Dear Friends of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County:
We are pleased to bring you our 2016 Annual Report. Lewis County’s Cooperative Extension report is far ranging, provides a wealth of up-to-date, research based information for individuals, families, business people, farmers and professionals. Our 4-H program is offering a variety of educational opportunities for our county’s youth as they grow into tomorrow’s leaders.
The following are just a sample of our offerings:

...4-H Welding and Electrical Clubs introducing today’s youth to the skills they will need for tomorrow’s employment;

...A Parenting Program that creates community-building and networking, targeting real-life issues in this county;

...An agriculture department that gives area farmers and agribusinesses “tools” for their trade;

...A responsive Ag Team meeting the needs of our dairy farmers during this ongoing time of financial uncertainties;

...Programs on finance and home energy education; and

...Valuable interaction with special guest speakers and experts in requested fields of interest.

The Board and staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County extend our sincere appreciation to the agencies and individuals that provide us with funding and resources throughout the year. We gratefully acknowledge the continued annual support provided on behalf of Lewis County residents through the Lewis County Board of Legislators.

We hope you enjoy reading about your Cooperative Extension and perhaps discover a new opportunity. We invite you to look over the past year and hope you will join us at educational programs, workshops and/or events in the upcoming year. In 2017, we look forward to offering relevant, unbiased and helpful information to each of you—the residents of Lewis County.

President, Board of Directors

Association Executive Director

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individual with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.
Lewis County 4-H

It was a busy year for the 2015-2016 4-H Program. We continued popular and successful programming while incorporating some new avenues.

One of the newer plans we implemented was the Afterschool Program, held once per week at the Lowville Library. Topics varied each month and included hands on activities in nutrition, arts and crafts, environmental science and animal science.

Try It! Workshops were also new this year. Two of the highest attended included a workshop in painting and carving gourd birdhouses led by a local artist, and nanoparticles, led by one of our own 4-H teen leaders.

Teen Council was another newly added, successful venture. Teens from across Lewis County 4-H joined together to socialize and build leadership skills through monthly meetings. They were responsible for grant writing, organizing an International Day, marketing 4-H and hosting Achievement Night.
While we tested the waters with new ideas, the bulk of the 4-H year consisted of events and programming that were **back by popular demand**.

The New Year kicked off with the well-attended Veterinary Science Program, led by Dr. Deanna Fuller, from Countryside Vet Clinic. This series of four workshops focused on police dog training, dairy goats and sheep, a necropsy and wildlife science. Teen Winter Weekend was again held at Camp Oswegatchie, with 9 other counties in attendance. Despite the gruesome winter weather, February Fun Day was still attended by 52 members, and included workshops from nail art to nutrition and rocket stove building. Other highlighted programming included Public Presentations, the Incubation and Embryology Workshop, Tractor Safety and Conservation Field Days.
Horse and Dairy programming remained strong thanks in part to volunteers on the respective committees. The annual Horse Tack Sale was held in cooperation with Jefferson County this year, and was very well attended. Horse Bowl had some fresh new faces and placed first regionally at the novice level. We also had one senior make the alternate team for the State Horse Judging Team. The Closed Show and Horse Camp also returned this year. Lewis County hosted both the Regional Dairy Bowl held at South Lewis, and also the District Dairy Judging Tour in July. The Dairy Bowl Teams remained strong, placing first at the Senior, Junior and Novice levels regionally. We also had one 4-Her compete at the National 4-H Egg & Poultry Contest in Louisville Kentucky, and hope to see more participation in varied livestock events this upcoming year.

Trips this year included the Capital Days Award Trip, Career Explorations and Animal Crackers at Cornell, Dairy Discovery, and the Veterinary School Open House.

Two major fundraisers held again included the Cheese Sale with a profit of $1,891.00 and our Spring and Fall Paper Clover Fundraisers at Tractor Supply Company. Several grants were brought in this year to help support programming including Stewart’s Holiday Match, The Wal-Mart/United Healthcare Nutrition, the Lowville Academy Youth Advisory Council and the Lewis County Youth Bureau Grants.
County Fair Week included six interactive project stations at the Youth Building: Woodworking, Wind Power, Arts/Crafts, Rocketry, Horticulture, and Engineering which were all led by the Jr. Superintendents. Poultry was also back this year, making the Small Animal Barn very lively. Our Jr. Sups did a great job interacting with the crowds by demonstrating their knowledge on animals within the barn and the newly hatched chicks. 4-H dairy and horse competitions ran smoothly thanks to the help of many volunteers. The Youth Building at the State Fair this year included five Lewis County teens to serve as leaders in the State Level Booths for Poultry, Evaluations, Shooting Sports and Sustainable Energy. Lewis County was also represented in dog, horse, dairy and poultry competitions.

Overall, while the 4-H program in Lewis County remained strong, there is always room for growth and new ideas. We look forward to the next year of continued programming along with some innovative areas. Keep a look out in 2016-2017 for a welding/electrical club, cloverbud and tween socials, and an increase in gardening programming.
Agriculture

Lewis County CCE coordinated and contacted several businesses with the help of a committee to promote a Cuisine Trail Designation Program administered by the New York State Department of Ag and Markets designed to promote agricultural marketing for agricultural producers located in the area. This trail includes a combination of producers, food or agricultural product processors and retailers including restaurants that buy local produce at their establishment. The trail will include herbs, meats, vegetables, wineries, cut flowers, breweries, maple syrup, mushrooms or fruits. The trail will utilize a map and highway signs to market their products and direct consumers to their place of business. Lewis County is unique to offer four meat markets in the area which is uncommon in the surrounding counties. The Chamber of Commerce will sponsor the trail and in the near future the signs will be seen to promote agritourism of the Cuisine Trail in Lewis County.

Because of the large interest in gardening, several container gardening classes were held. The participants in the classes planting English garden peas; these were held at local libraries.

A beekeeping workshop was held and taught by Edwin Stillman and Frank Kogut. There is so much interest in the backyard beekeeper that we will have another workshop in the early spring. We are trying to form a beekeeping group and offer the CCE meeting room to hold their meetings.

New to Lewis County, Meatsuite.com which is a free online directory of regional livestock farms that consumers visit to search for farms that sell meat in bulk quantities. The farmer creates a profile featuring contact information, prices, photographs and description of meat products and farming practices. It is an excellent way to generate sales and encourage the consumer to buy local and fresh.

The 2016 Northeast Livestock Conference will be held at the Ramada Inn, Watertown, NY on November 11 & 12. It is a regional effort of CCE educators with a two day conference to improve the production quality and market for locally produced meats. It is an opportunity to network, talk to tradeshow vendors and learn about marketing, cost of production, product pricing, and processing. Our local meat markets in Lewis County will be there.

Many farmers took advantage of our weekly high moisture testing of corn samples. It was much easier to have the samples once a week with mandatory working days to be covered.

The 5th annual Family Farm Day was held at the Jones Family Farm in Copenhagen and was a huge success with 800 people attending, enjoying the festivities and beautiful weather. This was a great opportunity for the consumer to learn firsthand about Dairy Farming.

Dairy producers continued to experience low milk prices and the challenges that go with a price that is less than their cost of production. CCE has worked with many producers on financials to help them lower their cost of production, secure funding or transition to another agriculture enterprises. The lower milk price looks like it will continue into 2017. CCE will continue to be there for the dairy producers whether it’s through programming or one on one visits.
2016 brought unusual weather for the county, lower than average snowfall followed by lower than average rainfall. Crops tended to do ok, but water tables dropped to low levels. Many farmers were forced to haul water to meet their needs. CCE monitored the drought situation by holding drought meetings with other agency people, and assisting farmers with their water needs. The 8th class of Dairy Prospects has started with many great trips and education opportunities for the students scheduled. Since its inception, over 90 students have taken part in this program eight students from six schools are currently participating.

Profit teams, discussion groups, classroom meetings, farm visits and one on one are many of the ways we connect with producers to assist them in all aspects of their business.

Regional Staffing Impacts Lewis County

Meat and Dairy Processing & Marketing

Harvest NY is working closely with Northern NY and Central NY regarding meat processing and marketing. The meat industry is experiencing growth and added interest in the production and availability of locally sourced meats and meat products. The prospect of new processing capacity in many parts of New York as well as the development of enhanced educational programs in meat processing at SUNY Cobleskill presents an opportunity for enhanced capacity to support this growth. MacKenzie, Harvest NY’s Livestock Processing and Marketing Specialist has been working with processors and producers to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the processing process; from slaughter to fabrication. This past quarter, MacKenzie has been involved in producer meetings. These meetings ranged from beef genetic talks and sheep wool pooling; to Beef Quality Assurance training and farm business summary training.

Focusing on the workforce in Northern New York is a priority for the food manufacturing industry. The North Country has a relatively young workforce in Food and Beverage manufacturing compared to the rest of New York State. This is an advantage to the North Country, if these employees are properly trained, enhancing younger employee retention and creating a more stable workforce.

In August 2016, we did the first of 3 on-site trainings on Basic Dairy Science and Sanitation for at least 20 Kraft employees in Lowville, NY. Many plants have a hard time sparing upwards of 10 employees for a 1-2 day training course. For this reason, we will be working on developing a program that will be held on-site in Northern New York and open to the surrounding plants. This way, it is more cost effective for everyone, plants can send a comfortable amount of employees, and it is close to their own operations.
NYN Alfalfa Growers Take Advantage of Cornell Alfalfa Snout Beetle Programs

Alfalfa is an important crop to most of the 1000+ dairy farms in Northern New York, but it is uniquely at risk of devastating damage by the Alfalfa Snout Beetle (ASB). The 6 NNY counties (Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence Franklin, Clinton and Essex) grew a little more than 127,000 acres of alfalfa in 2012, according to the USDA Ag Census. ASB infestations are unique to NNY and have been found in 9 northern counties, including the 6 listed above, but are not found in the rest of NY State nor in the remainder of the United States. A large, collaborative ASB-scouting effort took place across all 6 NNY counties in the fall of 2015. CCE regional and county staff worked together to scout alfalfa and alfalfa-grass fields in at-risk areas. New infestations were noted in Franklin County while other infested areas had not expanded significantly.

After 25+ years of research, Cornell University entomologist Dr. Elson Shields and his research support specialist, Tony Testa, developed the use of 2 native New York nematodes as an effective biological control method for ASB, and have implemented the program on many NNY fields. The approach takes advantage of the natural, insect-attacking habits of the nematodes to reduce ASB populations to manageable levels. The Shields Lab have also worked out nematode rearing and application methods for both small, farm-built, and larger, commercial sprayer equipment.

In 2015, a cost-sharing program made possible by a grant by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program helped farmers to apply the nematodes on their own, or with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel, or by hiring a commercial applicator. During the spring, Mike Hunter and Kitty O’Neil, agronomists with Cornell Extension’s NNY Regional Ag Team, spread the word across the 6 counties and linked farms with the Shields Lab at Cornell University to organize nematode rearing, transportation and application strategies. Nematodes were ordered, reared and delivered to NNY on a tight schedule to allow applications to take place within 24 hours of delivery for best nematode survival. Final applications took place in early September. Through the 2015 cost-sharing program, 22 new farms representing 1058 acres participated and 14 of those farms, representing 986 acres, had the nematodes applied commercially. Growers who had participated in the program in previous years treated an additional 3,242 acres. In total, 4,300 acres of alfalfa were treated with biocontrol nematodes in 2015 with this program. The distribution of the 2015 applications were: Jefferson County – 11 farms & 1,137 acres, Lewis County – 24 farms & 1,641 acres, St Lawrence County – 4 farms & 1,004 acres, Franklin County – 9 farms & 318 acres, Clinton County – 2 farms & 200 acres. In total, 60 billion nematodes were reared by the Shields’ lab at Cornell and transported to NNY producers for application on alfalfa fields during 2015. Since 2007, 77 farms have applied biological control nematodes on more than 250 fields covering 12,000-14,000 acres in 6 NNY counties.

Despite the fact that our grant was not renewed for 2016, the Shields Lab at Cornell University will continue to offer bio-control nematodes for ASB and to teach interested farmers to rear these important nematodes on their own. Mike Hunter advises, “ASB is really a ‘neighborhood’ problem, so all alfalfa-producing farms in an infested area need to apply some nematodes each year until all fields have been treated, or the problem will continue to threaten alfalfa production in that area.”

Regional Programming provides Dairy Producers with Latest Data on Reproduction

Reproduction is a critical focus point for dairies as it can have direct and indirect impacts on production and profitability. Cornell professor Dr. Julio Giordano and PRO-DAIRY’s Dr. Rob Lynch were interested in sharing with NY dairy producers initial data from a large research project focusing on dairy reproduction. In June, the Northern NY Regional Ag Team organized two evening programs, one each in Jefferson and Clinton counties, to discuss research results and herd reproduction troubleshooting.
These sessions were offered free of charge and ran from 7-9pm in the evening to allow more producers and industry representatives to attend. Even with regular barn duties and the demands of field work, both sessions were very well attended by producers, as well as veterinarians, breeders, and students/interns.

Initial feedback after each program was very positive; attendees were intrigued by the initial findings presented and are keen to learn more once the study is completed. The research and data presented were very practical and applicable to both producers and the industry representatives present. One key positive of this meeting was having the producers hear directly from the researchers and getting the chance to ask questions and troubleshoot issues on their dairy.

It is important that the Northern NY Regional Ag Team provides producers in the North Country with the latest research and emerging ideas, and this was a great opportunity to do so. We will continue to utilize the strengths of the regional team and our relationships with researchers at Cornell and PRO-DAIRY to help educate producers, identify areas of improvement on farm, and increase their profitability.

Let’s Improve Bunker Management

Bunk Density outreach has been ongoing in NYS since a NYFVI grant in 2006-07. During the last milk price downturn in 2009-10, and now in 2015-16, Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators in Jefferson and Lewis were looking for other management issues on dairy farms that were costing the farms money and profits. We decided on “Let’s Improve Bunker Management-Short Course”. As we were doing bunk assessments we mused “wouldn’t it be great to have a real time measurement of density to report to the farms if they need to improve packing while they are doing it versus several months later at feed out?” Thus the Safe, Real time method for estimating packing density in bunk silos was born with a grant from NYFVI.

The impact of the project has been valuable from a feed economic standpoint. The biggest industry change is dairy farmers now recognize that producing their own forages has a cost, as do purchased grain and supplements. Great silage makes profitability possible. Great silage does not happen with forages that are harvested at the wrong dry matter, were poorly packed or were not protected from air and water infiltration, however.

The cost of growing, harvesting, storing and feeding high quality forages has a real effect on the balance sheet. With quality standards in mind, the Bunk Management Short Course provided immediate feedback to the bunk-filling crew. While taking measurements, we were able to interact with the crew, helping them understand the importance of bunk density and filling practices. Using bunk management flashcards (available from your local extension office), developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension educators of Jefferson and Lewis Counties, bunk-filling personnel can make immediate adjustments, when necessary.
Cooperative Extension has offered workshops on the recent research covering 3/16 tubing, natural gravity and taphole sanitation. The popular Winter Maple School was offered at the American Maple Museum in Croghan on a Saturday with a variety of workshops such as: Measuring your Sugarbush and Woodlot; Best Management Practices for Tubing Design, Installation, and Maintenance; Silviculture – what it means to manage your sugarbush and woods; Climate Change & The Maple Industry; Ecology and Management of American Beech and How to Make Money at Sugaring to name a few workshops. Friday night’s successful Beginner Workshop was for those just getting into or thinking about tapping some maple trees.

The 2016 Maple Weekend effort was undertaken with the assistance of the Lewis County Maple Producers Association and the Lewis County Government to offer transportation via busing from the American Maple Museum for the public to visit the sugarhouses. Another effort supported by the county government and the maple producers was publicity with both ads, news releases, TV appearances and our ongoing maple trail app which can be seen at www.adirondackstughill.com.

Continued work on marketing of maple and value-added maple to help producers supply maple products both here in the United States and abroad is a continuous ongoing effort.
Parenting and Family Life

Over the past year we have had the opportunity to enhance our relationship with the Department of Social Services as we work with families in this county to provide them with additional support. Some families I have worked with for over six months to help them transition their children home. The increased amount of time with the families allows for additional visitation with the children and opportunities to help with addressing the chaos in the homes. Two families have had their children returned to their homes with custody reestablished. Both families continue to work with us and are doing well. I am currently working with an additional sixteen other families throughout the county.

Through community outreach we have provided home visiting classes to the Head Start Programs enrolled families throughout the county. The topics range from positive discipline to child development. The visits allow for parents to receive support and education based on their family’s needs. There have been on the average, five families a month who qualify and participate in these programs.

Additional outreach education has included basic nutrition classes. Classes are offered to families who are participating with parenting during their visits. Classes are also offered to the community in small group settings. Twelve group classes have been presented to ARC at Extension’s conference room on a monthly basis. This year’s classes continue to focus on cooking and making healthy meals.

Over the past year my participation at local community events has helped with referrals and connecting with families. I have attended Head Start Open Houses, presented programs at Lyons Falls and Constableville Library and other area in the county covering programs such as parenting, nutrition, energy savings to how to make laundry detergent.

As the Parenting and Family Life Educator I attended the Parenting In Service at Cornell University, which provided me with updated research material for programming. I have also recently completed the Custody and Divorce Mediation Training with the Jeff-Lewis Resolution Center. I have also had the opportunity to continue additional Professional Development trainings on substance abuse, domestic violence and adolescent behavior.

Parent Education: To provide the research to parents to help make positive changes.
Partnerships
Growing Local Investment into Funding for Programs that Improve Lives and Grow Businesses

$372,000
in core funding from Lewis County and New York State

$300,000
in additional funding for local programs and initiatives

Creating New Partnerships:
CCE is often able to multiply resources by connecting local partners for tandem growth. For example: Connecting local producers with local consumers through MeatSuite’s online marketing and the newly formed multi-county meat CSA, where local producers are collaborating across three counties to sell meat together.

Enhancing Community Partnerships:
CCE is involved in numerous partnerships with local agencies and organizations which provide a vehicle to reach and educate local residents in ways that benefit everyone involved. For example: Working with Head Start enrolled families, the Parenting and Family Life Educator has been able to present programs on parenting, nutrition and energy savings.

Developing Unique Partnerships:
CCE has the skills and initiative to bring non-traditional partners together to form unique alliances that can yield unprecedented results. For example: 4-H working with local manufacturing companies has started up two new clubs to educate youth on welding and electricity for potential employment.