

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Steuben County

www.PutKnowledgeToWork.org

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2025 Annual Report



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Mission

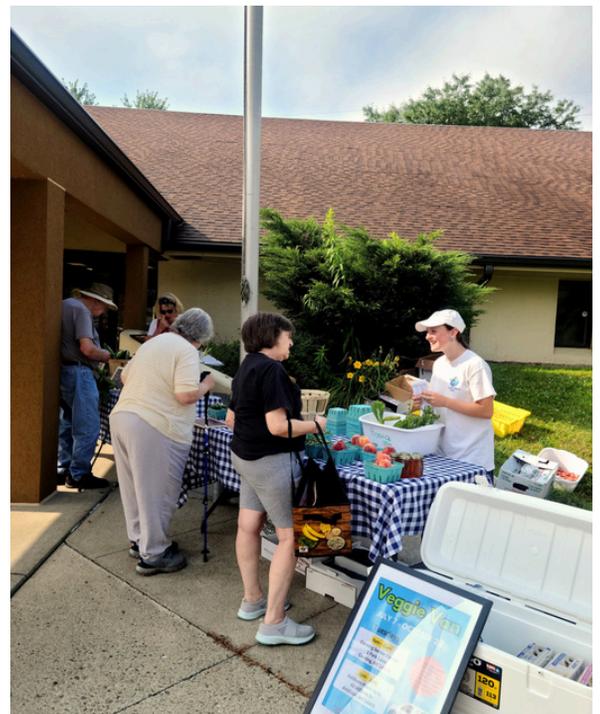
CCE Steuben puts knowledge to work by providing access to a network of evidence-based resources to strengthen our communities to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Vision

Our work is based in over 100 years of service to the community using the land grant mission. Our vision is a strong community in which residents thrive, maintaining health, self-reliance, and prosperity.

Values

We believe in constantly working toward a better quality of life for our community. To that end, CCE Steuben is inclusive, service-minded, collaborative, credible, and innovative.



Letter from the Executive Director

Many things have happened in 2025, and we are so grateful for the continued support of our community that makes this work possible. I am proud of our volunteers, youth, families, and staff who have dedicated themselves to helping Steuben County thrive. Our programs continue to grow, and together we are educating and supporting thousands of people across the county and the Finger Lakes region.

This year brought its share of change, including the loss of federal SNAP-Ed funding. Thanks to New York State stepping in with a small allocation, we have been able to continue the program on a more focused scale. We remain committed to providing essential nutrition education to those who need it most.

Our Agriculture in the Classroom program has expanded significantly. With 2.5 staff members now teaching in every school district in Steuben County, students are engaging in hands-on agricultural learning every day. We are thrilled to see this program flourish countywide.

Our local Agriculture and Natural Resources Lead has worked with various Cornell regional teams and organizations to provide high-quality programming to farmers and homeowners alike. The Master Gardener program also continues to grow with an increasing number of classes, workshops, and community projects. Their dedication is helping residents build gardening skills and environmental awareness throughout the county.

Our 4-H program had a wonderful year as well. We hosted the NYS 4-H Shoot and held our second annual 4-H Summer Showcase at Hendershot Haflingers—both successful events that highlighted the talent, leadership, and enthusiasm of our youth. With ongoing workshops and activities, 4-H remains a vibrant and welcoming space for learning and growth.

Even amid change, CCE Steuben remains steadfast in providing high-quality, evidence-based education that supports farmers, youth, families, and all residents of Steuben County as it has for over 100 years.

We could not do this important work without the support of our volunteers, funders, board members, program committees, the Steuben County Legislature, Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration, Cornell University, and our community.

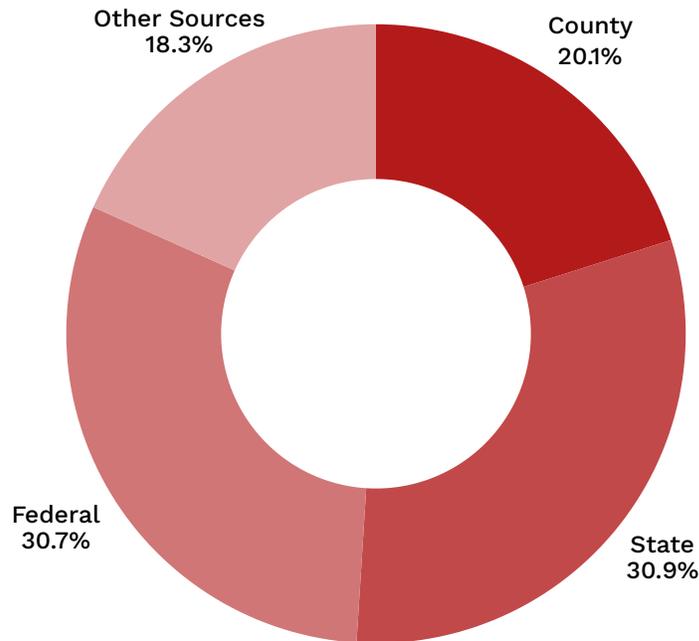
Please reach out to me anytime at tsm223@cornell.edu or 607-664-2301. Thank you for your continued support—I look forward to working with you in 2026!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tess McKinley".

Tess McKinley
CCE Steuben Executive Director

2024 Summary of Resources & Support



Federal	\$753,841.15	State	\$758,582.69
Smith-Lever Funds	56,528.89	County Law 224	92,376.08
SNAP Ed Program	692,032.26	NYS Seed Container Grant	44,368.99
RHSE Grant	5,280.00	Ag Energy Grant	2,485.81
		4-H Ag in the Classroom Grant	27,600.00
Other Sources	\$449,050.73	NYS State Fringe Benefits	591,751.81
Enrollment and Program Participation Fees	10,598.18		
Contributions	59,813.77	County	\$493,476.00
Sale of Equipment, Printing Reimbursement, Rental Income, Sale of Publications, Fundraising, and Dividend and Interest Income	119,573.97	Steuben County Appropriation	432,000.00
Specialist Contract Support from Cornell University	197,134.34	Veggie Van Project	4,500.00
Special Projects funded by local agencies or other sources	61,930.47	4-H Outdoor Activities Grant	15,000.00
		In-kind Value of Space Allocation	41,976.00
		Total Support	\$2,454,950.57
		Numbers based on 2024 financial information	

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Steuben County is a subordinate governmental agency with an educational mission that operates under a form of organization and administration approved by Cornell University as agent for the State of New York. It is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

The association is part of the national Cooperative Extension System, an educational partnership between County, State, and Federal governments. As New York's land grant university, Cornell administers the system in the state. Each Cornell Cooperative Extension association is an independent employer that is governed by an elected Board of Directors with general oversight from Cornell. All associations work to meet the needs of the counties in which they are located as well as the state and national goals.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Steuben County 4-H youth achieved remarkable success this year, demonstrating strong knowledge, leadership, and commitment across a variety of animal science and wildlife competitions. Through equine science, dairy & livestock knowledge, wildlife identification, and communications events, youth applied years of learning and hands-on experience while proudly representing Steuben County at regional, state and national levels.

Equine Science: Building Knowledge Through Competition

Equine science programs such as Hippology and Horse Bowl provided youth with opportunities to deepen their understanding of horse care, nutrition, health, equipment, and management. These contests challenge participants through written exams, identification stations, judging, team problem-solving, and fast-paced quiz-style questions.

Steuben County was well represented by 4-H members in Hippology and Horse bowl at the regional contest with outstanding results in all divisions. Novice members Maggie Fodge and Wyatt Chase set the bar high, earning first and second place respectively and sweeping the division and earning first-place team honors for both contests! Junior members Madeline Slayton and Jaiden Corbitt also performed exceptionally, earning top individual placements and contributing to a first-place Junior Team finish. At the New York State 4-H Horse Bowl Contest held at Cornell University, individually Madeline placed 4th and Jaiden placed 7th while their team placed 3rd, respectively.



4-H members **Wyatt Chase, Madeline Slayton, Jaiden Corbitt, and Maggie Fodge** earn top placements at the regional Horse Bowl contest.



Steuben County 4-H member **Grayson Wallace** demonstrates confident communication skills.

Communications & Presentations: Developing Confident Leaders

In addition to technical animal science skills, Steuben County youth strengthened their communication and public speaking abilities through District Presentations and the Horse Communications Contest. Six youth represented the county at the district level, with Madeline Slayton and Maggie Fodge earning Top Score Awards and ranking among the top presenters of the day. Judge's Choice Awards were earned by Sienna Smalt, Caroline Slayton, and Ruby Havron, recognizing outstanding delivery and engagement.

Youth competing in the Horse Communications Contest also achieved notable success across Senior, Junior, and Novice divisions, earning multiple top placements and further demonstrating their ability to clearly and confidently share knowledge.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



4-Hers **Ethan Waters** and **Caroline Slayton** compete in the Finger Lakes District Livestock Skillathon.

Dairy & Livestock Education: Applying Science and Ethics

Steuben County 4-H youth also showcased their skills at the 2025 Regional Dairy Bowl Contest, a Jeopardy-style competition testing knowledge of dairy production, nutrition, calf health, food safety, and crop systems. Youth competed across Beginner, Junior, and Senior divisions, earning solid individual placements. Notably, Madeline Slayton's fourth-place finish in the Junior Division qualified her to advance to the State Dairy Bowl Contest at Cornell University. At the State Dairy Bowl Contest, Madeline finished 10th individually and was a member of the 1st place team!

For the first time, Steuben County youth participated in the Finger Lakes District Livestock Skillathon, an event emphasizing livestock care, judging, ethics, and the economic and environmental impacts of animal agriculture. Alice Gerow earned an impressive second-place finish in the Senior Division, while Madeline Slayton placed fourth in the Junior Division. Beginner participants Caroline Slayton and Ethan Waters also demonstrated strong foundational knowledge. The Skillathon encouraged critical thinking, responsibility, and continued engagement in the livestock industry.

National Wildlife Habitat Program

Steuben County 4-H members Alex McCarthy and Alexis Hurd achieved a historic milestone this year as members of the first New York State team to compete at the National Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) Contest, held in Tennessee. Their participation marked an important step forward for New York 4-H wildlife education at the national level.

The WHEP contest challenges youth to demonstrate advanced knowledge of wildlife identification, habitat management, conservation practices, and problem-solving related to real-world environmental scenarios. Competitors apply ecological principles to evaluate habitats and develop management plans that balance wildlife needs with land use considerations.

By earning the opportunity to represent New York State on the national stage, Alex and Alexis showcased not only their individual knowledge and preparation, but also the strength of Steuben County's 4-H outdoor & wildlife programming. Their accomplishment reflects hours of study, field experience, and dedication to outdoor education.



Steuben County 4-H members **Alex McCarthy** and **Alexis Hurd** represent New York State at the National Wildlife Habitat Education Program Contest in Tennessee.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Agriculture in the Classroom Grows to Reach Every Steuben County School District

Cornell Cooperative Extension Steuben County (CCE Steuben) continues to strengthen agricultural education and workforce awareness through the rapid expansion of its Agriculture in the Classroom program. Now in its third school year, the program has grown to reach all 13 school districts in Steuben County, bringing hands-on agricultural learning directly into local classrooms.

Agriculture in the Classroom educators travel throughout the county delivering engaging lessons and interactive activities that introduce students to a wide range of agricultural topics, including corn, dairy, turkeys, fiber and clothing, composting, and more. These lessons are designed to build agricultural literacy while helping students understand how agriculture connects to their daily lives and the local economy. The program serves students in pre-kindergarten through seventh grade, aligning instruction with New York State Education Standards in science, social studies, and English language arts.

CCE Steuben launched Agriculture in the Classroom in the fall of 2023 in response to a growing need to engage young people in agriculture-related careers. According to the Steuben County Agricultural Census, the average age of farmers in the county is 57, and 98 percent of farms are family-run. As the number of farms continues to decline—often due to younger generations not taking over family operations—the program aims to spark early interest in agriculture through positive, hands-on experiences that highlight the industry’s opportunities and importance.

The program is part of a statewide partnership between New York State Agriculture in the Classroom and Cornell Cooperative Extension, with the shared goal of increasing agricultural literacy and awareness. In Steuben County, a key partnership with GST BOCES has made it possible to offer an affordable option for schools while supporting a sustainable staffing model for CCE Steuben.

What began just two years ago with seven school districts and one educator has expanded into a countywide program supported by two full-time and one part-time educator. In addition to classroom visits during the school year, Agriculture in the Classroom also reaches youth through summer school enrichment programs, libraries, and other community-based settings.

In 2025, the program served more than 3,000 unduplicated youth, and participation continues to grow. Through its expanding reach and strong partnerships, Agriculture in the Classroom is helping ensure that agriculture—one of Steuben County’s largest economic sectors—remains vibrant, relevant, and sustainable for future generations.

Master Gardener Volunteer Program

2025 was a year of growth and connection for the CCE Steuben's Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) Program highlighted by the successful completion of its second in-person MGV training series since 2023. The 2025 training series covered a wide range of horticultural and environmental topics, including soil health and fertility, vegetable and community garden production, composting methods and sustainability practices, plant pathology and pest management, and pesticide safety and responsible application. The continued training and advanced education opportunities provided to our volunteers cultivates knowledgeable, engaged leaders who strengthen our communities. Each trainee developed and implemented an Action Project, applying their knowledge to educate community members or initiate garden-based projects that benefited local communities, groups and organizations. From this training, four new Master Gardener Volunteers officially joined the program in 2025.



Master Gardener Volunteer **Claudia Haile** leads an educational composting workshop at the Southeast Steuben County Library.



Students at ProAction's Youth Development Program harvest beans from the garden they planted. Produce grown in the YDP garden was sent home with program participants and donated to St. Thomas Episcopal Church's Red Door Luncheon program which serves weekly hot lunches to those in need.

Youth Community Garden Partnership

CCE Steuben supported Pro Action's Youth Development Program (YDP) to fund, plan, and establish a Youth Community Garden at the St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Bath, NY. The project engaged youth in hands-on learning about gardening, food systems, and community service while fostering responsibility, teamwork, and environmental awareness.

The garden was implemented over the course of the 2025 growing season. Planning for the project began in April with support from Master Gardener Volunteers focused on creative design and incorporating kid-friendly features. Funding was secured in late May, allowing garden bed establishment to begin in June. Approximately 10–15 youth, ages 8–15, participated throughout the growing season. The program continued through October, concluding with garden cleanup and end-of-season reflections.

The garden was highly productive and served as a positive learning environment for all participants. The youth took pride in watching the garden evolve through the season, enjoyed caring for the flowers, and expressed satisfaction in donating their harvest to help others.

Agriculture & Natural Resources Program Education and Support

Cornell Cooperative Extension's agriculture and natural resources program strives to provide adult education services that make it easier for producers and community members to obtain essential trainings and certifications while strengthening their knowledge and skills.

Each year, we offer agriculture workshops and trainings focused on topics where industry demand or specialized needs have been identified. These can include topics related to farm business management, profitable and sustainable livestock production, improved soil health through cover crops and pasture management, weed control and integrated pest management, pesticide applicator certifications, among many others. Notably, we use these trainings to increase awareness of local support programs offered through USDA, NRCS, and the Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District.

During 2025, collaborative partnerships with our CCE Vegetable Program Specialists, CCE Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crop Specialists as well as specialists working with the Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District, NY Soil Health, and Cornell Integrated Pest Management, helped us offer field specific trainings and workshops throughout the county. Notably, a Spring Greenhouse Growers meeting reached Plain communities located in some of the more rural parts of Steuben County while also connecting them with other Plain communities working in horticulture and greenhouse production throughout the region. Participants were able to get hands on training and participate in discussions on improving production through developing scouting skills and overcoming pest challenges, understanding the value of beneficial insects and biological controls, scouting skills for diseases and management, irrigation, and fertility.



This meeting also offered members of the Plain community a convenient opportunity to connect with their County CCE Ag representative to learn more about services and receive assistance with other production challenges they are experiencing. Connections such as this help CCE understand what producers need. We were then able to bring in agriculture field specialists within Cornell University and Cooperative Extension, and other industry professionals to cover important topics such as livestock management, internal parasites, field crop and pasture management, soil health, rotational grazing, nutrient management, silvopasture, cover crops, and biochar throughout 2025.



CCE Steuben Board Member **Chuck Susick** attends a tree fruit pest scouting workshop at Crooked Line Farm & Orchard in Bath, NY.

A Tree Fruit Pest Scouting & Management workshop offered at Crooked Line Farm & Orchard, a local u-pick orchard in Bath, NY, offered community members and fruit and vegetable producers an opportunity to learn more from fruit and ornamental Integrated Pest Management specialists and earn NYS Pesticide Applicator Renewal Credits if needed. Economically significant tree fruit pests were the focus of this training, covering insect identification, monitoring methods, and scouting for damage. Additionally, biocontrol basics were covered, identification of common beneficial insects and how to encourage them into your orchards. While the addition of beneficial insects in outdoor settings is not common, valuable discussions occurred regarding some potential uses in NYS fruit production.

REGIONAL AGRICULTURE TEAMS

SWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Program



Smith's Stock Farms in Howard, NY

The Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program (SWNYDLFC) is a partnership between Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Steuben counties. In 2025 the program conducted 1,544 farm consultations in the areas of farm business management, field crops, dairy management, and livestock production. In Steuben County, the SWNYDLFC team held several events in 2025 including a hands-on workshop on internal parasite management for sheep and goat farmers. They also held a mortality composting training in collaboration with Steuben County Soil and Water, CCE Steuben, and the Cornell Waste Management Institute.

Finger Lakes Grape Program



Ryan Vineyards in Pulteney, NY

The Finger Lakes Grape Program (FLGP) is a partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in six counties in the Finger Lakes region. In 2025, the FLGP held a series of grower meetings around the Finger Lakes region from May through August. The series kicked off with the Spring Grape IPM Meeting held at Doyle Vineyard Management in Hammondsport, NY. The nearly 100 growers who attended heard talks on insect and disease management. This spring, the FLGP was also awarded three grants funded by the New York Wine & Grape Foundation for research projects conducted between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026.

Cornell Vegetable Program



Squires Produce in Prattsburgh, NY

The Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP) is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and County Associations in 14 counties. In 2025, CVP Specialists conducted 4,752 farm visits and consultations across the 14 county region. Steuben County is one of New York State's top potato producing counties. CVP Specialists planted a potato variety trial test during the growing season in 2025 to test the yields of several potato varieties. Through the trial they found Baltic Rose, a red potato with yellow flesh, to have the highest yield in 2025 while the russet varieties had a harder time withstanding the high temperatures and low rainfall of the 2025 growing season.



A Veggie Van stop with **Lowery Family Farms** at Guthrie Corning Centerway offers a wide variety of local produce.

Veggie Van & Voucher Program

The Steuben County Veggie Van served as a mobile market, bringing fresh, locally sourced produce directly to community sites across the county. A collaboration between CCE Steuben and three local farms, Lowery Family Farms, Habee Farm, and Bluebird Trail Farm, the Veggie Van reached over 2,100 individuals in 2025. By delivering fruits and vegetables to convenient locations the program reduces barriers to healthy food access and supports local farmers. As a mobile market, the Veggie Van can accept Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons provided by New York State. In 2025 the Veggie Van sold over \$16,900 of fresh produce in seven communities throughout Steuben County, 49% of which was purchased using FMNP coupons.

To compliment the Veggie Van, this summer the SNAP-Ed Southern Finger Lakes team introduced the Veggie Van Voucher Program. This operated as a free nutrition education series that provided participants with vouchers to purchase produce from the Veggie Van. The series featured group learning, recipe demonstrations, and tastings of new dishes. Each participant received \$120 in produce vouchers to use at the Veggie Van over six weeks, ensuring direct access to fresh, healthy foods.

Direct and Indirect Education Outreach

3,040 individuals reached with direct education

116,523 individuals reached with indirect education

Numbers are based on SNAP-Ed data from program year 2025 in Steuben County. Direct education includes virtual workshops for adults and in person workshops for adults and youth. Indirect education efforts include static displays, handouts, tabling at community events, and informative social media posts.



SNAP-Ed Nutritionist **Amy Heale** empowers moms with young children through the American Heart Association's *Healthy for Life* curriculum.

Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx)

The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) is an innovative food-as-medicine initiative that encourages participants to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables through a combination of nutrition education and voucher incentives. The program is a six-week nutrition education series that utilizes \$20 vouchers at each class to encourage healthy eating by providing access to fresh produce. The FVRx program is referral-based, partnering with local health care providers to generate referrals.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

4-H Summer Showcase



Hendershot Haflingers in Cameron Mills, NY

This year, Steuben County 4-H held their second annual Summer Showcase event for Steuben County 4-H youth, families, and community members. Over the three-day event 101 youth exhibitors participated in a wide variety of activities ranging from animal showmanship and sport to flower arranging and cake decorating. There were over 1,100 entries at the event including animal entries, static projects, and youth contests. The evening of Friday, July 25 Empire Livestock ran the annual 4-H Market Sale where buyers came to purchase animals and baked goods that 4-H youth have been working hard on all year. In addition to this livestock and baked goods auction, 4-H members had the opportunity to sell products that they made at the 4-H Maker's Market Friday afternoon. Items sold included jewelry, 3-D printed keychains, canned goods such as salsa, wood burning pieces, and more.

Farm Trail Day

In October, CCE Steuben hosted its fourth annual Farm Trail Day event. This year we expanded to include 15 Steuben County farms and agribusinesses as stops, the most the event has ever had. Made possible through a grant from Explore Steuben, this year's event included informational hayrides, a goat milk soap making demonstration, hands-on apple cider making, grape vine wreath making, tool identification, and sampling of local farm products. We received positive feedback from community members who participated including one woman who when dropping off her completed farm passport said it was the best thing she had done with her grandchildren.



Evermore Farms in Lindley, NY

Local Memoir Reading



Dormann Library in Bath, NY

In early December, CCE Steuben and the Dormann Library in Bath, NY hosted author Ryan Dennis as he shared excerpts from his new memoir *Barn Gothic* with members of the local agriculture community. Dennis grew up on a dairy farm in Canaseraga, NY and participated in the Steuben County 4-H Program. He shared several passages from his new book with those in attendance including stories from growing up on his family's farm as well as contextual information about the rising challenges for small dairy farmers. The event was well received by community members present, including some local farmers.

Thank You, Volunteers!

Paulette Adams
Jessica Adriance
Susan Alexander
Donna Andrews
Amanda Ballam
Krystle Blencowe
Kathie Boccia
Vicky Bolton
Jeffery Brandow
Perry Brandow
Paula Brewer
Brittany Brown
Rhonda Burdin
Hannah Bush
Jason Cartwright
Alissa Cary
Christopher Chapman
Teresa Chapman
Jonathan Chase
Michelle Chase
Shawn Cicon
Isaac Clements
Melonie Coley
Christopher Comstock
Jason Dininny
Kate Dininny

Thomas Edwards
Michael Fodge
Kelsey Folckemer
Scott Folckemer
Ashley Fox
Cheryl Glashauser
Amber Goho
Troy Goho
Claudia Haile
Kayla Hall
Cindy Hammond
Brian Harrison
Lynn Hayes
Cynthia Herrington
James Herrington
Lydia Hoad
Betty Holden
Beth Honadle
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Joshua Hurd
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Pamela Lally
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Joseph McCarthy
Michelle McCarthy
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Joshua Meacham
Ed Merry
Cindy Peterson
Kevin Peterson
Tim Peterson
Fred Potter
Jack Potter
Krystal Potter
Hanna Proaper
Phyllis Rathbun

John Ricci
Eric Robarge
Robin Robarge
Kelsey Roche
Erika Rosettie
Amey Rusak
Stuart Sammis
Susan Schwingel
Joseph Simpson
Jessie Slayton
Gabriel Smalt
Karen Smith
Kristen Stewart
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Danielle Strom
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Donna Walker
Melissa Wheaton
Elizabeth Whitehouse
Amy Wilson
Lisa Zawrotny
Ashlee Zschoche
Philip Zschoche



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Empire Livestock
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GST BOCES
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CCE Steuben Board of Directors President **Bill Joint** drives students around Smith's Stock Farms during Agriculture in the Classroom's Farm Tour.

Program Advisory Committees

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