Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County

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~ Serving Schenectady County Since 1918 ~

Arden Lawand, Master Gardener Volunteer
Graphic Design
September 2016

Dear Friend of Extension,

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County (CCE,SC) proudly presents the Association’s 2016 Annual Report to residents, elected officials and stakeholders. CCE,SC puts experience and research knowledge to work educating residents in the areas of Youth Development, Wellness and Nutrition, and Agriculture and Horticulture. The programming highlighted in these pages, as well as all of the programming done by CCE,SC, would not be possible without the continued support of government partnerships, grants, Cornell University and the tireless work of staff, volunteers, community and partnering non-profits.

This year the Board of Directors committed to engage in the strategic planning process through the engagement of the New York Council of Nonprofits. During 2016, the board met with a strategic planning consultant to identify programming priorities, organizational strengths and areas for development. CCE,SC looks forward to working on the development of new initiatives and expanding existing programming throughout Schenectady County.

The Association Board of Directors and staff would like to thank the more than 150 volunteers who assist CCE,SC to be a vital resource to Schenectady County. We are excited to grow our educational programs to address the needs of County residents.

This report is a sampling of the many programs offered by CCE Schenectady. Please take a moment to review and for more information, please visit www.cceschenectady.org.

Sincerely,

Emily Perks-Quinlan
Board President

Sarah Pechar
Executive Director
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) offers nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referrals and a variety of nutritious foods to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women, infants and children up to age five to promote and support good health.

WIC improves the health of pregnant women, new mothers and their infants and children. The foods provided through WIC are a good source of nutrients often missing from the diets of women and young children. WIC participants have longer, healthier pregnancies and fewer premature births.

The Schenectady WIC program reaches approximately 2,800 participants each month.

- WIC continues to collaborate closely with Schenectady County Public Health Services to ensure that participants’ educational needs are met. Individuals and families participating in the WIC program receive nutrition education on topics including: breastfeeding, infant and child nutrition, and making healthy dietary choices consistent with USDA’s MyPlate. Participants also receive referrals to other community-based programs and services that will help meet their needs and goals.

- The Schenectady WIC program participates in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Through this program, WIC participants receive vouchers redeemable for fresh produce at local farmers markets. Additional funding from Ag and Markets enabled over 2000 sets of vouchers to be distributed to participants.

- WIC has a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program where specially trained peer counselors help breastfeeding mothers succeed. Through this program, WIC offers breast pumps, if needed, and individualized breastfeeding support for eligible WIC participants. A new class of peer counselors began training in August and they are looking forward to graduating and supporting WIC moms.
Healthy Schenectady Families

Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death among children in the United States. Buckling children in age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats and seat belts reduces serious and fatal injuries:

- **Car seat use reduces the risk for death to infants (birth -1 year) by 71% and to toddlers (aged 1-4 years) by 54% in passenger vehicles.**

- **Booster seat use reduces the risk for serious injury by 45% for children aged 4-8 when compared with seat belt use alone.**

Through a grant from the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County and the Healthy Schenectady Families Program collaborates with Parsons Early Head Start to host car seat clinics for limited resource Schenectady County residents.

Certified seat technicians educate parents and caregivers on the proper car seat to install that will meet the specific needs of the infant or child based on the child’s age and size. Educators will then show the parents/caregivers how to properly install the appropriate car seat and then the parent/caregiver will do the final installation.

Through this funding, if families arrive at the car seat clinic without the appropriate car seat or with an expired car seat, educators are able to provide seats as needed for all children in the family.

Since starting the program in October of 2014, 140 installations have occurred. Educators have replaced 116 expired, damaged or inappropriate car seats for 95 families.
The Little Diggers Program

...brings together a diverse group of pre-school-aged children from the City of Schenectady and its suburbs for hands-on learning activities in an urban garden setting.

- These initiatives enable young children ages 3-5 to connect with the outside world and their environment.
  - Through storytelling, crafts, drama, and physical games, children learned about gardening and nutrition.

- In 2015, 28 children engaged in fun activities, including planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting.

- Children were able to help prepare and taste food from the garden.

Additionally, teens participating in the Roots and Wisdom Program assisted with teaching the Little Diggers.

- Serving as mentors to the younger children, they worked closely with two or three children at a time. Roots and Wisdom youth gained important skills in leadership, community spirit, self-confidence and choosing a healthy lifestyle. The Times Union Hope Fund provided scholarships to qualified Little Digger families.

As a result, caregivers reported that children are eating fresh vegetables that were introduced while they participated in the program.

Through the Little Diggers program, children gained an understanding of the food cycle from planting to harvest and consumption.

This knowledge creates a lifelong interest in gardening and making healthy food choices.
4-H reached 1,928 youth ages 5-19

... through community clubs, family 4-H, school enrichment, afterschool, library partnerships and special interest programs.

- 4-H focuses on the USDA Mission Mandates of STEM, Healthy Living, and Citizenship.
- A noted success is the doubling of the number of youth enrolled in community 4-H and Family 4-H clubs.
- As part of New York State Ag In the Classroom’s Agriculture Literacy Week, 429 second graders learned about the apple industry through George Ella Lyon’s book, Weaving the Rainbow.
- Seventy-one youth ages 5-14 explored the connection between health and staying physically active as part of the 4-H Summer Reading Partnership between 4-H and public libraries, “On Your Mark, Get Set, Read.”

Youth learned about parts of the body, and explored various fun ways to stay active through games.

In addition, they experimented with pedometers and predicting how many steps it took to do various tasks.

- Through special funding from New York State Ag and Markets, over 600 youth learned about Invasive Species and what they can do to prevent the spread of invasive insects, plants, and animals.
- Participation in 4-H STEM programming enabled 497 youth to explore rocketry and 50 youth utilized geospatial technology (GIS/GPS) including mapping the Mabee Farm. In the area of citizenship, over 65 youth completed community service projects. Additionally, youth developed life skills such as public speaking, team work, time management, and leadership development.
Smarter Lunchrooms

Cornell Cooperative Extension was excited to partner with Cornell University on the nationwide USDA-funded project Smarter Lunchrooms. This project is designed to test small, low- or no-cost changes to school cafeteria environments in order to promote healthy eating behaviors and sustainability. The project was implemented in Schenectady and Albany Counties in the 2015-2016 school year. There were a total of eight schools involved in the Smarter Lunchrooms intervention. The schools involved in Albany County included Shaker Junior High School, and the following middle schools: Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk, Sand Creek, Lisha Kill, Bethlehem, and Farnsworth. The middle schools involved in Schenectady County included Draper and Schalmont.

With guidance from CCE, schools implemented at least three low-cost or no-cost changes throughout the school year. The interventions included promotion of food groups that are under consumed in the school lunch program.

Fruits: Use black display cups to hold the fruit. Display fruit factoid posters in a visible location. Rotate each week.

Vegetables: Place the vegetable right after the hot entrée (at least not before the entrée). Use cups provided by the project to hold the raw vegetables/salads. Display vegetable factoid posters in a visible location. Rotate each week.

White Milk: Display white milk in easy-to-reach location and in front of sugar-added beverages, including: chocolate/strawberry milk, Gatorade/Snapple, and 100% fruit juices. Place signs with “Ice Cold White Milk” next to all beverage coolers.

The intervention period was six weeks long during which weekly visits were performed to check in on challenges and perceptions of changes. Results are still being analyzed and will be combined with results from all NYS projects. The research is using “behavioral economics” as a way to look at how we make our food choices. Basically, we tend to eat the food that is easiest to find.

By making healthy choices the easiest choices, we can help people eat healthier without them even knowing it!
Youth Agriculture & Environmental Education

...educators work with youth year-round, and deliver multi-faceted programming to Schenectady County youth.

Eighty seniors from Mohonasen High School were engaged in interactive learning activities at the Sustainable Living Center on topics such as composting, the differences between traditional and organic gardening, cover crops, integrated pest management and invasive species.

Through a partnership with Schenectady City School District and Schenectady ARC, ten individuals with disabilities gained skills and confidence in seeding and garden preparation.

Roots and Wisdom

...a summer youth agriculture and community service program that brings together urban, suburban, and rural Schenectady County residents.

The Sustainable Living Center in Central Park is used as the primary outdoor classroom main garden with supporting learning activities held at the Fehr Avenue garden site.

All Roots and Wisdom participants under the age of 19 are also enrolled as special interest 4-H members.

This year Roots and Wisdom youth and crew leaders came to the garden through partnerships with Schenectady Job Training Agency, Girls Inc. of the Greater Capital Region, SUNY Cobleskill, SUNY Albany and Skidmore College.

Roots and Wisdom developed leadership qualities among returning crew members who took on the role of Crew Leader this summer.

- On average, 250 pounds of produce was harvested weekly. This produce was sold at a weekly farm stand where youth learned business principles and customer service skills.

- Additionally, youth interacted with community members who purchased a season’s worth of produce through the Harvest Share program. As a way of giving back to the community, Roots and Wisdom donated produce to local food pantries. The participants also took weekly trips to a local grocery store to pick up food scraps for compost for next year’s garden.
Schenectady County Master Gardener Volunteers...deliver

Through a new collaboration with Schenectady County Senior and Long Term Care Services, Master Gardeners visited the four senior meal sites throughout the county and offered classes on a variety of topics, such as growing and cooking with herbs; home vegetable gardening; container gardening; garden design; perennials and trees and shrubs. Through these programs, participants learned best management practices that ensure success while preserving the natural environment.

The Master Gardener volunteers in Schenectady County delivered educational programs to over 650 school-aged students throughout the county. Topics such as pollinators; birds and butterflies; soils, composting and recycling; and vegetable gardening and the benefits of growing our own food were highlighted. Volunteers continued to work with local Girl Scouts at the Sustainable Living Center and expanded program offerings that matched badge requirements related to gardening and the environment.

Master Gardener volunteers assisted with numerous beautification programs in the community including the Native Bird and Butterfly Garden and the Meadow Garden in Central Park, as well as the Bird and Butterfly Garden at the Scotia Branch Library. They also assisted miSci with an educational butterfly exhibit and helped to maintain the Animal Protective Foundation’s garden. Volunteers distributed over 50,000 flowers for the Adopt-a-Public Space program to help beautify Schenectady County. Additionally, the Master Gardeners collaborate with the Friends of the Greenhouse to raise awareness and support for the Central Park Greenhouses.

Working directly with youth enrolled in the Roots and Wisdom Program, volunteers assisted with mentoring the youth on horticulture and gardening skills and helped to maintain vegetable gardens at the Sustainable Living Center in Central Park.

It is estimated that the Master Gardener program responded to 3,500 phone or email inquiries on a myriad of issues ranging from household pest management to complex horticultural issues in lawn and landscape settings. Master Gardeners also tested approximately 500 soil samples, identified numerous insects and plants, and diagnosed plant problems and diseases.
Partnership in Community Health (PICH)

Did you know there are over 140,000 people who are food insecure in the Capital Region?

That is one out of every ten people who are hungry. Most people would think the opposite of hungry is full; however, it is important to consider the quality of food consumed.

Food pantries are charitable organizations that directly provide clients with food to battle hunger throughout the United States. Food pantries receive most of their food from a food bank which organizes food that is donated or gleaned from food producers to mitigate waste. In Schenectady County there are 15 organized food pantries serving the community. The Partnership in Community Health (PICH) project helps these pantries serve healthy foods to their clients.

CCESC partnered with Schenectady County Public Health Services to work with five food pantries to increase healthy food options and create policies to support this work. Interviews were conducted with food pantry directors throughout Schenectady County. Each pantry has different staffing, space, and capacity but an underlying desire to serve clients with respect and provide them with needed food. Over the course of two months, educators completed 308 surveys of pantry clients. Results showed that individual pantries have between 10-30% of clients or a household member with at least one diagnosed health condition and that the majority of participants were considered overweight based on BMI. Along with questions about health status, clients were also asked if there were any foods pantries could provide to meet dietary restrictions. Responses indicated the desire to have more options for lower sugar, fat, and sodium foods including more fish, lean meat, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and fresh fruits and vegetables. After reviewing survey data and working with educators, each of these five pantries identified and made environmental changes (such as layout and signage) in order to encourage increased consumption of healthy foods. In September, a press event was held to highlight the work of the PICH program and the impacts made at several local food pantries.
SNAP-Ed...is designed to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) will make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate, a curriculum of grade-level appropriate lessons for students in kindergarten through 6th grade.

MyPlate has several behavior-specific messages that include:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Make at least half your grains, whole grains
- Drink water instead of sugary beverages
- And — be active in your own way.

Lessons engage the learners on what are healthy foods, how to eat healthy, how to stay or become active, and how to connect with family members to create a healthy environment at home. Each lesson is approximately 30 minutes long and students complete activities on meal planning, healthy snacks, sugary beverages, and create posters about being active and eating right.

The CCESC educator visited nine elementary schools, working with 35 different classrooms and completed 152 lessons. Programming began in April 2015 and continued during the 2015-2016 school year. Most classes received five lessons with some adding additional lessons. Each class was also able to sample a selection of fresh fruits during one lesson. In addition, the educator also worked with Girl’s Inc. during their summer camp. Girls in grades kindergarten to 8th received lessons on how to prepare healthy snacks and basic food safety.
Nutrition Education for Seniors

CCESC delivers nutrition education to seniors participating in congregate and home-delivered meal programs through a contract with Schenectady County Senior and Long-Term Care Services. Over 370 seniors attended at least one of the eight presentations offered on topics including:

- Fluids and dehydration
- Mindful eating
- Physical activity
- Protein intake to prevent muscle loss, milk and dairy alternatives, and antioxidants.

Additionally, over 300 home-delivered meal participants received educational materials on:

- Food safety
- Sodium and hypertension
- Eating right on a budget
- Cooking tips to preserve nutrients.

Seniors ...at a higher risk for food borne illnesses, safe food handling and preparation practices are extremely important. CCESC educators work with kitchen staff at all meal sites as well as program participants to ensure safe food preparation practices.

Outreach to seniors also occurred at health fairs, the annual senior picnic and senior residential communities.

Forty seniors received individualized nutrition education. This opportunity enables the educator to incorporate food preferences, habits and health concerns into a tailored eating plan. Referrals to other community services are provided when appropriate.
Capital Area Agriculture & Horticulture Program

Members of the Capital Area Agricultural & Horticulture Program (CAAHP) have been busy once again this year providing technical assistance and education to the farming community in Schenectady County.

We welcomed two new additions to the team in 2016. Lily Calderwood joined the team in January as the Commercial Horticulture Educator. Hank Bignell joined the team in April as the Livestock Educator.

Several educational activities benefited Schenectady County producers, including a discussion group on cover crops and a workshop to help farmers enhance the production and quality of the hay.

Lily Calderwood is using the greenhouses at the Sustainable Living Center for research and workshops on biocontrol of horticultural pests. Team members continue to be available to answer phone calls and make visits to Schenectady County producers on a wide variety of topics.

In response to numerous requests received from landowners, CAAHP staff held a multi-county meeting for rural landowners who had received inquiries from solar companies regarding placement of solar equipment on their farm land. The meeting included representatives from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority, and legal counsel. The meetings were well attended over the region.

Resources from the meeting were posted to the CAAHP website (https://blogs.cornell.edu/capitalareaagandhortprogram) and well utilized.
2015 Financial Support - Income

- Total County Support: $1,042,909 (47%)
- Total State Support: $776,571 (35%)
- Total Federal Support: $295,513 (13%)
- Total Other Support: $110,809 (5%)
- Total Support: $2,225,802 (100%)

2015 Program Revenue

- Total County Support: $1,042,909 (47%)
- Total State Support: $776,571 (35%)
- Total Federal Support: $295,513 (13%)
- Total Other Support: $110,809 (5%)
- Total Revenue: $2,225,802 (100%)

2015 Functional Expenses

- Program Services: 80%
- Management & General: 20%
- Total Expenses: 100%