Our highly skilled educators deliver research-based knowledge through non-credit education in the fields of Agriculture & Horticulture, Environment & Energy, Family & Consumer Education, and 4-H Youth Development.

2715 Route 44, Millbrook, NY 12545
845-677-8223 www.ccedutchess.org
Through quality educational programs, Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County (CCEDC) builds strong, healthy youth, adults, families and communities while enhancing the economic, social, agricultural and natural resources of Dutchess County. CCEDC links the research, knowledge and technology of the land grant system to the needs of individuals, families, businesses, and communities throughout the County. We provide practical education for stakeholders to use in dealing with critical issues affecting the County's future and we enhance the quality of life by promoting individual growth, strengthening families, improving the economic well-being of businesses, enhancing the environment, and building stronger communities.
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Agricultural Navigator

In August 2016, CCEDC was awarded a grant for The Dutchess County Agricultural Navigator project and Jennifer Fimbel, CCEDC Sr. Resource Educator, was appointed to the position of Agricultural Navigator by County Executive Marcus Molinaro. The Ag Navigator serves as the liaison between farmers and the County’s existing agricultural infrastructure to put the County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan’s recommendations into effect. The Navigator is the first point of contact for all agricultural needs, has a good understanding of and familiarity with agriculture, assesses agricultural needs and works to match those needs with existing programs.

Agri-Business

Training was held for the Dutchess County Association of Realtors on the tools and resources available to assist Dutchess County realtors when it comes to agricultural properties. The training focused on providing information on agricultural districts, agricultural value assessment, and using online mapping tools to assist realtors dealing with clients interested in buying land for farming here in Dutchess County.

Dutchess County ranks 12th in NYS for Christmas tree production which contributes to the agri-tourism industry in Dutchess County. Every year CCEDC offers a hands-on twilight field demonstration of various production and integrated pest management (IPM) techniques for farmers. This year’s twilight meeting attracted 18 participants and focused on insect/disease/weed management, sprayer calibration and proper pruning/shearing techniques. NYSDEC Certified Pesticide Applicator Recertification credits and International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) credits were offered.
**Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program (ENYCHP)**

High tunnel (HT) production has some great benefits such as season extension, higher quality and yield of crops. Many growers in the Eastern New York region are growing various vegetable crops in high tunnels and tomatoes are a popular crop and have some of the best financial returns. However, to realize those returns, growers must pay careful attention in managing the crop, soil, irrigation water and high tunnel environment. Beginning in 2014, educators from the ENYCHP and around the state developed a program to implement best management practices (BMPs) in high tunnels (HT) through grants from the New York Farm Viability Institute and Smith-Lever. The funding allowed educators to work in-depth with growers to track HT inputs, management practices, plant fertility levels, soil health and yields over several years. The knowledge gained through this work has been extended to growers all over the State through a series of workshops held at HT operations and conferences.

Growers have seen great improvements in yield and quality as a direct result of this program. In 2015 one of the participating growers in this project had a terrible HT tomato crop and ENYCHP began working with him to determine the cause of the nutrient imbalances. During 2016’s season, the grower was able to adjust the soil pH effectively and used the information from the biweekly plant foliar nutrient sampling and analysis to adjust his fertility program. The grower harvested more than 4,800 pounds of tomatoes off the 425 plants in the tunnel. That’s more than 11 pounds per plant and by the end of the season, the plant yields were about 30 pounds per plant. Educators continue to develop HT Best Management Practices through these grants and new collaborations with researchers and organizations such as NOFA NY. They continue to develop on-line resources for growers, share what has been learned at conferences, and provide one on one consultations with growers throughout Eastern New York.

**Community Horticulture**

The Community Horticulture staff and Master Gardener Volunteers led the collection and sharing of research-based information on invasive terrestrial plants for the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (LHPRISM) PRISM organization. All the information on the Information Exchange tab was verified, new pages were created for missing species, and fact sheets were discovered and linked where information was missing or minimal. Now it’s a robust portal to fact sheets from multiple credible sources available to over fifty LHPRISM partners and their volunteers.

A presentation, “CCEDC Ornamental Alternatives to Invasive Species,” was created for the region. A task force of ten MGVs analyzed the New York State Prohibited and Regulated Invasive Plants list and selected a subset of plants which consumers might purchase and plant for ornamental purposes. The ornamental and cultural characteristics of the targeted invasive plants were analyzed. Recommendations were made to replace those characteristics with non-invasive alternative plants.

Educational materials were created from that analysis including a set of slides and large display boards. The materials were presented at a “Train the Trainers” on November 14. Attendees included LHPRISM partners and their volunteers, and Cornell Master Gardener Volunteers from the seven Lower Hudson Counties. Instructors from CCE Dutchess, CCE Rockland and the New York Botanical Garden trained 37 people, positioning them to use the materials to teach others throughout the region.
The CCEDC Environment & Energy program works on a variety of topics ranging from healthy streams, to green infrastructure, resiliency planning, energy conservation, and Greenway concepts. As one of the few associations with a program such as this, CCEDC has continued to work with area extensions, Cornell faculty, New York State agencies, and municipal officials and residents.

**Greenway Compact & Smart Land Use Policy**

Through a grant from Dutchess County, CCEDC delivered information, outreach, and connections on Greenway concepts to County residents. The Environment & Energy program assisted Conservation Advisory Councils, offered materials at the Dutchess County Fair, and delivered forums and workshops on rain barrel construction and use, affordable energy efficiency upgrades, community-based solar options, and planning for green infrastructure.

**Dutchess County No Child Left Inside**

The Dutchess County No Child Left Inside (NCLI) youth environmental educators have worked hard over the past year learning about the environment and sharing that knowledge with youth in their community. In the spring and fall of 2016, the youth environmental educators conducted environmental After School Enrichment programs at Clinton Elementary School and Krieger Elementary School. The educators have also had fun doing outdoor activities like canoeing, hiking, gardening, seed collecting and seining, and going on field trips to places like the Waste-to-Energy Facility and ReCommunity Recycling Facility.

They also helped staff from the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve with research as part of the citizen science American Eel project. The NCLI youth learned how to electroshock for eels (and other fish), how to measure and weigh the eels, and how to collect other environmental data. The NCLI youth environmental educators continue to educate and work to connect youth with nature through community events such as Poughkeepsie Earth Day and the annual NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, “Day in the Life of the Hudson River.”

The NCLI youth also joined the Green Teens twice last fall to help them put their gardens to bed and start to get their hands dirty through gardening to prepare for their community project. The youth educators are currently working on their community project of planning a pollinator garden to be located at the Underwear Factory site on North Cherry St. in Poughkeepsie and are putting together a report with information on pollinators and how to plan a pollinator garden to be shared as a resource for others.
Cleaner Greener Communities

A multi-year grant from the New York State Energy Research Development Agency continued in 2016 as the CCEDC researched options for reducing organic waste throughout Dutchess County with a focus on potential for anaerobic digestion, pelletizing waste, and compost.

Hudson Estuary Watershed Resiliency Project

The CCEDC Environment & Energy program worked along with a regional team including NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and other Cornell extension associations to host a forum which explained the Climate Smart Communities Program to regional municipal representatives, explained the benefits of the Community Rating System for flood damage amelioration and culvert assessment and assisted municipalities in deciding how to best approach improvements.

As part of the Environmental & Energy’s regional Flood Resilience project, the GIS Lab also assisted with mapping and prioritization of culverts in a few local municipalities. These culvert maps were used as part of a workshop series to guide these communities in prioritizing a handful of their troublesome culverts with the goal of securing funding to replace and right-size one or more of them.

Finally, the Lab continued on with its mission of providing mapping, custom printing, and geospatial training for local residents, municipal officials, and conservation organizations. This year, we developed maps for the Harlem Valley Appalachian Trail Community, updated land-use maps for the Town of Pleasant Valley, provided analysis and mapping for submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) research being done by the Cary Institute, and helped organize a number of online natural resources mapping tools trainings for municipal officials in Dutchess and Columbia Counties and for realtors dealing with farmers and agricultural properties.

GIS & Mapping

This year, CCEDC’s GIS lab expanded upon 2015’s County Agricultural District mapping and created updated “Town Agricultural Profiles” for each of the twenty towns in Dutchess County. These profiles, which are available on our website and locally at the town halls, provide a brief overview of agriculture in each municipality, including information on the number and acreage of farm parcels by town, a breakdown of the different types of farms, capital investment information, agricultural district maps, farm photos, and a narrative detailing all of this information.
The Family and Consumer Education program strives to ensure that families facing challenges in parenting, family finances, and wellness and nutrition find the resources and education they need to improve their lives. FCE creates connections for residents with the latest, evidence-based research and practical information that can be directly applied to their day-to-day lives. FCE works to strengthen individual knowledge and skills while providing community level education. Our diverse families come from all over Dutchess County with the same goal in mind, to improve their lives through education and engagement. FCE’s goal is to bring interesting and innovative programming to communities in the hopes of appealing to people wherever they are in the process of improving their lives.

In the first half of 2016, the Financial Literacy for Youth (FLY) program reached 85 persons in Dutchess County. During the second half of the year, the Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) began running support groups and assisted 34 families to develop healthy parent-child relationships and positive living skills, creating a safe, structured environment to avoid foster care. RAPP programming was especially successful as it integrated education, respite, family fun, and cooperative problem solving. An intergenerational nutrition program gave caregivers and youth opportunities to share how they make some of their favorite foods, and during workshops a simple, low cost, healthy and delicious meal was prepared with youth setting tables and serving the caregivers dinner. Coffee & Conversation support group meetings engaged youth in nutritional games and activities while caregivers were provided support on legal, emotional/social and financial issues. The total direct educational impact and reach of our programs was 2,384 Dutchess County residents and their families.

FCE continues to work toward targeting programs to those living in underserved areas, and individuals with disabilities and other special needs. 2016 saw new staff join FCE with the motivation to move forward to identify and support the needs of the ever-changing communities of Dutchess County.
The goal of our Eat Smart New York project is to provide behaviorally-focused nutrition & physical activity education, social marketing and environmental system and/or policy changes to over 59,541 families, youth and individuals (SNAP eligible and recipients), living in the priority sites throughout the Hudson Valley. Behaviorally-focused education is delivered to qualifying youth and adults utilizing the approved SNAP-Ed curricula. Through the highest quality nutrition education workshops and one-time events, our nutritionists support the New York State SNAP priority messages which include: increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables daily; reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages by one or more servings each day; and increase the number of days each week individuals are physically active for 30 minutes or more.

In Dutchess County, through numerous partners and collaborations, during the 2015-2016 federal fiscal year, we reached approximately 4,706 residents. 761 residents were reached through direct education, and 3,999 through indirect education. Through our policy, systems and environmental change efforts we were involved in ten coalitions/committees that have missions and visions that align with ours. Of those ten coalitions our efforts include working with four local school districts and their wellness committees. These districts are working to improve wellness policy, offer professional development, increase Summer Food Service Program efforts, practice smarter lunchroom techniques and offer regular physical activity breaks. Along with schools, we facilitated two Nutrition Advisory Committees with over 20 active members who are working to improve food security throughout the county. Lastly, ESNY is an active partner in two coalitions whose focus is on the health and wellness of Eastern Dutchess as well as our Black and Latino communities. As we continue to build, our efforts for the new federal fiscal year include Smarter Lunchroom Movement initiatives; Nourish Your Neighbor; Healthy Food Drive initiatives utilizing partnerships with businesses and healthcare; improving the quality of food provided in school backpack programs and within our local pantries; and engaging partners in worksite wellness initiatives.
The effectiveness of 4-H Youth Development programs is undeniable. In an ongoing study, researchers at Tufts University have surveyed more than 7,000 adolescents to find out just what benefits youth gain from involvement in 4-H programs and the findings are exciting. 4-Hers are 4x more likely to give back to their community; 2x more likely to make healthier choices and 2x more likely to participate in STEM activities.

In 2016, 4-H Youth Development programs were supported by more than 225 volunteers who willingly gave over 2000 hours of their time to help the young people in Dutchess County to learn and grow.

The success of 4-H programs is recognized as Green Teen wins the School Nutrition Association Farm to School Partnership Award! The Green Teen Community Gardening Program, in partnership with the Beacon City School District, Hudson Valley Seed, and Common Ground Farm were honored by the School Nutrition Association with a Farm to School Partnership Award. This is a new award given for exceptional farm to school work in New York State, reinforcing the work of the NY School Nutrition Association, and the NY Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The diversity of 4-H programming continues to grow with the addition of flourishing clubs such as the Techno Titans (robotics), Dutchess County Long Rifles (shooting sports), and Ivy Akademy (personal enrichment). The Green Teen Community Gardening program in Beacon offers urban, at-risk youth the chance to learn real life skills towards a brighter future. Through Ag in the Classroom and during Ag Literacy Week, thousands of children across the County learn about the rich history and resources of their community.
Opportunities Created

4-H Club Program: In addition to regular activities, three youth attended the State Teen Action Rep Retreat (STARR) for three full days of youth leadership development; seven received tractor safety training; seven youth competed in State Horse Communications; Career Explorations at Cornell University attracted three youth; Dutchess County was represented by ten youth at the State Fair in the Canine show, Fashion Review, Hippology, and exhibition of various projects. An additional twenty-six youth sent projects to display in the Dutchess County 4-H booth.

Honeybees: Over 40 fourth graders learned about bees, pollination, and how they can help the environment.

Agricultural Literacy Week: 2300 youth in 115 different classrooms and libraries were read to by volunteers. This is the largest group of Dutchess County youth to participate in this program!

Green Teen Leaders: By creating five crew leader positions in summer 2016, Green Teen engaged in the 4-H mission to develop leadership qualities in young people. The partnership with Common Ground Farm and Hudson Valley Seed made these real-life experiences possible.

Lives Enriched

Community: Over 900 pounds of vegetables were harvested from the three Green Teen gardens, and sold at the Mobile Farmers’ Market; this produce is sold at low cost in accessible locations to seniors and low-income families.

Life Skills: By learning skills such as communications, time management, and problem-solving, and by being guided in making good choices, the 23 young people hired in 2016 by Green Teen are given the tools for a successful future.

Leadership: 4-H Clubs engaged 443 youth in year-round activities designed to develop leadership skills. These include serving as club officers, community service, public presentations, mentoring, and learning science, technology, arts, and crafts.

Projects Completed

Greens for Greens: Partnering with the Beacon Farmers’ Market and Common Ground Farm, Green Teen expanded the Greens for Greens program from $1,000 to $3,000. Three times more free, fresh produce went to food-insecure individuals and families.

Livestock: Over 30 4-H Clubs participated in judging of livestock, and on Saturday of the Dutchess County Fair, 52 youth participated in the annual 4-H Livestock Sale, selling their project animals.

4-H Projects: Completed projects (record book, public presentation and at least 1 hour community service) were submitted by the majority of members, with 353 youth participating in county level public presentations and a further 30 moving on to the district level.
Financial Support

TOTAL FUNDING $3,266,867.51 100%
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Working together to build strong, healthy families and communities while enhancing Dutchess County’s economic, social, agricultural and natural resources.

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Mental Health America
Mid Hudson Alcohol Recovery Center
Mid Hudson Building & Grounds Superintendent’s Assoc.
Mid Hudson Children’s Museum
Mid Hudson Green Industry Assoc.
National 4-H Council
New York Farm Viability Institute
NYS 4-H Youth Development
NYS Agriculture Experiment Station
NYS Arborists Association
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