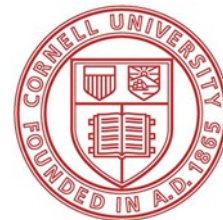


# Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County



## 2020 Annual Report

Greetings to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County Community:

The year 2020 has been one of the most challenging for us as individuals, our communities and our organization. Early this Spring as the pandemic started to take hold and our offices shut down, the CCE staffed pivoted and developed effective alternative strategies to fulfilling our mission. These involved wholesale reformatting of our offerings to an on-line format after decades of running them face-to face. All of the staff involved in the switch faced a steep learning curve as we implemented Zoom-based programs for the first time and held meetings and planning sessions remotely.

Though this was a difficult time for all of us, CCE Herkimer has come out stronger and more capable. Our staff has learned new skills for presentations and marketing of our programs and delivered high quality, research based educational experiences to help the residents of Herkimer County respond to the needs of the crisis and in improving their communities. In return, our programs are seen as increasingly important in this pandemic world. Helping people learn how to better manage their resources and produce and prepare their own food.

As an organization we depend upon our collaborations with partners to serve the public. Working with other Herkimer County agencies helps us provide seamless support to the public, whether this be questions on growing conditions from farmers or nutrition and health questions from young families. We also collaborate with other CCE organizations across the state to extend our reach and capabilities. This spring we worked with the CCE office in Clinton County to launch a Facebook Live program initiative. This effort gave the staff familiarity with that platform to reach new audiences.

Working with Cornell University brings world class resources and important connections to state efforts to meet the needs of our residents. Cornell staff made the COVID-19 response a top priority and instituted a series of measures to get timely information and resources out to the public. Working with the university and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, we advised the agricultural community of the latest recommendations on business and growing practices. CCE also gained access to no cost PPE supplies for farmers and agricultural related business that we distributed across Herkimer County.

As always, we would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the Herkimer County Legislature for their continued financial support which is vital to the work of Cornell Cooperative Extension. Special recognition and thanks to our many volunteers for their help with our programs and organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gareth D. Livermore".

Garet D. Livermore  
Executive Director

*Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities*

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

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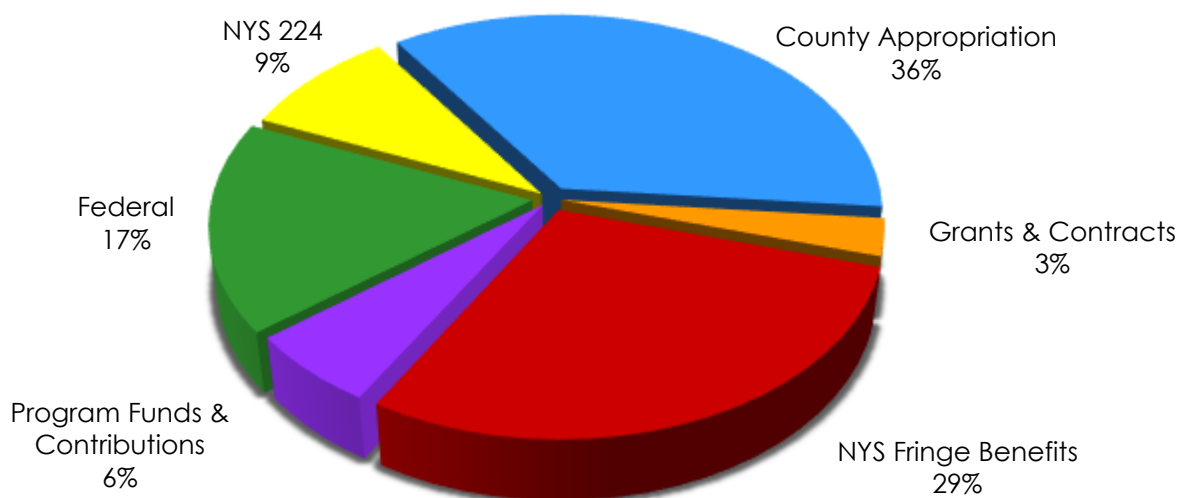
### 4-H Program Committee

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 Kim Creator  
 Cathy Eysaman\*  
 Jennifer Hartsig  
 Kate Hitchcock  
 Heather McCutcheon  
 Kathy Stalteri  
 Kiley Treen

*\*Committee Representative to Board of Directors*

### 2020 Financial Support

Federal Smith-Lever & EFNEP Allocation	17%	\$104,816.00
State 224 Allocation	9%	\$53,286.00
County Appropriation	36%	\$225,319.00
Grants & Contracts	3%	\$19,995.00
NYS Fringe Benefits	29%	\$181,805.46
Other Sources	6%	\$40,328.00
<b>Total Financial Support:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$625,549.46</b>



**Agriculture:** This year started off with CCE Herkimer planning two major agricultural initiatives, a workshop for farmers and landowners considering leasing their farms for utility scale solar projects and completing and implementing the Herkimer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.



**Solar Energy and the Future of Farming in the Mohawk Valley** workshop was held on March 7th with 118 people attending to hear six presenters offering information on leasing topics including legal considerations of leasing, municipal planning

of solar facilities and colocation of agricultural and solar operations. Sponsored by CCE Herkimer County, Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Otsego County Conservation Association and Herkimer College, this program brought together experts in the fields of land use, economics, legal concerns and solar grazing to present the latest information for landowners considering leasing. Evaluations were very positive noting that the expertise of presenters, information provided, and legal implications for landowners were the most important aspects of the program.

The **Ag and Farmland Protection Plan** was completed, approved by the County Legislature in early July and then by New York State Ag and Markets in September. Implementation planning was delayed by the pandemic but will be completed by mid-2021.

After New York State announced emergency measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, CCE pivoted to aid the agriculture community directly through the crisis. Working with Cornell University and state government, CCE Herkimer distributed NYS Clean personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the county. Over 400 farmers, agricultural workers, ag business staff and related people were given



facial coverings, hand sanitizer and educational materials to protect themselves against the viral infection. Staff made contact free deliveries around Herkimer County and through cooperating entities like Farmers' Markets and food distribution sites.

The COVID-19 crisis spurred a great interest in local foods within our county. There were new farmers markets that started and many people began planning to start farms to meet this need. CCE staff created a "Local Foods Roundtable" to begin planning for the 2021 growing and sales season and to share ideas about marketing Herkimer County produce. The first virtual session was held on October 28th. It attracted 28 farmers, farmers' market managers and the interested public. The Roundtable will continue in 2021 to provide a planning forum for local food production and marketing.

2020 marked the 21<sup>st</sup> year of a unique partnership between Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Herkimer County, NY FarmNet, and Herkimer County Mental Health with the **Farm Family Assistance Project**. The purpose of the collaboration has been to provide improved support and assistance to the Herkimer County farm community affected by the stresses of operating a farm business and farm life. Funds from this project helped support the printing of the 2020 Herkimer County Local Foods Map, Solar Workshop and PPE distribution.

NY FarmNet follow-up in Herkimer County: For 2020 Herkimer County had 14 open cases. 35% of the 14 open cases had high personal stress. This is a 42% increase of personal stress compared to last year. 28% of the 14 cases had high financial stress. This is a 32% increase compared to 2019 financial stress numbers. FarmNet consultants worked with dairy, livestock, equine, beekeepers, and tree farmers in Herkimer County. NY FarmNet is available at 1-800-547-FARM (3276). A 24-hour, 7 day a week answering service is available and is free and confidential. Website is [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org)



**Herkimer County Local Foods Map:** Eating locally grown and raised foods increases awareness of where your food comes from, local growing seasons, and the importance of supporting local agriculture. Local foods are fresher and more nutritious than foods that have traveled many miles and days to get to your table. When you buy direct from local farmers, your dollars stay within your community and strengthens the local economy. This helps preserve farming as a livelihood and rural landscapes as farmland in Herkimer County. The 2020 Herkimer County Local Foods Map listed sixty-two farms that grow and / or produce local foods along with information on five Farmers' Markets in Herkimer County. Over four thousand copies were distributed at over sixty-eight organizations, businesses, libraries, farms and other public locations in Herkimer County. To view an online version of this map, please visit <http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceherkimer/programs/nutrition-programs/herkimer-county-local-foods-map/>



CCE also coordinated post-season Zoom call for Herkimer County Farmers' Market Managers who shared market plans, successes, and challenges for the 2020 season and discussed ideas for the 2021 season.



**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP):** Despite COVID-19, eighty-five families participated in EFNEP impacting 315 family members with many participating in virtual programs through Zoom, phone, and Facebook Live. Four school youth groups participated at Benton Hall Academy with "Choose Health: Food, Fun, and Fitness curriculum (6 sessions each) reaching eighty-five Grade 5 youth before COVID restrictions.

A pilot project with Clinton County EFNEP to deliver EFNEP lessons via Facebook Live reached twenty-five Herkimer County families this year with positive results. Also, six men housed at Nichol's House community reintegration program through Beacon Center completed 8 "Healthy Cents" sessions virtually via Zoom with very positive feedback.

**Food Preservation:** Renewed interest in growing your own food or buying local produce has meant increased interest in food preservation. To meet that need, CCE added new website resources including Food Preservation "How to" videos from the National Center for Food Preservation at the University of Georgia and University of Maine Cooperative Extension along with 10 food preservation webinars from CCE Saratoga County that were recorded and added to our website and promoted through our Facebook page. Based on this there was a 250% increase in views on Food Preservation page over past year and 300% increase in views on Food Preservation "How To" videos page.



**Horticulture and Homeowner Questions:** CCE staff and Master Gardener Volunteers continued their services to Herkimer county residents by answering questions and serving as a resource for homeowners, gardeners and property owners. As with previous years, the most popular questions related to managing home gardens, fruit tree health, and identifying plants and insects. Invasive species, particularly Japanese Knotweed is a rising concern with landowners as it is a growing presence in the Mohawk Valley and difficult to remove. Weather conditions in

the Adirondacks created a number of concerns for Herkimer County residents in the Old Forge area. These included increases in the mouse population and aggressive geese that impacted residents in that area. CCE provided homeowners with current information on the best management practices for these issues to successfully control them safely.





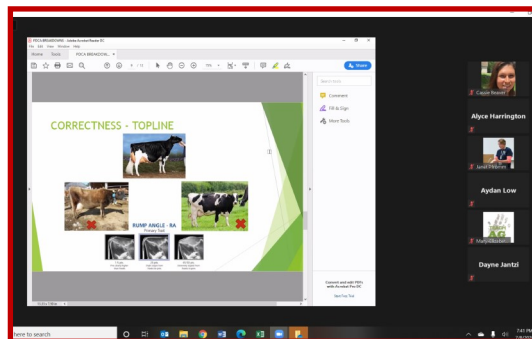
To continue our horticulture education programs within the COVID pandemic quarantine restrictions we shifted to an on-line format by Zoom Teleconference program. This Spring we helped teach residents to garden through our **"Grow It Yourself"** series of workshops. With titles ranging from "Planning an Heirloom Garden" to "Composting at Home", we attracted an average of 60 people to each event. This was followed up in the Fall with our biennial Master Gardener Volunteer Training which attracted 42 participants. This nationally recognized program trains people to encourage others to garden, solve gardening and outdoor questions for county residents and work on CCE sponsored volunteer projects. To reach the broadest audience, we worked with two other CCE associations, Delaware and Otsego/Schoharie. This arrangement gave us access to a greater range of experts on topics we have not been able to cover and to share expenses.



The **Herkimer County 4-H Government Intern Program** was not able to be in person this school year. The Spring sessions were half way through the program when the state shut down in March. This fall due to school being both virtual and in person, the program was put on hold. Instead Herkimer 4-H made several tour and interview videos of some of the departments that students would visit in the regular program. Those videos were shared with Herkimer County High School government teachers to be used in their classrooms for all students.



**Virtual Dairy Judging:** A need for some of our regular 4-H programs in the late spring and summer led us to come up with virtual program for Dairy Cattle Judging. We started by recruiting our clinicians who were more than happy to help out, especially since they could participate from the comfort of their homes. We scheduled four sessions, each 90 minutes long. Each session covered different topics and culminated with the last session allowing youth to give reasons directly to a clinician one on one through the use of breakout rooms.



Although not ideal in how we would prefer to offer our programs, it worked and it taught us a lot about how to conduct successful virtual programs. We reached over 145 youth throughout the state, many who were very happy to be able to "see" their 4-H friends from other areas. After completion of this successful series, we continued with a virtual "Dairy Knowledge" series that also lasted four weeks. This one was opened up to neighboring states as well. Looking ahead, we are planning on offering many more virtual (hopefully hybrid) trainings and practices to 4-H youth across the state and beyond.

During this pandemic - Herkimer 4-H has adapted several programs by using social media and email to promote programs while 4-H members were at home. 4-H used Facebook live and Zoom meetings to lead projects and educate youth in several different project areas. The 4-H office also put out a **"4-H Weekly Spark"** to introduce members to a wide range of subject areas offered by 4-H. These video's and links are shared on our website for anyone to try something new.



**Herkimer 4-H Showcase** - The Herkimer County Fair was cancelled, but we were able to put together a slideshow of 31 projects Herkimer County 4-H members have been working on this year. The 4-H office created a slide show based on projects submitted, and shared the showcase so that members could share with friends and family what Herkimer County 4-H has been up to. All projects worked on during the 2019-2020 4-H year may be entered at next year's Herkimer County Fair. We cannot wait to feature the many different projects of Herkimer County 4-H youth.



Herkimer County 4-H members observed **National 4-H Week** this year by showcasing the incredible experiences that 4-H offers young people, and highlighted the remarkable 4-H youth in our community who work each day to make a positive impact on those around them. The All Season's 4-H Club made a display at Van Hornesville Milk Producers Coop. The Green and Growing 4-H Club members and leaders also wore their 4-H shirts to school and work to promote 4-H. The Kuyahoora Kaprines 4-H club had a display at the Teel Farms in Barneveld, where they also had their goats interact with the public to educate about their project animals and 4-H. The theme for this year's National 4-H Week, Opportunity4All, is a campaign that was created by National 4-H Council to rally support for Cooperative Extension's 4-H program and identify solutions to eliminate the opportunity gap that affects 55 million kids across America.



Herkimer County 4-H held several **Public Presentation** events for their members in February. Forty-five total youth participated by giving illustrated talks, and demonstrations in front of judges that evaluated their presentation skills. Special thanks go out to our

volunteers for taking time to evaluate and work with our youth.

The evaluators were

**Jordynn Alesia,**

**Carol Ainslie,**

**Natalee Collins, Kristy Downes, and Donna Salamone.**



**Utica Zoo** - Several 4-H families helped maintain and harvest the vegetable gardens at the Utica Zoo this summer. Herkimer 4-H grew cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, sunflowers, lettuce, kale, spinach, sweet potatoes, green beans, and bell peppers. Volunteers and 4-H members gathered at the Utica Zoo on Sunday October 4, to harvest and clear out the raised beds; shovel more shavings around the raised beds; and top off the cleaned beds with more compost.



They were accompanied by Herkimer College Intern Kayanna Cunningham. Thank you for all of the continued support of the Utica Zoo animals through the pandemic this year.

**Beaversprite** - Herkimer County 4-H club members worked on trail maintenance and beautification projects at Beaversprite, in June. 4-H members from Kuyahoora Kaprines and Green and Growing 4-H clubs cleared hiking trails and remove down trees and debris.

Youth and their families opened overgrown existing trails and worked on establishing a new one-mile trail.



The **4-H Member and Volunteer Event** was held as a drive-through in our parking lot. Those members and clubs who turned in year-end completion sheets were recognized with their awards and certificates as well as a few



other "goodies" from the 4-H office.



**Tractor Safety:** On February 18-20, 7 youth from Herkimer & surrounding counties participated in the 4-H Tractor and Machinery Certification Program held in Clinton and sponsored by CCE of Herkimer County, Clinton Tractor and Implement Company, and the Workforce Development Institute. 4-H Youth Development provides Tractor and Machinery Certification for youth 14 years and older. This certification allows 14 and 15 year olds to legally operate tractors and machinery while off the family farm. Farm safety awareness is a major focus. This training would not be possible without the dedication of skilled instructors. Class instructors included **Bernie Kennett** and **Eric Heath**, NYS Troopers; **Christina Hall**, New York Center for Agricultural Medicine & Health (NYCAMH); **John Lehmann** and **Mike Martini**, Clinton Tractor; **Erik Merrill**, paramedic; **Roger Neff**, Bureau of Fire Prevention; **Emily Mandresh**, 811 Call Before You Dig, and **Dave Schieferstine**, 4-H volunteer.



**Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops (CNYDLFC) Team:** The team had a rollercoaster of emotions and events over the last year. The move from in-person contact to online platforms was a major shift for everyone. They all yearned for farm and field visits. They missed their producers and hoped to have more face-to-face contact. Field Crops Specialist, Kevin Gano, retired after 26 years stationed in Herkimer County. The team (and CCE Herkimer Co.) welcomed Erik Smith, Ph.D. as Kevin's replacement.



Before the pandemic shut down in-person meetings, the CNYDLFC Team held: Livestock Techniques Hands-on workshops; Field Crop Pest Management Meetings; Sheep & Goat Nutrition 101; Dairy Forage Options for Marginally Drained Land; QuickBooks for Farmers and Growers; 2020 Corn Day; Crop Risk Management Series for New and Beginning Farmers; Meat Marketing Workshop; and 2020 Dairy Day.



Virtual programming offered by the Team included: Agriculture Workforce Development Training Skills for Dairy Farms (in English and Spanish); Updates for Producers on the USDA COVID-19 Relief & PPP; Stress Management and Mental Health Awareness; USDA CFAP Program; Get Ready for the Earliest Corn Silage Harvest Ever; Fly and Pest Control for Livestock; Determining Whether or Not Your Animal is Ready to Harvest; To Market, To Market; Design Your Succession Plan; Wool Classification; Milk Check Mysteries; Sheep & Goat Production 101; CFAP 2: What You Need to Know to Apply; Dairy Feeder School (English & Spanish); Dialing into Your Best Dairy podcast series; Price Risk Management for Dairy Farmers; Navigating Farm Family Relationships During Business Succession Planning; Swine Production 101; John's in Sheep & Goats; Pork Quality Assurance Training; Livestock & Whole Farm Risk Management Awareness; Beef Cattle Nutrition 101; and Onboarding Webinar Series.

Peter Burritt, summer Intern, work with the field crop grant projects. Peter is a student at Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Through July, intern Peter continued the weekly Growing Degree Days email publication that kept area producers informed of conditions throughout the region. Incoming Field Crops Specialist Erik Smith continued the e-publication through August and September, adding updated context each week as the season progressed and conditions changed.

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County Staff

**Garet D Livermore**

*Executive Director / Agriculture Issues Leader*

**Linda Robbins**

*Assistant Director / Nutrition Educator*

**Jennifer Collins**

*4-H Youth Development / Animal Science*

**Wendy Richardson**

*4-H Program Assistant*

**Veronique Stormes**

*Finance Administrator*

**Barbara Johnson**

*Administrative Assistant*

**Mary Franklin**

*Administrative Assistant*

**Valerie Pettengil**

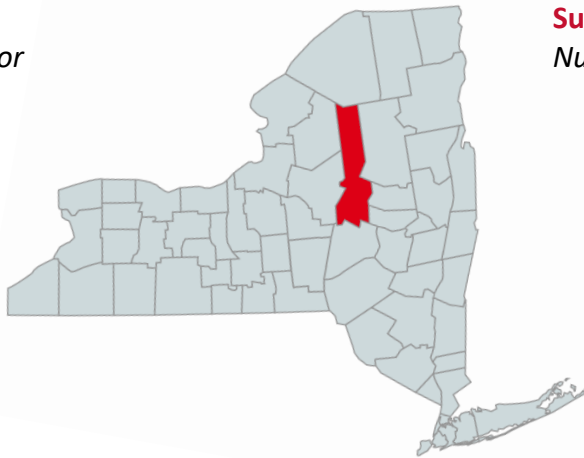
*Nutrition Program Educator: EFNEP*

**Shari Purcell**

*Nutrition Program Educator: EFNEP*

**Sue Elliott**

*Nutrition Program Educator: SNAP-Ed*



*Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, a regional partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery, Otsego, Saratoga and Schoharie Counties:*

**Nicole Tommell**

*Team Leader / Farm Business Management*

**Dave Balbian**

*Dairy Management Specialist*

**Ashley McFarland**

*Livestock Specialist*

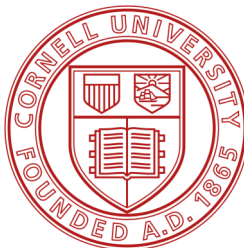
**Erik Smith**

*Field Crops Specialist*

## Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Herkimer County

**Your Source for Information on  
Agriculture, Nutrition, 4-H**

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