Growing the Future; North Wind Programs at the Extension Learning Farm

In 1999, CCE of SLC purchased the Extension Learning Farm property from the People of the State of New York. Since that moment forward, Extension has worked endlessly to rebuild the facility and create a program legacy that is true to the location’s rich educational history. The recent addition of the North Wind Programs at the Extension Learning Farm have dramatically increased its impact, reach and financial sustainability. Together, the North Wind Afterschool and Farm Day Camp are shaping how a generation of people will engage with agriculture and their food systems.

Unveiled only two and six years ago respectively, North Wind Afterschool and Farm Day Camp have rapidly grown in both public recognition and participation, establishing them as core youth programs operating on the Farm. In 2017, Farm Day Camp expanded its length of operation and weekly camper capacity, added staff members, and planned for significant increases in enrollment. The program exceeded expectations by enrolling 240 campers representing an increase of 57 over 2016 and a 85.7% capacity rating. This follows another dramatic increase of 46 campers over the 2015 camping season. The 2017 enrollment reached 21 communities in six counties.

North Wind Afterschool, while smaller in size, has the potential for even greater impacts as caring adult mentors foster long-term positive youth development outcomes. Students engage daily in farm activities including animal husbandry, gardening, healthy lifestyle and nutrition education. The farm-based program has grown to its permitted capacity of 25 students in only two years and now maintains a long waiting list. Financially, it supports the employment of three 4-H Educators, (one FTE and two .5FTEs). The North Wind Director is now challenged with managing the program’s expansion, either on the Farm or at satellite locations across county school districts.
**Agriculture Program**

Extension’s Ag Team collaborates with campus-based faculty and Extension associates to design and conduct field research and educational programs directed to a wide array of topics related to crop and animal production. CCE of SLC works towards improving Ag production efficiency, food quality, and safety, which results in positive changes in production practices and improved economic returns for farmers. In 2017, Extension’s Ag Team reached 2,258 program participants through 144 multi-session educational events including dairy and livestock, dairy processing, biofuels, horticulture, farm business management, natural resources and rural economic vitality. Many more are served during farm visits, at the Extension Office and through the media.

**Food Preservation Program Launched; Workshops in High Demand**

Extension launched a Master Food Preserver Volunteer Program with an intensive three-day training for new volunteers, underwritten by the Canton Community Fund. Graduates now provide food preservation classes across the County and in the Harvest Kitchen at the Extension Learning Farm. The training included the scientific basis of home food preservation; hands-on experience in traditional canning and pressure canning; making jams and jellies; pickling and fermentation; demonstrations in freezing and drying; and a discussion of other methods of preservation. The class graduated 21, the first step toward becoming a certified CCE Master Food Preserver. The actual certifications are awarded after volunteer requirements are met, ensuring they give back to their communities and enrich the lives of others.

**Tractor Safety and Maintenance Training**

In partnerships with Cornell’s Small Farm Program, Extension experienced a renaissance in tractor safety and maintenance training. In late April, CCE of SLC hosted an action packed two-day course targeting first time tractor owners taught by Shane LeBrake, a private consultant out of Maryland. The program was marketed across NY State and funds were available to support military veteran’s enrollment and travel expenses. The course graduated 19 individuals (including seven Ag Studies Academy students who audited the course). Of the remaining 12 participants, nine were out-of-county residents who hailed from Western and Central NY. The program received strong support from local implement dealerships who are seeing an increase in the number of customers with limited machinery experience. Extension plans similar safety programming to be an annual occurrence at the Extension Learning Farm.

**Partnership with St. Lawrence County Sheriff’s Department Provides Valuable Life Skills to Inmates**

Extension strives to deliver programming to underserved and diverse populations regardless of their economic status or life circumstance. The recent partnership with the Sheriff’s Department is an example of how Extension outreach can be uniquely tailored to meet the needs of County residents. Paul Hetzler, Natural Resource and Horticulture Educator, regularly visits the St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility to bring skills-based programs to inmates who have earned the opportunity to participate. In 2017 Extension provided workshops on gardening, invasive species, insect pest identification and control, weed science, tree health and pruning, and ginseng production. Rodney Votra, SLCCF Programs Director, believes that, “These programs provide beneficial knowledge for the participants, allowing them to enter back into the community with new prospects of improving their lives as they rejoin society. The partnership Cornell Cooperative Extension has developed with St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility is a perfect example of one organization’s selfless efforts in making our community a better place for all.”

**Mission:** Extension provides unbiased, educational outreach to the North Country through research, education and demonstration in Food and Agricultural Systems, Life Skills, Community Enhancement, Rural Stewardship, and Youth Development.
Agricultural Studies Academy Enters Second Year; Students Exposed to Wide Ranging Sectors of Agriculture and Career Paths

The Agricultural Studies Academy, a joint venture between St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES and CCE of SLC, graduated its inaugural class of seven students in June 2017. During the course of the year, the students participated in rigorous educational modules and associated practical experiences to gain knowledge, skills and career interests in a wide range of agricultural sectors including:

- Animal Science
- Crop & Soil Science
- Farm Business Management
- Ag Mechanics
- Machinery Operation
- Food Science
- Veterinary Science
- Maple Production
- Natural Resources
- Communications
- Leadership

This year, the students can earn a total of 13 college credits via a partnership with Jefferson Community College and undertake numerous extracurricular activities including 4-H and FFA. The eight students enrolled in the current Academy represent a range of school districts: Canton, Potsdam, Gouverneur, Clifton-Fine, Madrid-Waddington and Lisbon. The program continues to develop exciting strategies to engage the students as they explore their futures in Agriculture.

Master Gardener Volunteers Maintain Skills to Better Serve St. Lawrence County

The Master Gardener Volunteers enjoyed a scenic and informative tour at hardy fruit and nut tree business St. Lawrence Nurseries. This 90+ year old Potsdam business is under new management by North Country native Connor Hardiman. Participants walked through the scionwood orchard with 230+ varieties of apples, pears and plums and also saw a whip grafting demonstration. This fieldtrip is an example of the monthly professional development programs coordinated by the MGV Program intended to cultivate the volunteers knowledge and skills so that they may better serve the residents of St. Lawrence County.

Pictured L to R: Row 1 - Julie Hackett-Cliff, Jean Gang, Carol Budd, Louise Scarlett, Anneke Larrance, Jim Snow, Adam Randall. Row 2- Ken Kogut, Jane Portolese, Paul Hetzler, Loni Recker, Karen Bage, Pam Mahoney, Connor Hardiman

4-H Youth and Family

Extension engages youth and family programming with three distinct mission mandates including citizenship, healthy lifestyles and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). 4-H delivers a variety of program opportunities that reach youth in many different settings including home, school, afterschool, summer camp and the Extension Learning Farm. 4-H programs use the experiential education model and are delivered by trained volunteers and youth development staff. 4-H activities address at least one of the mission mandates but often intertwine all three.

2017 Program Results

The Youth and Family Team engaged 6,470 participants:

- 339 4-H Club members
- 818 campers at 4-H Camp Overlook
- 240 day campers at the Extension Learning Farm
- 360 students in the Extended School Day Program
- 80 senior citizens in the Walk with Ease and Tai Chi Programs
- 3,181 youth in school enrichment activities
- 1,164 youth in short-term special interest programs
- 51 young adults employed by 4-H Camp Overlook
- 136 families in EFNEP nutrition education
- 101 enrolled volunteer (4-H, MGV and MFP Programs)

“The Ag Studies Academy provides an ideal farm environment where mistakes are not feared, and where we can improve our skills.” - James Ellard, 2017 Ag Studies Academy graduate who is now enrolled at SUNY Canton.
MAAPs Program at 4-H Camp Overlook
In 2017, 4-H Camp Overlook unveiled the MAAPs Program, a tiered series of wilderness education classes and Adirondack outings. The levels include Mountaineers, Alpine Adventurers and Pathfinder (MAAPs) and participation is based on camper’s age and experience. Each level provides a strong base of knowledge and positive experience in backcountry camping. In total, 115 campers took part in the MAAPs program. The majority, 90, were in the all-ages Pathfinder class. Pathfinder is meant to be an introduction to backpacking which will inspire campers to participate in the off-camp trips as they get older. The second tier, Alpine Adventurers, is for ages 11+ and includes a two-night/three-day trip into the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks. Two sessions of Alpine Adventurers were conducted this summer. More daring campers participated in the challenging Mountaineers trip during which they backpacked from the Adirondack Loj to Johns Brook Lodge on a 4-night/5-day excursion. Their trip took them over the summit of Mt. Marcy and through Avalanche Pass. Campers built strong bonds as they shared experiences, inside jokes, stories and the pride of hiking the backcountry.

EFNEP Reimagined in 2017
Childhood obesity, limited access and resources for fresh fruits and vegetables, and lack of knowledge about what makes up a balanced diet is a real challenge in St. Lawrence County. In 2017, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) modified its staff structure, mode of delivery, and community partnerships with the intent to better address this urgent health concern, access to healthy foods, and healthy meal planning, while attempting to improve services to local constituents and partners. Nutrition Educators focused their energy on rebuilding the program and specialized their training around program delivery and knowledge of health and nutrition for low income families. Programs were creatively marketed as enticing cooking and food preservation classes, resulting in new and valuable partnerships with the local food pantries and community centers, libraries, low-income housing complexes, health care providers, and other family services across the county. EFNEP, with support from the Walmart Foundation, also brought 4-H Healthy Lifestyles education to youth participants in schools, after schools, and camp programs. This effective delivery strategy created important new linkages between 4-H and Nutrition programs.

Leveraging County Funding to Build Financial Sustainability
St. Lawrence County appropriated $378,541 to Extension in 2017. It is anticipated that CCE of SLC will generate $1,286,411 in Federal & State funding, grants & contracts, and program operations (including 4-H Camp Overlook). This represents a $3.40 match for every dollar in funding provided by the County Board of Legislators. In recent years Extension has devoted significant energy towards developing new partnerships, enterprises and revenue streams to build financial resilience and sustainability. Examples of this year’s efforts include renewed NIFA funding through a partnership with Clarkson University for anaerobic digester research, State funding through a partnership with BOCES for the Ag Studies Academy, USDA funding for the countywide Local Food Initiative and continued growth of innovative programs which provide critical revenue to the Association.

Examples of Funding Leveraged with County Support
- $82,519 in Smith Lever and NYS 224 funding for educator staff.
- $342,098 in matching funds for the NNY Regional Ag Program.
- $300,000 in State Funds for NNY Harvest NY Program.
- $102,500 in Federal funds for the EFNEP outreach to income eligible families.
- $71,760 in USDA RBDG in support Extension’s Local Food Initiative.
- $53,170 in Federal funds for after-school programs in six school districts.
- $334,914 in State funds for employee state fringe benefits.
- $592,520 in program and camp fees that enable Extension to meet its mission.

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