Very few youth-serving organizations can rival the storied history and wide-ranging impact of 4-H, America’s largest youth development organization. 4-H took root more than a century ago, providing young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County 4-H programs connect kids to the resources of Cornell University and the land-grant system, strengthening the next generation of inventors, entrepreneurs and problem-solvers. Activities and events inspire and shape youth, give them opportunities to master skills, enrich their knowledge and work with others who can positively influence them. In 2016, 477 youth enrolled in 25 different programs and activities.

4-H Mission Mandates

**STEM**
4-H engages youth in science, technology, engineering, and math. 4-H’s approach to STEM is comprehensive and holistic—from agriculture to alternative energy—youth are learning about highly relevant complex systems and issues that will ensure their contributions to their communities today and their success as global leaders tomorrow.

**Citizenship**
4-H citizenship programs empower young people to be well-informed citizens who are actively engaged in their communities and the world. Youth learn about civic affairs, build decision-making skills and develop a sense of understanding and confidence in relating and connecting to other people. These life skills help grow 4-H youth into true leaders.

**Healthy Living**
Healthy living programs have been at the core of 4-H and remains a foundation of our pledge. While 4-H believes that healthy living habits of young people begin at home, we strive to equip youth with knowledge and skills that will prepare them physically, emotionally and socially to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

4-H Outreach

- After-School Programs
- In-School Enrichment
- Summer Stem Day Camp
- Community Fairs and Festivals
The Legislative Intern Program matches students with local government officials to discover first-hand how government works. This after-school program runs October through March and is available to high school juniors and seniors living in and attending schools in Niagara County.

Guest speakers, independent projects, seminars, legislative meetings, committee meetings, public hearings and possible field trips during one semester of the school year provide invaluable opportunities.

Students successfully completing the government intern program may receive academic credit. This year, 18 students participated in the program from Newfane Central School, Royalton-Hartland, Lockport Senior High, Starpoint Central School, Lewiston-Porter Central School and Niagara Falls High School.

The Legislative Intern Program has been active in Niagara County under the direction of Cornell Cooperative Extension since 1977.

The Successfully Transitioning Youth to Adolescence (S.T.Y.A.) Theater Group is a 4-H outreach group that meets in Niagara Falls at the Niagara Falls Housing Authority’s recreation center at Packard Court.

On average, 10 youth ages 11-13 participated in the theater arts program, that included mime and pantomime, storytelling and set-design activities. Several of the youth took the initiative to write a play and they all came together as a group to work out the details. They developed life skills such as planning, organizing, sharing and communicating. They will be participating in a six-week baking/cooking project this spring, having completed the Theater Arts project.

In July, three weeks of day camps were offered at CCE. Each week, over 45 youth participated in fun, hands-on activities to enhance learning. The camp is available for children entering kindergarten through fifth grade.

The camp consisted of daily classes in science, nutrition, and garden-based learning, in addition to structured physical activities. Popular activities included building gumball dispensers, marble mazes, fairy night lights, ladybug wind chimes and creating edible science experiments. Archery was offered to youth ages 8 and up.

4-H Day Camp offers children the opportunity to build life skills and friendships while learning and building confidence.

Research Shows that 4-H Youth are...

- 3X more likely to contribute to their communities;
- 41% less likely to engage in cigarette, drug and alcohol use; and
- 2X as likely to exercise and be physically active.
Animal Science Program

CCE’s volunteer-led Animal Science Program continues to offer educational activities in 11 species—Beef, Dairy Cattle, Dogs, Meat Goats, Dairy Goats, Working Goats, Poultry, Sheep, Rabbit/Cavy, Swine and Equine—to youth throughout the county. An Alpaca program will be added in 2017.

The 4-H Animal Science Program is designed to engage and excite young people in the STEM-based field of animal science while developing life skills such as leadership, responsibility, caring, recordkeeping and good sportsmanship.

Jr. Gardener Program

The goal of the 4-H Junior Gardener program is to help children learn basic horticulture concepts while participating in hands-on gardening activities and crafts. Jr. Gardeners meet once or twice a month from March through November. The 4-H Jr. Gardener program allows these youth to have their own area to watch plants grow from seed to harvest.

This year, Jr. Gardeners planted in the 4-H garden with each child having their own area. Many of the Jr. Gardeners chose to plant tomatoes and had such a bountiful crop they were able to donate three bushels to the CCE Veggie Van and one bushel to the Lockport CARES homeless shelter. A sunflower planting along the south side of the greenhouse provided a lesson in pollination with Jr. Gardeners participating in an activity using paper flowers and pipe cleaner bees. Several community service projects are planned for 2017.
4-H youth are 1.7 times as likely to plan to take courses or pursue a career in science, engineering or technology.

4-H participants are 1.9 times more likely to have higher levels of positive youth development.

4-H participants are 2 times more likely to have higher civic identity and engagement.
Homesteading Classes

In 2016, CCE offered two series of homesteading classes. Homesteading can be defined as a lifestyle of self-sufficiency. The spring series included workshops on yogurt and butter making, introduction to backyard chicken keeping, weaving, tree and shrub pruning, composting, organic gardening and various other classes.

Our fall homesteading series featured workshops on seed saving, quilting, basket weaving, garlic growing, fermenting vegetables and the art of herbology. The first year of our homesteading classes was a great success, with over 180 workshop attendees. CCE will continue to hold homesteading classes in 2017.

Eat Fresh WNY App

This fall, CCE received a grant from the Yahoo Community Benefit Fund to create a mobile application designed to promote local foods and agri-tourism in all of Niagara County, as well as parts of Erie and Orleans Counties. The Eat Fresh WNY app will be created for the use of travelers visiting Niagara Falls and Buffalo as well as residents from all over WNY who are seeking to experience the local food culture.

Niagara County is home to a world-renowned natural wonder which is the fifth most visited attraction in the world. With food-related tourism generating $32 billion per year and approximately 95% of travelers using digital devices, mobile apps present a valuable opportunity to connect with tourists. The mobile app will provide convenient information such as local food and agri-tourism attractions, events, restaurants and more along with interactive features designed to increase tourist traffic. Look for further updates on this exciting project in 2017.

WNY Food Enterprise Center

By adaptively reusing an existing building on CCE Niagara’s campus, this center is intended to foster entrepreneurs and grow food-related businesses and small to mid-sized farms that want to begin producing value added products. It will support start-up enterprises by providing technical assistance, business programming, and other wrap-around services including a commercialized kitchen and storage facility.

CCE received funding from the United States Department of Agriculture for the planning phase of the project, which was completed in March 2016. CCE has just recently received funding from the USDA’s Local Food Promotion Program to continue development of this project.
Horticulture

The Horticulture Program provides the latest research-based information to a diverse audience including home gardeners, professional horticulturists, municipalities and service industries such as lawn care companies, groundskeepers, and exterminators.

More than 2,100 individuals contacted Cornell Cooperative Extension for horticultural information via phone calls and office visits in 2016. The majority of these direct contacts were for problem diagnosis, pest identification, and soil analysis. More than 200 insect specimens were submitted for identification. More than 300 home garden soil samples were also submitted for testing.

This was the fifth consecutive year that the number of ticks submitted by residents and veterinarians increased. Forty-two samples were identified compared to thirty-eight in 2015, twenty-six in 2014 and sixteen in 2012. Fourteen were identified as deer ticks which are the species capable of transmitting Lyme disease.

Eighteen group presentations with a total audience of 385 were made to garden clubs, civic organizations, and youth groups. Sixty-five consultations with greenhouse operators, arborists, lawn care companies, exterminators, and groundskeepers relating to integrated pest management and problem diagnosis were completed.

Retail horticulture businesses such as florists and garden centers continue to refer their customers to Cornell Cooperative Extension for gardening information.

Niagara County master gardeners volunteered over 1,700 hours in 2016. Some of their activities included assisting with community gardens and beautification efforts, staffing information displays at garden festivals and making group presentations.

Spring gardening classes open to the community were offered this year. Over forty participants attended classes on pruning, ecological gardening and monarch butterflies. A plant sale at the Cornell Cooperative Extension greenhouse followed.

The horticulture program has collaborated with other county departments and local municipalities including the Niagara County Health Department, Niagara County Parks Department, WNY Land Conservancy, Lockport Housing Authority and the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation office.

Other priority areas included providing technical support to community gardening efforts in local communities and monitoring invasive species populations such as the Emerald Ash Borer. In 2016, the horticulture program worked with several homeowners associations and landowners regarding strategies to deal with Emerald Ash Borer.

It is estimated that at least 25% of horticulture inquiries are a result of referrals from local businesses.
The Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP), a CCE regional agriculture team, serves the vegetable greenhouse, potato and dry bean industries in an 11-county region of Western New York including Niagara County. Our region accounts for more than half the acres of the New York vegetable industry, with 1,017 vegetable farms and an estimated farm gate value of more than $250 million. The Cornell Vegetable Specialists work together with Cornell faculty and extension educators statewide to address issues that impact the industry.

CVP provides educational programs and information to growers, processors and agri-business professionals, arming them with the knowledge to profitably produce and market safe and healthful vegetable crops, contributing to the viability of farms and the economic well-being of New York State.

The Lake Ontario Fruit Team partners with Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide educational programs for the commercial fruit industry, using research-based information to help the tree fruit and berry industries in New York compete in the world market and provide safe, high-quality product for consumers.

The Lake Erie Grape Program serves the needs of regional grape growers and wineries by giving them the tools to improve their generational sustainability and fiscal health. There are approximately 30,000 acres of vineyard in the Lake Erie region of New York and Pennsylvania grown on 840 farms, making this the largest grape growing region outside of California.

The NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team is a regional agricultural CCE program, serving a 10-county region in the Western New York. Team specialists collaborate with Cornell faculty and extension educators statewide to provide service to large and small farms, whether dairy, livestock, hay, corn, wheat or soybean focused.

Education and support include individual farm management team meetings, multi-day classroom and hands-on training, ongoing farmer group discussion meetings and thematic day-long symposia.
Ag and Farmland Protection Plan

Niagara County originally adopted an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan in 1999 and several major goals of the Plan have been successfully implemented. Niagara County’s agricultural industry has continued to diversify and develop with a renewed emphasis on direct marketing, both locally as well as regionally. This past year, CCE successfully collaborated with the County to obtain funding from the Department of Agriculture & Markets to update the plan. One of the goals in revising the plan is to engage the widening range of stakeholders, including farm operators, owners of farm-related businesses, municipal officials, tourism and economic development agencies, and other local and regional organizations currently committed to agricultural and related initiatives. We intend not only to document the current economic value of our farm industry, but also to identify specific strategies that will support and increase the profitability and continuity of our farm operations. The revision process should take approximately 18 months and is scheduled to be completed by June 2018.

Farmers Market Promotion Program

CCE received funding through the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) to promote the growth of the Park Place Market and the City Market of Niagara Falls. CCE has utilized various tactics to help increase the awareness of the markets within the community, such as creating advertising materials for markets, conducting cooking demonstrations at the markets to show customers how to use agricultural products, and providing training to market vendors about marketing strategies and potential ways to increase their profitability. The FMPP grant has been in effect since the Fall of 2015 and will continue through the majority of 2017.

AgNet

CCE was awarded funding through the Niagara Area Foundation, a geographic division of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to implement the AgNet program. AgNet is a youth education program intended to promote agriculture and food systems by offering inquiry-based, hands-on education and activities to junior high and high school students throughout Niagara County and is designed to maximize the integration of food systems and agriculture into the educational system. In 2017, CCE will pilot test nine lessons to 185 youth in grades 7-12 attending Niagara County schools as well as 4-H and homeschooled youth. This introductory course is designed to teach students about agriculture as well as science, math, reading, and writing. Throughout the course, students will explore careers and post-secondary opportunities within agriculture and the food system through hands-on learning experiences.

Agriculture and Local Foods

CCE participates in the Agricultural Districts program through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. There are five agricultural districts in Niagara County. The agricultural districts are designed to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production and provide landowner incentives and protections. CCE conducts the 8-year reviews for each agricultural district, as well as the annual 30-day inclusion period for Niagara County, in accordance with NYS Agriculture and Markets law.

There was a lot to see and do at the Niagara County Fair this past year. On the agriculture and food systems side, fairgoers could visit the Ag Discovery Zone to learn about agricultural products produced in Niagara County, and shop at the Farmers Market that took place on Friday. Visitors on Saturday could also watch the awards ceremony for the WNY Home Wine Competition and the Niagara County Fair Homebrew Competition. Fifty bottles of wine were entered into the wine competition along with 46 bottles of beer for the homebrew competition.
Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

CCE Niagara was awarded the next iteration of the NYS Department of Health grant, entitled Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), which began in the final quarter of 2015.

The CHSC program enhances the multi-sector, collaborative approach, incorporating both strong school and community components to increase demand for and access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for daily physical activity to reduce the risk of chronic disease in the high-need communities and school districts of Niagara Falls and Lackawanna.

Veggie Van

Bringing Fresh, Local Produce to Food Deserts

This summer, CHSC did a pilot launch of the Veggie Van, a mobile farmers market that provided residents of Niagara Falls and Lackawanna with direct access to fruits and vegetables, many of whom have limited access to fresh produce.

The Veggie Van first launched on August 19th in Niagara Falls, and on September 1st in Lackawanna. Once a week the Veggie Van would go to the two designated locations and sell fresh produce. Not only did the Veggie Van sell fresh produce at market price, our staff also accepted both cash and EBT payments.

The Cities of Niagara Falls and Lackawanna are considered food deserts—areas where residents have limited access to fresh, healthy and affordable foods. The Veggie Van helped combat hunger and reduce food insecurity by traveling to communities that do not have a grocery store nearby.

Most of the food sold was locally sourced from farms in Western New York, which encouraged residents to “eat local”. Locally grown produce is full of flavor because it spends less time in transit on the way to being sold. Eating locally also supports local farms while advancing the economy in Western New York.

The six-week pilot program has been a great success, with over $3,000 worth of fresh produce sold over seven weeks and servicing approximately 80 residents per week. Next year, CCE-Niagara is hoping to expand the program by bringing the Veggie Van to more sites in the community and to expand its program to operate for the entire summer of 2017.
We are in the process of creating a workforce development program designed to provide unemployed and dislocated adults in the Lockport area with the skillset and knowledge needed to obtain gainful employment in industries such as: greenhouse/nurseries; landscaping/facilities maintenance; food processing/restaurants, etc., while also gaining necessary soft skills and job/career counseling and support. NiagaraWorks participants will complete an Introduction to Horticulture training and then may choose one of two tracks: (i) Greenhouse/Nursery Training with a Food Preparation/Processing component and (ii) Landscape/Grounds Maintenance Training with a Facilities/Custodial/Maintenance component.

As part of the program intake/orientation process, participants will be assessed for any necessary supportive referral services to minimize barriers that might impede success in the program. CCE received funding from the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc. to implement a pilot of this program, which is projected to begin in late 2017.

Lunch Box Garden Fresh Bistro Student Run Café

One strategy of CHSC is to increase access to healthy, affordable foods. CHSC School Coordinator Jennifer Tynan teamed up with Jenn Willat’s, a Lackawanna High School’s Life Skills educator who wanted her students to gain hands-on life skills. After several meetings with key stakeholders plans emerged for a healthy café and a supply list was generated. CHSC was able to fund the purchasing of equipment and supplies through a sub-award.

The Lunch Box Café provides an opportunity for students with special needs to learn about healthy food choices and cooking while gaining hands-on experience and life skills. Since opening in October, the entire school community at Lackawanna Middle and High School now has access to affordable, healthy options during the school day. Everything is sold at cost and the money is put back into purchasing supplies.

Lackawanna City School District has a high poverty rate with 83% of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Many have not had exposure to healthier options for eating or the opportunity to learn basic skills related to nutrition. Students in Mrs. Willat’s life-skills class started small by preparing healthy recipes in the Home and Careers room, which gave them an opportunity to gain hands-on life skills. The principal suggested she expand her project into a vacant space near the cafeteria, but she had limited resources to get started.

The Lunch Box Café has had great success, with over 1,000 customers placing orders in the first three months of business. Students have created meal calendars and newsletters with healthy meal recipes to help members of the school community to live a healthier lifestyle, while also providing students with hands-on opportunities to gain real world experience. In addition to offering in-house dining and to-go orders, they are now planning on catering events as well!

Over 1,487 customers served!

Beginning in Spring of 2017!
Eat Smart New York

Eat Smart New York offers free nutrition education to individuals who qualify for and/or receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance coordinates this program through a five-year grant administered in Niagara County by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Their program goals are to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption, and increase physical activity to balance calories eaten as part of a healthy lifestyle. To achieve these goals, nutrition educators have worked with after-school programs, summer camps, food pantries, local grocery stores, farmers markets, adult education and job training centers, libraries, senior centers, community centers and many others. While at these sites, nutrition educators host hands-on and interactive classes, workshops, or table style events to discuss a variety of topics. Class topics include sugar shockers, blubber burgers, fruits & vegetables, fiber & whole grains, stretching food dollars, and food safety.

Some of the positive results during 2016 include a 3rd grade girl trying kale in an after-school program and taking the recipe home for her parents to try; a participant at a food pantry who learned about healthy snacks and ideas of how to incorporate the five food groups into every meal for her daughter; and an adult participant who learned the importance of eating breakfast every morning, tried eating breakfast more and enjoyed how much energy he had throughout the day.

In 2016, SNAP-Ed Educators completed 1,393 events (indirect and direct). They reached 9,569 people through indirect education and 3,719 through direct education.

For adults that participated in an Eat Smart New York Nutrition Program:

- 65% intend to eat more fruits and vegetables daily
- 54% intend to drink fewer sugar sweetened drinks
- 62% intend to eat more whole grains and fiber-rich foods

For youth that participated in an Eat Smart New York nutrition program:

- 83% intend to eat more fruits and vegetables daily
- 87% intend to drink fewer sugar sweetened drinks
- 75% intend to be physically active for at least 30 min. most days of the week
- 89% intend to buy and eat more low-fat dairy products
Grow on the Go

Grow on the Go is a mobile gardening initiative that launched in May of 2016. Eat Smart NY partnered with the Niagara Falls library system to bring home vegetable gardening to downtown Niagara Falls. The program helped Niagara Falls residents grow fruits and vegetables in an urban environment where there were many challenges in maintaining a successful garden including apartment living with no greenspace, rental homes with limitations on yard space, unsafe soil conditions, lack of equipment and lack of previous gardening experience.

Grow on the Go helped to break down those barriers and put fresh produce on the plates of community members. Area businesses donated abandoned shopping carts that were repurposed, lined with landscaping fabric, filled with soil, and seedlings. The program gave families and individuals their own “greenspace”. Using shopping carts allowed the gardens to move into buildings, onto elevators, into apartments, into sunny corridors, or taken for a walk to find sunlight and fresh air.

In addition to providing several resources to Grow on the Go, the library also acted as a host site for “cart clinics”, which offered library patrons, community members, and Grow on the Go participants the opportunity to take Eat Smart NY workshops that focus on healthy eating, how to use the foods they were growing at the time, and how to balance food and physical activity. Clinics also featured periodic help from an extension Master Gardener who provided assistance to gardeners who were experiencing growing issues.

"Every parent should do this with their kids. Water once a day, pick whatever little weeds grow, and watch it grow in front of your eyes."

-Amber Rowlett, Grow on the Go participant

CSA Research Grant

In partnership with Cornell University, CCE is participating in a multi-state USDA-funded research study entitled, Innovative Community Supported Agriculture Cost-Offset Intervention to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Strengthen Local Agricultural Economies. The study is examining whether subsidizing the cost of CSAs for low-income families, integrated with tailored nutrition education, increases consumption of fruits and vegetables and improves overall diet quality. Families with children between the ages of 2-12 years who reside in households receiving SNAP, WIC, or meet similar income guidelines are eligible to participate. Currently, 12 partner farms are participating in this study and 200 families have been enrolled, including 36 families from Niagara County. Families receive the CSA share at half price and attend nutrition education classes which are led by a CCE nutrition educator. Each education session has a theme related to one or more of the objectives and includes tastings, demonstrations, and food preparation that features fresh local produce.
ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

EmPower

EmPower New York, an energy management program sponsored by NYSERDA and developed in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, reached 81 Niagara County low-income homeowners and renters from September to December 2016.

Participants attended the free educational workshop and learned ways to reduce their energy bills through no-cost/low-cost conservation methods that they could easily do themselves. Eight workshops were conducted in Niagara County. The workshop included worksheets participants used to calculate financial savings by lowering their thermostats, using energy efficient appliances, water conservation, and efficient lighting options. Participants enjoyed learning about and seeing how different forms of window and door insulation are installed, the cost savings of different types of lighting and how appliances affect our energy bills.

Aquaponics

The overall aim of the Aquaponics Program is to educate and promote environmental stewardship by offering opportunities to explore and interact with an ecosystem while developing scientific thinking and fostering an interest in environmental and agricultural careers.

With funding received from ZONTA, CCE installed an aquaponics unit in our on-site greenhouse. Through this program, youth and adults learned what an ecosystem is, and how aquaponics utilizes natural bacterial cycles to convert fish waste to plant nutrients.

Shooting Sports Program

Since 2014, approximately 75 youth have participated in the Shooting Sports program at CCE-Niagara. With an emphasis on maximum safety and the most responsible use of firearms and archery equipment, youth participants have the opportunity to gain both vocational training knowledge and garner important life-long recreational skills.

The goal of the shooting sports program is to help 4-H’ers learn about habitat control and wildlife conservation. Additionally, youth participants are exposed to the history of archery, trapping, and hunting.

Pheasant Program

The Pheasant Program tasks 4-H’ers with learning how to care for pheasants at a very early age. Raising any animal, wild or domestic, is a lesson in responsibility. Youth learn the daily needs of the growing pheasants, witness the feather development from down to adult plumage, and equate pheasant propagation techniques with those used by hen pheasants caring for their newly hatched chicks.

Eventually, 4-H’ers release their pheasants, which requires knowledge of what habitats pheasants prefer and which covers provide good pheasant hunting activities.

Aquaponics Program Description

Aquaponics is an environmentally friendly method of growing plants and raising fish simultaneously. Fish waste provides nutrients for the plants, while the plants help clean the water for the fish. This symbiotic relationship allows for a more sustainable and efficient use of resources.

Shooting Sports Program Description

The Shooting Sports program is designed to teach youth the importance of responsible firearm and archery use. Participants learn about safety measures, proper handling techniques, and practical applications of these skills.

Pheasant Program Description

The Pheasant Program teaches participants how to care for pheasants, from raising to release. Youth gain valuable skills in animal care, habitat management, and understanding the role of these birds in the ecosystem.
MISSION
Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

VISION
Cornell Cooperative Extension is a national leader in creating positive change on behalf of families and communities through rigorously-tested extension programs. We create measurable change by aligning local needs with the resources and priorities of the land grant system and its state and federal partners.

VALUES
While working with individuals, families, communities, businesses, and industries, we value our commitment to excellence, responsiveness, collaboration, learner-centered life-long education, results-oriented programming, volunteerism, inclusiveness, and the future.
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