4-H/Youth Development

Very few youth-serving organizations can rival the storied history and wide-ranging impact of 4-H, America’s largest youth development organization. 4-H took root more than a century ago, providing young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime.

Niagara County 4-H programs connect kids to the resources of Cornell University and the land-grant system, strengthening the next generation of inventors, entrepreneurs and problem-solvers. 4-H welcomes young people of all beliefs and backgrounds, empowering them with skills to lead for a lifetime. In 2018, with the support of 179 volunteers, 21 different clubs were offered to the 519 youth enrolled in 4-H.

4-H Mission Mandates

**STEM**

4-H engages youth in science, technology, engineering, and math. 4-H’s approach to STEM is comprehensive and holistic—from agriculture to alternative energy—youth are learning about highly relevant complex systems and issues that will ensure their contributions to their communities today and their success as global leaders tomorrow.

**Citizenship**

4-H citizenship programs empower young people to be well-informed citizens who are actively engaged in their communities and the world. Youth learn about civic affairs, build decision-making skills and develop a sense of understanding and confidence in relating to other people. These life skills help grow 4-H youth into true leaders.

**Healthy Living**

Healthy living programs have been at the core of 4-H and remain a foundation of our pledge. While 4-H believes that healthy living habits of young people begin at home, we strive to equip youth with knowledge and skills that will prepare them physically, emotionally and socially to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

4-H Livestock Auction Program

The Niagara County 4-H Livestock Auction Program continues to grow with fifty-two 4-H members participating by raising, showing, and selling 80 market animals in 2018.

4-H’ers have the opportunity to gain valuable life skills through their 4-H livestock projects, such as communication, critical thinking, financial management, organization, responsibility and leadership. Successful completion of a market livestock project includes recruiting buyers to bid on their animals during the auction.

Through their project involvement, 4-H’ers also have the opportunity to receive a premium price for the animals they market through the livestock auction. Many youth use the money earned from their 4-H livestock projects to help pay for college and to continue raising livestock each year.
Legislative Intern Program

The Legislative Intern Program matches students with local government officials to discover first-hand how government works. This after-school program runs October through March and is available to high school juniors and seniors living and attending schools in Niagara County.

Students successfully completing the government intern program may receive academic credit. This year, 15 students participated in the program from Newfane Central School, Royalton-Hartland, Lockport Senior High, Starpoint Central School, Lewiston-Porter Central School and Niagara Falls High School.

“The ability to interact with both county legislators and department heads allowed myself and others to become more informed on the processes of government and understand the importance of how it impacts us all individually. My experience was educational, enjoyable, and it further bolstered my choice of political science as my major in college.”

Vanessa Zapp, Lockport High School Senior

4-H Robotics

Robotics classes were started in 2018, with 14 youth ages 10-18 participating in 6 consecutive classes. The Robotics program emphasizes different aspects of robotics while youth build their own robots and develop robotics knowledge and skills. 4-Hers enjoyed learning how to build and program their robot to perform various tasks using a Lego Mindstorms EV3. Our volunteer leader, Jeffrey Miller, works in the field of medical robotics and provided participating 4-Hers with real-world experiences.

Over the course of time, we hope the program will help youth improve communication and teamwork skills by learning to use the processes and approach of science, the planning and conceptual design of engineering, and the application of technology. They will develop responsible attitudes about technology while gaining problem-solving and decision-making skills as they complete the challenges presented to them. The overall goal of our robotics program in the coming year will be to form a team prepared to compete at the New York State Fair Robotics Challenge Competition.

4-H Cloverbuds

The 4-H Cloverbud program is specialized to meet the developmental needs of five to seven-year olds. The program also provides an exciting introduction to the 4-H experience. Through a variety of hands-on activities with an emphasis on participation, cooperative learning, and teamwork. When they move into the next phase of the 4-H Club Program, Cloverbuds are ready to take on the challenges of greater self governance and longer-term project work.

Aim High

Aim High is a 9-week program structured to teach youth the safe and responsible use of archery equipment, while also promoting an appreciation for the outdoors, respect for others, and positive self-image by offering hands-on education and team building activities. In 2018, 154 youth participated in Aim High.

Aim High was made possible through funding received from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

4-H IMPACTS

- 3X more likely to contribute to their communities;
- 41% less likely to engage in cigarette, drug and alcohol use; and
- 2X as likely to exercise and be physically active.
4-H Day Camp

4-H Day Camp provides youth with a variety of fun, educational, hands-on learning experiences designed to help them develop life skills and friendships while learning and building self-confidence. Activities include STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) challenges, outdoor education, agricultural activities, team building exercises, gardening, healthy cooking classes and much more. Forty youth between the ages of 5 to 12 participated in 4-H Day Camp during the three weeks it was offered in the summer of 2018.

The morning is structured with youth rotating through the lessons and activities in groups of 10-15. Activities included building fairy houses and tin can lanterns, planting seeds and learning about the various parts of a plant and its functions, and learning how to make healthy snacks like turkey and brown rice burgers and delicious spinach smoothies.

After lunch, campers participated in STEM lessons designed to spark their imagination and creativity. They learned the principles of chemistry and used them to blow up balloons, made kaleidoscopes, and possibly the most fun they had was making slime! Woodworking was extremely popular with the campers as they made wooden caddies, plaques and their very own stepstools. During outside activities, campers enjoyed learning how to make shelter with ropes and tarps, and participating in archery and yoga.

The late afternoon provides choices and options for youth. They can play games and do crafts inside the auditorium or go outside to play kickball and yard games until they are picked up. Fridays are special as we always have a unique activity planned for the morning. This year we were happy to host a robotics team, have an iron chef challenge and a talent show.

#SPARK

#Spark is a STEM afterschool program designed to "spark" interest in STEM careers for middle school students. This afterschool program will be offered to students at Barker Middle School twice a month and at Lackawanna Middle School once a week during the academic school year. The program is divided into units of four sessions. In each unit, various STEM jobs that fall within a specified career field will be discussed. The highlight of each pod will be the presentation of a real-world problem where students will take on the role of a STEM professional. Providing students with real-world problems and asking them to brainstorm solutions will bring higher order thinking skills into play and reinforce the role creativity plays in STEM fields. Each activity will be relevant to the skills needed in that particular occupational area and will challenge students while allowing for multiple approaches to advance toward a solution.

The overall goals of the #Spark program are to: create a culture that will incubate curiosity, creativity, and inquiry among students; increase the number and diversity of students who want to pursue a career within a STEM related field; increase the number and diversity of students who believe they have the confidence and attributes to pursue a career within a STEM related field; and enhance personal growth, teamwork, problem solving, confidence, leadership, etc. #Spark is funded through the Ralph Wilson Foundation.
ACE Program

The After Class Explorer program, also known as ACE, gave Newfane Middle School students ages 9 to 14 afterschool enrichment at the middle school level. The program aimed to foster a healthy lifestyle, increase scholastic achievement and expose students to new experiences and foods. Most importantly, ACE gave students a safe and secure space to learn, make new friends and expand their world.

ACE started each day with a healthy snack including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and whole grains. This was followed by 30 minutes of exercise and team building activities. Then came “Explorer Hour”, where every day from 3-4pm a trained educator from CCE-Niagara instructed the class. Each day of the week had its own program starting with arts and crafts on Mondays, agriculture Tuesdays, Wednesdays featured nutrition, Thursdays featured various 4-H programs and STEM activities ended the week on Fridays.

School work was a priority at ACE and students had a tutor available for one-on-one tutoring and homework help. Students were encouraged to help each other through peer to peer tutoring, helping to foster character and leadership skills.

ACE was funded by the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc.

AgNET

AgNET was a youth education program intended to promote a greater understanding of agriculture and food systems by offering inquiry-based, hands-on education and activities to students in the classroom. CCE worked with the Niagara Falls City Schools District, Barker Central School District and Roy-Hart Central School District over the past three years, delivering agriculture lessons to students in grades K-12.

At Niagara Falls High School, CCE implemented the Agriculture Exploration (AgX) curriculum for 300 9th grade students. This was an eight week course where students designed their own package to “ship a chip”, made butter from whipping cream and learned about products grown in New York State with taste tests. Throughout each lesson, students were exposed to multiple careers that fit within our food system such as food scientists, chefs, agriculture engineers, soil scientists and many others.

At Barker Central School District, 418 students between Pre-K and 6th grade were exposed to the Food, Farm and You, a fifteen lesson curriculum that CCE compiled and developed to teach students about the path their food takes from farm to table.

CCE also developed an Introduction to Agriculture course that will be taught to eighth grade students during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year at Barker Central School District and Roy-Hart Central School District.

AgNET was funded by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture through the United States Department of Agriculture.
WNY Food Incubator

The 4-H Training Center on CCE grounds has undergone extensive renovations to create the WNY Food Incubator, a program that offers entrepreneurs access to our shared-use commercial kitchen along with a large variety of business support services. The WNY Food Incubator is dedicated to helping farms create value added products, as well as wholesale, retail, and catering food businesses thrive.

Participating food entrepreneurs will have access to a fully equipped commercial kitchen, inspected and certified by the Niagara County Board of Health and New York State Agriculture and Markets. Clients will have access to state of the art equipment, helping to lower their expenses as they look to take their food business to the next level.

We know there’s no one-size-fits-all model for business success. Through our own experience and our partnership with outside agencies, the WNY Food Incubator offers a wide range of business support services. In 2018, workshops were held in both the spring and fall, helping participants with business planning, pricing strategy, food regulation requirements and more. In 2019, workshops will continue to be offered through the WNY Food Incubator. Additionally, we will also offer one-on-one support tailored to each participants needs so they can get their business cooking!

CCE received funding for the WNY Food Incubator from the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc; United States Department of Agriculture; East Hill Foundation; and the WNY Foundation.

The WNY Food Incubator lowers the barriers to entry and teaches farmers with value-added products and food entrepreneurs what they need to know to grow their business.

The WNY Food Incubator, located at 4487 Lake Avenue, in Lockport, provides a licensed, shared-use commercial kitchen that helps meet food processing needs at low hourly rates.

It is perfect for:
- Home bakers or cooks who want to sell their goods.
- Food truck or catering businesses that want to lower their operating costs.
- Small to medium size farmers wanting to create value-added products.
- Start-ups that do not have the capital to invest in building their own kitchen.

Kitchen facilities include:
- Food Dehydrator
- Commercial Tabletop Stand Mixer
- Walk in Cooler and Freezer
- Commercial Dishwasher
- Stainless Steel Movable Prep Tables
- 2 Double Stack Convection Ovens
- 6 Burner Gas Stove
- Dedicated Vegetable Prep Area
Horticulture

The horticulture program provides the latest research-based information and technical support to a diverse audience including home gardeners, professional horticulturists, municipalities and horticultural service industry businesses, such as lawn care companies, landscapers, groundskeepers and exterminators.

More than 2,000 individuals contacted Cornell Cooperative Extension for horticultural information via phone calls, e-mails and office visits in 2018. The majority of these contacts were for problem diagnosis, pest identification and soil analysis. More than 150 insect and plant samples as well as 300 soil samples were submitted for identification and testing.

Public outreach was further expanded with regular article contributions to the Buffalo Niagara Gardening website which reaches 8,000 subscribers in Western New York.

Sixteen group presentations with a total audience of 312 were made to garden clubs, civic organizations, and youth groups. Fifty five consultations with greenhouse operators, arborists, lawn care companies, exterminators, and groundskeepers relating to integrated pest management and problem diagnosis were completed.

A new Master Gardener Training Class with 22 participants began in the fall of 2018 and will be completed in February 2019. Master Gardener volunteers donated over 1200 hours of time in 2018 assisting with community gardens, educational outreach, informational exhibits, beautification efforts and other areas where their expertise was needed.

Several gardening classes were offered to the public covering topics including vegetable gardening, composting, attracting beneficial insects, native plants, and herb growing.

The horticulture program provides information as needed to several county and other municipal entities such as the health department, parks departments, housing authorities home owners associations, The Farm Service Agency and Soil and Water Conservation Office.

Other priority areas included providing technical support to community gardening efforts in several locations and keeping the public informed on current and emerging invasive pest issues including Emerald Ash Borer and most recently the European Cherry Fruit Fly that was found in the county in 2018.

**SUPPORT**

Over 2,000 horticulture inquiries via phone calls and office visits in 2018.

**VOLUNTEERING**

Niagara County Master Gardeners volunteered 1,850 hours in 2018.

**PRESENTATIONS**

21 group presentations with a total audience of 425 participants.
CCE Learning Farm & Ag Incubator

We are currently in the planning stages of developing the CCE Ag Incubator, an initiative to help new and beginner farmers. CCE will actively recruit new/beginner farmers, while providing technical assistance, business planning, plots of land, and long-term planning workshops to help participants successfully enter the farming industry and grow the enterprise. It will be designed to include a mentorship program, access to shared resources, technical assistance and skill building resources for new/beginner farmers to prepare them for their own farm businesses. This program is made possible thanks to funding from the Yahoo Community Fund.

The Agriculture Incubator will also complement CCE’s WNY Food Incubator, a program for food entrepreneurs and small to medium farms interested in producing value added products. The Food Incubator kitchen and services will be offered to participants in the Agriculture Incubator (and vice versa) as they may wish to explore developing a product whose greater shelf life would provide an alternate revenue stream.

Regional Agriculture Teams

Cornell Vegetable Program

The Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP), a CCE regional agriculture team, serves the vegetable greenhouse, potato and dry bean industries in an 11-county region of Western New York including Niagara County. Our region accounts for more than half the acres of the New York vegetable industry, with 1,017 vegetable farms and an estimated farm gate value of more than $250 million. The Cornell Vegetable Specialists work together with Cornell faculty and extension educators statewide to address issues that impact the industry.

CVP provides educational programs and information to growers, processors and agri-business professionals, arming them with the knowledge to profitably produce and market safe and healthful vegetable crops, contributing to the viability of farms and the economic well-being of New York State.

Lake Ontario Fruit Team

The Lake Ontario Fruit Team partners with Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide educational programs for the commercial fruit industry, using research-based information to help the tree fruit and berry industries in New York compete in the world market and provide safe, high-quality product for consumers.

NWNY Team

The NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team is a regional agricultural CCE program, serving a 10-county region in the Western New York. Team specialists collaborate with Cornell faculty and extension educators statewide to provide service to large and small farms, whether dairy, livestock, hay, corn, wheat or soybean focused.

Education and support include individual farm management team meetings, multi-day classroom and hands-on training, ongoing farmer group discussion meetings and thematic day-long symposia.

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program serves the needs of grape growers and wineries by giving them the tools to improve their sustainability and fiscal health. There are approximately 30,000 acres of vineyard in the Lake Erie region of New York and Pennsylvania grown on 840 farms, making this the largest grape growing region outside of California.
Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Agriculture is one of Niagara County's most important economic development sectors. More than 760 farms in Niagara County generate a market value of more than $122 million in sales and employ approximately 1,000 individuals. With many changes taking place within the county, the County’s farmlands are facing conversion pressure. In order to preserve agricultural and natural lands and stabilize the agricultural economy, updates to the 1999 Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan were essential. In 2015, Niagara County, in collaboration with CCE, was awarded a New York State Agriculture and Markets grant to update the 1999 Plan. The expected outcomes of the agricultural and farmland planning project include protection of the high quality farmland and open spaces in Niagara County, and updating the most recent Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan to align with evolving agricultural practices in order to boost the agricultural economy in Niagara County. With matching funds from the Niagara County Legislature and CCE, this project will be finalized in early 2019.

EatFresh WNY

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County recently developed EatFresh WNY, a mobile-friendly website that provides information on local farms, food and agritourism attractions, events, destinations, direct consumer sale venues, restaurants, and much more. We developed EatFresh WNY to increase tourist traffic, time spent, and revenue, and also to establish a regional brand that promotes the high-quality local food and homegrown products that are available here in Western New York.

Information about EatFresh WNY is distributed at a wide range of tourist venues and attractions throughout the area. This state-of-the-art website serves as a directory to travelers visiting Niagara Falls, as well as for residents from all over Western New York who are looking to explore our region’s local food culture. With a few phone taps, visitors to EatFresh WNY can effortlessly find venues that sell locally grown and prepared food and beverages, and filter their search results.

Marketing EatFresh WNY to the millions of tourists who travel to the WNY area annually significantly increases the exposure of all businesses in the directory. Each listing provides a description of the venue, photos, what products are offered, and all other relevant information (e.g., address, hours of operation, website, phone number, etc.). And the site is fully searchable.

More than just a website, EatFresh WNY was also designed to become our regional brand for locally grown and produced agricultural products. In collaboration with the Niagara County Farm Bureau, CCE has developed free marketing materials for businesses in the directory. These branded materials will grab the attention of consumers, build awareness of our brand, and encourage the “buy local” movement. We also provide promotional signage to businesses listed on the site to identify them as an EatFresh WNY venue and supporter.

Please visit EatFreshWNY.com to explore and encourage others to do the same. EatFresh WNY was made possible through funding from the Yahoo Community Fund-Empire State Development Grant.
AgLab, commonly referred to as “a dirty classroom”, is our STEM-based education program intended to promote agriculture, food systems and inspire environmental stewardship by offering inquiry-based, hands-on education and activities. Our 30’ x 100’ greenhouse was transformed into an agriculture discovery center for youth, adults and families to explore topics such as hydroponics, plant science, vermicomposting/composting, aquaponics, integrated pest management, vertical gardening and climate change. Throughout the Niagara County Fair and the CCE Fall Festival & 4-H Expo, youth and families were encouraged to visit the Agriculture Discovery Center to explore the dirty classroom and complete our AgLab passport. The passport was designed to have visitors attend each exhibit area to engage in a hands-on activity and learn about the topic displayed.

In the Fall, CCE partnered with Newfane Elementary School to have their 3rd grade students visit the AgLab Discovery Center. Students went through the AgLab and made bracelets to help them remember the different parts of the Aquaponics tank. They made vegetable wraps using herbs from the hydroponics tank and planted a seed to take home and watch it grow.

The overall objective for the AgLab project is to increase the number and diversity of youth and adults exposed to STEM-based educational programming through hands-on learning activities in the CCE greenhouse.

AgLab was made possible through funding from the Yahoo Community Benefit Fund and the CCE Annual Appeal.

AgLab Impact on Youth Participants

- 82% increased their knowledge related to food systems and agriculture.
- 88% of youth intended to act as an environmental steward by composting, recycling, etc.

AgLab Impact on Adult Participants

- 89% increased their knowledge related to food systems and agriculture.
- 91% of adults intend to act as an environmental steward by composting, recycling, etc.
In 2018, the Niagara County Farm-to-School program entered its second year of programming. The program focuses on featuring locally grown, healthy foods in school meals across 7 Niagara County School Districts: Lockport, Wilson, Roy-alton-Hartland, Barker, Starpoint, Niagara Wheatfield, and Newfane. These schools and New York State farmers and producers are working together with local distributors to bring fresh produce and other New York State products into school lunchrooms. Through our program, we have strengthened local agriculture, improved student health, enhanced farm-to-school relationships between schools, farmers, and distributors, and increased awareness of the regional food systems to our community.

Over 15,884 students have gained an increase in access to healthy, local foods as well as educational opportunities such as farm to school curriculum and cafeteria taste tests. The Niagara County Farm to School Program empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Schools, including food service departments, now have a clear understanding of what “buying local” means. For us, it refers to any product grown or produced in the state of New York.

Niagara County Schools are also participating in the “Harvest of the Month” initiative, which encourages students to try a different local product in their school meal, while encouraging the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The Harvest of the Month continues to be featured on many school lunch menus.

The Niagara County Farm-to-School grant is provided by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The Niagara County Farm to School Program focuses on two key components: procurement (local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria) and education (students participate in educational activities including agriculture, food, health and nutrition).

55,855 lbs. of local NYS produce was purchased and served in Niagara County Schools during the 2017-2018 school year.

30% NYS Initiative is a new incentive for lunch providers, which will reimburse 25¢ per meal for schools that buy at least 30% local foods.

Over 50 lesson plans were created by CCE-Niagara for a toolkit, specially designed for teachers K-12 to integrate Farm to School into the classroom.
Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

CCE Niagara was awarded the next iteration of the NYS Department of Health grant, entitled Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), which began in the final quarter of 2015. The CHSC program enhances the multi-sector, collaborative approach, incorporating both strong school and community components to increase demand for and access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for daily physical activity to reduce the risk of chronic disease in the high-need communities and school districts of Niagara Falls and Lackawanna.

VEGGIE VAN
MOBILE FARMERS MARKET

Bringing Fresh, Local Produce to Food Deserts

In 2018, the Veggie Van mobile farmers market operated from July 18th through September 25th, in both the City of Niagara Falls and the City of Lackawanna. Not only did the Veggie Van sell fresh produce at market price, staff also accepted cash, EBT payments, and Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons.

The Cities of Niagara Falls and Lackawanna are considered food deserts—areas where residents have limited access to fresh, healthy and affordable foods. The Veggie Van program helps combat hunger and reduces food insecurity by bringing fresh, local produce directly to these designated communities.

Every Wednesday, the Veggie Van traveled to two sites in Lackawanna. From 10am-12pm, it was open at the Lackawanna Senior Center. The CHSC team would then drive to Taggert Playground on Odell Street from 1pm-3pm.

On Thursdays, the Veggie Van operated at the John Duke Senior Center from 10am-12pm, and then relocated to the Community Health Center of Niagara Falls from 1pm-3pm.

All of the food sold was locally sourced from farms in Western New York, which encouraged residents to “eat local”. Locally grown produce is full of flavor because it spends less time in transit on the way to being sold. Eating local also supports our farms while advancing the economy in Western New York.
Children spend most of their day at school, underscoring the important role that this institution has in promoting healthy eating. Because school gardens can support children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables, schools in Lackawanna and Niagara Falls established outdoor gardens. However, their use was limited by the short Western New York growing season and school calendar. So CCE Niagara used CHSC funding to provide tower gardens to each district’s school buildings. These vertical, aeroponic structures allow students to grow up to 28 vegetables, herbs, fruits, and flowers in less than three square feet.

Tower gardens are perfect for a school environment. They increase access to fresh produce and are an excellent hands-on teaching tool. In addition to helping overcome challenges associated with weather, tower gardens mitigate other outdoor garden-related challenges that schools face, including cost and staffing. Tower gardens are mobile so they can be used by more students, and have timed lights and pumps to ensure care during school vacations. Water and nutrients continuously cycle through the tower to shower the plants’ roots.

Since the tower gardens were implemented in March 2018, they have been used to educate students, staff, and parents. These gardens, called the Tower of Power by the Niagara Street School garden club, wouldn’t have been possible without CHSC, school-community partnerships, and student engagement. The first tower garden was implemented in Lackawanna in Martin Road Elementary School’s cafeteria. In Niagara Falls, students from the Gaskill Prep robotics club assembled their tower in the STEM lab. Richard Clark, the district science teacher, has incorporated tower gardens into his STEM lessons for 80 middle-school students. An after-school cooking class funded by CHSC is collaborating with the science class to use the harvest for its recipes. The principal at Niagara Street Elementary worked with CHSC and the School Quality Committee to plan its tower garden, which is in front of the main office. Students in the garden club planted herbs and greens, helped maintain the tower, and created educational posters.

Parents and families attended a family fun night at which CHSC staff and garden club members educated parents, staff, and students on the tower gardens and healthy eating. Eat Smart New York and CHSC also held a series of cooking classes to educate parents about eating local and healthy through use of the tower garden. Cafeteria staff at Martin Road Elementary used the harvest to make salads for staff, used herbs to make sauces, and spinach and kale to make smoothie samples for approximately 100 staff and students. These towers continue to provide opportunities to bring science, math, and other curricular areas to life. Even better, they give students brief active breaks during the day when they visit the gardens.
EquiStar Therapeutic Riding Program

Making a difference, one rider at a time

In the spring of 2018, when EquiStar, Inc. closed due to financial difficulties, CCE was asked to help revive this much-needed program. With the goal of making EquiStar thrive once again, CCE assumed management in late May, and restarted programming in June. With the help of dedicated volunteers, to date, we have offered over four sessions with over 100 classes to 45 riders.

The EquiStar Therapeutic Riding Program enriches the lives of individuals with disabilities through equine-related activities, helping riders reach milestones in their physical development and communication skills. Program participants include both children and adults with varying conditions, including cerebral palsy, developmental delays, autism spectrum disorder, trisomy 21, anxiety and more.

Therapeutic riding is a beneficial activity for any person and the riders at EquiStar reach milestones with the help of their equine friends. The horse is an excellent teacher and can help autistic and other focus-disabled people follow directions and communicate. The bond riders develop with horses has a calming, endearing effect on both the individual and the horse.

Riders can benefit physically by building core strength, muscle tone, gross motor skills, and mental capacity. The rhythmic motion of the horse, along with their warmth, can decrease spasticity and tightness in muscles.

Through a variety of activities and the natural gait of the horse, riders experience an improvement in hand-eye coordination and balance. Speech can be improved through simple physical activity, a need to communicate with their horse, and involvement with peers and volunteers. A boost in self-esteem often results from the confidence built through working with and riding a powerful animal like a horse. Therapeutic riding programs also assist emotionally challenged individuals build bridges of trust.

"I think this is a godsend for my daughter with trisomy 21. They are strengthening her core, building self-esteem and independence, as well as reinforcing what she's learning in school! Thank you for all you do to the EquiStar team!" - Sheila W.

EquiStar Riders by age (2018)
Eat Smart New York

Eat Smart New York (ESNY) provides interactive, community-based nutrition education and obesity prevention activities for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and SNAP eligible populations. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance coordinates this program through a five-year grant administered in Niagara County.

ESNY educators help participants shop, cook, and eat nutritious foods on a limited budget. They also strive to make the healthy choice the easy choice by working to change the policies, systems and environments around us. Their program goals are to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption, and increase physical activity to balance calories eaten as part of a healthy lifestyle. To achieve these goals, nutrition educators have worked with after-school programs, summer camps, food pantries, local grocery stores, farmers markets, adult education and job training centers, libraries, senior centers, community centers and many others. While at these sites, nutrition educators host hands-on and interactive classes, workshops, or table style events to discuss a variety of topics. Class topics include sugar shockers, blubber burgers, fruits & vegetables, fiber & whole grains, stretching food dollars, and food safety.

In 2018, SNAP-Ed Educators reached

4,438 adults in Niagara County 2,300 were new to ESNY programming

In 2018, SNAP-Ed Educators reached

6,059 children in Niagara County 2,521 were new to ESNY programming

By making a series of simple changes to your lifestyle, ESWNY can help you change your life.

Small changes can make a big difference.

Eat Smart New York also reached the community in other ways such as policy, system, and environmental change and social marketing campaigns. Their "Small Changes Make a Big Difference" campaign was seen on billboards, bus shelters, bus kongs, and television commercials. You may have also seen Eat Smart NY on HealthScope on Lockport Cable Television or read one of their nutrition columns, Niagara Eats, in the Niagara Gazette.
Our core objectives.

The Eat Smart Western New York program aims to improve health and nutrition and reduce chronic disease for low-income adults and youth.

1. Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables.
2. Reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.
3. Be physically active and balance calories every day as part of a healthy lifestyle.

ESWNY Cooking Classes

In 2018, Eat Smart Western New York (ESWNY) nutritionists were out in the community building a following throughout Niagara County. Educators Justine, Jenna, Mollie, and Ben offered hands-on nutrition workshops at many community sites—from youth drop-in centers to senior dining programs they have been everywhere and in between this year.

Jenna has built a steady relationship with The Connection, a youth drop-in center, creating a program where kids learn healthy cooking techniques. Ben has been maintaining his strong relationship with the North Tonawanda library, as he has grown the number of participants at his events! Mollie has established programming and collaboration with the YWCA of Niagara County, installing raised garden beds and offering cooking classes to residents at nearby housing sites as well as individuals enrolled in the culinary training program.

ESWNY Results

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<td>Workshops and classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total participants</td>
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<td>Engaged via tabling events and informational displays</td>
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</table>

Kids Cook Monday

Kids Cook Monday is a new ESWNY initiative created by Mollie, in collaboration with Anna Merritt Elementary, the Parent Teacher Association of Anna Merritt Elementary, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Aramark Foods. One Monday per month, Mollie and a local chef, lead kids and their parents on how to cook and serve a healthy meal together with the goal of developing their very own recipe. To help create the recipes, students prepare the dishes and provide samples to their peers during school hours, providing information about the meal and receiving feedback from their peers. The students also have a chance to take part in a competition to come up with a creative name for the dish!

The meals students create will be voted on by fellow students during taste-testing events. The winning recipes will be featured as new items on the school lunch menu.
Sodium Reduction in Communities Program

CCE-Niagara was awarded the Sodium Reduction in Communities Program (SRCP) grant from NYS Department of Health in October 2016. The program targets children in early child care education centers and students and faculty at colleges and universities in Erie and Niagara County. SRCP has partnered with Community Action Organization of Erie County Head Start, Holy Cross Head Start, University at Buffalo, and Niagara County Community College. The program intends to reduce the risk of hypertension by replacing high sodium foods with healthier alternatives.

Flavor Stations

Table salt contributes 5% of one’s daily sodium intake. Saltshakers are accessible at all condiment stations across the University at Buffalo’s campus and readily available for students. This additional salt can increase risk of high blood pressure. In order to address this concern, the University at Buffalo Campus Dining and Shops (UB CDS) added flavor stations to 3 dining centers. Implementing flavor stations near the condiment station offers an alternative to saltshakers, while still adding flavor. The flavor stations are colorful and attractive to students. They are intrigued by the display and the unique spice blends. The flavor station is equipped with signage and nine spice blends to choose from.

The shakers are filled with a variety of low salt spice blends from a Pride of New York company. The spices are labeled with a corresponding food item. For example, Italian seasoning is suggested to be paired with vegetables and the Garlic Rosemary with proteins. Other spices include a habanero blend, spicy coconut lime, garlic and herb, and lemon pepper. The flavor station encourages students to step away from the saltshakers and allows them to experiment with different flavors and mix and match to their preferences.

Over 100 menu items were impacted through product replacement. (See chart for sodium reduction per serving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Improved</th>
<th>Baseline (per serving)</th>
<th>Follow Up (per serving)</th>
<th>% Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deli Turkey</td>
<td>590 mg</td>
<td>340 mg</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchup</td>
<td>150 mg</td>
<td>50 mg</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinara Sauce</td>
<td>630 mg</td>
<td>25 mg</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Base</td>
<td>440 mg</td>
<td>125 mg</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UB Campus Dining and Shops

The University at Buffalo Campus Dining and Shops (UB CDS) is undertaking efforts to decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease to students and staff through the Sodium Reduction in Communities Program. With over 30,000 students and faculty members, 40 retail units, and 3 dining centers, UB CDS is managing a large food service operation. The culinary staff is determined to reduce sodium in menu items without compromising taste and flavor.

UB CDS is using strategies such as item replacement, consumer education, and menu modification to target high sodium options. Communicating with food distributors and vendors has been helpful in identifying low sodium ingredients.

In 2018 at a SUNY Culinary Summit, SRCP Dietitian, Kaitlyn Summers presented on the importance of lowering sodium menu items, the changes UB has made to lower sodium, and information on how to implement sodium reduction strategies at other colleges and universities.
Through environmental education, CCE teaches stewardship, an ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources to facilitate long-term sustainability.

Junior Gardeners/Nature Explorers

The Junior Gardeners program has expanded to include nature activities and has been renamed the "Nature Explorers program". The focus of Nature Explorers is on plants, animals, and their environment. Twelve times a year, a dozen 4-H’ers between the ages of 5 to 10 take part in various Nature Explorer activities. Nature hikes were one of the more popular activities, including a scavenger hunt in the Town of Lockport and a Fall hike at Tuscarora State Park in Wilson. The hikes gave 4-H’ers the opportunity to learn more about how plants change in the Fall, and learned how to identify native trees and shrubs. While visiting Tuscarora State Park, they collected twigs and stones from the beach to create scenes out of wood. The 4-H’ers also made toad abodes from clay pots in July to exhibit at the Niagara County Fair, attended a workshop on dragon flies to learn about how they are a beneficial insects, and made beaded dragonfly crafts.

Entomology

Insects are fascinating creatures, yet we know so little about most of them. Young people can learn more about these insects through the Niagara County 4-H Entomology Program. Toby Mansfield, a longtime volunteer, offers the Entomology Program once a month for any enrolled Niagara County 4-H member.

Over the course of a year Toby has educated youth on the following topics: “Know Your Insects”, “Labelling and Storing an Insect Collection” and “Learning About Butterflies”. Field trips to catch insects are included as part of the program, 4-H’ers catch insects, practice pinning and preserving methods, learn how to scientifically identify and label. The end goal is for youth to end up with a collection, display box that they can enter and exhibit at the county fair in August. Approximately a dozen 4-H’ers participate in the Entomology program.
MISSION

Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

VISION

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a national leader in creating positive change on behalf of families and communities through rigorously-tested extension programs. We create measurable change by aligning local needs with the resources and priorities of the land grant system and its state and federal partners.

VALUES

While working with individuals, families, communities, businesses, and industries, we value our commitment to excellence, responsiveness, collaboration, learner-centered life-long education, results-oriented programming, volunteerism, inclusiveness, and the future.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Veterans and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

2018 Budget

This chart is a visual representation of the sources from which Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County has gained financial support.
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