

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Career Fair Bridges the Gap between Ag Jobs and Workers

LOCH SHELDRAKE, NY— According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2015, there were 57,900 high skilled jobs in agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environmental fields within the United States. However, only 35,400 people graduated with a bachelor's degree in one of those fields that year. This left the US with 22,500 agricultural related jobs unfilled that year. These statistics do not account for the many thousands more of lesser skilled farm-related jobs that go unfilled every year due to lack of interest in or knowledge of them by potential workers. There is a pressing need for agriculture workers all across the United States, and Sullivan County is not immune to the trend.

A plan was developed by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County (CCESC) Agriculture & Food Systems program team, in partnership with SUNY Sullivan, to create a career and job fair that would provide an outlet for farms and associated agribusinesses in the Sullivan Catskills area to fill their employment openings.

Over two hundred people attended the Agriculture Career & Job Fair April 4, 2018, hosted and co-sponsored by SUNY Sullivan, with 20 businesses tabling, and over 40 jobs posted. Attendees were composed of the general public looking for work, SUNY Sullivan students, and even students from Cornell University. The college students used the opportunity to network with exhibitors for potential post graduate employment. More than 25 Sullivan BOCES high school students learned about future careers and summer employment opportunities, and toured the Hope Farm on SUNY Sullivan's campus.

Three main objectives were met through the Agriculture Career and Job Fair:

1. Provide any farm or agricultural related business within the Sullivan Catskills with the opportunity to post jobs and connect with potential employees.
2. Bring awareness to those seeking employment of the vast amount of available agricultural jobs within our region.

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3. Show the college students of SUNY Sullivan, as well as local high school students, potential career paths in agriculture to help create a sustainable supply of workers in the industry.

“The event wasn’t just successful for people looking for work or career paths,” said Melinda Meddaugh, CCEC Agriculture & Food Systems Team Leader.

“The agribusinesses in attendance left the day not only with the contact information of potential employees but also resumes and interviews scheduled. Overall, the event made a mutually beneficial impact for agribusinesses looking for workers and job seekers looking for employment.”

Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County plans to continue to support its mission to highlight Sullivan County agriculture by providing an online resource of agriculture-related employment on its website at [www.sullivancce.org](http://www.sullivancce.org), to include the postings available at the job fair, coming soon. Looking towards the future, CCEC plans to make the Ag Career & Job Fair an annual event, with more farms and businesses involved, more jobs posted, and more folks in attendance.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County is making a commitment to address the employment issues that farms, businesses that support farms, and the people of Sullivan County regularly face, and it will continue to do so into the future.

Learn more about this and other Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County agricultural initiatives by contacting Melinda Meddaugh at [mm2592@cornell.edu](mailto:mm2592@cornell.edu) or 845-292-6180, ext. 116.

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