Growing Minds, Growing Communities

2017 Annual Report
4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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.

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 2017, 500 youth enrolled in 25 different programs and activities.

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 Livestock Auction Program

The Niagara County 4-H Livestock Auction Program continues to grow with fifty-one 4-H members participating by raising, showing, and selling 98 market animals in 2017.

4-H’ers have the opportunity to gain valuable life skills through their 4-H livestock projects, such as communication, critical thinking, financial management, organization, responsibility and leadership. Successful completion of a market livestock project includes recruiting buyers to bid on their animals during the auction. Through their project involvement, 4-H’ers also have the opportunity to receive a premium price for the animals they market through the livestock auction. Many youth use the money earned from their 4-H livestock projects to help pay for college and to continue raising livestock each year.

4-H’ers preparing for an animal demonstration at CCE’s first Fall Festival & 4-H Expo.
4-H Day Camp

In July, three weeks of day camp were offered at CCE. Each week, over 40 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 a talent show, do-it-yourself jelly, pie-making, cardboard engineering, tie-dye banners, and woodworking cornhole boards. 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.

Junior Gardeners

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 youth to have their own area to watch plants grow from seed to harvest.

This year, Jr. Gardeners planted a large variety of vegetables in the 4-H garden. 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 were completed in 2017, with more projects being planned for 2018.

Legislative Intern Program

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.

Students successfully completing the government intern program may receive academic credit. This year, 10 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.

"By pairing our youths with county lawmakers to observe everything from the budget process to the drafting of local legislation, they have helped young adults gain a fuller appreciation of how government works and the impact it has on their lives — so much so that at least two alumni of the program even went on to become legislators themselves!"

- Legislator Anthony Nemi, R-Lockport

"4-H has taught me how to speak out without being nervous, how to help others, and how to make new friends. In 4-H I have learned new things about poultry, rabbits, and crafts. I am looking forward to growing with 4-H.”

- Garrett

"Without having 4-H in my life, I would not have had all the opportunities to learn many things, travel many places and meet many wonderful people...I had a great experience in 4-H as a third generation 4-H family in Niagara County."

- Melanie

New Programs!

Cooking 101 Program

The Cooking 101 Program is a 4-class series that teaches 4-H’ers cooking skills before allowing youth to compete against one another in a Jr. Iron Chef Challenge. The Jr. Iron Chef Challenges are also held at pop up events like the 4-H Fall Festival & 4-H Expo, the Niagara County Fair, and the Cultural Showcase Day.

Robotics Program

The 4-H Robotics Program is a developing program available in 2018. Through robotics, 4-H’ers learn teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, engineering and design.
Aim High

CCE-Niagara launched a new youth archery program thanks to funding received from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Aim High is a 9-week program structured to teach youth the safe and responsible use of archery equipment, while also promoting an appreciation for the outdoors, respect for others, and positive self-image by offering hands-on education and team building activities to youth in Niagara County.

While archery is a big component, it’s only one aspect of the program which helps students develop important skills that will better prepare them for the future.

CCE’s New York State 4-H shooting sports certified instructors teach youth the basic principles of archery including equipment, safety, sportsmanship, and range etiquette. Additionally, the NYS shooting sports model is specifically designed to promote positive youth development and life skills.

One important program component is yoga, which helps participants improve breathing and strength with holding archery stances and has been shown to improve the accuracy of hitting targets. In addition to helping with archery, yoga also teaches youth new coping methods to deal with stress and how to enhance their mental focus.

Aim High also ties in environmental education through hands-on activities geared towards helping participants develop a better understanding and appreciation for nature. Guest speakers are brought in on a regular basis to help cover topics ranging from wildlife management; habitat rehabilitation; the use of GPS, maps, and compasses; outdoor survival skills; and fire building.

The final component of the program involves teambuilding activities designed to promote problem-solving, leadership, self-awareness, communication and conflict resolution.

"In addition to helping our youth learn the fundamentals of archery, we’re also focused on helping them gain self-confidence and benefit from a teambuilding atmosphere. This program is designed to provide them with tools they can use in all aspects of their lives."

-Heidi Feltz, Lead 4-H Educator
ACE Program

Beginning in November 2017, this new pilot program addressed the desperate need for afterschool enrichment at the middle school level. The After Class Explorer program, also known as ACE, began at Newfane Middle School with 20 students ages 9 to 14. The program aims to foster a healthy lifestyle, increase scholastic achievement and expose students to new experiences and foods. Most importantly, ACE gives students a safe and secure space to learn, make new friends and expand their world.

ACE starts each day with a healthy snack including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and whole grains. This is followed by 30 minutes of exercise and team building activities.

School work is a priority at ACE and students have a tutor available for one-on-one tutoring and homework help. Students are encouraged to help each other through peer to peer tutoring, helping to foster character and leadership skills.

What truly makes this program unique is our “Explorer Hour.” Every day from 3-4pm a trained educator from CCE-Niagara instructs the class. Programs include but are not limited to: robotics, healthy eating, archery, yoga, science and technology, agriculture and food systems, and artistic exploration. ACE is funded by the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc.

"ACE has been a program that’s enriched the lives of so many of our students. Regardless of background, they have learned new skills, worked together, and built a greater connection to our school and our community."
- Tom Adams, Principal, Newfane Middle School

AgNET

AgNET is a youth education program intended to promote a greater understanding of agriculture and food systems by offering inquiry-based, hands-on education and activities to students. CCE pilot-tested nine food systems/agriculture education lessons to youth at Royalton-Hartland Middle School, Niagara Falls High School and Niagara-Wheatfield Middle School. The course is designed to teach students about agriculture as well as science, math, reading, and writing.

Throughout the course, students explored careers and post-secondary opportunities within the agricultural and food system industries. 197 students participated in AgNET project activities through hands-on learning opportunities in the classroom. 71% of students participating in AgNET activities increased their knowledge related to food systems and agriculture. In the post-survey, 88% of students agreed that Niagara County and NYS Agriculture is beneficial to them, their families, and their communities, compared to 61% at baseline. 81% of students agreed that agriculture is a part of their everyday life, compared to 57% at baseline.

At the end of the AgNET course, 63% of students felt that it is important for youth to learn about agriculture and 83% of students agreed that we should teach the course to students in the coming years.

AgNET Funding Sources

Niagara Area Foundation
Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc.
In the Fall of 2016, CCE-Niagara was awarded funding from the Yahoo Community Fund-Empire State Development Grant to develop a food and agri-tourism website called EatFresh WNY. EatFresh WNY is a discovery guide that connects users to local foods and agritourism in Western New York. Users can search for farmers markets, wineries, farm stands, u-pick farms, local food events, and more.

Millions of travelers visit Niagara Falls each year, but our County’s food culture is a wonder of its own...

EatFresh WNY will help tourists discover and explore Western New York’s local food culture. Whether they want to enjoy a wine tour, visit the Peach Festival, or take their family on a haunted hay ride at Becker Farms, there are so many fascinating opportunities waiting to be discovered by tourists visiting the Falls. EatFresh WNY will attract tourists, interest them in extending their stay to explore Niagara County, and encourage them to come back soon.

By connecting website users to locally grown products and agriculturally based activities, our goal is to help people build a stronger relationship with Western New York’s agricultural resources. We look forward to launching Western New York’s first and only tool of this kind in the Spring of 2018!

The 4-H Training Center on CCE grounds is undergoing renovations to create the WNY Food Incubator, a program that offers access to our shared-use commercial kitchen along with a large variety of business support services. The WNY Food Incubator will be dedicated to helping farms create value added products, as well as wholesale, retail, and catering food businesses thrive.

Participating business entrepreneurs will have access to the fully equipped commercial kitchen, inspected and certified by the Niagara County Board of Health and New York State Agriculture and Markets. Workshops will be held as part of the program to help members with business planning, pricing strategy, understanding food regulation requirements and more. Additionally, CCE staff will provide 1-on-1 business support services.

CCE received funding for the WNY Food Incubator from the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc; USDA; East Hill Foundation; and WNY Foundation.

Renovations are currently underway, and will be completed in 2018. AgLab was made possible through funding from the Yahoo Community Benefit Fund.
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 2,000 individuals contacted Cornell Cooperative Extension for horticultural information via phone calls and office visits in 2017. The majority of these direct contacts were for problem diagnosis, insect identification and soil analysis. This included 220 insects specimens submitted for diagnosis and over 300 soil samples for pH testing.

The number of tick specimens submitted by county residents and veterinarians increased for the sixth consecutive year. Growing concern regarding Lyme Disease and other tick borne illnesses suggests this trend will continue. In 2017, 58 tick samples were brought to our office for identification.

Twenty-one group presentations with a total audience of 425 participants were given to garden clubs, youth groups and civic organizations. Over 60 consultations were provided to greenhouse operators, arborists, groundskeepers and woodlot owners relating to problem diagnosis and integrated pest management. Twenty-one local greenhouse businesses attended an integrated pest management workshop in September featuring presenters from Cornell University.

Retail businesses such as garden centers, nurseries, and florists continue to refer their customers to Cornell Cooperative Extension as a research based objective source of information on horticultural topics such as pest identification and control.

Niagara County Master Gardeners volunteered 1,850 hours in 2017. Some of their highlights included assisting with local community gardens and beautification efforts, staffing displays at garden festivals and assisting in our office. A new training class of 15 Master Gardeners began in the fall and will be completed in the early spring of 2018.

Monitoring of invasive species continue to be a priority issue. In 2017, Cornell Cooperative Extension with several homeowners associations and individuals regarding strategies for dealing with Emerald Ash borer. This included group meetings and individual consultations with land owners.

SUPPORT
Over 2,000 horticulture inquiries via phone calls and office visits in 2017.

VOLUNTEERING
Niagara County Master Gardeners volunteered 1,850 hours in 2017.

PRESENTATIONS
21 group presentations with a total audience of 425 participants.
Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

CCE partnered with the Niagara Falls City Market and the ‘Veggie Van,’ (CCE’s mobile farmers market) to promote the growth of each of the farmers markets. CCE provided training to farmers market vendors on marketing and business operations, educated community members on the value of local food, nutrition and food preservation. Additionally, CCE developed marketing materials to promote the markets to Niagara Falls residents and visiting tourists, and advocated for increased transportation access to both of the Niagara Falls markets. Funding for the FMPP program was awarded to CCE from the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program in the fall of 2015 and commenced at the end of 2017.

Regional Agriculture Teams

Cornell Vegetable Program

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.

Lake Ontario Fruit Team

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.

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

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.

NWNY Team

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.

Facebook.com/NWNYTeam
Ag and Farmland Protection Plan

CCE is leading a collaborative effort to update Niagara County’s 1999 Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan. The updated plan will recommend strategies to expand the agricultural economy, retain farmland for continued agricultural use, and improve public understanding of the food system and agricultural practices. During 2017, planning consultant LaBella Associates largely completed the analysis of existing conditions; gathered input from farmers, stakeholders and the public; and identified potential strategies.

Analysis of economic data found that agricultural products worth $140.3 million were produced on Niagara County farms (based on 2015 data). The largest sectors are dairy, fruits, grain and vegetables. More than 2,300 people had jobs in farming and agricultural support services in Niagara County, while an additional 470 people worked in food manufacturing. Agri-tourism continues to grow, with increased investment in wineries and breweries. The plan will recommend economic development strategies that would benefit farms and related businesses such as processing, distribution and tourism.

The plan will delineate areas as high priority for farmland retention, and will identify suitable strategies to retain these lands for continued agricultural production, such as “farm friendly” land use regulation, conservation easements, and purchase of development rights. The updated plan is expected to be completed by June 2018.

CCE Learning Farm

We are currently in the planning stages of developing the CCE Learning Farm, a fun and interactive experience where people of all ages can come to the CCE campus and learn about the inner workings of their local food system. The Learning Farm will have multiple components, including the AgLab (a greenhouse learning center), an animal farm, and several exhibits for visitors to learn about various aspects of agriculture.

Visitors will enjoy learning about farm animals, but also learn about the farming process, the role technology plays in farming, and the products that various animals produce. Students who visit the CCE Learning Farm can expect to have fun while learning how chickens lay eggs, how milk is made, how wool is used for clothing, and much more.

Another component of the CCE Learning Farm is an initiative to help new and beginner farmers. CCE will actively recruit new/beginner farmers, while providing technical assistance, business planning, plots of land, and long-term planning workshops to help participants successfully enter the farming industry and grow the enterprise. The program will have an emphasis on target populations: veterans, displaced individuals (refugees) and socially disadvantaged individuals. It will be designed to include a mentorship program, access to shared resources, technical assistance and skill building resources for new/beginner farmers to prepare them for their own farm businesses. This program is currently in the planning phase.

Visitors to the CCE Learning Farm will develop a better understand of their local food system through farm animal presentations, activities in our dirty classroom, and by exploring a variety of exhibits and play stations built to foster a fun and interactive learning environment.
In 2017, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the grand opening of our Agriculture Education Building, which was held during our first annual Fall Festival & 4-H Expo at the fairgrounds in Lockport. Assemblyman Norris spoke during the ceremony and presented a citation from the New York State Assembly before cutting the ribbon.

Construction of the Agriculture Education Building was made possible through the $5 million fund Governor Cuomo set aside in the 2016/2017 budget for improving the infrastructure of all Agricultural Fairs across New York State. The funding requires that projects be shovel-ready and relate to the housing or promotion of agriculture. The Agriculture Education Building will be devoted to agriculture educational programming, not just during the Niagara County Fair but on a year-round basis.

Cornell Cooperative Extension’s first Fall Festival & 4-H Expo was a success, with fun kids’ craft and educational activities, along with food, games, live music, wagon rides, 4-H animal demonstrations, vendors, and 4-H informational meetings that educated the community on how to become a member of the Niagara County 4-H Program.

“Our Agriculture Education Building is part of a shared vision we have for our grounds that will help boost agriculture education opportunities in our community. We look forward to using this new facility to expand programming to better serve Niagara County”.

— Cathy Maloney, Executive Director
Farm to School Program

In 2017, the Niagara County Farm-to-School program was launched to increase the use of healthy, locally grown foods on school menus. The program is funded through New York State’s Agriculture and Markets Farm-to-School Initiative and will benefit over 28,000 students attending public school districts in Niagara County.

The program’s goal is to develop and strengthen connections between local farms and Niagara County schools to help grow the agricultural economy and increase the amount and variety of specialty crops procured by schools for healthier meal options. CCE’s Farm-to-School Coordinator will be assisting food service staff in food preparation trainings and procurement, and the use of specialty crops in school meal programs.

CCE is working collaboratively with 8 public school districts in Niagara County to assess the district’s needs and develop a specific plan to be implemented. These schools include Barker, Wilson, Lockport, Newfane, Starpoint, Royalton-Hartland, Niagara Wheatfield, and North Tonawanda school districts as well as local farmers to develop a farm to school procurement structure that will be adaptable to all districts in the county.

The Farm-to-School coordinator has also incorporated a “Harvest of the Month” initiative, which helps promote the Farm-to-School Program by highlighting and serving a different locally grown food every month. “Harvest of the Month” is a great opportunity to celebrate local abundance, experiment with new foods and recipes, and get some positive recognition for the schools. The program’s goal is to encourage healthy food choices by increasing students’ exposure to seasonal foods while also supporting local farmers and building excitement about school meals.

It also provides wonderful opportunities for school food and nutrition staff, educators, school administrators, family members, and students to collaborate, and to celebrate our commitment to serving locally grown foods with the community.

Cooking with Kids

CCE educators have been visiting elementary schools in Niagara County as part of a new program called “Cooking with Kids”. The goal of the monthly program is to provide an interactive and hands-on educational program that teaches youth how to prepare nutritious meals and make healthy lifestyle choices while also providing a bridge to the local food system.

Cooking with Kids, which started in August, has quickly garnered support from teachers, who say that the program has led to more discussion among students about the value of eating healthy and locally grown produce.

The Cooking with Kids program is funded by the Allen Foundation and will continue throughout the school year. Many schools in Niagara County are already participating, including Lockport, Barker, Wilson, Royalton-Hartland, Starpoint, and Newfane Elementary Schools.

Niagara County Farm to School will increase the amount of local produce in school meals, benefiting the County’s estimated 16,361 public school students who receive their breakfast or lunch through their schools meal program.

Additionally, all 28,000 public school students in the County will be impacted by the Farm to School classroom curriculum integration, which will include hands-on learning activities to increase awareness of local specialty crops as well as healthy marketing throughout the schools.

Children in Niagara County will learn about where their food comes from and have a greater connection with our local food system.

28,000
Number of students benefiting from Niagara County Farm to School

1,500-2,000
Children in Niagara County will learn about where their food comes from and have a greater connection with our local food system.
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC VITALITY

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
MOBILE FARMERS MARKET
Bringing Fresh, Local Produce to Food Deserts

In 2017, CHSC officially launched the Veggie Van, CCE’s mobile farmers market that gives direct access to fruits and vegetables to underserved communities, many of whom have limited access to fresh produce.

CHSC expanded the Veggie Van to two locations each in Lackawanna and Niagara Falls, and operated for 12 weeks, from June 21st through September 14th. On Wednesdays, the Veggie Van would travel to Lackawanna and set up at the Lackawanna Senior Center and the Old Friendship House Site. On Thursdays, the Veggie Van would head to Niagara Falls and visit the John Duke Senior Center and the Niagara Falls Medical Center on 10th street. 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.

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 2018.

In 2017, 5,572 lbs. worth of produce was brought to low-access communities via the Veggie Van.
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County’s Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant (CHSC), in partnership with GoBike Buffalo, the City of Niagara Falls Department of Community Development, and the Niagara Falls City School District, are working to create safer crosswalks around schools in Niagara Falls. Over 100 students at several Niagara Falls Elementary schools have been designing and painting colorful crosswalks to promote traffic calming and help improve the safety of walking and bicycling in the City of Niagara Falls.

The initiative was inspired by Complete Streets, a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

To date, crosswalk painting projects have been completed at Niagara Street Elementary, Gaskill Preparatory, Cataract Elementary, LaSalle Preparatory, 72nd Street, and Maple Avenue Elementary Schools. Additionally, several more schools in Niagara Falls are scheduled to have these vibrant crosswalks painted this school year.

“Even after the paint fades, these children’s experiences will remain, hopefully, encouraged to think differently about everyday spaces in the future.”

-Seth Piccirillo,
Niagara Falls Community Development Director
The NiagaraWorks workforce development program debuted in April, 2017, and was designed to provide underemployed adults in Niagara County with the skillset and knowledge needed to obtain gainful employment in industries including greenhouse/nurseries; landscaping/facilities maintenance; food processing/restaurants and more. The program was free to participants and provided them with small stipends throughout the 12 weeks of training.

Program participants received a mixture of classroom and hands-on training to learn a wide range of skills to prepare them for a new career path.

Over the course of 12 weeks, participants completed an introductory lesson in horticulture before choosing one of two career tracks: (I) greenhouse nursery training with a food preparation/processing component or (II) landscaping/grounds maintenance training with a facilities/custodial maintenance component.

The first track included training in basic greenhouse management and functions, hydroponic and aquaponics gardening, plant identification/propagation, and integrated pest management. The food preparation/processing component included food safety and ServSafe training, as well as an introduction to food preservation techniques such as freezing, drying, and both water bath and pressure canning.

The second track consisted of training in workplace safety, plumbing and electrical maintenance, small engine troubleshooting, proper landscaping techniques, horticulture problem solving, and turf management.

Participants also spent time at Orleans/Niagara BOCES where they received guidance on interviewing, job search strategies, resume preparation, and customer service training. After completing the program, NiagaraWorks program graduates received job placement assistance and individualized support services through CCE-Niagara. Funding for NiagaraWorks was made possible through the Grigg-Lewis Foundation, Inc. We’re hoping to find a funding source so we can continue this program next year!
Eat Smart New York

Eat Smart New York (ESNY) 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.

In 2017, SNAP-Ed Educators completed

1,271 events reaching 9,114 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

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

ESNY Cooking Classes

Eat Smart New York (ESNY) nutritionists have been building a following at the North Tonawanda Library. Ben is a monthly feature at the library, hosting a nutrition workshop with cooking demonstrations. In one winter workshop, Ben prepared a butternut squash risotto. Ben spoke about using seasonal vegetables to save food dollars. He also informed participants about the nutritional benefits of butternut and winter squashes, such as fiber, antioxidants, and vitamin A. These squashes can be intimidating for some to prepare, but Ben broke it down and showed them simple ways to prepare the squash. Participants learned to add vegetables in to every day dishes to create restaurant quality meals at home. Ben taught a simple way to prepare a butternut squash risotto. One participant remarked she had eaten risotto in a restaurant and this was even better! She looked forward to making the recipe at home.
Grow on the Go

Grow on the Go is a mobile gardening initiative that helps bring home vegetable gardening to community members by providing them with the resources they need to successfully grow their garden. 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.

In 2017, Grow on the Go relocated and expanded its program to two locations; one at St. Johns Outreach in Lockport and another at the LaSalle Library Branch in Niagara Falls. There was a total of 10 participants, 6 Niagara Falls families and 4 Lockport families.

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 Niagara Falls Public 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.

"Next year we will be moving and we plan to take the garden with us. It fits in the moving truck!...The kids loved it! They grew so many green beans and tomatoes. I made homemade baby food from the peas we grew to save money. I just boiled and mashed the peas and the baby loved it!"

- The Miller Family

Double the Sites, Double the Impact

In 2017, the Grow on the Go program expanded the program to include residents from the City of Lockport.
Sodium Reduction in Communities Program

CCE-Niagara was awarded the Sodium Reduction in Communities Program (SRCP) grant from NYS Department of Health in October 2016. The program targets children in early child care education centers and students and faculty at colleges and universities in Erie and Niagara County. SRCP has partnered with Community Action Organization of Erie County Head Start, Holy Cross Head Start, University at Buffalo, and Niagara County Community College. The program intends to reduce the risk of hypertension by replacing high sodium foods with healthier alternatives.

New Menu Items at NCCC

Students and faculty at Niagara County Community College are looking for more healthy foods, according to a recent student survey. With top selling items such as pizza and chicken wings, it was difficult to change the culture of the cafeteria. NCCC has 5 stations in the cafeteria, grill, salad bar, pizza, sandwich, and Mexican and a large variety of snacks and beverages. Although healthy options are available, signage was not visible to customers. Working closely with the food service manager, the new school year introduced increased signage, new menu items, and a tabling event with new product samples. Fifty percent of the chip rack is dedicated to healthy options. Healthy is defined as 200 calories and 250mg of sodium per package. The food service manager also created a Healthy U Menu. This included vegetarian sandwiches and thin crust pizzas on a 10” wrap. Sodium was reduced from 742mg to 440mg using a 10” wrap instead of a 12” wrap. A tabling event was held with Healthy U sandwich samples to increase awareness about the new products. During the event, the Healthy U Map was distributed. The map is a detailed handout that lists each station and the healthy options at that station. Faculty, staff, and students were very interested in the map and did not know about the numerous options available.

CAO of Erie County Head Start Division

Community Action Organization (CAO) is responsible for 25 Head Start locations across Erie and Niagara County, serving breakfast, lunch and snack to over 1,900 students ages 3-5. Depending on gender and age, the sodium limit for children 3-5 years old is 1,500-1,900mg per day. Because of this, CAO agreed to limit sodium offered to the children by passing a nutrition standards policy, which states “no more than 430 mg of sodium for breakfast, 640mg of sodium for lunch and less than 200mg of sodium for snack”.

The nutrition for every product, recipe, and menu item was assessed and was crucial to the menu planning process. This brought attention to the high sodium products on the current menu such as meatballs, chicken patty, and deli turkey, and showed the menu planning team where improvements could be made. By working directly with the food distributor, healthier products such as raw chicken breasts and low sodium deli turkey were discovered to purchase. Success in reducing sodium was found by switching canned green beans to fresh or frozen and removing breaded chicken patties to a raw, whole muscle chicken breast.

To ease the transition of new menu items, new kitchen equipment such as food processors, spiralizers, mandolins, and food dehydrators were provided to help staff work more efficiently, reduce the number of canned goods purchased and increase the number of fresh food served.
ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Through environmental education, CCE teaches stewardship, an ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources to facilitate long-term sustainability.

Backyard and Beyond

Backyards & Beyond was a 4-H program that connected youth with the outdoors, in natural areas around the 4-H grounds and local parks. Youth and adults were encouraged to explore and discover nature together. 4-H members and their parents made birdfeeders, participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, Animal Tracks, Winter Tree Identification Walk, Know your Wildflowers, Ponds & Frogs and Fall Tree Identification Walk. Approximately 30 kids attended one or more of the workshops that were offered.

The goal was to inspire youth, with their families to go outside where they can spend quality time in nature, while promoting health and wellness.

Aquaponics

Aquaponics is a model of sustainable food production that combines fish farming with hydroponic plant production. With funding received from ZONTA, CCE installed an Aquaponics unit in a greenhouse on-site. In this system, water is re-used through biological filtration and recirculation. The waste products of one biological system are used as a nutrient source for another living system. Integrating fish and plant production also increases agricultural diversity and produces multiple products in the same space. Through this program, youth and adults learn what an ecosystem is, construct their own ecosystem that will produce a food system, document the process by collecting data, and record observations. The overall aim of the Aquaponics program is to educate and promote environmental stewardship by offering opportunities to explore and interact with the environment, while developing scientific thinking and fostering an interest in environmental and agricultural careers. Aquaponics programming will be continued through AgLab.

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 them to have a strong understanding of their natural habitats. The goal of the Pheasant Program is to meet the current and future needs of people for pheasant hunting, observation, and educational opportunities within biological constraints.
CCE OF NIAGARA SOURCES OF SUPPORT—2017

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

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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