

2011 Annual Report

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Extension Supporters,

As it turns out 2011 will be my final year as the Executive Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Columbia and Greene Counties. I am preparing to begin a new career at Cornell University working at the statewide administrative level of the organization and will take my experiences here with me as we all work together to ensure that Cooperative Extension continues to be a vital organization working on behalf of New Yorker's from Long Island to Buffalo. I want to thank all of the board members, staff members and program participants who have helped us respond to the needs of our communities over these years. In particular I appreciate the spirit of collaboration and creativity that has developed in recent years as we have explored new ways of doing our work as circumstances and priorities have shifted around us.

2012 is an opportunity to carry all of these efforts to another level as we work together to plan new programs and prioritize our efforts, seek a new leader for the Columbia-Greene Association and embrace new approaches to our work that help address the 21st century challenges facing our families, businesses and communities.

I wish you all the best as you tackle this new world together!

Andrew S. Turner, Executive Director

THE FOLLOWING PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS
PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF THE DEPTH AND
BREADTH OF CCE'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H TRAINS SCIENCE CONSULTANTS

Community sites like libraries and afterschool programs are looking to partner with 4-H to present fun hands-on science programs. There are many more requests than can be filled. Extension Educators Linda Tripp, Kelly Radzik, and Beth Horton collaborated on a New York State 4-H Foundation Grant to provide training to under-employed teachers to meet this need.

These "4-H Science Consultants" extended our outreach this summer and fall, by travelling to summer recreation sites, libraries, and other community programs. Using 4-H curricula like "Magic Bubbles" and "Birds in Your Backyard," the consultants increased participants' skills in important areas like making predictions, interpreting data, and developing critical thinking skills.

A participant in a 4-H Science program at the Catskill Library made this scientific observation during the "Dancing Raisins" activity: "The raisins will sink to the bottom when you put them in the bubble (seltzer) water. When you blow on the raisins, more bubbles go on the raisins." These kind of hands-on experiences keep things real for youth as they learn basic scientific concepts.

Twelve consultants have been trained to work in both Columbia and Greene Counties. The program will continue through 2012 thanks to additional funding from the Stewart's Holiday Match program.

4-H YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN CITIZEN SCIENCE

During the summer, 4-H Extension Educator, Crystil-Lee Skoda, provided regional training to youth on the citizen science project Wasp Watcher. This project uses a docile native wasp called The Smokey Winged Beetle Bandit, *Cerceris fuminpennis*, as a biosurveillance tool to monitor the Emerald Ash Borer. Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive beetle which kills Ash trees in as little as three years.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Ash trees make up 7% of the trees across New York State.

At the completion of the project seven groups of youth and adults from six counties participated in the Wasp Watcher training program. As a result of the regional presentations four groups committed to Wasp Watchers this summer. And other trained participants have indicated intention to complete the project in the coming season.



Within Greene County youth from the Siuslaw Shooters 4-H Archery Club participated in searching for the wasp used in the project. Currently there are no known wasp colonies in the county. A map of searched sites was created from these searches to aid citizen scientists with this project in the 2012 Wasp Watcher season.

Special funding to extend this project to a regional basis was provided by Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership.

4-H CLUB MEMBERS ARE LOCAL LEADERS

As the youth development program of New York's land-grant university – Cornell University –and the Cooperative Extension System, 4-H fosters an innovative, “learn by doing” approach with proven results. The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, a longitudinal study conducted by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, shows youth engaged with 4-H are:

- Nearly two times more likely to get better grades in school;
- Nearly two times more likely to plan to go to college;
- 41 percent less likely to engage in risky behaviors; and
- 25 percent more likely to positively contribute to their families and communities.

In 2011 almost 100 local volunteers help to lead 4-H clubs located throughout Greene County. These adults organize the clubs in their communities, provide project leadership, are guest speakers, evaluate 4-H exhibits at the fair, and more. The caring support of adult volunteers and mentors inspires these young local leaders in 4-H to work collaboratively (especially as they participate as club

officers), take the lead on their own projects and set and achieve goals with confidence.

Virtually every 4-H member, in conjunction with their 4-H club, participates in service activities in their communities. They look to the needs of those in their local community – providing food to the food pantry, holiday boxes to families in need, compassion to

the elderly, help for homeless pets, activities for young children and more.

4-H members build their confidence and speaking skills by participating in the public presentation program and sharing their knowledge at the county fair. They explore career options as participants in programs such as Cornell Career Explorations and Cobleskill Agribusiness Career Trip.

Fueled by research-driven programming, 4-H'ers engage in hands-on learning activities in the areas of science, citizenship and healthy living. Their local 4-H club volunteers provide many hours of guidance as 4-H members explore, build, lead, create, share.

AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE

After a cool, wet spring, the crop plantings were delayed, and the hay gathering was sporadic. After a pretty fair middle to the growing season, Tropical Storms Irene and Lee dumped a major deluge on the region. Even the higher elevations of the county, as well as the lower lying areas took a major hit from the “gallons and gravity” combination, and many crops, livestock, equipment, facilities, roads, bridges, and a great deal of soil from farmland were lost. CCE helped bring the farmers and disaster relief organizations together in a meeting at the ARC in early September. The networking that was afforded by the meeting helped many farms gain access to the federal, state, and county supportive agencies’ relief efforts, and began the process of healing up and starting over. Disaster relief was a focus of our efforts at CCE for some time, and in additions to the meeting and networking, programs for water quality were held and water test kits were distributed.

The hops demonstration project was slow to materialize this spring, due to the cool, wet weather, the change in venue for growing areas, and late arrival of hops rhizomes

ordered in. There were four cooperating producers involved in the project - funded by Senator Seward through the IDA. There were four different locations and four different sets of production techniques employed in the demonstration. Hopefully, the lessons learned may assist others who wish to raise hops in the future. The rhizomes were planted in early June, with approximately 2/3 of them sprouting in 8-12 days and continuing on through the season in like numbers. Trellises were erected and the growing began, as the hops "bines" reached and climbed for the sky. The roots developed well during the summer, but the harvest was expectedly light, due to the lateness of planting. Next year, we expect there will be a decent harvest, and the connection between growers and brewers should be forged in earnest.

The strategic collaboration between the CCE Columbia and CCE Greene associations and the dual ag program also began this year. Other agriculturally-related initiatives and programs that were featured this year included a maple production school and a festival; silvopasture field work; new grazing plans and follow-up visits with graziers; many specific contacts with farmers raising various crops and livestock; and then, referrals to the newly established five-county Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program, designed to assist our area farmers with world-class expertise and relevance in 1) farm business management, 2) soils and field crops, 3) livestock production and marketing, 4) beginning farmers and market development, and 5) commercial horticulture.

CAPITAL AREA AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

Serving Albany, Columbia, Greene, Schenectady and Washington Counties

The commercial agriculture and horticulture industry in New York's Capital Region is a thriving, diverse industry that relies on the research of Cornell University and other Land Grant Institutions to maximize profitability and sustainability. During 2010 and 2011 the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Albany, Columbia, Greene, Schenectady and Washington Counties, with financial assistance and guidance from Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration in Ithaca, were able to design and implement a new regional programming model for the commercial agriculture and horticulture industry.

The initial step in this process was an analysis of the trends in the agriculture and horticulture industry that

were observed in changes in the data reported in the USDA Census of Agriculture. These trends included increased number of farms in all of the counties with the majority of the increase in the smallest farms and the larger farm categories. Fruit and vegetable production has increased significantly as has the production of livestock for food and fiber. The dairy and field crop industry has seen major changes in recent years and continues to be of high importance to the overall agricultural industry in the region.

Five existing county-based educators transferred into new regional positions. These regional positions allow for staff to develop specialization and are anticipated to facilitate increased research and demonstration projects in the region and the opportunity for the development of increased external funding for agricultural projects in the region. These five educators remain based in county offices. Their specialties and office locations are as follows:

- Farm Business Management: Sandy Buxton, Washington County
- Agronomy: Aaron Gabriel, Washington County
- New Farmer/Market Development: Steve Hadcock, Columbia County
- Livestock: Tom Gallagher, Albany County
- Horticulture: Chuck Schmitt, Albany County

Accomplishments in the first eight months of this program include the formation of regional advisory committees for each of the program areas. These committees will meet on a bi-annual basis and will provide direction to the research and educational program for which each staff member is responsible. These committees also include representation from Cornell faculty members to help strengthen the connection between campus, the educators and the producers.

Other accomplishments include:

- Development of a weekly email newsletter that highlights upcoming programs and issues of importance to producers has been initiated. This weekly newsletter has over 700 subscribers from around the region.
- Agriculture Educators from around the region put together several meetings on disaster assistance for farmers in response to the devastation caused by tropical storms Irene and Lee.

- A beef grading clinic was held over the summer. Seventy-two producers attended and 17 earned Beef Quality Assurance Certification. Producers who have BQA Certification agree to follow particular management practices in their operations and take responsibility for the quality of the beef produced on their farms.
- The agronomy educator held several Field Crop Scouting Sessions around the region. At these sessions producers get the opportunity to learn to scout for insects and diseases in their crops and earn recertification credits for their pesticide licenses.
- An open house for farmers was held at a local manufacturing plant that produces natural, biodegradable packaging products. This application is a potential outlet for locally produced field crops and may grow into a new market for local farmers.
- Several "Beginning Farm Business Management" courses were held around the region. This class gives new and established farmers the tools they need to take control of their record keeping and finances and helps to establish a framework of good financial information to help agricultural businesses to meet both family and financial goals.
- A "Beginning a Small Fruit Business Meeting" was held where individuals interested in fruit farming were introduced to business management and production principles involved in fruit production.
- A Christmas Tree IPM Project continues with growers learning new methods for scouting for foliar diseases of evergreen trees.
- An educational program aimed at increasing the skill of landscape architects around plant materials has been developed. Participants have increased their skills around site assessment and plant material selection.

Staff has also been diligent in developing grant proposals. Several proposals are out for consideration including one which would fund the development of a Vegetable Farm Business Summary Program loosely modeled on the Dairy Farm Business Summaries.

Future directions for 2012 include an increase in field research work and increased programming throughout the year to better meet the needs of all producers.

CAPITAL DISTRICT VEGETABLE & SMALL FRUIT PROGRAM

Serving Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren and Washington Counties

Over twelve local field trials help to inform growers about plant variety selection. The trials are looking at the viability of varieties of tomatoes and potatoes. Some trials are looking at cover crops, use of high tunnels for greens and reduced tillage for strawberries. Finally, others are evaluating methods of planting sweet potatoes and the effect of various herbicide applications when growing pumpkins and garlic.

The team consistently scouts for specific pests during the growing season so as to provide a quick turn-around of recommendations to local farmers as they deal with the pests before crop damage takes place.

2011 was an especially memorable growing season because of the challenge brought forth by excessive rain at the beginning and end of the season with high temperatures and a lack a rain in the middle. With the season-ending record rains affecting many farmers the team assisted county educators with informational meetings about emergency programs and continues to conduct disaster assessments with farmers.



A number of educational courses, workshops and meetings were held throughout the year. Farmers have been able to participate via on-line courses, internet webinars, face-to-face classroom and field programs.

The team continues to pursue grant-funded projects to help extend the research and educational work it conducts. SARE, SCRI and USDA funded grants find the team as lead or partners in projects to study pests like the brown narnorated stink bug, growing conditions like the reduced till strawberries and marketing such as the farmers market promotion program.

CONSUMER HORTICULTURE & MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

It was another busy year in Greene County. We continue to be the place to go for local residents looking for gardening information. Our garden hot-line has been busy and we also have many visitors bringing samples from their homes, yards, gardens as well as their ponds. The Master Gardeners and staff help local residents identify plants, pests and diseases from their home grounds as well as help them make informed environmentally sound decisions about how to deal with problems that arise. The Master Gardeners also work one-on-one testing soil and answering questions from local gardeners at events around the county.

We offered many programs during the year on a range of issues such as classes on garden planning and preparation, growing in raised beds or containers, growing and planting vegetables, soil workshops, 21st Century lawn care, and pruning. A holistic pond management class for watershed residents was also provided.

Our tick-borne disease outreach this year included programs for the residents of Sleepy Hollow Lake, a recorded program for the DEC and a program for the Adult Learning Institute at Columbia-Greene Community College. Our youth outreach included tick programs for youth in Columbia County (Chatham and Taconic Hills), Greene County's Dare Day at South Lake and CCE's Environmental Awareness Day at the Siuslaw Forest of the Agroforestry Resource Center. We reach hundreds of youth each year with tick-borne disease prevention strategies.

On September 12, Master Gardener Volunteer Training began for Columbia and Greene Counties. The training, which ran nearly every Monday until mid-December, will



result in 16 new volunteers between the two counties. The new volunteers will help increase our outreach next year. As part of a grant-funded project through the Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership, we developed a regional master gardener training module on invasive species.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

EAT SMART NEW YORK (ESNY)



Nutrition education at the individual and household level is a critical part of supporting the overall health and well-being of our county's residents. The goal of ESNY is to improve dietary choices, food handling and preparation practices, food budget management, and levels of physical activity among limited-resource

adults and their families with the long-term goals of increasing food security and reducing the incidence of chronic disease. Individuals who enroll in ESNY receive, at no charge, a minimum of 6 nutrition lessons, which are delivered on an individual basis (typically in the participant's home) or in a group setting. Lessons are derived from one or more approved curricula and delivered using a research-based and thoroughly tested method of instruction. 2011 was a particularly difficult year for the ESNY program, as the program was furloughed at the end of April due to funding issues. However, even with the shortened year, Nutrition Program Educators Eileen West and Rebecca Polmateer managed to deliver education to 121 individuals, with 85 individuals completing 6 or more lessons. We are also excited to report that ESNY has returned for the 2012 program year, with 3 educators, Eileen West, Karyn Novakowski and Charity Lanthier, covering both Greene and Columbia Counties.

PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Parenting Education Program consists of two distinct programs designed to provide parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective parents. The two programs are the Home-Based Parenting Education Program and the Parenting Skills Training Program. The Home-Based Parenting Education Program

works intensively with families in the home who have been referred exclusively by the Greene County Department of Social Services and other social service agencies. The experienced parenting educators, Kelly Ryan and Peggy Henne, provide hands-on practical education covering a wide variety of parenting topics. The Parenting Skills Training Program entails a 16 week series of classes that are open to the general public and cover a variety of topics. They take place at the Department of Social Services and are offered twice a week. During 2011, education was delivered to 68 families through the Home-Based Parenting Education Program, impacting 154 children who are considered at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Of the 68 families, 25 met their goals and graduated the program, with 29 families continuing on into 2012. The Parenting Skills Training Program reached 67 individuals, with 31 completing all 16 classes and receiving their certificates of participation.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

GREENE COUNTY FLOOD RESPONSE

Tropical Storms Irene and Lee had a devastating effect on portions of Greene County in the late summer and fall of 2011. CCE Greene responded to the floods in a variety of ways to provide assistance for recovery.

Staff members from CCE Greene assisted the county in elements of organization of the flood response; staff members made a coordinated effort to provide research-based information to householders on issues such as flooded wells and septic systems, mold remediation and other topics related to flooding. CCE Greene also responded by providing easy access to water well testing kits to assist landowners in determining the safety of their drinking water after the flood. In addition, CCE Greene, in partnership with the regional agricultural group, organized a program to bring together agencies, organizations, and businesses that could be of assistance to farmers in relief and recovery efforts from the effects of Irene.

Communities and individuals living near streams in Greene County were severely impacted by flooding due to tropical storms Irene and Lee. People were in need of reliable, research-tested information on a variety of topics related to flood recovery.

CCE Greene responded to the identified need by posting fact sheets on our website, printing hard copies of fact sheets for distribution in heavily impacted areas, and reading fact sheets on local radio broadcasts.

CCE staff also secured cases of water test kits from St. Peter's Bender Environmental Laboratory as well as a local water testing lab. CCE was instrumental in raising awareness of the need to test flooded wells and for distributing over 150 water test kits in hard hit areas.

CCE also provided educational programs pertinent to storm recovery soon after the event, including a Wells and Septic program for residents and an Emergency Agricultural Meeting for Area Farmers program designed to offer farmers access to all of the different disaster relief efforts being carried on by the different organizations and agencies, in one place. In December, responding to inquiries about repeated failed water tests; CCE organized a program that covered this topic, as well as persistent mold issues, in the Town of Windham. John Wilson from St. Peter's Bender Environmental Laboratory, provided expert advice on tackling wells and other water sources impacted by the flooding.

Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, (FEMA) the Farm Services Agency, (FSA) Farm Bureau, (FB) NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS) Soil and Water Conservation Districts, (SWCD) the Department of Labor, (DOL) the Department of Social Services, (DSS) Crop Insurers, Farm Credit East, and Cornell Cooperative Extension were on hand to help answer questions, and direct farmers to programs within the disaster relief efforts that best fit their needs. Over 50 participants attended.



CCE Greene was able to effectively reach impacted communities with timely and reliable information on flood recovery. The impact of this service has not been quantified, but we believe that hundreds of households, with a variety of needs, have benefited from the services we provided and continue to provide in flood recovery.

Collaborators who worked with CCE Greene on these initiatives include WRIP and WGXC radio stations, St. Peter's Bender Environmental Laboratory, Meyer's Environmental Laboratory, Columbia County Department of Health, CCE Columbia County, and the Extension Disaster Emergency Network.

In addition to the community response to Hurricane Irene, the Agroforestry Resource Center hosted close to 200 programs, reaching an estimated 2,000 participants. The programs included updating targeted audiences on invasive insect pests threatening our forests, learning how to saving money by saving energy, organizing Master Forester Owners to assist local residents with forest stewardship concerns, studying our local creeks in order to protect water quality and learning about mushroom cultivation for both fun and profit. All of these programs help contribute to the long term economic and ecological sustainability of our regional natural resources.

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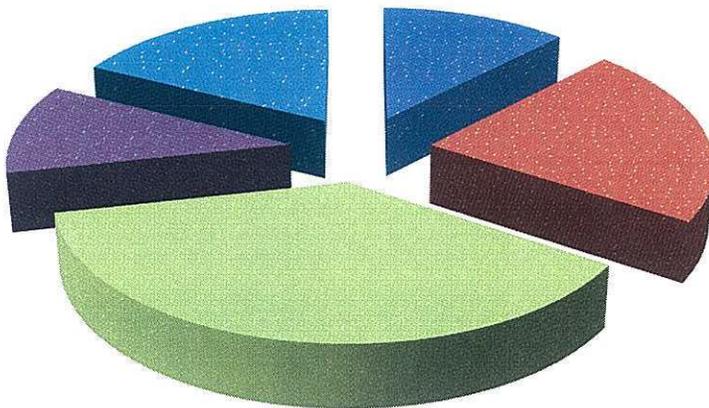
Capital Area Agriculture & Horticulture Program:

Sandy Buxton, Aaron Gabriel, Steve Hadcock,
Tom Gallagher, Chuck Schmitt

Capital District Vegetable and Small Fruit Program:

Chuck Bornt, Laura McDermott, Crystal Stewart

2011 FINANCIAL SUPPORT



- Federal \$120,889* (12%)
- State \$215,161* (22%)
- County \$367,214 (57%)
- Other Grants/Contracts \$107,536 (11%)
- Program Fees & Fundraising \$172,753 (18%)

**includes employee benefits
Figures for Federal, State and county
also include grants and contracts.*