Financial Educator Nancy Reigelsperger promoted her free Budget Coaching program to Bath area agencies and businesses during a lunch program. The partnership with RSVP of Steuben County and a Martin Luther King mini grant helped make local agencies aware of this free service for their clients. Eight trained budget coaches formed a panel to explain how much budget coaching is needed in our area and shared stories of success with specific cases.

Later in 2014, six new budget coaches were trained and added to the program to assist Steuben County families.

Partnerships with Corning attorney Patrick Roth and Financial Advisor Amy Irvine have led to several successful workshops for the public on estate and financial planning. Reigelsperger worked with CCE-Steuben Board Member Amy Irvine to host the first annual Southern Tier Financial Conference - Financial Education For Women by Women in October. It was a highly successful event because it reached women of all ages and taught them how to improve their mind, body and checkbook. The participants came together for a common goal, and Reigelsperger said it was “definitely a thumbs up” due to the numerous educational sessions and interactive activities.

Reigelsperger created another popular program entitled Clear the Clutter to help people organize their finances by first organizing their living space. Participants raved about using the tips to make great strides in organizing their accumulations of paper and treasures to clear the way for planning and keeping a healthy budget.
Two Steuben youth lead New York to top ranks

Ian Stewart, an 11th year Steuben County 4-H member, was one of four NYS team members who helped New York take first place honors among 14 state teams in the 35th Annual North American Invitational 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl Contest in November in Kentucky. The NYS Team had the top four individuals on the written test with Ian placing third. Since the contest started recognizing top written test scores, no team has swept the top four spots until NYS did in 2014.

Ian learned about the value of teamwork, saying, “The NYS team got along well and worked great together. We all had our areas of expertise.”

The National 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl contest is a two-day event which includes a written test, five team questions, and toss up (buzzer) questions about many levels of dairy business, animal biology and current industry issues.

Paige Demun, ninth year Steuben County 4-H member, was one of four NYS team members who helped the NYS team earn a fourth place finish overall among 13 states at the Pennsylvania All-American Invitational 4-H Judging contest in Sept.

Dairy Judging requires participants to understand the concepts of dairy cow conformation and provide sets of oral reasons for choosing one cow over another. Paige improved her communication life skill through this experience, saying, “The dairy judging contest requires competitors to give oral reasons. Giving reasons improves communications skills, as you need to be able to express the reasons for your placings clearly and with confidence. The ability to express your thoughts clearly is a very important skill needed in everyday life.”

Presentations teach skills that last for life

Raven Foote’s speech, Fear of Public Speaking and How to Overcome It, received a silver award at the state public presentations. Raven says, “4-H teaches more life skills than any club I’ve ever been involved in. It teaches social skills, teamwork, and healthy life style choices just to name a few, but to me the most important skill I have gained in my 11 years in 4-H is my ability to become a strong public speaker.”

During 2014, 116 Steuben County 4-H members participated in county-wide public presentations, and 110 members gave club presentations. All 12 Steuben County 4-H members who participated in the Finger Lakes District Public Presentation Program received an excellent rating with a score of 90 or above. Seven of those presenters were selected as the top 31 presenters out of approximately 89 presentations, and two were selected for judge’s choice awards. Two participated in the Region 2 Horse Communications Contest. Three went on to participate in the state contests.
Raven Foote, a ninth year member of the Willing Workers 4-H Club, was selected as one of four NYS 4-H Delegates to attend the National 4-H Conference in Maryland in April. This Conference is a premier opportunity for teens ready to network with teens from across the country, discuss their interests, and voice their thoughtful concerns to 4-H leaders and national decision makers. The main focus of the National 4-H Conference is civic engagement, civic education, and personal development. As an addition to the 2014 conference, each delegate was tasked with taking home their roundtable briefing topics.

The National 4-H Conference is a working conference where delegates receive a roundtable topic and research it prior to attending. During the conference youth delegates combine their research from each state and prepare a presentation to national partners. Raven worked in the group about School to Prison Pipeline and presented their report to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program. Raven said, “It was only through 4-H and the public speaking skills I have learned that I was able to give a speech to a federal agency at only 15 years old.”

2014 4-H trips serve to educate and reward

**Citizenship-Washington Focus Trip**, attended by Joel Rosko and his mom, Regena as chaperone, is a week-long 4-H citizenship program for youth at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center near Washington DC. 4-H youth explore, develop, and refine their community/civic engagement skills to be outstanding community leaders. Joel met with aides to Senator Kristen Gillibrand and Senator Charles Schumer, Congressman Chris Gibson, NYS Representative/19th District, and Congressman Tom Reed, NYS Representative/23rd District. Joel says, “CWF was definitely a trip of a lifetime. I learned a lot about citizenship and leadership working with 4-H’ers across the country.”

**NYS 4-H Capital Days Program** was attended by Bradley Sick, Flynn Scheib, and Madeleine Gurecki. Sponsored by the NYS Association of CCE 4-H Educators, program participants expanded their knowledge about the public policy process and state government. They met with leaders in state government and members of the court system. The state agencies that Steuben County members participated in were the Departments of Environmental Conservation, Education, and Health. They observed a working session of the state legislature, learned about government careers, and met with Assemblyman Philip Palmesano and Senator Thomas O’Mara.

**NYS Career Explorations** is a three-day event created to provide youth with exposure to academic fields and career exploration, to develop leadership skills, to provide hands-on experience in a college setting, and to introduce them to Cornell University. They participated in focus programs such as Lego Robotics. Three Steuben members served in leadership roles as Focus Assistants.

**NYS Teen Action Rep Retreat (STARR)** is a three-day fun-filled event where 4-H teens participate in a variety of workshops and activities meant to challenge, excite and further develop life skills. Five Steuben County teens, four Steuben County chaperones, and two volunteers as workshop presenters attended. One teen and two chaperones from Steuben served on the 2014 STARR Planning Committee.

The **NYS Youth Dairy Discovery Workshop** is held at Cornell University each spring, sponsored by the NYS 4-H Dairy Cattle Program and developed/ordinated by PRO-DAIRY, Cornell Animal Science Department and Dairy Management Group. Seven Steuben members enjoyed hands-on science oriented learning experiences. The 2014 focus, “Dairy Herd Health and Management Program,” featured unique facilities, industry professionals and Cornell University staff.

The Annual **NYS 4-H Agribusiness Career Conference** was attended by eight Steuben County 4-H members and is co-sponsored by NYS 4-H, the NYS Farm Bureau, and SUNY Cobleskill, helping youth become more aware of opportunities with agriculture and academic requirements for professional agri-business positions.
CCE-Steuben’s annual gala was held in April at Pleasant Valley Wine Company, the oldest winery in the region, a perfect setting for the program on wine history featuring the Finger Lakes Museum and Cooperative Extension grape specialist Hans Walter-Peterson. Guests dined on local foods and celebrated our volunteer power.

In October, we drew nearly 7,000 people to the 8th annual Southern Tier Outdoor Show which included hunters education, wildlife shows, and youth activities. This year an I Love New York marketing grant helped us distribute more publicity about the event and optimize the show’s website for better Google ranking. A Facebook campaign helped grow the audience by 90 percent and reach click-through numbers reaching 200,000. The show also connected with new national sponsors such as Cabela’s.

2014 Association Events

FEDERAL - 13%
- Smith-Lever $ 11,456
- Special Projects (grants/contracts federally funded through Cornell University) $ 42,053
- University Resources $120,626
- TOTAL FEDERAL SUPPORT $174,135

STATE - 37%
- County Law 224 Formula $ 63,967
- State Fringe Benefits $254,188
- University Resources $183,984
- TOTAL STATE SUPPORT $502,139

OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT - 14%
- Enrollment and Program Fees $ 24,247
- Sale of Equip; new, 4-H camp, rent, dividend/interest, misc income, fundraising $ 73,297
- Contributions (restricted/unrestricted) $ 20,676
- Special projects (grants/contracts, funded through Cornell University) $ 25,567
- Special projects (grants/contracts, funded by local agency/other sources) $ 38,318
- TOTAL OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT $182,105

TOTAL SUPPORT - 100% $1,348,581

COUNTY - 36%
- Appropriation $407,200
- Other County Support $ 83,002
- TOTAL COUNTY SUPPORT $490,202

OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT - 14%
- Enrollment and Program Fees $ 24,247
- Sale of Equip; new, 4-H camp, rent, dividend/interest, misc income, fundraising $ 73,297
- Contributions (restricted/unrestricted) $ 20,676
- Special projects (grants/contracts, funded through Cornell University) $ 25,567
- Special projects (grants/contracts, funded by local agency/other sources) $ 38,318
- TOTAL OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT $182,105

TOTAL SUPPORT - 100% $1,348,581