

**Cornell Cooperative Extension**  
**Ontario County**

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**Putting Knowledge to Work**

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# WHO WE ARE



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Agriculture and Natural Resources



**Adam Bacher**  
4-H Afterschool Educator  
4-H Youth Development



**Matty Brooks**  
4-H Afterschool Coordinator  
4-H Youth Development



**Amelia Devolder**  
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4-H Administrative Assistant



**Colletta Francese**  
Facilities Supervisor



**James Hooper**  
4-H Resource Educator  
4-H Camp Bristol Hills  
4-H Youth Development



**Debbie Huls**  
Finance Coordinator



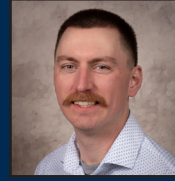
**Julie Kikkert\***  
Team Lead  
Cornell Vegetable Program



**Anne Lahr**  
Facilitator  
Parenting Skills Workshop



**Kaitlyn Lutz\***  
Bilingual Dairy Specialist  
NWN Dairy, Livestock & Field  
Crops



**Jacob Maslyn**  
Agriculture Economic  
Development Educator  
Agriculture & Natural Resources



**Jessica Middleton**  
Summer Camp Director  
4-H Camp Bristol Hills  
4-H Youth Development



**Emma Moore**  
Agriculture Literacy Educator  
Agriculture and Natural Resources



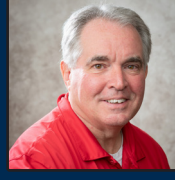
**Pat Owen**  
Facilitator  
Parenting Skills Workshop



**Amy Pyra**  
4-H Program Coordinator  
4-H Youth Development



**Moira Tidball**  
Executive Director  
(May 1, 2024 Start)



**Russell Welser**  
Senior Resource Educator  
Agriculture and Natural Resources



**Sarah Wilhelm**  
4-H Resource Educator  
4-H Youth Development

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## A Message from the Board President

Dear Friends of Extension,

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Ontario County is excited to highlight some of our new and existing programs in our annual report. We continue to grow, improve and develop new programs to meet the interests of our community. Our Master Gardeners program remains strong, and we will soon welcome new Master Gardeners who have completed their training. Our agriculture, parenting workshops, and horticulture programs continue to expand to meet the requests and needs of our community. Agriculture In the Classroom continues to grow in scope and in the number of children we reach and inspire with nutritional knowledge. 4-H Camp Bristol Hills is celebrating their 100-year anniversary this year. While overall the number of campers attending continues to be lower than pre-pandemic, some of the eight different camps show increased attendance and we continue to look for new ways to provide education and entertainment over the summer months for our campers. Our 4-H programs remain strong; we were able to bring back a sewing workshop which filled within an hour of posting, and some food and nutritional programs. We now have a dog training club which enabled us to bring a dog show back to the county fair this year. Our 4-H staff is often limited only by the lack of volunteers so consider volunteering if possible.

While many counties throughout the state have seen grant monies being withheld and a decrease in county support, we in Ontario County are lucky in that our county government continues to strongly support us. Our Executive Director, Mo Tidball, has been very successful in obtaining grant monies to support many of our programs. The strong teamwork of our Board of Directors continues to provide their knowledge and expertise to ensure CCE of Ontario will continue to meet these diverse challenges effectively and efficiently as we say goodbye to three outgoing members and welcome five new members, filling two existing vacancies, this upcoming year.

Please read the pages of the Annual Report to fully understand and appreciate the work of our staff and volunteers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Ebberts".

Sandy Ebberts  
President, Board of Directors  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
of Ontario County



## A Message from the Executive Director

As I finish my first full year as Executive Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County, I am very proud of all that we have accomplished! As you will read in this report, we continued strong with our core programs and added some new programming, such as Farm to School initiatives through the Rooted in Learning grant and bringing more youth to the Ontario County Fair through a NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets grant. We also received grant money to pilot a Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) African safari with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and researchers from Cornell's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. I was one of the six women who traveled to Mozambique to learn about the role hunting has on conservation and the African wildlife economy and how that relates to our North American model. The program was a huge success and NYS DEC has announced another BOW African safari in 2026 for more women to have this learning experience.

This year was also the celebration of one hundred years of offering 4-H summer camp in Ontario County. Read about our centennial activities, starting on page 27, as we look at the history of 4-H Camp Bristol Hills and look forward to the future of camp. We have made structural and cosmetic improvements to the facilities with the help of grant money and lots of volunteers.

2025 was a good year, and I/we look forward to 2026.

Moira (Mo) Tidball  
Executive Director  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
of Ontario County

Left: NYS DEC 1st BOW African Safari participants in Mozambique with support staff.  
Right: CCE staff at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills Centennial Gala





## THE MISSION OF CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

*is to enable people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work.*



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**Cover, from top left:** Pheromone traps detect harmful pests like black cutworm and common armyworm in farms in the Finger Lakes region. 4-H Campers boating in Canandaigua Lake in 1925. Master Gardeners lead a Kissing Balls Greens Class. 4-H Member shows a goat at the County Fair.

**Above, from left:** Feed Managers from 28 farms across 8 counties participate in a Feeder School. School students attend Conservation Field Days, sponsored by CCE and Ontario County Soil and Water, held at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. Area tourism agencies attend an agritourism event at Shortsville Reindeer Farm.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for providing equal program and employment opportunities in accordance with applicable laws.**

# THIRD ANNUAL CCE ONTARIO FALL FESTIVAL AND OPEN HOUSE EVENT

The third annual Fall Festival and Open House once again showcased the breadth of programs offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County. This free community event brought together staff and volunteers representing Agriculture, Master Gardeners, Ag in the Classroom, 4-H Clubs, and 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. Building on the success of previous years, the 2025 festival expanded its offerings, participation, and duration.

More than 30 staff and volunteers helped prepare the site, set up activity stations, and welcome guests to the Bristol Hills. While this year's earlier date aimed to take advantage of improved weather, it coincided with several other community events and the start of the school year, resulting in slightly lower attendance. Even so, around 75 guests joined in the fun—including a surprise visit from a special guest, John Woodard.

Upon arrival, guests were greeted by 4-H Teen Leaders and directed to the Welcome Tent, where 4-H and Parenting Administrative Assistant Amelia Devolder provided maps and information about the day's activities. Inside Cockram Lodge, displays from 4-H, Camp, and Agriculture programs offered opportunities for visitors to connect with Executive Director Mo Tidball, 4-H Club Resource Educator Sarah Wilhelm, and Camp Director Jessica Middleton.

Outside, guests explored a wide range of educational and hands-on experiences. CCE Economic Development Educator Jacob Maslyn led an apple tasting featuring several locally sourced varieties. Master Gardener volunteers inspired families to learn about birds and birdwatching near Cayuga Cabin, while others shared freshly popped corn and discussed the importance of this staple crop.

At the pond, Camp volunteers led fishing activities and invited families to make s'mores around the campfire, participate in a camp craft, and even challenge themselves on the high ropes course. Several 4-H Clubs were also on hand, including the Pet Club, Hens, Hares & Hooves Club, and Beau's Bandits Club, each bringing animals for visitors to meet. Inside Davis Lodge, the 4-H Animation Club invited guests to try their hand at simple character drawings, while club leader Dan Middleton shared information about the group. Meanwhile, the Wags and Wisdom 4-H Dog Club engaged visitors in the Critter Care area, promoting positive youth development through canine care.

Throughout the day, 4-H Program Coordinator Amy Pyra and 4-H Camp Manager Jim Hooper provided support to staff and volunteers, ensured smooth operations, and captured moments from the event.

A highlight of the day was the unexpected visit from John Woodard, son of Art Woodard, the 4-H Agent who oversaw Camp's relocation to its current site in 1936. John fondly recalled planting the row of pine trees along the camp road and tending the garden that once grew near the Woodard Cabin. John recently retired from a long and wonderful career as an Extension Agent himself. His visit provided a living connection to Camp's storied past and added a personal touch to the celebration.

Smiles and laughter throughout the day reflected the success of the event. The Fall Festival once again served as a powerful reminder of the diversity, collaboration, and community spirit that define Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County.

4-H Clubs set up a petting area for families to interact with animals. Camp staff invite families to fish on the dock. Camp Manager Jim Hooper and Executive Director Mo Tidball pose for a photograph with John Woodard at the end of his visit.





# AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

## Extension's Agricultural and Natural Resources Impact

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County Agriculture Team, in partnership with campus-based faculty and regional Cornell Cooperative Extension specialists, creates a useful and inclusive educational program which focuses on the current agricultural education needs of the community. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario addresses issues that are relative to our local farmers. There are workshops on various topics for residents including gardening, school programs, and small farmers.

1,240 individuals received consultations through telephone, email, and in-person discussions. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County conducted 285 programs and reached 6,350 residents.

### Other contacts:

- Rural Farm and Land Notes (monthly electronic newsletter): 806 individuals (an increase of 14) with an average open rate of 47%. This is up by 1% from last year.
- Inside Dirt (gardening newsletter published monthly February to October): A total of 116 households receive each issue which includes 82 receive hard copies that are mailed and 34 receive their issue electronically. The mailed issues include the 13 Ontario County Libraries that receive complimentary issues.
- Household Hazardous Waste: April 26, 2025, received 690 telephone contacts and September 20, 2025, received 650 telephone contacts.
- Well Water Testing: consultations by phone and in person before and after testing. 133 completed the testing of their wells (an increase of 86 over last year.)
- Ontario County Buy Local Guide: 60 participants with their listing. These were delivered to Farmers' Markets, Ontario County Fair, schools, and the participants. In total approximately 200 were distributed.
- Agriculture in the Classroom/Dairy in the Classroom: reached 1,100 youth with 196 programs.

## Well Water Testing Program

Most rural landowners rely on private wells for their water supply. It is recommended that these private water sources be tested yearly for potability (Coliform bacteria and E.coli). Testing your drinking water is the only way to make sure that your water remains suitable for household use. Also, consider testing if you notice changes in how your water looks, smells or tastes; you have made repairs to your well, pipes, or home structure or have changed your drinking water system; changes in your household/family, such as pregnancy, new babies, or changes in someone's overall health; or the well runs dry or the amount of water flowing from your fixtures changes.

To assist Ontario County residents with well water testing, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County has the information on their website <https://cceontario.org>. When residents google well water testing, our Cornell Cooperative Extension website is the first one listed.

Ontario County does not have a local NYS Certified Lab for getting well water tested. This makes it difficult for residents to have their well water tested. This service is important for many people, including checking their water at their home; selling or buying a house; testing a new well; small businesses that are processing food products, be it in a kitchen with a home exemption or a commercial 20C license. This test for food processing is required by NYS Agriculture and Markets

### Local Staff:

#### Russell Welser

Senior Resource Educator  
Homes and Grounds

#### Jacob Maslyn

Agriculture Economic  
Development Educator

#### Emma Wilson

Agriculture Literacy, Dairy in  
the Classroom Educator

#### Nancy Anderson

Operations Coordinator/  
Senior Administrative  
Assistant

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Total Public Outreach

1,095 Programs

### Total Instructional Hours

519 Hours

### Volunteer Hours

1013 Hours

### As of the 2022 Census of Agriculture:

Number of farms: 815

Land in acres: 174,577

Milk produced:

91 farms have 27,459 cows

Total milk sales: \$167,270,000

Total Value of Agricultural  
products sold: \$293,630,000  
(43% increase since 2017)

and New York State Health Department.

Cornell Cooperative Extension works with Lozier Environmental Consulting Inc. in Rochester. When people are looking for a well water test, we can assist them with the bottle (s), instruction sheet, and lab sheet. People can pick up the information Monday through Friday during office hours. Then they return their water sample and lab sheet along with payment on a Wednesday morning before 9:00 am. Lozier Labs picks up the samples. Lozier Labs also offers other tests for well water such as hardness, lead, and nitrate/nitrites, and more.

Reporting results between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025.

There were 133 well water tests completed during that period. Most were absent for Coliform Bacteria and negative for E.coli. The few that tested present for Coliform Bacteria did a retest after taking remedial action such as shock chlorination of the well and the results were negative.

## Conservation Field Days

Conservation Field Days is a collaborative program between Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County, with a target audience of Ontario County sixth graders. The educational goal is to provide an outdoor experience to expose and increase awareness and understanding among the students of their natural surroundings and environmental issues. This year the event was held on September 23-25 at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills.

*Patti Albert talks about birds with students at Conservation Field Days*



*Susie Nettleton and Vicki Jennejohn teach tree identification at Conservation Field Days.*

There continues to be increasing environmental concerns and issues that affect our daily lives. Such things as climate change, food safety, waste disposal, invasive species, and management of natural resources to name a few. Youth and the public in general have become increasingly more distant regarding the knowledge and understanding of their personal and community environment and how they impact that environment.

All schools within Ontario County are invited and receive direct mailings with follow-up calls. 12 environmental topics were offered on Tuesday and Wednesday while Thursday there were 16 topics. 24 presenters were involved providing outdoor classroom instruction. The students moved from station to station every 20 minutes for a total of 6 stations each day.

Six schools participated with a total of 560 students. The program provides a different learning atmosphere and experience. Students were exposed to topics that they would otherwise likely not be exposed to with a clear increase in awareness and understanding of their actual and environmental surroundings.

Wegmans sponsored some of the volunteers' lunches on the days of the event.

## Cornell Cooperative Extension Cut Flower Program Hosts Conference

The Cornell Cooperative Extension State Cut Flower Work Team held its Second Cut Flower Conference in March in the Hudson Valley Region. The goal is to move the conference around to different regions each year. Pest Management/IPM, Marketing and Production Scheduling were among the topics presented. The team also developed a monthly one hour long Cut Flower webinar series. The range of participation is 40-60 individuals for each live webinar. Folks can later see these presentations on the Cut Flower YouTube Channel. Horticultural Educator, Russell Welser did one of the webinars on Peony Production.





Around 50 individuals attended the live presentation, and an additional 116 individuals watched the YouTube version. The group is developing several fact sheets, planning additional webinars, and coordinating the next State Cut Flower Conference.

## Recycling Education in Ontario County

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County coordinated and marketed several educational collection events with the Ontario County Department of Sustainability and Solid Waste Management throughout the year. Residents of Ontario County have a need to dispose of household hazardous waste in an environmentally responsible way to recycle vs. putting it in the landfill. This goal was achieved by holding two Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events.

Clean Harbors Company was the collector of hazardous waste materials. Hazardous Waste Collection Events collected all types of paints, stains, pesticides, old gasoline, oil, automotive products, and household cleaning supplies. With the PaintCare Program, all paints are separated out from the other hazardous waste materials and separate numbers are recorded.

When people call to register for Household Hazardous Waste Events, we answer questions about where to dispose of items such as propane tanks, dehumidifiers, fire extinguishers, and other miscellaneous items that are not accepted at the event.

The Household Hazardous Waste Events were April 26, 2025, and September 20, 2025:

- At the April 26, 2025, event there were 630 households participating with 32,195 pounds (16.10 Tons) of household hazardous waste. This event was held at the Ontario County Landfill.
- At the September 20, 2025, event there were 590 households participating with 36,860 pounds (18.43 Tons) of household hazardous waste. The event was held at the Town of Farmington Highway Facility.
- These events were a partnership with Ontario County

Department of Sustainability and Solid Waste Management and Casella Waste Management Services.

These events provide a much needed, way of environmentally disposing of household hazardous waste that otherwise would end up in the landfill, down the sink, or dumped on the land.

Summary: Total Household Hazardous Waste (including PaintCare) was 34.53 Tons diverted from the landfill.

## Sustainable Landscapes-Horticulture Program: Master Gardeners

Master Gardener Volunteers are a critical component to this program in extending knowledge about ecological and environmentally sound gardening practices. Practices that impact food safety and nutrition, improve protection of water quality and conservation practices, and increase implementation of integrated pest management practices.

There are currently 39 Master Gardener Volunteers in Ontario County. They volunteered 1013 hours, provided 168 consultations, offered 43 educational programs that reached 517 adults and 2802 youth and provided 68 hours of instruction. The Master Gardener plant sale generated \$2350. \$1517 of that went to 4-H Camp Bristol Hills to provide financial assistance for youth to attend camp. This left the Master Gardeners with \$833 to support their ongoing programs.



Master Gardeners leading a workshop on hypertufa containers.

A key program emphasis this year for the Master Gardeners was providing both a fall and winter webinar series for home gardeners. Topics covered included: Choosing a more responsible shrub, creating a pollinator container garden, creating a fresh herb garden, creating a beekeeper's garden, extending the garden season and cocktails and mocktails for garden guests. Each was around an hour in length and free to the public. In total they reached 151 individuals.

There are 11 new volunteers currently going through their 11-week training course. The course covers a wide range of topics: plant pathology, entomology, soils, flowers, woody ornamentals, vegetables, small and tree fruit, pesticides, botany, wildlife, invasive species, climate smart natives, composting and more. The goal is to give them a broad base of knowledge and resources from which they can further their knowledge. These new trainees have agreed to give back 100 hours of volunteer time over a two-year



*Sarah Sutton*

### **What motivated you to become a Master Gardener for CCE Ontario?**

*In 2021 my family moved from the Ithaca area where we had 14 acres, to Pittsford, NY in Monroe County where we have 3/4 of an acre. I was working for White Oak Nursery in Canandaigua and being out that way felt like home to me because of the proximity to the lake and the vast open areas. I enjoyed the regional aspect of the program and getting to know people from all over the more rural areas of the Finger Lakes. Before leaving the Ithaca area, I had begun to convert my former farm fields to native pollinator meadows, and we had started an apple cider orchard. I was happy to meet people with overlapping interests through the program. Also, I switched career paths late in life and I knew I wanted to open a native plant nursery in the Rochester area where there are not a lot of pure native species plant options; the program helped 'round out' my knowledge.*



### **What makes this a meaningful use of my time?**

*I garden for habitat. I garden because I truly believe, one yard at a time, we can have a positive impact on our ecosystem. With blooms we can help pollinators, with deep roots we can clean our watersheds and stabilize erosion, we can plant trees to store carbon, and we can support our food webs from the bottom up through using plants that have coevolved with our insects and wildlife. We can take invasive plants out of our yards to help stop the displacement of native plants on our trails and in natural areas. Educating communities and individuals about the power they have to make a difference through their own yards or through community plantings makes my volunteer work meaningful.*

### **What is the biggest personal benefit you receive as a volunteer for CCE Ontario?**

*The biggest personal benefits of being a volunteer for CCE Ontario are the relationships that I have developed with fellow Master Gardeners; as well as the interchange that comes from offering educational programs to peers who have so many great aspirations and ideas. It has been wonderful to try out ideas and get feedback.*

### **What is the most memorable accomplishment of your volunteer experience?**

*I started a green club at my daughter's elementary school. We planted a pollinator garden in the school courtyard and got a Pittsford Pollinator Pathway Designation. The group was divided into butterfly groups - the Swallowtails, the Gossamer Wings and the Brush-footed. Each group planted their respective host plants in the garden, and we were delighted to see even in between the four brick walls of the 60's structure, tucked away in a corner of a courtyard - we saw several caterpillars and butterflies on the host plants. If you build it, they will come!*

*Another memorable accomplishment is a restoration I have become involved with on Irondequoit Creek with a small community group. This past year the town supported our push for removals of invasive species such as autumn olive and burning bush (to name a few!). This fall, the native plants such as Bladdernut and Northern Spicebush are thriving and have filled in amazingly.*





Master Gardener Christen Groeling leads the Hello Bird Lovers Workshop.

period, with the opportunity to renew their volunteer commitment at the end of that initial volunteer time.

In addition, the Home and Community Horticulture Educator did 10 programs for various libraries, schools, and clubs. These programs reached 89 adults and 125 youth. Provided 724 consultations (phone, email, and in-person).

The gardening newsletter "Inside Dirt" reached 116 households which includes the 13 libraries in Ontario County that received a complimentary issue each month. "Inside Dirt" is a subscription for nine issues, from February through October with gardening information. It is offered as an electronic issue or a hard copy that is mailed.

In total, the Sustainable Landscape-Horticulture Program reached 1614 adults and 2927 youth with 80 hours of instruction.

Residents of Ontario County need to understand and support horticultural management practices which improve the ecological soundness of the environment at home, in

the community, and in the marketplace. Collectively the practices of home gardeners have a potentially significant impact on their environment and that of their community. Home gardens are centers for fresh fruits and vegetables to supplement market produce, as well as a source of produce to be preserved for later consumption.

## Pesticide Applicators Training

Educational efforts in core pesticide training resulted in 28 agricultural producers from Ontario and Seneca Counties receiving New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Private Pesticide Certification and recertification training in February and March 2025.

Statewide agricultural producers face a multitude of pest pressures (weeds, insects, and diseases) in growing crops. Chemical pesticides are a vital tool in the management of such pests and may require the use of a restricted pesticide. Crop losses can be significant without the use of these products. To purchase and apply restricted pesticides the agricultural producer must be a New York Certified Private Pesticide Applicator. Such individuals must recertify every five years after receiving their license. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County agricultural educator provided a series of four classes each 2.5 hours of instruction over 4 weeks for Ontario County and 3 classes for Seneca County. Training included pesticide laws and regulations; mixing and calibration of pesticides; environmental considerations; how to read and understand a pesticide label, first aid, how to use and maintain personal protective equipment; spray drift prevention, pesticide disposal and storage; pesticide formulations and toxicity; pesticide exposure and risk along with much more. 16 agricultural producers received recertification credits and 15 took the DEC pesticide exams.

During the year Cornell Cooperative Extension resource educator responded to 53 inquiries related to pesticide certification and recertification.



Master Gardeners host a Kissing Ball and Wreath Making workshop.

## Ag In The Classroom: Rooted in Learning

For the 2025-2026 school calendar, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) is excited to continue to deepen its partnerships with schools, educators, and students through the “Rooted in Learning” grant initiative. This effort supports agricultural literacy, local food systems, school-based learning, and youth engagement in Ontario County. Through targeted funding, curriculum integration, and hands-on activities, CCE-led programming is helping schools connect classroom learning to the living systems of agriculture, food, and environment.

The “Rooted in Learning” initiative is aimed at embedding agricultural education, food systems awareness, and garden-learning opportunities within K-12 school settings. During this school year, CCE is engaged with Red Jacket, Midlakes, Bloomfield, Canandaigua and Geneva school districts.



Ontario County CCE’s program key goals include:

- Increasing student awareness of agriculture, local food systems, sustainability and healthful eating.
- Enhancing hands-on learning through school gardens, farm visits, in-class taste tests and more!
- Strengthening school-community-farm partnerships.
- Supporting educator professional development so that agricultural literacy becomes embedded and sustained in curricula.

The “Rooted in Learning” initiative represents a meaningful advance in how Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County and school partners bring agriculture, food systems and experiential learning into the heart of K-12 education. By weaving gardens, local food procurement, curriculum, and community into the fabric of school life, students are not just learning about agriculture—they are becoming active participants in it. The coming year offers opportunity for scale, sustainability and deeper impact—ensuring that the roots planted today will continue to grow, in classrooms, cafeterias and communities across New York State.

Left: Shout-out to Food Service Staff at Bloomfield Schools. Middle: Taste testing apples with students at Canandaigua Schools. Right: Taste testing in Penn Yan with students.







Left: Students at the robotic Milker at Hemdale Farms. Middle: Students make Pumpkin Pie in a Bag during Ag Literacy Week. Right: Campers taste and score different cheeses at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills.

## Dairy In The Classroom

For the second year, Ontario County CCE has been awarded funds from the Dairy in the Classroom (DITC) grant to bring educational and engaging agricultural lessons and activities to classrooms throughout the county. Participating districts include Marcus Whitman, Midlakes, Canandaigua, Red Jacket, Geneva, Honeoye, and Victor. Programming supplemented field trips from Penn Yan students to Hemdale, and extended to summer and after school activities at local libraries and for campers at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. Over the 2024-2025 school year, the DITC program reached over 1,100 youth!

Participants on Dairy in the Classroom programs learned lots about Ontario County's largest agricultural industry, dairy, and about many different aspects of our local farming community. One activity that helped young people connect with dairy included making mozzarella cheese. In just one hour, students were able to make cheese, learn about the history of cheese, and observe physical changes caused by chemical reactions. Another cheese lesson was cheese mongering, where youth learned about the many varieties of cheeses from all around the world and tasted samples of some of those varieties. Many participants go to try cheeses they had never heard of before such as Emmental cheese, familiar cheeses with a twist like blueberry cheddar, and every tasting ended with tried and true mozzarella cheese.

For the youngest of participants, Dairy in the Classroom programming helps them get an understanding of what agriculture is and what it means to our community. The "A Day Without Agriculture" program encourages students to imagine what life would be like if agriculture didn't exist. From the clothes they wear to the food they eat and even the materials used in their school supplies, students quickly realize how deeply agriculture is woven into their everyday routines. The discussion helped spark curiosity and gratitude for farmers and agricultural workers. Students were surprised to learn that items like crayons, boots, and even parts of musical instruments come from agricultural products!

In classrooms where repeat visits were possible, students learned about other agricultural industries through the Lens of Dairy, such as corn, maple sugaring, agritourism, pumpkins, pollination, and more!





## Farm Field Days

Each year Cornell Cooperative Extension on Ontario County hosts a field day to introduce farmers and entrepreneurial gardeners to emerging crops and practices. These field days are meant to showcase a crop that is both suitable for New York's climate and easily marketed in our area to consumers. Last fall, the field day focused on buckwheat, and farmers came together to learn from professor emeritus Thomas Björkman. We discussed how buckwheat could be incorporated into their current rotation and add profit to their bottom line.

Buckwheat lends itself well to our area because it is easily added to a traditional farm rotation. During the peak of summer after wheat has been harvested, buckwheat can be immediately planted and then harvested in 12 weeks. Buckwheat needs little fertilizer, can be drilled directly into wheat stubble, and grows faster than most weeds can. Buckwheat is also easily marketed through Birkett Mills in Penn Yan where farmers can get a contract before they even plant a seed. As a grain it is naturally gluten free and an easy substitute for wheat, you have perhaps had the option of regular or buckwheat pancakes at your favorite diner.

One farmer that attended the field day took the knowledge that he learned and started planting buckwheat this year.

Harvesting buckwheat can sometimes be done directly with the combine cutting head, but often it must be cut with a swather and laid to dry before it can be picked up later by the combine. This farmer searched for a swather and found an old self-propelled International Harvester swathing machine in good condition. This fall, the machine was hard at work swathing both buckwheat and clover for seed.

These field days don't always need to be done in person either. In June a virtual learning session was organized for farmers to learn how to plant and grow Rhubarb successfully on a larger scale. Jacob organized a webinar in partnership with researchers at AgriTech to discuss the potential of rhubarb as a NY crop. Over 50 people tuned in to learn and more reached out for the recording which can be found on our YouTube channel. Virtual webinars can't always replace the feeling of being in person and the interactions we have, but they do offer a lot of additional benefits. Virtually we can reach a broader audience across the region, and by recording them it helps educate people well after a program has ended. Jacob intends on offering a field day during summer 2026 bringing farmers out to see a large commercial rhubarb plot in action.



*Jacob Rathbun from Naples swathing some organic buckwheat destined for Birkett Mills*



## Agri-tourism regional event at Shortsville Reindeer Farm

Agri-tourism is a growing industry in the Finger Lakes with more tourists seeking unique experiences and locals wanting to get out and explore things in their own backyard. More farm operations are taking advantage of this and offering fun experiences and events. Jacob Maslyn frequently partners with the official tourism agency of Ontario County, Finger Lakes Visitors Connection (FLVC), to promote our many agricultural operations to tourists and residents.



Jess and Chloe from FLVC attending our Agri-tourism event at Shortsville Reindeer Farm

Running a business open to the public can be very different from running a regular farm business, and a farmer must become knowledgeable on the liabilities and costs of running a tourism operation. CCE Agriculture Economic Development Educator Jacob Maslyn worked with some farms to help them understand how best to open their farms up to the public, from simply having a roadside farm stand to a bed and breakfast. Maslyn works with our statewide agri-tourism work team to promote webinars and do professional development events.

This past summer, CCE of Ontario, Monroe and Seneca Counties partnered to host a group of tourism professionals at Shortsville Reindeer Farm. The group was made up of FLVC members, Visit Rochester and a mix of other professionals who operate agri-tourism enterprises. Participants learned how Mike Scheartl started his business with reindeer and how he opens the farm up to the public for many events and social activities for the community. Shortsville Reindeer Farm is a prime example of a business that serves an agricultural purpose making honey, syrup, reindeer products and more all while doing educational workshops, and fun family-oriented activities.

## Meet Your Local Farmer Event

In early spring CCE Ontario partnered with New York Kitchen (NYK) for the 3rd year to host our Meet Your Local Farmer event. This is a yearly farmers market happening at New York Kitchen where farmers are invited to sell products ranging from meat & eggs to flowers & baked goods. The added attraction of this event is the cooking demonstrations by NYK chefs that utilize local products consumers can purchase at the event in simple recipes.

This year's event was held on May 4th and despite it being a cold and rainy day, over 300 people turned out to meet the over 20 farmers present. Many farmers reported selling much more products than they expected and some sold out of goods before the end of the day. This event offers a unique opportunity to market products to consumers for a few reasons.

- Cooking demonstrations by professional trained chefs in a kitchen theatre helps promote farm products by both taste and the learning opportunity of viewing a variety of cooking methods.
- Having a farmers market in a unique venue with the opportunity to engage with different consumers gives farmers the opportunity to market products to a broader audience in the future.
- By having such a variety of products available the event has become a greater attraction to a much broader audience.

Overall, this event has become a staple to our yearly offering of programs and has helped strengthen our engagement with farmers, consumers, and community partners. The ongoing partnership we have with NYK has helped CCE to reach a greater audience and reinforced our connection to food and agriculture. We already plan on offering this event again May 17th and potentially a second time later in the fall, we hope to see you there!



Chef RJ doing a cooking demonstration

## Master Forest Owners Program

September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025

In Ontario County, there were two visits completed by two volunteers encompassing a total of 82 acres of forest.

In the Northwest Region, which includes Ontario County, there were 36 total visits completed by 20 volunteers over a total of 821 forested acres:

- 71% of the visit requests resulted in an actual site visit
- Most of the requests come from either the postcard campaign or passed along from CCE
- Many of the forest owners report they own woods for privacy, recreation, and wildlife watching reasons
- Around 25% live on the property they requested the visit.
- After the visits, many intend to contact foresters, write down their owner objectives, conduct forest vegetation management (either chemical or mechanical), create trails, produce firewood, and plant trees

Statewide, there were 226 visits completed by 142 volunteers on 9157 acres of forested land in 50 counties:

- This year we had the largest number of active volunteers in one year since the program began (187 volunteers)
- 75% of the active volunteers completed at least one visit
- Approximately 937 hours were spent on preparing for and completing visits
- Volunteers traveled approximately 7,913 total miles to complete the visits in 2024-2025



## Food Preservation Programming

Food Preservation programming is on the rise. This year CCE Ontario completed 14 food preservation events, covering topics such as making various jams, fermenting sauerkraut, quick pickling, and preserving tomatoes. Workshops took place on site and at partner organizations such as Wood Library, Naples Library, Red Jacket CSD, Naples CSD, Blueprint Geneva and New York Kitchen.

One particularly successful program was a Pick N' Pack class hosted in collaboration with New York Kitchen and Chase Farms in Fairport. This class sold out weeks before it was held, and included picking strawberries at Chase Farms, which were taken back to NYK's hands-on kitchen to be washed and prepared into a delicious strawberry jam. All 24 participants left with a jar of jam, a quart of strawberries, and the knowledge to make jam at home and preserve it for long term storage in a hot water bath canner.

Over 120 individuals participated in food preservation workshops, and we gained one more Certified Master Food Preserver, Alyssa Hooper. A handful more volunteers are going through the training to become Master Food Preservers, and the future of food preservation programming in Ontario County looks to be growing in leaps and bounds. In the coming year, it is our goal to continue to offer more seasonally relevant food preservation cases to continue to make utilizing local produce accessible year-round to the residents of Ontario County.





# CORNELL VEGETABLE PROGRAM

In 2015 a group of Ontario County farmer's began discussing a new produce auction to support local farms. This auction would serve as a market channel for families growing flowers, fruits and vegetables. A core group of these growers formed a committee to develop the auction and funds were raised within the community and local commercial lenders to buy the land and construct the auction building. The first auction was held in 2017 and today, 8 years later the auction operates 3 days a week in-season, and supports hundreds of buyers and growers as a local wholesale, aggregation point for flowers, vegetables, fruit and hay. The auction is centrally located in the Town of Gorham, convenient for local farmers and buyers coming from outside the county.

Cornell Cooperative Extension has been involved in the Ontario Produce Auction since its inception and today works closely with a farmer-based education committee to support production, marketing and food safety needs. Each year the Cornell Vegetable Program conducts a winter educational meeting and summer produce walks, in addition to conducting hundreds of farm visits and consultations. This work supports millions of dollars of local farm products and increased availability of fresh fruits and vegetables for Ontario County citizens.



Top: Peppers and produce in Ontario County.

Middle: Early planted tomatoes in Ontario County.

Bottom: Cantaloups in Ontario County.

## Cornell Vegetable Program

### **Julie Kikkert**

Vegetable Specialist, Team Leader

### **Elizabeth Buck**

Vegetable Specialist  
Fresh market vegetables, weed science, soil health

### **Robert Hadad**

Vegetable Specialist  
Farm food safety, organic, marketing, fresh market vegetables

### **Christy Hoepting**

Vegetable Specialist  
Onions, cabbage, broccoli, garlic, pesticide management

### **Margie Lund**

Vegetable Specialist  
Potatoes, dry beans, post-harvest handling

### **Judson Reid**

Vegetable Specialist  
Greenhouse & tunnel production, produce auctions, fresh market vegetables

### **Lori Koenick**

Extension Support Specialist

### **Camila Ichazo**

Field Technician

### **Angela Ochterski**

Administrative Assistant  
Enrollment, sponsorships, VegEdge production



# FINGER LAKES GRAPE PROGRAM

The Finger Lakes Grape Program (FLGP) had a demanding and productive year in its continued efforts to support grape growers and winemakers in Ontario County. A major focus was the increasing presence of the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF), an invasive pest first detected in the Finger Lakes in 2024 in Ontario and Seneca Counties. Those populations expanded considerably in 2025, reaching at least one commercial vineyard in Seneca County during the summer. In response, the FLGP collaborated closely with Cornell Integrated Pest Management (IPM), the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to keep growers informed and equipped with potential management strategies. These approaches were discussed with Ontario County grape growers during our Tailgate Meeting held at Stanbro Vineyard near Naples, NY on May 27.

The FLGP also participated in two statewide monitoring projects in 2025, both of which included vineyards in Ontario County. The first project focused on scouting for invasive pests, including SLF, with monitoring conducted at two commercial vineyards near South Bristol. Fortunately, none of the targeted pests were detected in the county. The second project involved fruit sampling to track ripening progress in vineyards across New York State. Samples collected from two South Bristol vineyards and White Springs Vineyard in Geneva contributed to statewide data sets and were featured in the weekly *Veraison to Harvest* newsletter, which provided updates and brief summaries of harvest conditions throughout September and October.

For the third year in a row, the annual BEV NY Conference, hosted by FLPG and Cornell Craft Beverage Institute (at Agritech) will be held at Hotel Canandaigua March 3-4, 2026.

## Veraison to Harvest Newsletter

In viticulture, veraison is the onset of the ripening of grapes. The official definition of veraison is "change of color of the grape berries". Veraison represents the transition from berry growth to berry ripening, and many changes in berry development occur at veraison.

Grant Project for the Finger Lakes Grape Program: Veraison to Harvest Newsletter (Funding source: New York Wine & Grape Foundation) This project has been an ongoing one for the regional grape programs since 2007. Each week during the ripening season (September – October), grape samples are collected from multiple vineyards around the state and sent to the Craft Beverage Analytical Lab at Cornell AgriTech for basic chemical analysis (sugar content, acidity, nitrogen content). These results are sent out to the industry each week in the Veraison to Harvest newsletter, which also includes brief summaries about harvest progress across the state and highlights from relevant viticulture and enology projects that year. A graduate student is currently

analyzing this ripening data alongside weather conditions from each year to look for indications about how climate variation each year (or across years) might be affecting ripening. Her results will be presented at B.E.V. NY 2025.

## Sample article from *Veraison to Harvest*, September 26, 2025.

### **Finger Lakes** (Hans Walter-Peterson)

*If we weren't before now, I think I can safely say that the Finger Lakes is in the heart of the 2025 harvest this week. With the exception of the early hybrid varieties and later ripening cultivars like Riesling and Cabernet Franc, if you name just about any other variety, it is likely that somebody has been picking it in recent days. And why shouldn't that be the case, as fruit quality is looking excellent in most places. I went to rate sour rot infection in a Pinot noir block for an experiment this week, but it only took me three minutes because every cluster had zero rot. Even the yellow jackets think the fruit is delicious.*



Spotted Lantern Fly



Whether it's more like summer or fall out there, it's definitely yellow jacket season. Photo by Hans Walter-Peterson.

### **Finger Lakes Grape Program**

#### **Hans Walter-Peterson**

Viticulture Specialist/Team Leader

#### **Brittany Griffin**

Team Coordinator

#### **Ellen Coyne**

Project Field Technician



# NORTHWEST NEW YORK DAIRY, LIVESTOCK AND FIELD CROPS PROGRAM

## Calves: Your Herd's Future

In the dairy industry, we often refer to the youngstock as the future of the herd. In an average of two years', the female calves that are born today will be calving for the first time and entering the milking herd. This two-year period is an investment that we must care for carefully to see a return once she starts milking. Everything we do to care for that calf, including the facilities we keep her in, the nutrition we provide and the preventative health care program we execute all either set her up for success or failure. The US is currently seeing a lack of available dairy herd replacement heifers, with NASS reporting a 37,000 head decrease from January 2024-January 2025. This is driving up the cost to buy heifers and causing dairy producers to renew their focus on youngstock management in order to accommodate the rapid herd growth we are seeing in northwest New York.



The statewide dairy specialists and PRO-DAIRY teamed up to develop and present two programs to target youngstock management in March 2025. The first program was a hands-on on-farm program focused on transition calf inventory and facilities management, health and nutrition with the target audience being youngstock managers. The second program was a dinner meeting targeting farm decision makers and industry representatives with guest speaker Dr. Melissa Cantor, Assistant Professor at Penn State University. Dr. Cantor shared her research on extended feeding colostrum for calf health and new calf technologies.

The NWNy team held the hands-on workshops on March 18th and 19th in Wyoming and Ontario Counties,

drawing 40 participants. Both workshops were taught in English and Spanish. One participant said that they liked the "in-depth explanation of why we should manage calves and heifers in a specific and ordered way." The dinner meeting in Genesee County on March 18th drew 34 attendees. Dr. Cantor noted that the group was the most interactive she had ever had, showing that the topic was one of interest and value to our region's producers.

## Using Pest Monitoring Tools to Protect Crop Yields

Black cutworm and common armyworm are two moth pests that can travel on prevailing storm fronts to NY each spring. The team utilizes pheromone traps across our region to detect these moths and monitor their first arrival into our area. Traps are checked weekly, and the number of moths is recorded. Utilizing degree-day (DD) data starting at the first significant flight (10 or more moths per week), we can determine the time of egg hatch and when larvae will be large enough to cause economic plant injury.

In 2025, we set up five cutworm and five armyworm traps across the region in late April. Significant catches of both moths were recorded in Genesee, Livingston, Ontario and Yates counties on May 7. We started recording (DD) from that date utilizing the Network for Environmental and Weather Applications (NEWA) site. We hit the 90 DD mark on May 21 as larvae were hatching and feeding on corn leaves. By June 10, the NWNy region hit 300 DD, and cutworms were large enough to cut corn plants.

Weekly results were published in

### NWNy Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team

**Kaitlyn Lutz**  
Bilingual Dairy Management

**Nancy Glazier**  
Small Farms, Livestock

**John Hanchar**  
Farm Business

**Ashley Knapp**  
Administrative Assistant

**Jodi Letham**  
Field Crops and Soils

**Margaret Quaassdorff**  
Dairy Management

**Mike Stanyard**  
Field Crops & Team Leader



our weekly Crop Alert on the NWNy Team Blog. Crop Alert is published May through September and informs growers, consultants and industry reps what we are currently seeing in corn, alfalfa, soybean and small grain fields. As a result of our trap network, we were able to advise farmers that they should be out scouting their corn fields for potential plant injury at the appropriate time to avoid economic crop loss. As little as a 3% reduction in plant population can result in an economic yield loss in corn.

## Partnering with American Farmland Trust for Regenerative Agriculture Education

Farmers work to achieve economic, environmental (soil, water, air, climate and others), and community objectives. When they base management decisions on research-based information, the likelihood of achieving objectives increases. Regarding soil health practices adoption on farms, farm business owners are looking for information.

The NWNy Team worked in conjunction with American Farmland Trust's NY Women for the Land Program to hold



View of Canandaigua Lake from Tamberlane Farms pastures.

a pasture event at Tamberlane Farms, Ontario County. Amanda and Chase Brown now own and operate the farm previously owned by Chase's grandfather. They have improved pasture management, increased grazing acreage and cattle numbers, utilize cover crops for grazing, and worked with Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District to construct a barn to house their cows during the winter. These practices greatly reduced erosion that would have flowed directly into Canandaigua Lake. Approximately 18 participants learned good grazing practices, pasture management, and ruminant nutrition from Amanda, the team, and NRCS Grazing Specialist Karen Hoffman.

The Team partnered with American Farmland Trust's NY Women for the Land Program to develop resources and economic analyses. During the quarter, the team worked with farmers Peter Zelif and Nicole Porter, Zelif Farms, to complete a case study that included a before and after economic analysis. Farming land in Orleans and Niagara counties, Peter and Nicole, with their focus on regenerative practices, are considered successful soil health system adopters. Team members reported results via a variety of delivery methods. A field day at the Zelif Farms drew about 60 attendees and an article was shared in the team's monthly newsletter.

In both events contacts learned that successful adoption of a soil health system [regenerative practices] coincides with increased economic performance. Results provide incentives to others to pursue adoption of practices. Contacts also learned about research-based strategies for planning and implementation, keys to informed decision making and successful adoption. Better understanding increases the likelihood of achieving objectives.

## Feeder Schools Fuel Farm Economics and Cow Health

The dairy farm employee in charge of mixing and delivering daily rations to the cows is key to the farm's success. Not only is that employee responsible for the stewardship of the biggest input cost on the farm, the feed ingredients, but they are also largely accountable for maintaining herd health through proper execution of the farm's nutrition plan. These points, including the importance of communication with the farm management team and safety, were discussed during two Feeder Schools held in November 2024 in Genesee and Ontario Counties. The program was part of a series of Feeder Schools developed by Regional Dairy Specialists across the state and was taught by NWNy Dairy Specialists, Nutritionists, and Industry Specialists.

The program drew 54 participants representing 28 farms and 8 counties across Western NY. Both locations offered station presentations in English and Spanish and covered topics essential to dairy feeder success. These topics included: economics and the importance of the dairy farm feeder, forage and ration dry matter monitoring and control, feed quality control, feed loss reduction, ration auditing and cow eating behavior, feed inventory monitoring and safety in the bunker silos, and equipment troubleshooting. In all groups, interaction between attendees was significant, and there was a notable degree of learning by sharing experience between one professional dairy feeder to another. Participants left the training with a new appreciation for their role in feeding consistency and farm economics, and how to better achieve both safely and efficiently.

CCE NWNy Feeder School participants learn how to troubleshoot issues related to mixer wagon calibration and maintenance at Reyncrest Farms in Genesee County. Photo by Betsy Hicks.





# **4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT** **Impact of Positive Youth Development**

The mission of the 4-H Youth Development Program is to create a supportive learning environment to provide positive youth development for youth and families from diverse backgrounds to help them achieve their fullest potential and become capable, competent, and caring citizens. The 4-H program accepts youth ages 5-19 and provides a variety of project areas to explore including STEM, Animal Science, Communications, Healthy Living, Visual and Expressive Arts, and Workforce Development. Delivery modes include 4-H clubs, 4-H camp, and a 4-H afterschool program in Geneva Elementary School. If you would like more information about how to join 4-H, please email Sarah Wilhelm at [sab423@cornell.edu](mailto:sab423@cornell.edu).

**4-H Camp Bristol Hills** offers an outdoor camping experience integrated with top rated educational programming and highly trained staff. Summer camp extends several choices for camper participation that include: day, overnight and specialty camps. Educational classes include programs in outdoor adventure, nature and science, sports and creative arts as well as a continued focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

## Launch of the new 4-H Dog Program

This year we launched a brand-new dog program! The journey started with seven youth participating in a basic dog obedience class with dog trainer Kylie Hill held at our office starting January 4, and continued for six weeks. This experience led to the founding of a new dog club called Wag N' Wisdom by 4-H volunteer and certified dog trainer Alyssa Boyea. The club has meetings monthly and another round of dog obedience classes started in February. We also held a Grooming and Handling course in the spring to set youth up to participate in an inaugural 4-H dog show at the Ontario County Fair this past summer.



Nora Day, Dog Obedience Graduate

## Ontario County Fair – Bringing Back the Dog Show

The 2025 Ontario County Fair was a great one! 4-H'ers had a fantastic week of showing off all their hard work on their projects and had lots of fun with their 4-H friends. However, one of the major highlights was the return of the dog show. Thanks to the hard work of dedicated volunteer, Alyssa Boyea, the dog program has successfully made a comeback in Ontario County!

It has been more than a decade since the Ontario County 4-H program has included dogs as a project area. At the 2024-2025 kickoff meeting, families suggested a 4-H dog obedience class to be hosted by the County. After educators successfully brought in a guest instructor for this first class in January, Alyssa Boyea (a 4-H parent) stepped forward to start the 4-H dog club called Wag N' Wisdom to keep the program going. Alyssa is an avid dog shower and certified dog trainer which made her the perfect person to start a club. In addition to regular club meetings, she held additional obedience

### BY THE NUMBERS

**Total 4-H Clubs:** 23

**Total Members in Organized 4-H Clubs:** 214

**Total Members in 4-H After School Clubs:** 61

**Total 4-H Membership:** 222

**Number of Volunteers:** 68

**Number of 4-H Volunteer Hours:** 9,000

**Number of Camp Volunteer Hours:** 2,052

**4-H Camper Weeks** 700

In 2025, 4-H youth projects involved horticulture, food and nutrition, science, textile, robotics, rocketry, woodworking and animal science. Hallmark educational events of the 4-H Club Program include Harvest Food Fest, Public Presentations, Tractor Safety, and the Ontario County Fair.

### Local Staffing:

**Sarah Wilhelm**  
4-H Club Resource Educator

**Jim Hooper**  
Camp Resource Educator

**Amy Pyra**  
Program Educator

**Michele Albrecht**  
Administrative Assistant, 4-H Camp

**Amelia Devolder**  
Administrative Assistant, 4-H Parenting Coordinator

**Matty Brooks**  
North Street School  
4-H Coordinator

**Adam Bacher**  
North Street School  
4-H Facilitator

**Jessica Middleton**  
Camp Director



*Youth participating in dog show at Ontario County Fair*

classes throughout the spring and summer to help youth prepare their dogs for a 4-H show. Working together with 4-H educators, Alyssa helped plan a dog show for the 2025 county fair including drafting guidelines and hiring a judge.

The dog show was held Thursday night of Fair in the Carriage Barn. This first show was small with four youth participating. 4-H'ers competed in Grooming and Handling, Obedience, Trick and Costume classes. The show was very

well attended by spectators including several other 4-H'ers who are interested in participating next year. Alyssa has plans to expand the show to include agility classes next year.

We are so pleased to have brought back this amazing 4-H project area and are thankful for our volunteer Alyssa Boyea for helping make this dream a reality.

## Fifteen Youth Participate in Regional Public Presentations Event

This year, Ontario County 4-H sent fifteen youth to the Finger Lakes Regional 4-H Public Presentation event. This next level of competition challenges the youth to present their topics in larger school setting and has more opportunities for recognition of outstanding presentations. Our youth were very successful with their presentations, including several receiving Judge's Choice and Top Ten Presenter awards.

The public presentation program is one of the staple experiences that 4-H youth participate in as part of their holistic 4-H experience. Although not a required event, public presentations is highly recommended for all 4-H members and is often cited by alumni as their most formative 4-H project area. Across the state, counties hold local public presentation events, and the top presenters are invited to present at the regional level.

This year's Finger Lakes Regional event was held at the Manor Intermediate School in Honeoye Falls. Our presenters were prepared via one-on-one coaching with 4-H Educator Sarah Wilhelm to polish their presentation and improve their public speaking skills. Each youth worked very hard to implement feedback from both the county



*Ontario County youth receiving awards at regional public presentations event.*

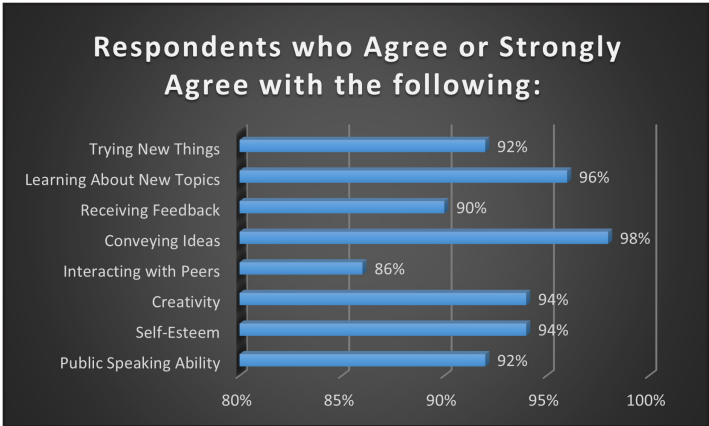
event judges and Sarah and were met with outstanding success at the regional contest.

The following youth represented Ontario County 4-H at the contest: Owen Grefrath, Laramie Pyra, Grant Pyra, Madelyn Reed, Madison Glaude, Hope Robertson, Addy Rae Bozeman, Mason Michaelson, Mackenzie Michaelson, Travis Clark, Klara Mehlenbacher, Isaac Wheeler, Addilyn Hooker, Mary Lou Sheckler, and Isaac Sheckler.



Out of a total of 43 presenters at the contest, Ontario County 4-H received 3 Judge's Choice Awards (Mary Lou Sheckler, Isaac Sheckler, and Grant Pyra) and 5 Top Ten Presenter Awards (Addy Rae Bozeman, Mackenzie Michaelson, Laramie Pyra, MaryLou Sheckler, and Addilyn Hooker). This shows the hard work that these youth put into their presentations and the quality of our local public presentation program.

We are very proud of all our youth who presented at the regional level. Their dedication to improving their skills in public speaking will serve them well in their lives and careers.



Public Presentations Impact Survey Results

### Ontario County 4-H Scholarship Recipients

The Ontario County 4-H program is pleased to announce that the recipients of their annual scholarship award are longtime 4-H members Myleigh Pendleton and Alexa Davies. The Ontario County 4-H scholarship is awarded annually to 4-H'ers who are high school seniors planning to attend college in the fall.

Myleigh has been an Ontario County 4-H member for the past nine years. During her years in 4-H, she has participated in horse, livestock judging, and food preparation. She has helped with cleaning up the fairgrounds and with various fundraisers for the 4-H horse program as well as helping younger members with their horses at County Fair and being an encouragement to her fellow 4-H'ers. When asked about her 4-H experience, Myleigh says, "4-H has allowed me to be a more sociable person and make friends who have the same interests that I do...." She also adds that "I wouldn't be the person I am today without 4-H."

Alexa has been a member of Ontario County 4-H for the past nine years. During her years in 4-H, she has participated in dairy animal science, public speaking, leadership, and community service. She has shown her dairy cattle at county fair very successfully. Through her 4-H club, she has also participated in many hours of community service activities including ringing a bell for the Salvation Army, leading farm tours for area schools, and nursing home outreaches. She has been a wonderful teen leader in her club including serving as the president and helping the younger members with their projects. When asked about the impact 4-H has had on her life, Alexa says that, "I like that 4-H is a fun experience but also helps you get ready for the real world and understand that responsibility, respect, and leadership get you far in life no matter what your career path."

Both Myleigh and Alexa are wonderful young people who deserve this award. They have had a great impact during their time in the 4-H program, and we have no doubt that they will continue to make an impact on their community and on the world in years to come. Best of luck, Myleigh and Alexa, from all your friends at Ontario County 4-H!



4-H Scholarship recipients Myleigh Pendleton (left) and Alexa Davies (right) receiving their awards at the Annual Ag Appreciation Banquet.



## Ontario County 4-H Horse Clinic Opportunity Expansion

Over the past two years, the Ontario County 4-H Horse program has held three spring clinics each year to help youth improve their horsemanship skills and prepare for the county fair horse shows. These past clinics have boasted high attendance rates (roughly 70%) and yielded noticeable improvements in performance at county fair shows. This year, with the help of a key volunteer, we were able to increase our clinic offerings to hold six clinic opportunities. We kicked off our clinic series with a groundwork clinic led by Tara Pratt at TMP White Horse Stables on April 12th. The focus of this clinic was building your relationship with your horse. Eleven youth took advantage of this opportunity. This clinic was followed-up by a second clinic with Tara on May 18th where they expanded their relationship building exercises under saddle. Seven youth participated in this follow-up clinic.

On May 10, Taylor Rund, a local hunter jumper instructor, worked with youth in small groups of two at a time to hone in on their jumping position and execution. Eleven youth participated in this clinic.

On May 31, Jennifer Chaffer, a long-time owner and trainer at Triple C Farms in Naples, led small groups of 2-3 youth in a pattern clinic. She instructed them on what a judge looks for in a horsemanship or equitation pattern class and how to break down a pattern and work on elements with your horse to prepare for a show. Eleven youth participated in this clinic.

On June 18-19, we held a Juneteenth clinic where youth participated in both fun activities and instructional lessons. On the evening of June 18, we gathered at the fairgrounds to eat a pizza dinner, watch an equine massage demonstration, and play some team-building games. On the morning of June 19th, families hauled in their horses for a full day of activities. The day included time to practice mounted games classes, a working equitation

*Elena Soberon jumping her horse during our spring 4-H horse clinic series.*



*Lucia Soberon working on skills during our spring horse clinic..*

demonstration, an unmounted relay race to practice gymkhana patterns, craft time to create decorations for the fair decorating contest, and some facilities preparation for fair shows. It was great to get together for a full day of learning and fun before fair! Fourteen youth participated in this event.

We finished up our educational series with one final clinic on June 28 where Gracie Kuhner provided one-on-one saddle fitting sessions for youth. This topic is important as many equine behavioral issues stem from ill-fitting tack and animal wellbeing is at the foundation of the 4-H experience. Our 4-H Horse program has grown into a robust educational experience for our participating youth. Horse lessons and clinics are often very expensive and not accessible for many young horse people. Because we were able to find quality, respected clinicians willing to donate their time to help our 4-H youth improve their horsemanship skills, we were able to provide educational opportunities to these youth that they may not have received otherwise.





## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

*Alyssa Boyea*

Alyssa started her 4-H career in Ontario County as a member of the Canine Companions 4-H dog club with leader Jim Knarr. Jim inspired her to pursue a career in dog training, which she did for about 14 yrs. During Alyssa's time as a 4-Her she competed at County Fair and State Fair in grooming and handling, obedience, 4 Man team, Drill team & agility and rally. When she aged out of 4-H Alyssa decided to start a dog club in Livingston County, and some of those kids are now dog professionals and compete all over the US with their dogs in National competitions. She took some time off to start a family and as soon her kids were old enough to be in 4-H they enrolled right away!



Alyssa came to us last year to help us run a dog obedience class which had a great turn out. This eventually turned into "How would you feel about starting a dog club?" and that is how Wag & Wisdom was born! Alyssa has now run multiple different types of dog classes for us like dog obedience, grooming & handling, agility type classes and has attended workshops at Cornell like March Dog Madness to gain additional knowledge. Alyssa also agreed to take on the great feat of resurrecting the dog department and dog show at Ontario County Fair.

As a 4-H volunteer Alyssa loves working with kids and their animals, no matter what species. Alyssa states "Working with animals teaches kids how to problem solve, communicate, and manage their time. In addition, it can be a very rewarding and humbling experience at the same time". Training dogs teaches kids how to think of others and to be proactive. You always want to be one step ahead of your dog. Working with any animal teaches empathy and patience, and she hopes that all the kids we work with can show empathy towards animals, as well as people in our community. Alyssa's favorite part about being a 4-H volunteer is problem solving with the kids and the dogs. She also loves to see kids gain independence. Not only can they train their dog but now they can tell someone how they trained that skill. All these skills are going to help kids be successful in the world as they grow up.

We are looking forward to many more years of our 4-H dog program & are so thankful to have found such a great volunteer willing to go above and beyond for Ontario County 4-H!

## More than a 4-H Livestock Auction



Maggie Schaertl auctioning off her goat in the show ring during the 4th annual 4-H Livestock Auction.

Each year in Ontario County, the local 4-H program culminates one of its major youth-agriculture initiatives with the Ontario County 4 H Livestock Auction at the county fair. This event offers young people the chance to showcase the fruits of months of work — raising, finishing and marketing livestock — while also inviting the community to support their efforts.

The auction is the final step in a year-long project for many 4-H members in Ontario County. 4-H youth participating in the livestock project learn about raising, finishing and marketing animals, and the project ends when buyers bid on the animals at the county fair.

At the auction, local businesses, farms, individuals — "buyers" — place bids on the animals. The proceeds often go back to the youth for further education, project development or to recoup project costs. This year's auction had thirty-five lots and grossed \$141,794 making it the highest grossing sale we have held yet!

The auction is more than a sale. It's a teaching tool, a community link, and a celebration of agriculture and youth leadership.

For the 4-H members, this project builds real skills: animal husbandry, budgeting, marketing, time management, teamwork and responsibility. From raising and caring for an animal over many months to preparing it for show and sale — the process yields many lessons.

The auction helps youth finance future projects, relieve some of their financial burden and incentivize high performance. Encouraging strong community turnout helps maintain the viability of the program.

The Ontario County 4-H Livestock Auction is much more than a marketplace — it's a milestone in youth





Youth who participated in the 4th annual 4-H Livestock Auction program. These youth work hard all year round, through educational and hands-on learning.

development, a bridge between agriculture and the community, a learning laboratory for young people, and a celebration of local heritage. Whether you're a 4-H member, a parent, a buyer, or a fair-goer, the event offers a way to engage with agriculture, invest in the next

generation, and appreciate the hard work behind each animal and each sale.

## CCE of Ontario County and 4-H Youth Granted -NYS-Fair Transportation Grant

Many throughout our community love to attend the county fair for agricultural education and good family fun. However, there are some youth that never get the opportunity to attend a county fair. This year, New York State accepted proposals from organizations to increase local youth attendance in county fairs. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County was awarded this Fair Transportation Grant to facilitate a fair experience for youth from summer camps across Ontario county. This initiative was successfully implemented through a collaboration of CCE staff across 4-H and Agriculture departments.

CCE staff were able to recruit Marcus Whitman Summer program, Manchester Town Parks and Recreation Day Camp, Hobart William Smith Kinder Day Camp, and Partnership Ontario's Afterschool Program to bring a total of 237 youth to the Ontario County fair. CCE staff helped coordinate bussing and scheduling for all the groups and created itineraries for each group.



Youth from the Manchester Town Parks and Recreation Camp having fun at the Ontario County Fair!

While at the fair, youth ages 5-17 learned about agriculture, animals, 4-H programs, and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program, providing a wholesome fair experience. Youth went on a scavenger hunt across the fair answering



questions and talking to 4-H and FFA youth about their projects. They also enjoyed feeding animals at the petting zoo and playing at the fair fun zone. Youth were treated to lunch and ice cream as part of their experience, and they were provided with popcorn for their ride back home. As they departed, each youth was given a drawstring bag showcasing the fair, 4-H and CCE logos filled with fun souvenirs including 4-H pencils, cow-shaped ice pack, coloring sheet, and literature about the fair, 4-H club, 4-H camp, and CCE agricultural programs.

We enjoyed implementing this grant and feel it was a very positive agricultural exposure to youth who might not have had a chance to attend fair otherwise. We plan to apply again next year when funding is offered!

Two day camp youth holding baby chicks in the poultry building during the scavenger hunt, part of the fair transportation grant program.



## 4-H CAMP BRISTOL HILLS

### Celebrating 100 Years of Camping Excellence in Ontario County 4-H



Boys 4-H Club Camp, 1925

Camp opened its doors in 1925 on the shores of Canandaigua Lake. Boys and girls attended separate weeks of camp.

In 1925, America was in the midst of roaring change. Radios crackled in living rooms for the first time. Automobiles outnumbered horses on country roads. Cities climbed higher, and life seemed to move faster by the day. Yet amid all that progress, parents and educators began to see a growing need for something timeless — a place where young people could slow down, step away from the manual labor of farming and into nature, learn from one another, and from themselves.

It was in that spirit that 4-H Camp Bristol Hills first opened its gates. What began as a simple effort to connect youth

with nature soon became something much deeper — a place where generations would discover confidence, community, and the quiet joy of belonging. Nearly a century later, those same values still guide us. While the world has changed in ways that Art Woodard and the CCE Board of 1925 could never have imagined, the power of a summer spent at camp remains as vital as ever: a reminder that growth doesn't always come from what we build, but from the space we create to play, explore, and connect.

Camp was of course, different then than it is today. In 1925, Camp rented space on the shores of Canandaigua Lake. Initially at Onoka on Torrey Beach, near what is now Crystal Beach, then across the lake at Point Rochester (now Camp Ononda), and then back to Onoka Point, before acquiring our current property in Bristol in 1936. From 1925-1930, only Ontario County 4-H members in good standing were allowed to attend, and we ran separate weeks for boys and girls. Campers focused on skills like first aid, nature study and basket weaving. Campers were expected to bring a cot from home (though campers could rent cots for \$0.50/week) as well as a mess kit to eat from. Bristol Hills was the second 4-H Camp in New York, with Dorothy P. Flint opening a 4-H camp just a year earlier on Long Island.

By 1931, the success of 4-H Camping in Ontario County was drawing attention from neighboring counties. The Camp became a regional program, officially supporting 4-H members from seven counties. More counties would





*Campers relaxing on the front porch of the original dining hall at 4-H Camp. This building collapsed in March 1978 and rebuilt in time for camp to open as scheduled in July of that year.*

jump on board in later years. It was evident that 4-H Camp was going to need a place of its own to call home, and 4-H Agent Art Woodard made a connection that changed the course of Camp forever. Woodard met with Ogden P. Letchworth and Marjorie Maxwell, who had recently purchased several hundred acres of land in the Bristol Hills. Woodard, Letchworth, and Maxwell came to an agreement to lease land to 4-H for three years to hold its growing camp (CCE purchased the land at the conclusion of the lease, making it a permanent home for the Camp). Woodard then turned his sights on building the infrastructure that would be needed to make camp happen. Working with the Works Progress Administration, along with our local officials, trees were cleared, a dining hall and a swimming pool were constructed, and several small cabins were built. The camp was a massive success, and continued to operate throughout WWII, the Polio pandemic and every other national situation through the years.

Camp continued to focus on facility development through the 1950's and 60's, adding the fishing pond, more cabins, the "Crafts Lodge" (now called Woodcraft), the basketball court, and even a new swimming pool in 1960. Another landmark shift occurred in 1961, related to 4-H membership. For the first time, camp accepted children all children, without the requirement to be a Club member.

Attendance soared throughout the 1960's reaching the record high attendance in 1970 when 1,750 campers spent a week at camp. Shortly thereafter, the New York State Department of Health established cabin capacities, based on square footage of the cabin interiors, putting an end to the era of campers sleeping on the floors when the beds were all sold out.



*A new pool was constructed in 1960. This pool is slated to be replaced in 2026.*





Campers swim in the old pool, built in the creek in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration.

Catastrophe struck in March of 1978 when the dining hall collapsed under the combination of heavy snow and extreme winds blowing up the hill. With just 3 months before camp, CCE Staff Niles Brown and Sally Jo Crosiar led a Herculean fundraising campaign, drawing on the generosity of our Ontario County officials, camp families, community donors, 4-H Clubs, Cornell University, and others. In an effort that could never be replicated today, the old dining hall was cleared and a brand new building was erected just in time for campers to arrive in early July, never missing a beat.

Camp has always offered a very traditional summer camp experience. A paradigm shift began in the 1980's with a growing emphasis on building a more diverse array of camp programming. A ropes course was added, and new programs were developed including Adventure Camp, Sprout Camp, an Adirondack Tripping program, and even targeted programs like Camp OK (a weight loss focused program). We also earned our first accreditation from the American Camp Association (see 4-H Camp Bristol Hills Earns Re-Accreditation, page 35 in the early 1980's. Later, programs like Young Women's Adventure Camp, Progression Camp, and a Teens With Autism Camp (a collaboration with the Ontario County ARC) were unique programs specifically targeting different types of youth.



Campers create some interesting costumes for Evening Programs at 4-H Camp.



Our relationship with Cornell University has always had a direct influence on our program, but that relationship grew significantly in the 2010's, with graduate students facilitating programs including STEM Camp, Food Science Camp, as well as various collaborations with research students teaching campers about healthy coping strategies, brain studies, geospatial studies and more. A concerted effort to bring urban youth into outdoor spaces was made in 2014, when Disney Corporation selected 4-H Camp Bristol Hills as one of just four sites nationwide to receive grant money to allow urban youth to attend overnight camps.

Spirits were running high at the start of 2020. Camp was enjoying an enrollment that was growing every single year and was on pace for the highest enrollment in 50 years. That all came to a grinding halt, however, when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. There was a lot of uncertainty related to whether Camps would be permitted, and while our Camp staff was working hard to follow the medical research and best practices, ultimately the NYS Department of Health declared that no overnight camping programs would be permitted that year. The Hills were eerily quiet in 2020, with just a bare bones staff of maintenance and administration holding down the fort, with no campers on site. Camp re-opened in 2021, but with a very different feel. Campers were COVID tested prior to arrival, segregated into cohorts, wore masks, rotated through a series of classes, temperatures were checked daily, and keeping campers and staff safe in this evolving pandemic took center stage. But, Campers were back at camp, and while it definitely felt different, it still felt magical to be together again, outdoors, doing what Camp does best. During the years since the Pandemic, Camp has largely returned to a very traditional camp experience, and is continuing to rebuild enrollment.

Through the years, our name has changed — from Ontario County 4-H Camp to Camp Letchworth, 4-H Victory Camp, and finally 4-H Camp Bristol Hills — but our purpose has never wavered. Each generation has left its mark on these hills, building not only cabins and programs, but a legacy of growth, friendship, and discovery. As we celebrate our centennial, we honor the vision of those who first dreamed of a camp where young people could learn by doing, live with purpose, and find their place in the world. Nearly a century later, the laughter of campers still echoes through the trees, a timeless reminder that the spirit of 4-H Camp Bristol Hills is as strong — and as needed — as ever.



*Dana Abbott Spragge*

Dana "Luna" Abbott was a camper and a member of the 4-H Club the Cheshire Cats in the early 1990's. She remembers winning a ribbon for public speaking/food demonstration for chiffon pumpkin pie and another one for spinach angel hair pasta. She came back to camp in 1998 as a junior counselor where she worked in day camp and in the kitchen. Her fondest camp memories are singing around the campfires, outdoor cookery, the skits and the quick camaraderie that become the magic of camp.



This summer, Dana returned to camp to visit with Camp Director, Jessie Middleton. They had been friends since childhood, and they reminisced about working together all those years ago at camp. Jessie was talking about celebrating our centennial year and the upcoming Gala. However, the week before, we had just hit a roadblock; all the leads for chefs for the event had fallen through. With the event two months away, we needed to nail down the chef sooner rather than later. Dana is a woman of many talents. She became a nurse in the mid 2010s and prior to that worked as a chef and caterer for about a decade. Hearing our struggles Dana didn't just offer to cater the event, she offered to do it for free!

Over the next couple of months, she and Mo Tidball discussed the event, the menu, and what Dana would need to pull it all off. Dana's flexibility with ingredients (many of which were donated as well) made it so much of the funds raised from the event could go towards our fund for rebuilding the pool complex, rather than the expense of putting on the event.

As a 4-Her herself, Dana pulled some of the recipes right from the 4-H Cookbook she had gotten as a child. Dana, with the help of her husband, Alex, were able to create a delicious meal for the 140 people in attendance. The event itself raised over \$15,000 which will provide the seed money we needed to be able to seek out larger donations for the complex.

When asked about her thoughts on camp now, Dana said "Camp is magical and necessary and I will always help in whatever ways I can to keep that magic going. We need more campers in the world!" We'd like to extend a huge thank you to Dana and Alex for filling all our bellies with an expertly cooked meal that evening!



## The Impact of a Little Camp Magic

### How Campers Benefit from the BIG-M at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills

Jessica Middleton, Camp Director

Dark Realm, The Bench Wars and the truce the followed; the Pond Shark; Kangaroo Court; the Legend of Little Dipper; Big Mac Cheesy Camp Casserole being chanted with so much excitement before diving into a new concoction created by our camp cook, Licious; campfires big and small; ending the week by singing "Love Letter" with half of the camp in tears because they have to go home the next day...These are just a few of the traditions that our campers experienced this summer at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills.

Some are traditions that have been going on for decades, and others are just brief moments and memories that happened because you were at camp for week 3 in the cabin of Cayuga. Each summer, we always ask our parents to share why they choose to send their kids to 4-H Camp Bristol Hills and many simply write "because they love it". And with all the activities and high jinks that take place, what's there not to love?

The benefits of summer camp, however, run much deeper than the fun activities and silly stories that campers leave with. The American Camp Association sums up the benefits and anticipated outcomes of camp as a place that kids learn social skills development, character building, and community building. Leadership, communication, active participation, responsibilities, resourcefulness and resilience, fairness, trustworthiness are all skills we see our campers grow in just one week.

4-H, at the national level, identifies 4 Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development, known as the "BIG M", which stands for Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery. At 4-H Camp Bristol Hills we believe that camp is a place where people belong, have an increased sense of independence, can be generous with each other, and work on mastery of different skills. It occurs in so many ways throughout the week and all with our counselors at the helm creating the space for kids to thrive. Throughout the summer, we take note of feedback from parents, and we ask campers and staff about their highlights. Below are insights of how "BIG M" played out in a few ways at camp.

**Belonging:** Middle school. That tough time where kids can say the cruelest things. As the Camp Director, I can tell you that if there's an issue in a cabin, it's most likely a cabin of 11 – 13 year old boys. It takes a special kind of counselor to contend with this, and that's exactly what we had the last week of camp. Each evening the counselors of the 11 – 13 year old cabin would gather their boys outside for a mini-camp fire in their portable fire pit. There were some big personalities in that cabin but the connection around the campfire each evening provided a time and space for them to connect.



Staffer David Browne creates a little magic with campers. (Magical sparkles added in editing!)

**Independence:** One parent said their child enjoys overnights with friends and he likes choosing between the activities provided. They also love the independence that's facilitated during these weeks. "Knowing he'll be screen-free for the week is amazing. It's affordable for a week long overnight camp with lots of structured activity, fun counselors, outdoor fun. Well worth the expense."

**Generosity:** Imagine being 8 years old and putting on your first performance - a skit where you and your cabin-mates decide to sing "If I Were Not A Camper" and each girl comes up with a rhyme of the counselor they would be. The cabin stands in front of the entire camp and starts shyly at first singing and even though there are a couple of bumps with missed cues along the way, they totally get into it as they see their audience totally get into their performance. By the end, the audience erupts in applause, and the "4-H Camp Bristol Hills Has Talent" judges award them with the highest score of the night. When campers know they can take risks in a safe space and are encouraged throughout, amazing things happen. I'm sure those girls left the stage feeling like a million bucks.

## Shared Spaces, Shared Success: How Rentals Keep Camp Thriving

Since 1937, when 4-H Camp Bristol Hills moved to its current location in the Bristol Hills, our facilities have been made available to a wide range of rental groups. Hosting these groups during the spring and fall seasons is a mutually beneficial arrangement: it provides organizations with an ideal setting to fulfill their own program goals, while also supporting camp operations financially and helping to broaden awareness of 4-H and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Rental groups have long played a vital role in helping 4-H Camp Bristol Hills keep its summer camp programs affordable for families. Revenue from these rentals directly supports our summer operations, helping to offset costs and sustain our mission. Groups such as Canandaigua Schools, Leadership Ontario, Canandaigua National Bank, and Camp Get-A-Way have become long-standing partners. None, however, have been with us longer than Bristol Hills Music Camp, which has been renting our facilities since 1962!

2025 was an outstanding year for rentals at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. Camp Get-A-Way, a returning fall group, expanded their partnership by adding a new spring

encampment. When their original host site fell through at the last minute, we were able to welcome them to Bristol Hills on just a few days' notice. In addition, two new groups joined us in the fall: a travelers' program through Horizons Unlimited and a religiously affiliated group in the Sikh faith. Each of these new groups stayed for nearly a week, and together, the three new rentals in 2025 contributed more than \$33,000 in additional revenue to the camp budget. All three groups have already indicated that they intend to be with us again in 2026.

Looking ahead, we are eager to continue growing our rental programs and expanding opportunities in the spring and fall "shoulder" seasons. To that end, we are developing a series of new, ready-to-go camp programs designed specifically for rental groups interested in sampling classic camp activities. These offerings allow us to bring in additional staff, enhance the guest experience, and strengthen camp's financial sustainability.

If your organization—or one you know—would benefit from a rustic retreat in the Bristol Hills, we invite you to contact the Camp Office at [CampBristolHills@cornell.edu](mailto:CampBristolHills@cornell.edu) or (585) 394-3977 ext. 435.



Boys hanging out in their cabin at night.

**Mastery:** As the mom of two campers, I got a good reminder of why I have devoted so much of my life to summer camp. This summer my eldest son decided he wanted to participate in Adventure Camp – a decision we were very surprised by because cooperative games and heights have always been a challenge for him. I checked in often with his counselors and him to see how the week was going (the perks of being the Camp Director) and

was pleasantly surprised to hear he LOVED it. That weekend my sons and I decided to take a hike in the ravine. There were a few parts that were nearly impassable, but I saw a change in my son. What would normally have had him turn around and go back, became a cooperative challenge. He was quick to give a hand to his brother or me as we made our way through fallen trees and we discussed how we could best traverse through the hard sections together. Months later, he still brings up with his group "The Flock" and the connections he made that week.

Camp is a space where kids don't just come to be entertained for a week away from home. I've been blessed to experience Camp through all stages of my life – as a camper, counselor, staff for the last 20+ years, and now I get to experience it as a mom. For me (and I know I'm not the only one), 4-H Camp was the place where some of the people I met for a week are still my best friends decades later (shout out to my camp girls!). It's a place where I made some of the best memories of my life and learned more about

myself in a week than I ever did over the entire school year. And it's a place where I learned about others – how to work and play together, how to support others and ask for help when I need it and how to be thankful for the small and big moments that I get to be a part of. In a world where it seems like connections are dwindling, the connections and memory building continue to be strong at camp. And as someone who has been around for much of the last 30+ years, I can say as a camper, staff member, and mom, it's an awesome place to grow up and grow into yourself.



This cabin is excited about the mythical magical monster they created!



## Making a Splash, for Generations to Come

For generations of campers, few places at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills have created as many memories—or taught as many lifelong lessons—as the swimming pool. From first-time swimmers taking their very first strokes to confident lifeguards discovering their leadership potential, the pool has always been more than a place to cool off on a summer afternoon. It's been a classroom, a confidence builder, and a cornerstone of the camp experience.

Swimming is one of those rare skills that stays with a person for life. It's equal parts recreation and responsibility, joy and safety. Beyond being a fun summer pastime, swimming instills discipline, physical fitness, and self-assurance. Campers learn to set goals, overcome fears, and celebrate progress—one lap at a time. And for many youth who might not otherwise have access to swim lessons, 4-H Camp Bristol Hills is where those essential skills begin, creating a ripple effect that lasts long after camp is over.

Our swimming program isn't just about strokes and floating—it's about teaching persistence, teamwork, and respect for water. Campers learn to support each other, cheer for one another's successes, and build a sense of shared accomplishment. Those same qualities—resilience, encouragement, and community—are at the very heart of what 4-H stands for. We currently offer swim lessons for all Day Campers. Resident and Progression Campers have the option to sign up for Swim Lessons and/or Watersports classes. Additionally, every single camper has the opportunity to swim each afternoon. Occasionally, campers even have the chance to swim in the evening. The Pool is, without a doubt, the most popular place in camp.

The current camp pool first opened in 1960, and for 65 years it has faithfully served generations of campers, counselors, and families. Countless campers have learned to swim there and spent long, sunny afternoons building friendships that last a lifetime. Swimming has been a major part of our Camp program since the very first campers met on the shores of Canandaigua Lake in 1925, learning to swim, row a boat, and fish. It's hard to imagine a summer at camp without the familiar laughter and splashing that echo from the water.

But as with all things, time takes its toll. Decades of heavy use and the natural wear of the elements have brought the pool to the end of its functional lifespan. Rather than

seeing this as an ending, we see it as an opportunity—a chance to reimagine what swimming can look like for the next generation of campers. Plans are now underway to replace the aging facility with a new, modern pool that meets today's standards for safety, accessibility, and environmental sustainability.

The new design will allow for improved water circulation and energy efficiency, safer entry points for swimmers of all ages and abilities, and expanded opportunities for instruction and recreation. It's being planned with the same spirit that has guided 4-H Camp Bristol Hills for a century: providing young people with hands-on experiences that build confidence, character, and capability.

Importantly, this effort isn't just about upgrading infrastructure—it's about investing in people. Swimming remains one of the most vital life skills a child can learn. According to the American Red Cross, more than half of Americans either don't know how to swim or lack the skills needed to save themselves in an emergency. By ensuring that every camper has access to high-quality, safe, and fun swim instruction, we are helping to create a generation that's better prepared for life—both in and out of the water. The Red Cross Lifeguard certification programs that we have been offering in recent years allow the impact of our pool to ripple far beyond 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. Our new pool complex will be a destination training ground for Lifeguards throughout the Finger Lakes.

To make this vision a reality, we're pursuing a combination of grant funding and community partnerships through a dedicated capital campaign. This approach allows us to move forward responsibly, without sacrificing the affordability and inclusivity that have always defined camp.

The replacement of the pool isn't just a construction project—it's a continuation of a legacy. It's about preserving one of camp's most iconic traditions while ensuring that the lessons learned at the pool's edge continue to shape confident, capable young people for decades to come.

When the first campers dive into the new pool, they'll be doing more than splashing into cool water—they'll be diving into a tradition over 100 years in the making, one that will keep rippling outward into the community for generations to come.



## 4-H Camp Celebrates the Centennial Throughout 2025

It isn't every day that an organization celebrates its 100th anniversary. Throughout 2025, the 4-H Camp Bristol Hills team honored this remarkable milestone with a year-long series of events, social media campaigns, camp "birthday" celebrations, and special opportunities for alumni to leave their mark on the next century of Camp history.

The celebration began last fall with two initiatives designed to connect past and present. First, staff dug deep into the photo archives—some dating back to our very first summer—and selected ten of their favorites to reproduce as 16x20" canvas prints. Each image was paired with a lighthearted camp sentiment and offered for sponsorship through our alumni social media channels. Once sponsored, the canvases were displayed across Camp with acknowledgments to the donors who made the project possible. This simple yet meaningful fundraiser raised nearly \$1,000 while reconnecting alumni and giving current campers a glimpse into Camp's rich history.

In addition, two banner displays were developed—one highlighting current camp programs and another featuring a timeline of Camp's evolution. These displays have been showcased at community events throughout the year, including at eight different Canandaigua National Bank branches, where Camp was featured as CNB's "Business of the Month."

The official Centennial Kickoff took place in January at Rebel Sailor Brewing in Manchester. Nearly 80 alumni, staff, and friends gathered to celebrate, bid on silent auction items, and share birthday cake. The owners of Rebel Sailor, whose children are part of the Camp community, hosted a 50/50 raffle benefiting Camp. In total, the evening raised

nearly \$1,000 and set a joyful tone for the year ahead.

As summer approached, Camp introduced a new "Connections" event during staff training to bring together parents, alumni, and staff. The evening featured a casual dinner, camp tours, and opportunities for guests to engage with the next generation of Camp leaders. We are excited to continue this event as an annual tradition.

During the first week of the summer season, campers and staff gathered for a festive all-camp birthday celebration complete with hats, balloons, cake, and classic party games. We even shared a series of Facebook Livestream videos from camp during the event!

The year's festivities culminated on October 4 with a formal Centennial Gala held in the Camp Dining Hall. The space was transformed into an elegant venue for a locally sourced dinner prepared by a 4-H alumnus. Senator Pam Helming presented a New York State Senate resolution recognizing 4-H Camp Bristol Hills for its century of service. Guests enjoyed a historical display, silent auction, photo booth, and heartfelt reflections from alumni and community members on the lifelong impact of Camp. The evening raised nearly \$17,000, netting over \$15,000 to support the construction of a new swimming pool, planned for completion in 2026.

The Centennial Celebration was a fitting tribute to 100 years of friendship, growth, and community—honoring the legacy of 4-H Camp Bristol Hills while looking forward to the century ahead. The funds raised are slated to support the development of the new swimming pool at camp in 2026!

From top left: Centennial Kickoff event at Rebel Sailor in January, 16x20" canvas photo prints sponsored by alumni are displayed in Cockram Lodge, historical displays featured around the community throughout the year, Centennial Birthday Party at Camp, Centennial Gala, Senator Helming presents a NYS Senate Resolution acknowledging the Centennial achievement at the Gala.





## 4-H Camp Bristol Hills Earns Re-Accreditation

4-H Camp Bristol Hills has earned Accreditation status from the American Camp Association (ACA) for 2026 based on a 2025 accreditation visit. ACA accreditation means that 4-H Camp Bristol Hills submitted to a thorough review of its operation by the ACA — from staff qualifications and training to emergency management — and complied with the highest standards in the industry,” said ACA President and CEO Henry DeHart.

“State regulation varies widely and, at its best, can only go so far,” said DeHart. “Because of this, ACA’s accreditation program is a valuable resource that goes beyond regulation to strengthen camp practices related to health and safety. ACA accreditation is a voluntary process in which camps

must meet a robust set of standards. It includes a third-party review to help camps evaluate their health and safety policies and practices.”

ACA is the only independent accrediting organization reviewing camp operations in the country. ACA’s nationally recognized standards program focuses primarily on the program quality, health and safety aspects of a camp’s operation. ACA collaborates with experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Red Cross, and other youth-serving agencies to assure that current practices at the camp reflect the most up-to-date, research-based standards in camp operation. For more parent-focused information about accreditation, visit [ACAamps.org](https://ACAamps.org).

## PARENTING SKILLS WORKSHOP SERIES

Our program focuses on teaching and practicing five essential parenting skills: encouragement, self-control, can-do attitudes, choices, and respecting feelings. The program utilizes a friendly coaching approach where facilitators and participants provide support for one another. The sessions are based on a judgement-free space where people are genuinely interested in helping one another and learning new ways of parenting. Through extensive use of role plays, as well as visual resources, the program provides a whole-person approach. Our instructors make sure to provide additional support through offering classes on ZOOM depending on the needs of the participants, guest speakers from local organizations such as Aspire Hope and working with each participant to help them with their specific situation.

The program also offers a separate program targeting teens of participating parents. Facilitators teach the teens the same five skills as the parents using methods tailored for young adults. Teens are encouraged to use self-expression, understand their own emotions, and to make appropriate choices. The Teen program was not facilitated this year, but it is available if needed.

Childcare is available for younger children.

A Spanish interpreter is available for parents who need translation support.

Participant feedback this past year included:

- “We had a lot of group involvement, so I enjoyed & learned from each one of them”
- “Everyone was welcoming with no judgement”
- “Seeing that others can relate to my situation, helps me not feel alone.
- “Pat and Anne have taught me great parenting techniques and emotional intelligence in how to effectively parent my children. I have learned so much!”

Cooperative Extension offers three sessions of Parenting Skills Workshop Series (PSWS) each year. Each series includes seven 2-hour early evening workshops followed by a completion celebration dinner. Our 3 series this year were - #111 October 22-December 10, 2024, #112 March 4-April 22, 2025 & #113 April 29-June 17, 2025. Participants received certificates for completion and perfect attendance. Programs are held at the Finger Lakes Community College Childcare Center and the Jim Dooley Childcare Center in Geneva. The Ontario County Department of Social Services generously provides funding for our PSWS Program. Thank you to all our collaborators who make the Parenting Skills Workshop Series such a tremendous program for all parents.

### Parenting Skills Workshop Series

*Local Staffing:*

**Amelia Devolder**  
Program Coordinator

**Anne Lahr**  
**Patricia Owens**  
Program Facilitators

**Sarah Wilhelm**  
Resource Educator

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Bloomfield Central School District  
Bloomfield Library  
Bristol's Garden Center  
Bristol Library  
Bristol Volunteer Fire Department  
Bruce Reed, Reed's Farm  
Butterfly Effect  
Camp Get A Way  
Canandaigua Botanical Society  
Canandaigua, City of  
Canandaigua National Bank  
Canandaigua City School District  
Canandaigua Farmers Market  
Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association  
Canandaigua Montessori School  
Carter-Gray Agency, Inc.  
Casella Farms  
Castle Harvester Metal Fabricators



Casella Waste Services  
 Casey Kunes  
 Chesire Volunteer Fire  
 Department  
 Child Advocacy Center  
 Clifton Springs Library  
 Coldwater Pond Nursery  
 Community Bank NA  
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 Cornell Agriculture, Food &  
 Technology Park  
 Cornell Einhorn Center for  
 Community Engagement  
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 Crop and Soil Science  
 Entomology  
 Food Science  
 Horticulture Science  
 Planning and Community  
 Development  
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 Dale & Glen Shaw, Wishing Well Vineyard  
 Dennis Brewer  
 Dudley Poultry  
 Ed Joseph  
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 FLCC Child Care Center  
 Finger Lakes Community College  
 Finger Lakes Culinary  
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 Finger Lakes Institute  
 Finger Lakes Radio Group  
 Finger Lakes Visitors Connection  
 FLACRA-Clifton Springs  
 Fluffing Feathers at Vanilla Bean  
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 Geneva City School District  
 Geneva Farmers' Market  
 Geneva Library  
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 George Pickering, Pickering Farm  
 Grant Fletcher  
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 NYCAMH  
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 NY Kitchen  
 NY Steam Engine Association  
 NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets  
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 NYS 4-H Program  
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 (Ontario Co. Fair)  
 Ontario Co. ARC  
 Ontario Co. Board of Supervisors  
 Ontario Co. Children's Fund  
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 Research  
 Ontario Co. Dept. of Social  
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 Ontario Co. Dept. of  
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 Ontario Co. Family Court  
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 Ontario Co. Office of Economic  
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 Ontario Co. Sheriff's Office  
 Ontario Co. Soil & Water  
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 Senator Pam Helming  
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 Spring Valley Gardens, Inc.  
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 Sue & Jim Shively & Son Shine Kids  
 4-H Club  
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## **4-H Camp Donors & Volunteers**

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 Sandy Button  
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# THANK YOU

## 2025 ONTARIO COUNTY 4-H LIVESTOCK AUCTION BUYERS

### Grand Champion Steer

4-H Member: Addison Snyder  
Buyer: MCS Farms & Feed/Rushco

### Grand Champion Market Hog

4-H Member: Grant Pyra  
Buyer: Hartland Abattoir

### Grand Champion Market Lamb

4-H Member: Wyatt Wadams  
Buyer: MCS Farms & Feed/Rushco

### Grand Champion Meat Goat

4-H Member: Charlie Rodas  
Buyer: Marlin Horst & Son

### Grand Champion Poultry

4-H Member: Caleb Congilosi  
Buyer: Tamberlane Farms

### Grand Champion Rabbit

4-H Member: Charlie Rodas  
Buyer: Trademark Tire, LLC  
(donated back)  
Tamberlane Farms

## Special Thank You To:



### Auction Sponsor



### Reserve Champion Steer

4-H Member: Owen Grefrath  
Buyer: Weaver Livestock

### Reserve Champion Market Hog

4-H Member: Travis Clark  
Buyer: Anita Kriese

### Reserve Champion Market Lamb

4-H Member: Addison Snyder  
Buyer: Edgewood Grain

### Reserve Champion Goat

4-H Member: Wyatt Wadams  
Buyer: Seedway  
(donated back)  
Isaac VanBortel

### Reserve Champion Poultry

4-H Member: Emily Cheney  
Buyer: Trademark Tire, LLC

### Reserve Champion Rabbit

4-H Member: Elena Soberon  
Buyer: Willow Bend Farms

### Add On Donors continued:

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### Additional Buyers

Friendly Ford  
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Randy and Karen Rugenstein  
Canandaigua Stockyards  
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Stanley Ag  
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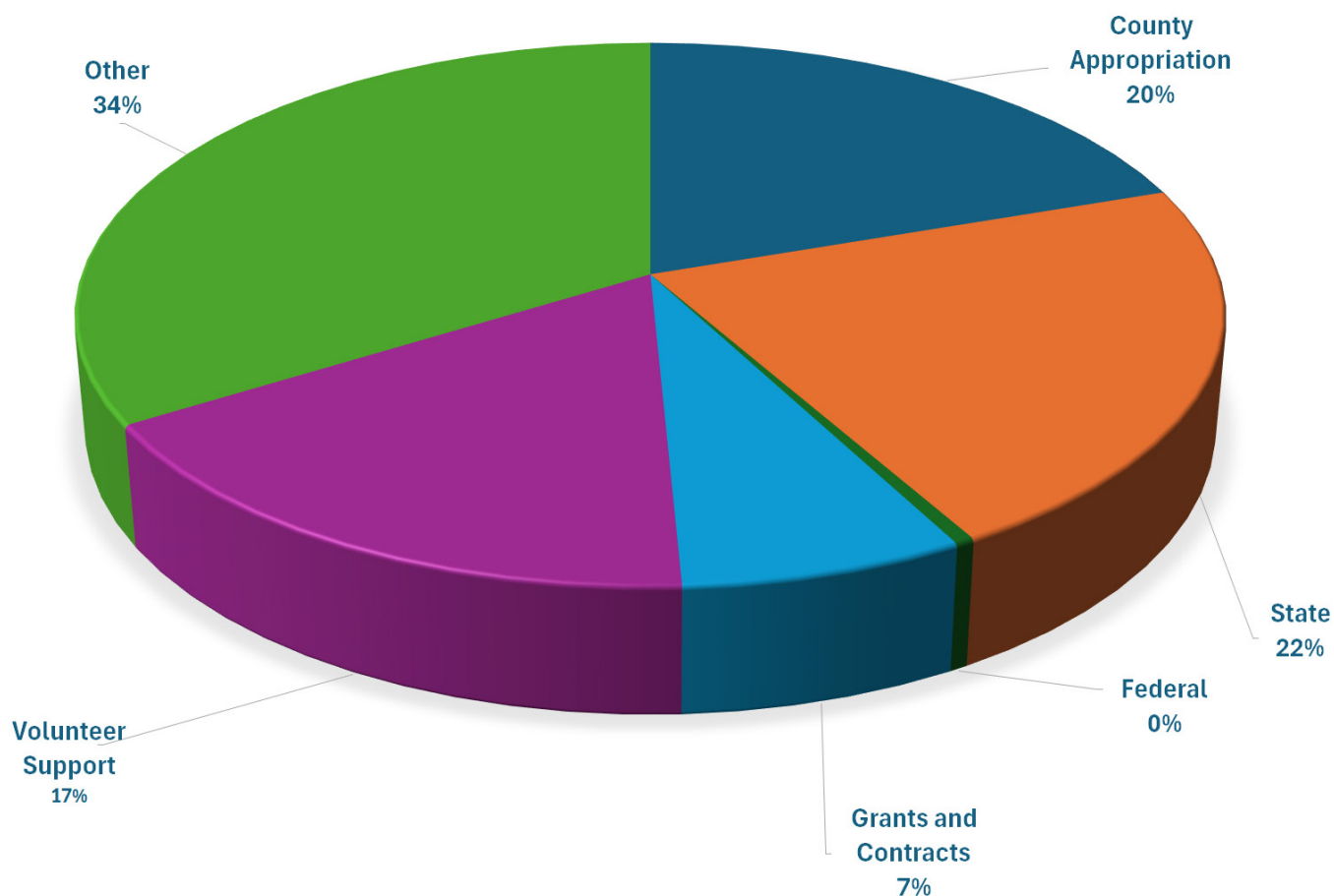
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Soberon LLC  
\*The Clark Family Farm  
Trademark Tire LLC  
Willow Bend Farm  
Mike Fallat- DDS Companies

Thank you to all of our bidders and buyers at the 2025 4-H Livestock Auction at the Ontario County Fair. A very special thank you to Canandaigua Stockyards for providing our auctioneer and ring men, Bozeman Family Farm, Rushville Lions Club for our buyer food coupons and to Tessah Ciardi Photography for photographing our auction. Thank you to Hartland Abattoir, Timberline Meats and HLW Acres Poultry Processing for your processing and harvesting services. We hope that we did not miss anyone: if we did please know that your support to the 4-H program and livestock auction is greatly appreciated! We thank all of our volunteers who make this auction possible!

## SUMMARY OF RESOURCES & SUPPORT

<b>County Appropriation</b>	\$492,077	<b>Other</b> (program fees, rent, fundraising, donations, etc)	\$841,504
<b>State</b>		<b>Volunteer Support</b>	(value of time/expertise for 12,147 hours of volunteer time at \$34.79/hour per The Non-Profit Leadership Center)
224 Funds	\$ 89,292		\$ 422,594
Fringe Benefits	\$458,269	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$2,490,470</b>
<b>Federal</b>			
Smith Lever	\$ 11,899		
<b>Grants and Contracts</b>	\$ 174,835		



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