











Cornell Cooperative Extension | St. Lawrence County

Telling Our Story

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Extension At A Glance







Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County functions as part of a larger state and national land-grant system that extends research-based information to local residents, families, and the agricultural community. Extension is a subordinate government agency, not a private non-profit organization. The Morrill Act of 1862 established the land grant universities, including Cornell University in NYS. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension System associated with the land grant institutions. NYS County Law 224 established Cooperative Extension in NYS, including a funding system that split financial support between Federal, State, and County Governments and provided legal status for separate, unincorporated CCE associations in EACH county.

Agriculture & Food Systems

The Agriculture and Food System Department is comprised of a team of capable and motivated individuals with varied subject matter expertise. These educators develop programs based on community input and emerging needs while also offering free 1-1 consultations. The department includes these positions: Ag & Local Food Program Leader and Harvest Kitchen Manager, Commercial Livestock Educator, Community Horticulture Educator, Crop and Soil Specialist, Dairy Specialist, Energy Advisor, Food System Program Assistant, Farm Business Management Specialist, and Natural Resources & Sustainable Energy Educator. The Ag Team was busy in 2026 offering **132 programs** that reached **2,173 program participants**, in addition to **2,290 1-1 consultations**. The department's outreach included **3,170,329 indirect contacts**. Additionally, they coordinated the efforts of **47 active volunteers** across the Energy Navigator, Master Food Preservers, and Master Gardeners programs who contributed 1000+ hours to connect with the public on their areas of interest and specialty. This level of impact is only possible by fostering community connections and the department collaborated with **144 organizations and businesses** during this program year.



Dairy Cattle Handling and Safety Workshops - Each year, numerous people working on farms are seriously injured or killed by farm animals, including dairy cattle. According to the NY Center for Animal Medicine and Health (NYCAMH), the primary causes include poor judgement and a lack of understanding animal behavior. With new workers constantly entering this work environment, farms need training programs to ensure cattle are handled efficiently, and with regard for the safety and welfare of people and animals alike.

The Tri-County Ag Team partnered with NYCAMH, Cornell Ag Workforce Development, and Cornell PRO-DAIRY to create an on-farm workshop that was delivered to three locations across the region addressing this need. Over 40 participants attended to learn how to identify hazards and escape routes around cattle facilities, better understand cattle behavior, and gain tips to interact with cattle in ways that result in safe and efficient movement and care. A separate track for managers and owners focused on strategies to build and manage a proactive culture of safety and animal welfare. Participants were awarded certificates to document continuing education to help meet the National Dairy FARM Program's requirements.



Over 40 animal care workers and managers attended hands-on workshops to better identify hazards and understand cattle behavior.

Mentoring Food Entrepreneurs from Ideas to Sales - From January through March 2026, Extension offered a suite of multi-session programs for food entrepreneurs and farmers creating value-added food products. 52 businesses signed up to take one or several of the seven custom themes including the production-oriented sessions: *Ready-to-Eat Food Businesses*, *Food Production with a 20C License*, and *Growing a Home-Based Food Business*. The non-production options included *Building a Business Basics*, *Developing Your Brand*, *Activating Your Online Presence*, and *Optimizing Your Operation*.

Businesses that participated fully in one production theme and two non-production themes had the opportunity to improve business operations through technical services provided by a project partner. Each entity selected their preferred services for up to $3,000 in value including logo design, brand management, website development, product labels, photography, and videography. After completing the Ag and Food Producers Academy, Katie Murray diversified her baking business and launched a food truck (see photos). Extension covered the cost of the design and printing of the large format stickers for her vending unit as well as professional photos of her food products.

This programming is made possible by the successful proposal to the USDA called *Empowering Food Producers with Regional Kitchen Incubator Program and Strategic Marketing*. The marketing component is called Celebrating Local Food which is open to eligible businesses now and includes customized marketing materials and more. The team of five educators making these sessions possible are gearing up to offer the program to a new cohort January to March 2027.





"It was valuable to have resources shared for each step in building a small food business. I had done research on my own a few years ago, but the Ag and Food Producers Academy made it so concrete and achievable." - Ag & Food Producers Academy Participant







Chef Training Camp builds skills and confidence in the kitchen using local foods. New this summer, campers in the 102 session developed their own recipe throughout the week and worked in pairs to prepare them on the final day. In addition to creating these twice baked potatoes from scratch, Avery and Lucy (Leftmost photo) also harvested the potatoes and parsley!

Connecting with Landowners Around Forest Stewardship - Extension's Natural Resources Educator coordinated a forest stewardship workshop at the Learning Farm with our partners from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District. Targeting a range of residents from just a few acres up to large woodlots, it was the first time in nearly four years that the program has been offered. The presentation touched on essential topics including landowner goals (wildlife, timber, forest health, and recreation), natural forest regeneration, forest management (thinning for forest health and opening the canopy to encourage growth and biodiversity), information on best management practices for soil and water conservation, and woodland pests and diseases. There are numerous federal and state programs and cost sharing grants available to landowners for planting, forest health, wildlife habitat management, and saleable timber management which were also discussed.

The workshop was well received with more than two-thirds of the 23 attendees saying it met or exceeded expectations. One attendee said, "above and beyond, could spend a whole day on it" and another said, "very good handouts/literature". Based upon evaluations and attendance, multiple workshops will be held in the future to address suggested topics and dive deeper into content including as tree selection appropriate to site, invasive species and management, and state and federal programs that help with cost sharing.

Improving Energy Efficiency in Low-Income Housing - Church Creek Mobile Home Park is a privately owned property in the Town of Canton. Its water supply is threatened by potential contamination from leaking oil and kerosene from individual mobile units' aging heating fuel tanks. The owner approached the North Country Clean Energy Advisor at St. Lawrence County Extension about ways to help his tenants improve their energy efficiency, comfort, and safety, while exploring alternative heating options.

While mobile homes are generally more affordable than other housing options, they are often lacking in energy efficient measures. The park's owner is concerned about his tenants' well-being as well as the danger and liability associated with the contamination threat to the water supply. His tenants, individual mobile homeowners, must comply with a new requirement to switch all current oil or kerosene fuel heating systems to propane or air-source heat pumps.

Working with the property owner and NYSERDA-certified contractor, GRO Energy Solutions, a personalized email and/or letter was sent to each mobile homeowner to offering assistance in applying for a free energy audit and efficiency improvements through NYSERDA's Empower+ program. The audit would be the first step toward conversion to air source heat pumps as a clean-heat alternative.

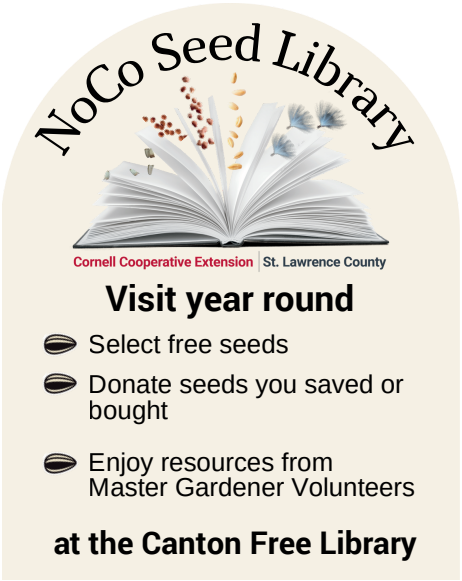
Of the 27 mobile homeowners contacted, eight home visits were completed by the St. Lawrence County Extension Energy Advisor and a North Country Clean Energy Hub teammate. Five Empower applications were submitted and three were approved. The contractor completed audits and installed energy improvements, valued at approximately $15,000. In addition to the improvements, homeowners were assisted with identifying heating alternatives and NY Clean Heat assistance.





"I'm really enjoying participating with your group and love everything the Extension office is doing with the Harvest Kitchen and Learning Farm." -Natasha

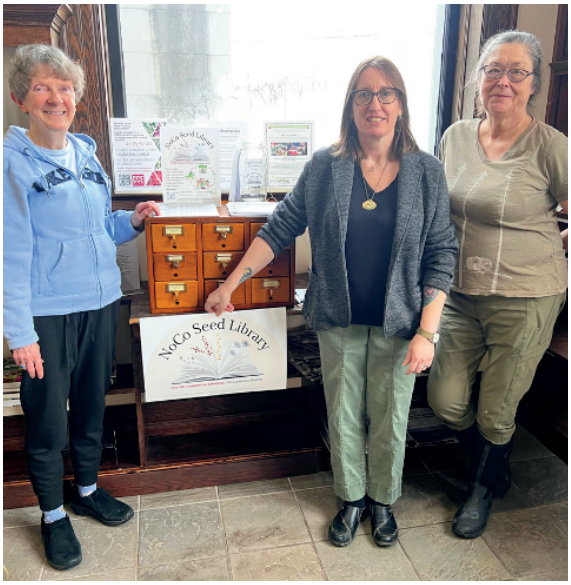
NoCo Seed Library opens with an engaging first season - Quality seeds and good information are fundamental to a successful garden. Master Gardener Volunteers spent the winter planning a way for local gardeners to access free seeds, learn sound gardening techniques, and make community connections. They partnered with the Canton Free Library, inviting a librarian to join their committee, and researched best practices through the organization Seed Library Network. They sourced donations from seed companies and held a seed saving program in the pollinator garden at the Extension Learning Farm to stock the library with native flower seeds. Developing resources on seed saving and storage, as well as a garden calendar made the seed library a resource for seeds as well as recommendations and connection to the Master Gardener program. By February, the planning was complete and MGV held a kickoff "Swap it - Seed it" event at the Canton Public Library with 28 attendees, many of whom brought seeds to contribute. From February to August there were 88 documented visitors to the Seed Library. Additionally, committee members promoted the NoCo Seed Library in the community by bringing seed packets to three farmers markets, the 21st Century Afterschool program, and the Seed to Supper program. The Master Gardeners are enthusiastic to expand programming and seed stock for 2027.



Seed library signage for tabling.



Anneke sorts community donated seeds at the "Swap it - Seed it" event in February.



MGV Anneke Larrance and Laurie Gilbert-Smiley with Jennifer Henry (center) of the Canton Free Library with the card catalog housing the seed library

4-H Youth & Family

The 4-H Youth and Family Team engaged over **6,592 direct participants** as well as **23,752 indirect participants** via social media and newsletters in 2026. Direct participants were reached through the following efforts:

- 253 4-H Club Members
- 420 Farm Day Campers
- 762 Camp Overlook
- 354 After School Programs Participants
- 4,803 Students in School Enrichment and Special Interest Programs







4-H Shooting Sports Marks 25 Years of Service to St. Lawrence County - This year marked the 25th anniversary for the Association's 4-H Shooting Sports Program, a six-week program held each spring at the Norfolk Rod and Gun Club. The program has provided hundreds of young people with real world, firsthand experience in range procedures and firearm safety. Many students have participated for multiple years and approximately 15 have become Certified Junior Instructors. The program is supported by 10 volunteer Shooting Sports Instructors in Rifle, Shot Gun, Archery, Handgun, Muzzle Loader, Natural Resources, and Living History.





North Wind Grows Leaders - North Wind Farm Day Camp provided 420 camper, ages 5–13, with an immerse educational experience enriching minds, developing character, and building life skills outside the traditional classroom. The program fulfills families' need for childcare while offering supplemental educational experiences through STEAM-themed general camp and specialty sessions like Livestock Leaders and Chef Training Camp.

North Wind boosts a high return rate with many campers returning year after year. The 2026 camp season North Wind developed a path forward for a young man who had aged out of the program after seven years of participation. The program allowed him to attend as its first Leader in Training (LIT), providing him with the opportunity to serve as an assistant counselor and positive role model for younger campers. The success of his experience will springboard North Wind's launch of a broader 2027 Leaders in Training Program in both its after school and summer camp settings.

"We took our kids to a different camp last summer, but it wasn't the same. Nothing is like Farm Day Camp." - Parent of Northwind Farm Day Camp participant







Agricultural Explorations at the Extension Learning Farm - The Extension Learning Farm provides a unique opportunity for visiting students to experience agriculture firsthand and participate in well-developed learning experiences that reinforce their classroom studies. Skilled Extension staff guide the students' experiences utilizing the Farm's many educational platforms including the sugar bush and sugar house for maple production; the historic barn and livestock operation; the Harvest Kitchen for exploring Farm-to-School and local foods; the loafing barn and dairy heifers for Dairy in the Classroom; and the upland woods and wetlands to build awareness of natural resources. The experiences are all made possible by Extension's team of dedicated and knowledgeable subject matter experts. Everyone gets involved!

Over 1,230 students visited the Extension Learning Farm in 2026, including those attending June's Dairy Days as part of the Association's Dairy in the Classroom initiative. Extension's 4-H Dairy Educator visits schools across the county throughout the year and develops fieldtrip opportunities to broaden the student's learning experience. Ultimately, youth have limited opportunities to visit the county's dairy farms. Dairy Days helps to bridge this gap by providing students with real world learning experiences in agriculture. The field trips serve as the culminating event that reinforces the Dairy in the Classroom instruction provided throughout the school year. The combined approach helps students better understand and connect the importance of dairy farming and agriculture in our community.

Community Health

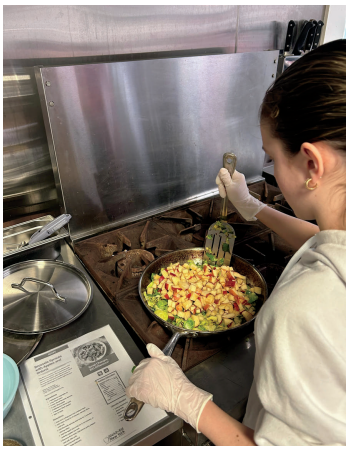
- 2783 Participants in SNAP-Ed Direct Education
- 127 Social Care Clients
- 63 Older Adults in Bingocize and Tech Classes
- 604 Participants in Community Nutrition

SNAP-Ed Legacy: The Next Chapter - Health and Nutrition Education is a crucial component of the public health framework in St. Lawrence County. SNAP-Ed deployed community-based outreach which combines direct education, promotional campaigns, and multilevel interventions by leveraging organizational partnerships. With the loss of federal funding for this longstanding community nutrition education program, Extension worked to recreate its nutrition education program built on the foundations of its SNAP-Ed partnerships. Through collaborations with the Healthy Alliance, SLC Public Health, and SLC Office for the Aging, Extension continues to provide community nutrition programming highlighting food resource management, nutrition security, cooking skills and safety.

Social Care Service Pilot Project - Health-related social needs (HRSNs) are socio-economic challenges that can impact a person's health and well-being, such as food insecurity, housing instability, and lack of transportation. The New York Health Equity Reform 1115 Waiver Demonstration established Social Care Networks (SCNs) to help ensure HRSNs are met for Medicaid members. Through a 2026 SCN capacity building grant, Extension provided screening, navigation, and enhanced care management services to North Country residents. Strong community partnerships have fueled referrals and built trust with eligible participants. As of early September 2026, Extension opened 587 cases, made referrals for 262 clients, and provided services to 127 county residents.

Activity	Quantity
Clients served	127
Cases created	587
Referrals sent	262







Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) - In St. Lawrence County, over 17% of county residents live in poverty and 13.2% are food insecure, both exceeding NYS rates. This correlates with the county's high rates of adults with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Complicating this for Medicaid populations is the county's federal designation as a Health Professional Shortage Area for primary care, dental health, and mental health. Extension's Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) was designed to be part of broader solution to support healthy behaviors and improve nutrition security for county residents.



Community health initiatives such as the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) address these challenges, complement clinical interventions, and improve quality of life. FVRx includes a series of interactive nutrition workshops paired with up to $150 in vouchers redeemable for fresh produce. Extension provides FVRx workshops at public locations and senior housing sites through partnerships with SLC Public Health Department and SLC Office for the Aging.







"I have learned how to read labels and look for hidden sugars. I have [learned] more about serving sizes and daily intake guidelines. Being able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with my vouchers has been a welcome blessing." -FVRx participant

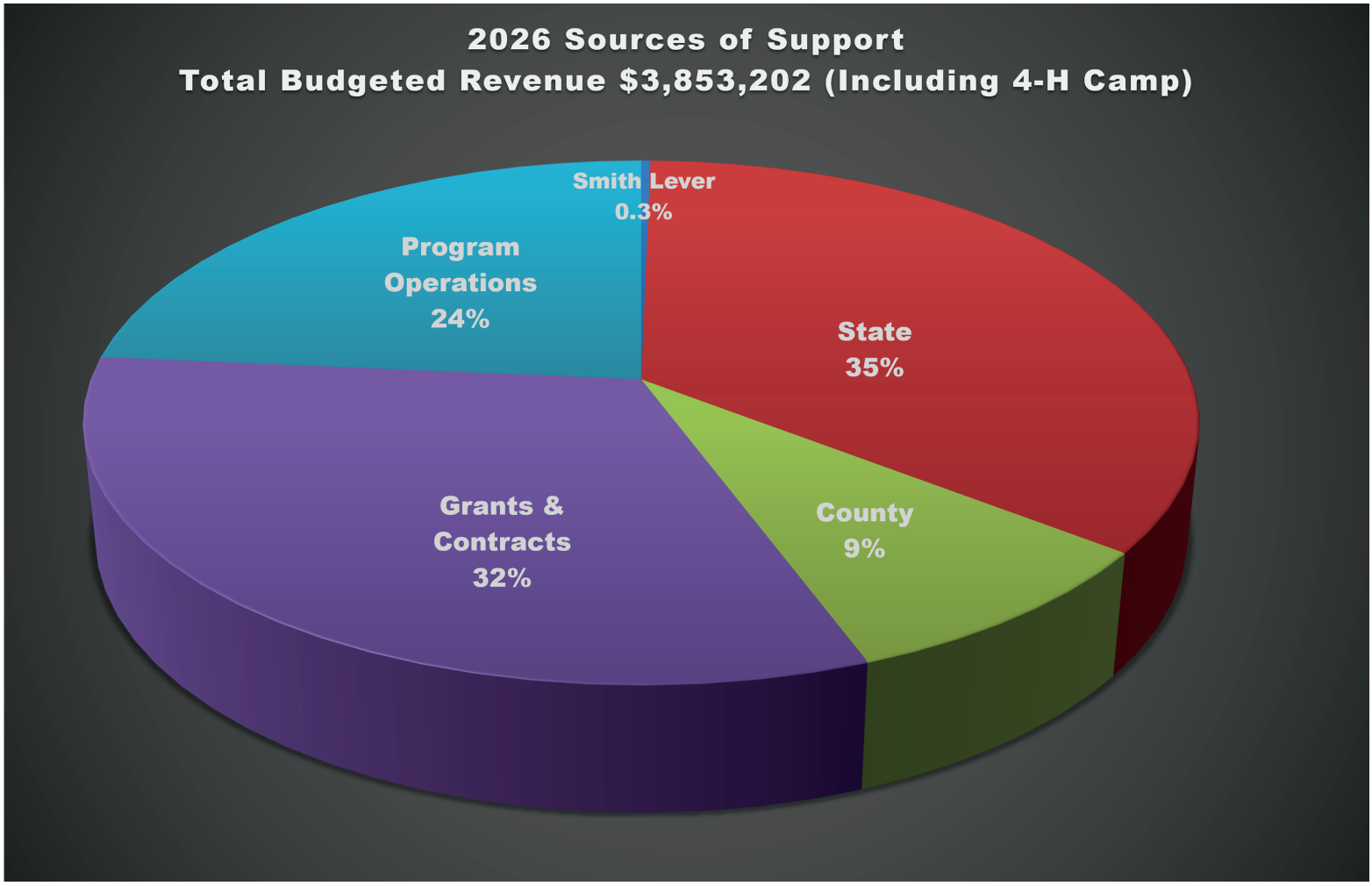




Fostering Social Connection - Programming for Older Adults - This partnership with Office for the Aging (OFA) and Extension was developed to support the physical health, mental well-being, and social connection of older adults in the community. A series of educational and hands-on workshops provided older adults with opportunities to build knowledge, develop skills, stay physically active, and strengthen connections with others to support their independent living in a safe environment. Exercise workshops were offered to encourage older adults to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives and support overall physical health and wellness to better support them with aging in place. In addition to promoting movement and healthy habits, these workshops provided opportunities for participants to engage with others in a supportive group environment, contributing to social interaction and mental well-being.

Technology classes were also offered to help older adults develop greater confidence and skills in using technology. These classes focused on practical technology skills that can help participants communicate with family and friends, access information, and maintain social connections. Increasing comfort with technology can help reduce barriers to communication and provide older adults with additional ways to remain connected to their communities and support networks.

Leveraging County Funding



St. Lawrence County appropriated $340,713 to Extension in 2025. It is anticipated that CCE of SLC will generate $3,512,489 in federal & state funding, grants & contracts, and program operations (including Camp Overlook). This equates to a $10.31 match for every dollar in funding provided by the County Board of Legislators. The Association has become more resilient as its revenue portfolio continues to diversify. The organization continues to reimagine itself after the loss of Federal funds to deliver the North Country SNAP-Ed Program.

Examples of Funding Leveraged with County Support:

- $103,245 in Smith Lever and NYS 224 funding for educator staff.
- $129,955 in Federal Funds to deliver 1115 Medicaid Waiver Screener/Navigator Services to St. Lawrence County.
- $125,862 in County contracts with the St. Lawrence County Department of Public Health and Office for the Aging.
- $656,041 in Federal and State funds for after-school programs in seven school districts.
- $99,235 in NYS Ag and Markets Funding for Farm-to-School Program over two years.
- $99,814 in Federal funds for a USDA Farmers-to-School Program over two years.
- $425,000 in Federal funds for a USDA research partnership over five years.
- $1,100,000 in State funds for employee state fringe benefits.
- $924,768 in program and camp fees that enable Extension to meet its mission.







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