

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Chenango County

2025 Annual Report



"Rooted in community and driven by progress"

A Message From Our Executive Director:

Dear Friends and Supporters of CCE Chenango,

As we reflect on the past year, one word comes to mind: dedication. The heart of CCE Chenango beats strong because of the unwavering commitment of our staff, volunteers, and partners. Every day, they bring expertise, compassion, and creativity to serve our community, whether it's through agricultural education and research, nutrition programs, youth development, or innovative social care initiatives.

This year has not been without its challenges. Federal funding cuts to SNAP-Ed have tested our resilience and forced us to rethink how we deliver essential nutrition education to community members who need it most. These programs are more than lessons; they are lifelines that empower healthier choices and strengthen communities. While these reductions have been difficult, they have also sparked innovation and collaboration, reminding us why our mission matters.

Looking ahead, we are energized by new opportunities. Our Social Care Navigator program, launched under the Medicaid 1115 Waiver, represents a bold step forward in addressing the social determinants of health. By helping Chenango County residents access benefits, housing, food, transportation, and care management, we are building bridges to a healthier, more equitable future. This work is not just about services, it's about dignity, hope, and the belief that every person deserves the chance to thrive. Your support makes all of this possible.

Together, we remain *rooted in community and driven by progress*, ensuring that every step we take today builds a stronger, healthier, and more hopeful tomorrow for Chenango County.

With gratitude and optimism,



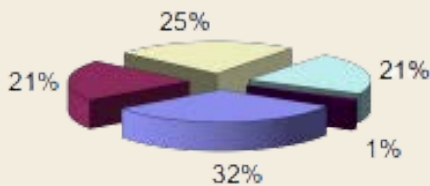
Craig Thomas Brown
Executive Director, CCE Chenango



Finance Report

State and Federal support includes the estimated value of services and educational access provided by Cornell, USDA, and NYS Sponsored grants. Most of this is related to training and access to the research that is the basis of the programs we conduct. These services are available to CCE Chenango because of the memorandum of agreement and support provided by our local government. and are made available because of Chenango County's contribution to our funding. Revenue is the actual cash provided to CCE during the Fiscal year 2025, of which Chenango County provides approximately overall revenue and support of 32%. Other reflects income generated through, contributions, special projects and rental income.

Sources of Revenue



■ COUNTY ■ STATE ■ FEDERAL ■ OTHER ■ GRANTS

| | TOTAL | SUPPORT | REVENUE | |
|---------|----------------|--------------|--------------|------|
| COUNTY | \$304,570.00 | \$0.00 | \$304,570.00 | 32% |
| STATE | \$630,617.42 | \$429,613.59 | \$201,003.83 | 21% |
| FEDERAL | \$297,297.07 | \$63,158.00 | \$234,139.07 | 23% |
| OTHER | \$204,931.98 | \$0.00 | \$204,931.98 | 21% |
| GRANTS | \$12,572.34 | \$0.00 | \$12,572.34 | 1% |
| TOTAL | \$1,449,988.81 | \$492,771.59 | \$957,217.22 | 100% |

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides free tax preparation services to qualifying individuals. This past year, Chenango County CCE's Volunteer VITA program led by Alice Andrews brought over half a million dollars back into Chenango County. That's \$523,635 reinvested in our local community. It's money that supports families, strengthens communities, drives economic growth.

Here's what that means to local families:

- Child Care Credit: \$4,635
- Child Tax Credit: \$117,410
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): \$122,454
- Education Credit: \$5,660
- Total Federal Refunds: \$461,500
- Total State Refunds: \$62,135



Grow Cook Serve - Powered by United Way

Grow Cook Serve, funded by United Way of Mid-Rural NY, has transformed food education, access, and community engagement for families across Chenango County. Over the past year, we have delivered programs that make a lasting impact, empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to thrive.

Through strong partnerships with 4-H, SNAP-Ed, HeadStart, WIC, and local schools, Grow Cook Serve has brought hands-on learning in cooking, nutrition, and gardening directly to the community. Our workshops and activities teach practical skills in meal preparation, budgeting, and healthy eating habits, fostering self-sufficiency and lifelong wellness.

Grow Cook Serve is more than a program, it is a movement that embodies collaboration, resilience, and hope. By pairing food access with education, we are not only nourishing bodies but also strengthening minds and building connections that sustain our community.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Individuals Reached through
Direct Education

224

Programs
Completed

26

GROW
COOK
SERVE

Grow Cook Serve - Produce Gleaning

In its ninth year, Grow Cook Serve continued to make a meaningful impact across Chenango County by gleaning and distributing over 14,000 pounds of fresh produce to local food pantries. This incredible bounty was generously donated by Norwich Meadows Farm, whose unwavering commitment to our program and local food pantries ensures that families in need have access to nutritious, locally grown food.

This year, the gleaning program supported several food pantries and expanded its reach. We especially want to thank Maggie Johnson, from the Community Cupboard, for helping distribute produce to additional sites, broadening our community impact. We also extend our gratitude to Cat Reeder, an agricultural teacher at Afton Central School, for aiding in distribution by supporting students and their families in the Afton School District through fresh produce donations.

These partnerships reflect our ongoing commitment to food equity, community collaboration, and youth engagement in nutrition and agriculture. Together, we are building a stronger, healthier Chenango County.



Grow Cook Serve - Kids in the Kitchen



Kids in the Kitchen is a hands-on nutrition and cooking education program coordinated through our 4-H Youth Development team and Grow Cook Serve Initiative. The program empowers youth with essential life skills by teaching them how to prepare healthy meals, understand nutrition labels, and make informed food choices. Participants created a variety of healthy recipes, including veggie wraps, fruit smoothies, homemade granola, and whole grain pasta dishes. Along the way, they learned practical skills such as knife safety, measuring, mixing, and proper stove and oven use. Nutrition education was woven throughout the experience, covering topics like MyPlate guidelines, food groups, portion sizes, and label reading. Students reported increased confidence in the kitchen and a greater willingness to try new foods. By combining cooking with nutrition education, Kids in the Kitchen helps children develop healthy habits and make positive food choices that can last a lifetime.

We want to extend a special thank you to United Way of Mid-Rural NY for funding the Grow Cook Serve Program. Their support allows our team to work tirelessly to empower youth with essential life skills, promote healthy habits, and strengthen our community. In addition to this program, our team leads the Local Hunger Coalition, which is dedicated to reducing food insecurity in Chenango County and ensuring that families have access to nutritious meals.

United Way of Mid-Rural NY does incredible work across the region, supporting programs that improve health, education, and financial stability for families. If you'd like to help them continue this important work, you can donate directly at www.uwmrny.org. Every contribution makes a difference and helps create lasting change in our communities.



SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program



This year brought growth, innovation, and meaningful community impact. Chenango County CCE's SNAP-Ed Program serves three counties: Chenango, Madison, and Cortland. We expanded outreach through Water Wednesdays in multiple school districts, food tastings, and direct education. We added the Oxford Farmers Market to our efforts with an EBT machine and introduced a sponsored produce share from Common Thread Farm, providing \$1,063.92 worth of fresh vegetables, about 330 pounds over 22 weeks, for programming. We launched a culturally responsive partnership with the Oneida Indian Nation, joined a CATCH Wellness Day at Edward R. Andrews School, and welcomed Brookfield, DeRuyter, and Homer Central School Districts. Brookfield quickly embraced Water Wednesdays after a full staff presentation.

Despite these successes, SNAP-Ed funding ended as of September 31, 2025, and we are currently operating on remaining state funds. We deeply appreciate the partnerships, collaboration, and community support that have made the last two decades so impactful.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Individuals Reached

4,397

Programs Completed

608



Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

Healthy habits shape lifelong well-being, yet many New York families face real challenges when it comes to eating well and staying active. Rising food costs, limited access to fresh options, and stressful financial priorities can make healthy choices feel out of reach. EFNEP changes that story. Supported by USDA funding, EFNEP educators work alongside families to build practical cooking skills, boost confidence around physical activity, and strengthen food security. Together, we empower households to turn small daily decisions into healthier routines that last a lifetime.

Defining the Need



63% Overweight or Obese
(up from 42% in 1997)

1 in 8 Families Facing
Food Insecurity
(13% vs. 10% national average)



36% Overweight or Obese

27% Low Physical
Activity



EFNEP in the Community

Every day, EFNEP educators connect directly with local families to build skills and confidence around healthy living. Our partnerships and presence across the community create opportunities for learning that truly matters.

Highlights for this year include:

- Adults reached through hands-on nutrition workshops: 47
- Program graduates who completed the full series: 19
- Family members impacted by healthier habits at home: 183

EFNEP isn't just a program, it is a partnership with our neighbors. Each workshop, each conversation, and each connection helps strengthen our community's health today and into the future.



Every \$1 spent in EFNEP saves \$10 in health expenditures and improves Quality Adjusted Life > 3 years for adult participants.



Agriculture in the Classroom

The Ag in the Classroom program in Chenango County, NY, is a dynamic educational initiative coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County, led by the 4-H Youth Development team. The program aims to connect youth with agriculture through hands-on, standards-aligned lessons that foster curiosity, critical thinking, and an appreciation for local food systems.

Students engaged in a wide variety of agricultural topics, including:

- Chickens – life cycles, egg production, and care
- Pollinators – their role in ecosystems and food production
- Edible Plant Parts – exploring roots, stems, leaves, and more
- Mushrooms – fungi as food and decomposers
- Cranberries – unique growing methods and harvesting
- Cows – dairy and beef production, anatomy, and nutrition
- And much more!

Impact Highlights:

- Fostered agricultural literacy among young learners
- Strengthened school-community partnerships
- Supported NYS learning standards in science, nutrition, and environmental education
- Encouraged curiosity and respect for local agriculture

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Youth Reached

1,200

Schools Districts

Served

5



CCE Winter Farmer's Market

On Thursday, February 6, 2025, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County partnered with Morrisville State College to launch the inaugural CCE Winter Farmers Market at the Norwich campus. The market ran bi-weekly for six afternoons through April 17, offering residents access to fresh, locally produced food during the winter months. Vendors included Davejen Farm with grass-fed beef, Schmidt Farm with maple products, True Nature Farm with fresh greens, and Fox Trail Farm with baked goods. Held in the campus atrium, the market drew several hundred visitors and created new opportunities for Chenango County producers to connect with the community.



"We were happy CCE was able to bring a winter market to Norwich. I think it's important to have a market like this that provides people the opportunity for locally sourced food and to get to know the people who make it."

— Andrea Schmidt, Schmidt Farm

Chenango County Open Farm Day



On Saturday, September 20th, CCE Chenango County proudly hosted its first-ever Open Farm Day, a celebration of local agriculture and community. Six incredible farms and businesses welcomed visitors from across the region, showcasing the very best of Chenango County's agricultural heritage and innovation. Participants included Schmidt's Scattered Maples and Dairy Farm, Berry Brae Sheep Farm, The Greco Homestead and Winery, Kutik's Honeybees, The Chenango County Historical Society, and CCE Chenango. Guests enjoyed unique experiences, learned about farming practices, and purchased high-quality local products directly from the source.

This inaugural event was a strong start, an inspiring example of how we can connect farms to families and strengthen our local economy. And this is only the beginning. Building on this momentum, we're already planning for an even bigger and better Open Farm Day next year on Saturday, July 18th, 2026. Our vision? More farms, more businesses, more experiences, and more opportunities for the public to discover and support Chenango County agriculture.

Stay tuned, 2026 promises to take Open Farm Day to the next level as we work with community partners to make this dream reality.





Chenango County 4-H Youth Development



Chenango County 4-H Youth Development is a dynamic program under Cornell Cooperative Extension that empowers young people to learn, lead, and thrive. It provides a safe, supportive environment where youth can explore their interests, develop critical life skills, and build confidence through hands-on experiences. Through positive youth-adult partnerships, 4-H helps young people grow into leaders who are prepared for success in school, careers, and life.

What makes Chenango County 4-H unique is its blend of tradition and innovation, offering a diverse array of opportunities that meet the needs of today's youth. The program honors its agricultural roots with hands-on learning in areas such as animal science, gardening, fishing, camping, hiking, and home economics. These are skills that connect youth to Chenango County's rural heritage. At the same time, it embraces the future through innovative programs in STEM, including robotics, coding, and environmental science, as well as leadership development, public speaking, and community service projects. Creative expression is encouraged through arts, photography, and culinary programs, giving youth the chance to explore their talents. With inclusive opportunities designed for diverse interests and backgrounds, Chenango County 4-H ensures that every young person can find a place to belong and grow.





Horse Quiz Bowl & Hippology



Hippology kicked off in November with an exciting farm visit where young people learned all about the tradition and practice of fox hunting. From there, the program continued every Friday night from January through March, leading up to the March competition. Over the course of 11 sessions, 18 participants came together to learn and grow. Not all youth go on to compete, but this year 10 youth advanced to the regional competitions, and 5 of those earned a seat at the State competition.

This achievement is no small feat. Hippology contests are challenging because participants never know what topics will be covered. Each year, we prepare by exploring a wide range of subjects, including breeds, colors, markings, bones, body parts, diseases, parasites, tack, equipment, carriages, and so much more. The goal is to make learning fun and engaging while building deep knowledge.

To keep things creative, this year's sessions included hands-on activities like making edible skin models, testing different types of bedding for absorption, and even "driving" pool noodle ponies. These interactive experiences help youth connect with the material in memorable ways while fostering teamwork and confidence.





Chenango County Fair Report



The 2025 Chenango County Fair was an incredible success! Our talented 4-H youth truly shined, showcasing their skills through impressive animal exhibits and creative building displays. Project judging took place on August 2nd and 4th, and the Fair ran from August 5th through August 10th. The week featured a full schedule of events, from poultry to dairy cattle, keeping 4-H'ers busy and engaged all week long. The Case Building was a hub of creativity and fun, offering hands-on activities like bracelet making, rock painting, and bubble art.

This year's numbers were outstanding, with 132 total exhibitors, 214 animal exhibits, and 102 building exhibits. Dozens of exceptional projects were selected to represent Chenango County at the New York State Fair, a huge honor for our youth. Congratulations to all of our 4-H members for their hard work, dedication, and creativity. You made this year's Fair unforgettable! Fairs provide youth with opportunities to learn, showcase their skills, build confidence, and connect with their community while celebrating agriculture and creativity.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Total Exhibitors

132

Animal Exhibitors

214

Case Building Exhibitors

102



Making Youth Adventures Possible: Thanks to the Chenango County Youth Bureau's Support





Sewing Program

The 2025 4-H Learn to Sew Program reached a record 47 youth, reflecting its continued growth and popularity. Structured by skill level, participants advanced from beginner projects like pin cushions to complex creations such as duffle bags and stuffed sharks, with some even crafting seatbelt guards for cancer patients. Supported by 19 dedicated volunteers, the program culminated in a Sewing Spectacular at the Chenango Arts Council, where youth proudly showcased their accomplishments, highlighting the creativity, confidence, and community spirit fostered through 4-H.



Entomology

The Bug Club launched in May with fun bug yoga sessions and fascinating entomology insights from Jen Caci. Youth learned about insect types, their roles in the environment, and how to identify them by body structure, while also exploring the difference between beneficial and harmful species. Highlights included taste-testing protein-rich dehydrated insects and a special Bug Club BBQ at Jen's farm featuring an insect scavenger hunt for pinning and personal collections. The program drew enthusiastic participation from youth, along with nine parents and six additional guests, making it an exciting and educational experience that combined science, creativity, and community.





Outdoor Cooking

The 2025 4-H Outdoor Cooking Program gave youth ages 12 and older the chance to explore cast iron cooking over an open fire. Despite winter weather limiting meetings to six sessions, members experimented with a variety of recipes, adapting ingredients to their tastes and building confidence in outdoor culinary skills. The project wrapped up with a popular demonstration at the Chenango County Fair, where three groups prepared a main course and dessert. Fairgoers were impressed by the creativity and skill of the youth, especially when sampling dishes they had cooked entirely themselves.

Shooting Sports

Chenango County 4-H Shooting Sports had an outstanding year, giving youth ages nine and up hands-on experience in archery, air rifle, air pistol, and .22 caliber rifle while emphasizing safety and responsibility. The program now boasts six certified instructors, each completing intensive 16-hour training to ensure high-quality instruction. This training is rigorous and comprehensive, covering everything from technical skills to youth development principles, ensuring instructors are fully prepared to teach safely and effectively. During the 2024, 2025 year, five instructors actively led sessions, and the program remained a favorite among members, whether focusing on archery or exploring multiple disciplines, building confidence, precision, and respect for safe shooting practices.



... and SO MUCH MORE!



Celebrating Our Volunteers and Donors

We extend our deepest gratitude to the incredible CCE Chenango volunteers and generous donors, whose unwavering dedication, countless hours of service, and heartfelt contributions make every program, event, and success story possible.

Your commitment not only empowers youth and strengthens families, but also builds a thriving, resilient community where learning, leadership, and opportunity flourish—thank you for making a lasting difference that touches lives every single day.



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