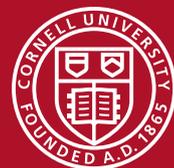


Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Onondaga County



# ANNUAL 20 23 REPORT

6505 Collamer Road, East Syracuse, NY 13057  
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[www.cceonondaga.org](http://www.cceonondaga.org)

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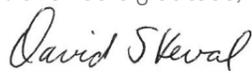
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# A YEARS REVIEW

As we close out 2023, we find so much to look forward to in the coming 2024 year. CCE Onondaga and its Board of Directors have prioritized strengthening our Association, emphasizing strong leadership and growth in all our program areas; with a shared goal to look to additional funding to fuel our amazing 110 year old mission and expand our expertise to address the ever-changing needs of our county.

We are extremely proud of our accomplishments this year. Some 33,400 direct contacts were made, within 33 educational projects, and 750 events. Together we reached over one and a half MILLION people with our educational messaging and news. We hope you enjoy this look back at - just a snapshot - of our work this past year. Words fail to express the thanks we have for all the people - staff, volunteers, funders, donors, and community partners - that have helped make it all possible.

With sincere gratitude,  
  
 David Skeval, Executive Director

# CCE ONONDAGA STAFF

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**HAROLD NUGENT**  
 Natural Resources Educator

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**LEANNA NUGENT**  
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## 4-H YOUTH & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

**SCOTT HUDSON**  
 Team Leader

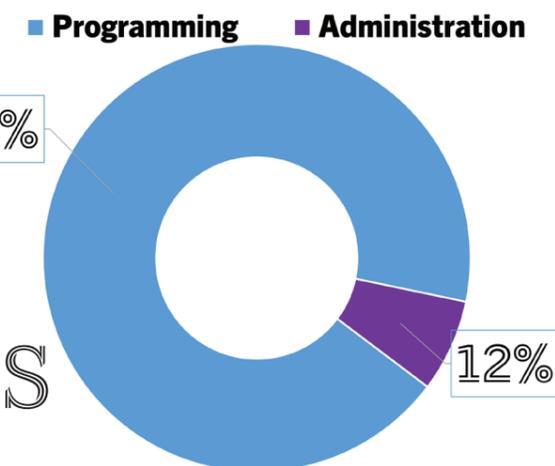
**CINDY ALBRO**  
 2023 4-H Program Leader\*

**ROBIN BARTHOLOMEW**  
 4-H Club Coordinator

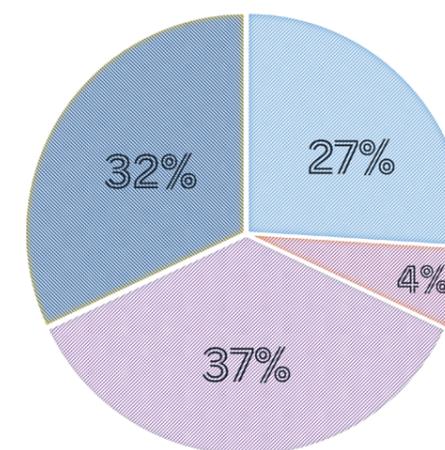
**DAVID SCHOLL**  
 4-H Youth Educator

# FINANCES

## 2023 ALLOCATIONS



## 2023 RESOURCES



■ County ■ State ■ Federal ■ Other Sources of Support

\* Denotes staff member not continuing in 2024

# 4-H YOUTH & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

## 2023 Program Highlights:

Onondaga County 4-H welcomes young people ages 5-18 from all backgrounds, empowering them to ultimately create positive change in their communities. 4-H youth learn leadership, civic engagement, and life skills necessary to succeed in life, such as communication and public speaking, goal setting, problem solving, collaboration, teamwork and social interaction. In doing so, they develop self-confidence and compassion for others in a supportive, hands-on, experiential learning environment, and establish connections with caring adults who help them positively contribute to their communities.

In 2023, Onondaga youth at Dr. King Elementary School in Syracuse tended to new plants in the school's urban garden. CCE Onondaga brought them into a research study, exploring how well Albion strawberries grow in urban gardens.



*"I like broccoli, tomatoes...Um, and apples and oranges. Salad, too. One Student said with wide eyes. "A lot."*

Enthusiasm for veggies is just what CCE Onondaga and the urban gardening program at STEAM at Dr. King Elementary School are trying to foster in their young students. The gardening project there has been going for six years, and during the 2023 summer the kids cared for a special kind of strawberry for our study.

They planted the bare-root strawberries and eagerly waited to see whether their plants would bear fruit. The purpose of the study being to figure out if Albion strawberries grow well in urban gardens. There's also another strawberry patch participating in the study, at VanKeuren Square housing development for veterans.

The main observations that the Dr. King Elementary kids gathered about the strawberries was "how much they like them," said CCE Small Fruit Specialist Anya Osatuke, who helped organized the study.



Dr. King Elementary School sits on the South Side of Syracuse directly next to the I-81 overpass. The neighborhood has a high rate of poverty and 95% of students enrolled at the school are economically disadvantaged, according to U.S. News & World Report. School garden-based programs have been shown to increase healthy eating habits of students. Research has shown a positive impact on mental health, physical well-being, reduction in obesity, development of social emotional learning, and self-confidence when involved in projects like this example and we hope to continue to grow in our capacity to support the youth of our County.

*Featured on left: David Scholl, our 4-H Youth Development Educator, poured syrup for a student at Dr. King Elementary School in Syracuse.*



## 2023 Program Highlights: A Focus on Farmland Protection

Over two-thirds of Onondaga County's land area is actively farmed land, forests, and open space, with over 150,000 acres in farms alone. Our farm landscapes and vistas are one of the most prized assets in the region. The agriculture industry in the County also contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economy and creates rural job opportunities.

Agricultural lands are a prominent and proud feature in Onondaga County's landscape. While generally characterized as an urban County, home to Syracuse, the 5th largest city in New York State, and over 460,000 residents, Onondaga County is also fortunate to have been able to retain a rich agricultural presence. Approximately 30% of the land use in the County is actively used for farming, and another 30% consists of agriculture related and nearby forested lands. The rolling hills, working and open lands, and emerging agritourism venues along our rural roads and highways across Onondaga County are community, and regional, assets and are key component of the quality of life to County residents both urban and rural. And with over 69% of all lands in Onondaga County classified as important farmland soils, Onondaga County possesses agricultural land qualities that are recognized nationally.

While new small farms are emerging, mid-size farms are in decline, and being absorbed by larger operations or sold for urban development. These dynamics relate to a decline in farm operations overall and more limited diversity of agricultural products, with a larger segment of Onondaga County agriculture now focused on the challenging and land intensive dairy industry. The pressures of urban residential development also continue and are met with new land development dynamics from commercial solar development, who are increasingly seeking to convert agricultural lands in Onondaga County to large-scale solar panel installations.

Onondaga County is committed to focusing on farmers and agriculture and supporting the value that it brings to its residents, economy, landscapes, and natural environment. There are many reasons to celebrate the efforts achieved since the completion of the original 1997 plan., including the protection of over 12,000 acres of important farmland from development, and representing a \$25 million investment in the local agricultural economy. However, there is much work ahead to protect farm operations and farmland here in Onondaga County.

Farmland Protection is a program through NYS to protect farmlands from commercial or residential development. Why? As the American Farmland Trust states, "No Farms, No Food!" Through an application process, landowners may be able to protect their land and keep it farmland forever. The state Farmland Protection Program makes it possible for agricultural land trusts to purchase the development rights of eligible farmland property from the landowner. The land trust becomes an easement holder and monitors the property forever to prevent it from being developed for anything other than farming.

We here at Cornell Cooperative Extension work with landowners in creating effective and meaningful workshops to go over the basics of Farmland Protection, assist in the application process, work with site planning and future goals, and work alongside the landowner for what will be best for the land. If you have any questions or interest in learning more about Farmland Protection and keeping the vital farmland in agriculture please contact our new Agriculture Team Leader, Janet Oppedisano, via email at [jto32@cornell.edu](mailto:jto32@cornell.edu) or phone (315) 424-9485 ext. 243.

You can also visit [plan.ongov.net](http://plan.ongov.net) and click on "Plan On Agriculture" to see the updated plan for the future success of Onondaga County or stay up to date with agriculture by visiting: [cceanondaga.org/farmland-protection](http://cceanondaga.org/farmland-protection)



# NATURAL RESOURCES

## 2023 Program Highlight: Voice of the Farmer Garden

CCE Onondaga celebrated the grand opening of the New York Voice of the Farmer Garden at the Great New York State Fair during the summer of 2023. The New York Voice of the Farmer Garden, which offers visitors the opportunity to learn about U.S. agriculture and crops grown in New York and around the country, is the very first statewide garden of its kind to open at a state fair in the U.S.

*“The Great New York State Fair is rooted in agriculture and has long served as an exciting space for fairgoers to learn about New York State’s rich agricultural heritage. We’re excited that the Voice of the Farmer Garden, the first garden of its kind at any state fair in the country, offers a tremendous opportunity to further showcase New York’s agricultural industry to visitors from all corners of the state and beyond.”*

*- New York State Agriculture Commissioner, Richard A. Ball*

“The mission of the Voice of the Farmer Garden is to showcase U.S. agriculture’s contribution to our economy, environmental sustainability, and global food security,” said Todd Greenwood, Vice President for Strategic Partnerships at Farm Journal Foundation. “New York is a powerhouse when it comes to agriculture, producing a wide variety of crops and food products that are vital to consumers and our economy – so we are thrilled to launch our inaugural state garden at the New York State Fair to highlight this important industry.”

To mark the opening of the new garden, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on site at the New York State Fair. The ceremony included remarks from New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball, State Fair Director Sean Hennessey, Farm Journal Foundation Vice President for Strategic Partnerships Todd Greenwood, New York State Assemblymember Donna Lupardo, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County Executive Director David Skeval, and New York dairy farmers Mike and Edie McMahan, who are Farmer Ambassadors with Farm Journal Foundation and featured in the garden’s learning content. Staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and the Master Gardener program were an instrumental part of the celebration, with the team having grown and cared for the garden this summer.

The garden, which is located across from the Expo Center near the Goat Pavilion, is a living, interactive learning space for visitors to see many of the major crops grown in New York, learn about important agricultural issues, and watch engaging videos of farmers and others in the food supply chain telling the story of agriculture.



The New York Voice of the Farmer Garden features over 35 varieties of vegetable crops, herbs, fruits and pollinator plants. Learn about New York State agriculture on a walking tour with QR codes that visitors can scan to watch videos on their mobile phones. Visitors can talk with CCE Master Gardener Volunteers and CCE Onondaga staff, and children will enjoy the shelled corn wading pool containing tokens to learn about a crop and win a prize. CCE Onondaga Master Gardener Volunteers planted and maintain this exhibit.

It took a remarkable team effort between the New York State Fair, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, CCE Onondaga and our Master Gardener Volunteers to create this garden of New York State crops and produce, and serves to reconnect us all to our New York farmers. We hope to see this grow each year!



# NUTRITION AND HEALTH

## 2023 Program Highlight: Breakfast with Veterans

VanKeuren Square is a supportive housing site for veterans located in Onondaga County. There are two case managers and a social worker who provide services to assist the veterans with recovery, healthcare issues, and unemployment.

In late Fall, the Nutrition team was asked to collaborate on a Health and Gardening project by our CCE Onondaga Master Gardener coordinator at VanKeuren Square. There are 10-12 raised garden beds installed on the grounds and the plan was to create interest, skills and tools among the veterans in growing their own fruits and vegetables. The Master Gardeners also hoped to create an understanding of healthy eating and the importance of taking ownership of ones own health. The SNAP nutritionist's role would be to engage the group of Veterans in a variety of practical healthy eating and living workshops.

*"The only vegetable I used to eat was cucumbers, but since growing tomatoes and peppers- I realize that I like them too!"*

The nutritionists taught nutrition workshops once a month. A group of 7-10 veterans met 5 times throughout the Winter, Spring and early Summer. During the workshops, the veterans were able to try swapping some new healthier breakfast foods for their old favorites. At each workshop the nutritionists prepared a different breakfast at each lesson. Some of the favorite recipes of the group were whole wheat French toast with turkey bacon, berry banana baked oatmeal, and veggie scramble wraps. The wraps were an especially big hit since they included veggies and tasted so good. That recipe started a discussion about growing different vegetables in the garden to put into their wraps!

With the help of the CCE Onondaga Master Gardeners, the veterans each planted a raised bed filled with their favorite vegetables, and the harvest has been amazing: tomatoes, cucumbers, hot peppers, sweet peppers, strawberries, watermelon, zucchini, squash, basil, mint, cilantro, sage, and the list goes on!

We hope to have one more workshop in the future so we can use the harvest to create a meal for all to enjoy. All participants reported that they would definitely include more fruits, vegetable, lean protein, and low fat dairy into their daily meals.

*"I liked that oatmeal bake - the fruit made it sweet without a lot of sugar. I could make it ahead and have a healthy breakfast all week!"*



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4-H VOLUNTEERS & CLUB LEADERS

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