Session participants were delivered in a variety of modes from in-person workshops and webinars to social media campaigns across the Capital Region. The Capital Region Eat Smart New York Program launched a social media campaign called “Nourish Your Neighbors” Healthy Food Drive through social media sites. This campaign reaches approximately 600 students. Class topics included consuming more fruits and vegetables, reducing sugar and fat, the importance of calcium and drinking more low-fat milk, consuming healthier snacks, increasing physical activity, and learning why breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Students from across the state at the end of one of the nutrition lessons: “I went to a birthday party and the waitress poured everybody soda to go with our pizza. I told her that soda has lots of sugar and I don’t like it, so I asked for milk instead,” second grade student. “My mother always packs me cookies for my school lunches. I don’t like cookies, I like fruit, so I send my mom a note each week asking her to pack me fruit.”

Since March, 2010, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County has conducted “lead paint” inspections in hundreds of dwellings throughout Troy, Lansingburgh, and the City of Rensselaer. The program is administered by the Rensselaer County Department of Health, and is one of only three primary “lead paint” inspection programs in New York State. Since its inception, the program has completed 80 home inspections. The goal of the inspections is to identify and remove lead-based paint in homes from children and adults. The inspections become the basis of specific home owner/renter education to develop a safe and healthy environment for the group. Ultimately, this program aids in participants increasing the safety of their home environment as it relates to lead exposure.

In January, four teens represented the state 4-H program, as they demonstrated 4-H STEM programming at Cornell Education Day at the New York State Capital. They met with New York State legislators and staff to discuss 4-H STEM program opportunities and gave them the opportunity to open the doors to legislating and public policy. On this day, our group met and engage with 4-H youth and learn how the emerging technologies is becoming imperative in agriculture and other industries.

Rensselaer County 4-H youth also met with Congressman Paul Tonko, as a follow up to the Capital Days, State and National 4-H Day and Forestry events. As a 4-H member, Mr. Tonko, met with 37 4-H members, including county 4-H Teen Leaders. Our teens spent the 2016 4-H year taking part in a number of programming opportunities, including 4-H programming, 4-H club activities, 4-H state events, State and National 4-H Days, Community Days, Rensselaer County 4-H Days, and other county 4-H events. Our 4- H members to learn more about the dairy industry, make new connections and grow.

The themes and life skills that our teens learn through 4-H programming will help to guide them as they begin to make education and career decisions. Within 4-H we are always encouraging our youth to reach their goals in life. With that, we help to guide them, providing them with the opportunities to succeed, as well as grow. In the 2015-16 4-H year we reached 4,580 youth through our clubs, after-school, school enrichment, and special interest programs focusing on STEM, Citizenship, and Healthy Living. We had 424 4-H club members, 503 after-school club members, and 169 volunteers to help ensure our teens and our positive adult mentor to help guide them through their experiences.
Greetings Friends and Supporters of Cooperative Extension—

The year of 2016 has not failed to keep Cornell Cooperative Extension ever evolving and adjusting to meet the needs of Rensselaer County. We saw the addition of two program offerings: Healthy Neighborhoods and the Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program. The Healthy Neighborhoods program enhances our current efforts in the Primary Lead Prevention and Nutrition Programs. Great synergy has been created with cross referrals and increased capacity to serve our families. Now when we enter homes of residents, we can educate beyond lead prevention and nutrition, to include multiple components of indoor environments and home safety.

Commercial Agriculture and Horticulture offerings ventured into new waters. The data collected from the 2015 comprehensive agriculture survey that we administered was thoughtfully reviewed to determine program needs. With leadership from our Agriculture Program Development Committee and Board of Directors, we joined the Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program. Our office is now home to this team’s Livestock Specialist and we have more than tripled our capacity to address agriculture and horticulture demands as these two industries trend toward more advanced technology and complex economies of scale. Unique to our county remains our strong Consumer Horticulture Program. Our Master Gardeners are an invaluable energizer and multiplier to our programming, meeting the needs of all youth from dairy cattle and equine afterschool programs to school enrichment continued to be high quality programming, meeting the needs of all youth from dairy cattle and equine afterschool programs to school enrichment continued to be high quality.

Our 4-H Youth Development Program from community clubs and afterschool programs to school enrichment continued to be high quality and impactful. S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), Healthy Lifestyles and Community Service efforts continue to dominate programming, meeting the needs of all youth from dairy cattle and equine to gardening and robotics. The success of 4-H is very reliant on an array of very dedicated and hardworking volunteers to expand our outreach to youth. Digital Literacy is one program area that cuts across audits from youth to seniors. Making connections through the Upper Hudson Library System, Rensselaer County office of Economic Development and working with our Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program are just a couple of snippets of the vast audiences that have benefited from Digital Literacy Education.

It is estimated that collectively our programs reached 5,666 households, farmers, producers or residents. Please know you are all invited to reach out to me should you have any needs or ideas that Cornell Cooperative Extension may be able to serve. I thank Rensselaer County for providing the base funding which allows us to leverage other funding and projects to enhance our community. Finally, I thank you all, from staff to volunteers and program participants for getting involved and supporting our Association. I look forward to 2017 and celebrating Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County’s Centennial. The strong roots that have grown since the seed of CCE was planted a hundred years ago is tribute to the role we continue to play in our community.

Sincerely, Bernadine “Bernie” Wiesen, Executive Director

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