

Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Schenectady County

# 2014 Annual Report



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\* Indicates staff who left  
employment during the year.

**Serving  
Schenectady  
County since  
1918**



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
of Schenectady County

October, 2014

Dear Schenectady County Residents:

2014 has been a year of transitions. This year, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County (CCE,SC) said goodbye to two long-time staff members, Pam Jewell and Chris Logue. Before her retirement, Pam provided support for the Schenectady County 4-H program youth and volunteers for over 20 years. Chris Logue, CCE,SC's Executive Director, left at the beginning of 2014 to pursue an exciting opportunity with New York State Ag and Markets. We wish both Pam and Chris well!

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County continues to provide evidence-based educational programs that address the challenges of local residents, businesses and communities while connecting Schenectady County residents with Cornell University – New York's Land Grant College. 2014 marks the 100-year anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act which established the nationwide Cooperative Extension system. As we anticipate the next 100 years of Extension, thirteen land-grant colleges and universities (including Cornell University) are engaged in a national "Extension Reconsidered" project. These state-level projects are bringing citizens together to reflect and deliberate on the value of Extension and its potential to renew and strengthen our communities, our democracy, and our civic culture in the 21st Century. The goal of Extension Reconsidered is to bring to light the diverse ways of seeing and doing the work of Extension.

CCE's Extension Reconsidered project invites you to share your ideas and thoughts about:

- The challenges CCE should address
- The strengths CCE has, and will need
- The innovations and changes CCE should be a part of

To be involved, share your thoughts on the CCE Extension Reconsidered blog: <http://extrecon.cce.cornell.edu> or on Twitter @ExtRecon.

We invite you to take a few moments to read through our Annual Report and learn more about the educational programs offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Quaintance".

Jay Quaintance  
President, Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Pechar".

Sarah Pechar  
Interim Executive Director



# *A Good Beginning*

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County provides research-based education and training opportunities for adults and youth. CCE,SC helps people gain knowledge and skills to improve their quality of life. CCE,SC also responds to the changing needs of the community and offers programming in the areas of Agriculture and Horticulture, Wellness and Health, and Youth Development.

A focus for programming over the past year has been the effective utilization of the Sustainable Living Center (SLC), formerly known as the greenhouse in Central Park, by staff from all programming backgrounds. Through a generous grant from the Wright Family Foundation, a classroom renovation including a demonstration kitchen has been completed. This has enabled a variety of classes to be taught at the Sustainable Living Center. CCE,SC staff have continued to expand programming opportunities and think creatively about developing programs for the entire community that can be held at the SLC.

*For example:*

- Facility grounds were filled with countless varieties of vegetables for use in the HealthShares program
- A vegetable variety trial, in collaboration with Cornell University, was also an additional hands-on learning experience for youth participating in Roots and Wisdom.
- Plans are already underway to incorporate 4-H youth involvement throughout the facility as well.

We are continuing to expand partnerships with Schenectady County agencies to fully tap the potential of this facility and we encourage you to stop by, take a tour and learn about upcoming programming and events.

The Sustainable Living Center also benefits from countless volunteers who have donated their time to help make CCE,SC programs the best they would be over the year. Over 1,000 hours of volunteer time were put in across the program areas to help extend staff and programming opportunities. CCE,SC thanks you for being generous with your time and expertise!

## *HealthShares*

HealthShares targets individuals at risk of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease and obesity. During six weekly visits over the summer, individuals and families enrolled in the program received nutrition education along with recipes, fresh produce and referrals to community resources.

Partnerships were significant to the success of this program. HealthShares 2013 provided a template and experience to expand on the logistics and resources offered to enrolled participants. In 2014, 19 participants from the 2013 program returned and partnerships were extended to include Ellis Bariatric Care Center and Schenectady ARC. Thirty new participants enrolled through word of mouth referrals from participants recruited in 2013. Thirteen individuals were enrolled in HealthShares from Ellis Bariatric Care Center. These individuals have complex nutritional needs, and HealthShares was able to help them improve their health and well-being. The group nutrition education sessions provided a safe and much needed venue for individuals to share their successes as well as challenges relating to weight loss and lifestyle changes.

The nineteen participants enrolled from Schenectady ARC either lived independently, with their family or at a group home. These individuals interacted very well with HealthShares staff and were at a functional and cognitive level that enabled them to bring the knowledge and skills learned through HealthShares back to their families and group homes and implement them where they reside.

The newly remodeled classroom at the Sustainable Living Center provided an inviting locale for the educational sessions and allowed the participants a view of the gardens. Every week participants learned about the produce they were receiving, including how it tasted and what to do with it. A produce guide was given to each participant at their initial enrollment. The guide included pictures of each type of produce, a description, use and fun fact.

With the help of numerous volunteers and their hard work, HealthShares produced over 6000 pounds of fresh produce, including over 100 different varieties of vegetables. These indispensable volunteers consisted of individuals ranging from age 16 up to 80! Rain or shine, cold, hot, or humid, these volunteers worked from the start of the season transplanting seedlings to finishing the cycle of processing and organizing the vegetables for participants to pick up at the scheduled nutrition sessions. Some of our volunteers came with much knowledge of gardening and others with very little, but everyone left with a great experience.





## *Master Gardeners*

Master Gardener volunteers delivered educational programs to over 500 school-aged students, including preschool, elementary and middle school students, throughout Schenectady County. Topics such as soils, composting and recycling, vegetable gardening and the benefits of growing our own food were highlighted. Master Gardeners attended community events and offered classes and lectures on a variety of topics, such as home vegetable gardening and growing herbs, container gardening, landscape design, perennials and trees and shrubs. Through these programs participants learned best management practices that insure success while preserving the natural environment.

Master Gardener volunteers assisted with numerous beautification programs in the community. The Bird and Butterfly Garden in Central Park was renovated, and a new Bird and Butterfly Garden was installed at the Scotia Branch Library. They also provided assistance to MiSci with a butterfly educational exhibit. Volunteers distributed flowers for the Adopt-A-Public Space program. Master Gardeners attended training classes on invasive plants and using the IMAP program to identify and map them in the Woodlawn Preserve in Schenectady County.

Volunteers worked directly with youth enrolled in the Roots and Wisdom Program and ARC participants, training them on horticulture and gardening skills and helping to maintain vegetable gardens at the Sustainable Living Center in Central Park.



It is estimated that the Master Gardener program responded to 2,800 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 250 soil samples, identified numerous insects and plants, and diagnosed plant problems and diseases.





# Vegetable Variety Trial Garden Project

## What do you get when you bring youth, retirees and Master Gardeners together?

A fabulous partnership for the Cornell Garden-Based Learning project, Vegetable Variety Trial Garden (VVT), a Citizen Science program involving Cooperative Extension offices from around New York State and Cornell Garden-Based Learning.

Cornell Cooperative Extension in Schenectady County (CCE,SC) submitted a grant application to create a demonstration garden and grow heirloom vegetables and other plantings as part of the VVT garden. CCE,SC took advantage of another program offered through Cornell University called RISE (Retirees in Service to the Environment) in which retired individuals are offered a structured training on various environmental issues, then upon completion, participate in a community service project. This year's project involved creating a demonstration garden at the Sustainable Living Center greenhouse facility in Schenectady's Central Park. In order to make the project intergenerational, staff coordinated with the Roots and Wisdom youth program and Master Gardeners. Together a garden space was created to demonstrate square foot gardening, to showcase the vegetable variety planting plan provided by the Cornell Garden-Based Learning, and to be used for future educational programming.

The entire process was a significant learning experience for all involved. The RISE volunteers, Roots & Wisdom youth and Master Gardeners met periodically over the summer to harvest and taste the different vegetable varieties. The RISE volunteers took produce home and prepared their own recipes to sample



beyond the garden. Taste-test ratings were averaged and entered into the Vegetable Variety Review database, along with yield and reliability for gardeners across the country to reference.

To learn more, visit: [www.gardening.cce.cornell.edu](http://www.gardening.cce.cornell.edu).



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# Regional Agriculture

## Capital Area Agricultural and Horticultural Program

The educators who are part of the Capital Area Agricultural and Horticultural Program have had another great year providing a variety of educational activities to residents in Schenectady and other counties. The educators of the Capital Area Agricultural and Horticultural team are: Sandy Buxton (Farm Management), Aaron Gabriel (Field Crops), Tom Gallagher (Livestock), Steve Hadcock (Beginning Farmer and Market Development) and Chuck Schmitt (Commercial Horticulture). In the last year, team members have been in contact with close to four thousand people in the five county area. They have answered questions posed through individual consultation and provided instruction in workshops, webinars and other educational activities. The following are some highlights of team activities for the year.

Aaron Gabriel, Tom Gallagher, Sandy Buxton and Steve Hadcock were part of a teaching team for a hay quality workshop series held last winter. The workshop was



designed to cover critical points in making and storing high quality hay. Sandy Buxton, Tom Gallagher, Steve Hadcock and Kirk Schoen (CCE Rensselaer County) reprised a two-day workshop for municipal assessors related to agricultural issues. The educators worked along with outside speakers to enlighten the participants about various issues that are unique to agricultural operations as it refers to real property assessment.

Chuck Schmitt, Aaron Gabriel and Tom Gallagher offered once again the Pesticide Applicator day in March. This day is designed to cover various topics important to private and commercial certified pesticide applicators.

The Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program has specialists who work in commercial vegetable, tree fruit, berry and grape production as well as a food safety educator and business management/marketing specialist. The 11 educators produce four different seasonal weekly newsletters and have been conducting classes and farm visits focused on food safety, marketing, pest management, and crop diversification among other topics. Tree fruit educators Anna Wallis and Dan Donahue have expanded the educational offerings to eastern NY orchardists by conducting harvest maturity evaluations and associated weekly grower conference calls.

The educators, with help from their technicians, monitor for many agricultural and invasive pests including sweet corn pests, Spotted Wing Drosophila, Late Blight, Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Leek Moth, etc. On-farm applied research projects have been conducted at approximately 20 farms in the region and findings from this work will be shared on the team website: <http://enych.cce.cornell.edu/> and in the monthly newsletter **Produce Pages**.





Matthew R.



I learned about many new vegetables and bugs that I never heard of. Youth can make a difference because they can use their time up in the garden instead of in the streets causing trouble.

*Matthew R.,  
2014 crew member*

Danashia B.



Working at Roots & Wisdom meant a lot to me. It gave me more responsibilities. I learned a lot about my community and what it's really about.

*Danashia B.,  
2014 crew member*

Tykeis J.



I learned that even though you're small, you can still make a difference in the community. Gardeners like us can help their own community.

*Tykeis J.,  
2014 crew member*

Sophie K.



Roots & Wisdom helped me garner a true appreciation for what I eat and where it comes from. It is one part home, one part community, and two parts compost.

*Sophie K.,  
2014 crew member*

## Roots & Wisdom

Roots and Wisdom is a youth agriculture and community service program that brings together urban, suburban, and rural Schenectady County residents to grow organic vegetables for donation to local food pantries and for sale to the community. The Roots and Wisdom program teaches its participants about sustainable agriculture, hunger, nutrition, and diversity. Many young adults are not exposed to positive work experiences, especially in urban areas. Young adults who work in a welcoming atmosphere and have supportive role models develop the pride it takes to accomplish milestones, such as completing their GED or high school diploma, finding employment, and/or continuing their path to higher education. Engaging youth in job training and employment is a critical component of preparing them for success in the transition to adulthood.

**"Just stop! You all are making me THINK about the FOOD that I eat!"**

... spoken by a first-year Roots & Wisdom crew member. Roots and Wisdom staff were discussing processed foods during lunch; right after a Cornell intern presented a workshop on food justice. Talking about food was a conversation heard all over the garden this summer. Roots and Wisdom crew members learned why heirloom tomatoes are "ugly," discovered new vegetables like kohlrabi, and learned about beneficial insects in the garden, all while making lasting friendships. At the beginning of the program, only 30% of the participants could identify eight vegetables grown



in Schenectady. By the end of the six-week program, 88% were able to name over eight vegetables, including kale.

Roots and Wisdom youth had a lot of experience with kale this year. The crew made and sampled kale chips for an event. They enjoyed them so much that each week the crew would ask for kale to make kale chips at home. One crew member who ended up leaving the program early called a Roots and Wisdom staff member from New York City to tell her he had bought kale chips at a local grocery store. His exposure to kale happened in the Fehr Avenue garden as he transplanted the kale plants alongside Schenectady County Community College volunteers while discussing college classes, requirements, and why getting a GED is an important thing. He came back from NYC to visit Schenectady and stopped by the garden to check on the kale plants he helped to grow, or as he referred to them, his "babies".



4-H is a hands-on learning program for children and teens.

4-Hers “learn by doing” in project areas like animal and plant science; cooking and nutrition; sewing and fashion design; photography; robotics; nature and community service. This year, two significant school enrichment programs were offered to the Schenectady County schools. In May, Environmental Education Field Days, held in Central Park, offered 430 youth hands-on education on topics about environmental science and

conservation. As part of New York State Ag In the Classroom’s Agriculture Literacy Week, 356 second graders listened to the story, *Who Grew My Soup?* by Tom Darbyshire in elementary schools throughout Schenectady County. Students learned about the various vegetables in a popular brand of vegetable soup and the farms and farmers who grew them.

Community service is an integral part of 4-H. This year, Schenectady 4-H youth were involved in their community on the club, county, and state



levels. Each club developed and carried out service projects in their communities. For example, the Mohawk Monarchs 4-H club made pillowcases for ConKerr Cancer. The pillowcases were then distributed to children at Albany Med, the Ronald McDonald House, and a ward at the Albany VA hospital. The Mohawk Monarchs also participated in a “jumping jacks-a-thon” in which they collected pledges of canned food per number of jumping jacks completed. As a result of their athleticism and generosity, over 200 pounds of nonperishable food was donated to the SICM Food Pantry. At the county level, individuals assisted educator staff doing hands-on science activities at community events such as the Schenectady Greenmarket, Jay Street Arts Festival, the Carrot Festival, and the Altamont Fair. On the state level, 4-H youth served as teen evaluators at the New York State Fair and practiced leadership and communication skills with other teens in the STARR Retreat (State Teen Action Representatives Retreat).



## Parents Involved In Education (PIE)

PIE is a youth development program focusing on helping preschool children prepare for Kindergarten. The program helps teach number and letter recognition, shape and color identification, basic letter writing, as well as sign language.

Program participation doubled from 12-14 preschoolers to 25-35 per session. The program was conducted twice a week at Sacandaga Elementary School. At each session, the children would work on writing their names. After they succeeded in writing their first name they would move on to writing their last names. One of the 3-year-olds with 29 letters in his name was able to write out his entire name correctly by himself.

Mom said, ***"I can't believe it; my kindergartener (age 5) cannot even do that."***

Children also learned basic sign language and would sing songs using what they learned. Some of the children took the sign language to another level. They would converse in class using sign language. Parents indicated that their children would use the sign language they learned from the PIE program at home and even teach it to their older brothers and sisters. Some parents said they also learned sign language from their children.

During their time at PIE, children are not only enhancing their academic and cognitive skills, they also learn to respect and care for each other along with developing social skills in making new friends. There is plenty of community involvement that takes place in the classroom. Visitors from all different professional settings are invited to share their knowledge and skills with the preschoolers in PIE. They cover topics such as science, pet care, music and movement, stranger danger, health, nutrition, fire safety and group interaction. As part of the 4-H Agriculture in the Classroom program, the book ***Who Grew My Soup?*** was read to the children by Assemblyman James Tedisco. He also participated in the



activity and lesson that went along with the book.

Lucas, age four, likes books. His favorite book was *Thomas the Engine*. The educator of the PIE program asked Lucas if he would like her to read the book to him. He said ***"Yes."***

He would bring the book with him on the days he came to the program and started reading the book during free time. He was having a difficult time with some

words and the educator and Lucas worked at sounding them out together. For four weeks they read the book. His mom even told the educator that at home Lucas would try to read the book to her. On the fifth week, he asked if he could read the book to the class during story time. He wanted to do it himself and share the story with his friends. He was able to read the entire book by himself to the class. He even sounded out the difficult words like how he practiced with the educator. He was so happy and proud. He gained confidence not only in his ability to read but also in his ability to speak in front of the entire class. Now he reads to his mom and brother every night before bedtime. Mom said he has become quite a reader and has completed two other books at home.

Mom's quote, ***"Thank you so much for encouraging Lucas to read and sound his words out. He reads the books now, sounding out his words, not just looking at pictures."***

# The Chance Program

## Collaboration for Health, Activity and Nutrition in Children's Environments

The average American adult gains one-to-two pounds per year, and spends 8.8 hours per day at work. Americans spend 10% of their disposable income on fast food every year, and 20% of all American meals are eaten in the car. Given these statistics, it is vital that the worksite environment be designed in a way that it supports health and wellness efforts of both employees and participants.

CHANCE collaborates with local agencies to assist them in establishing worksite wellness programs. Each agency determines what trajectory their program will take based on many factors including their programming, facility, and level of staff interest. CHANCE worked with these agencies, successfully changing the organizational environment to support health and wellness.

Bethesda House began participating in worksite wellness programs two years ago and continued throughout 2014. They began with nutrition workshops for staff and steadily increased their wellness programming by creating an exercise space, participating in a wellness challenge, instituting menu changes, and writing a wellness policy. Menu changes include a reduction of sodium during food preparation and offering two vegetables at meal time. They continue to make health and wellness of staff and consumers a priority.

Schenectady Day Nursery approached CHANCE about collaborating when writing their school wellness policy. They had a committee consisting of teachers, administrators, board members, and CHANCE staff



members who worked together to write a policy for the childcare center that included increased physical activity and improved healthy food guidelines at each age level. The policy also included parent involvement in health and wellness.

The Schenectady County Youth Bureau offers year-round programming to Schenectady County youth, as well as a summer camp. CHANCE staff met with the Director of the Youth Bureau and discovered what positive guidelines were already in place and where improvements could be made, both for youth in programs and at staff/volunteer meetings. The guidelines were then formalized into a policy for the board to meet, discuss and adopt. The Schenectady County Youth Bureau's partnership with CHANCE demonstrates the value it places on the health and wellness of youth across Schenectady County.

CHANCE will continue to work with organizations and schools throughout Schenectady County during the upcoming year to assist with health and wellness policies and environmental changes.





## WIC changed a life

There are many women in the community who seek out the assistance of WIC for supplemental nutrition during pregnancy and for the first five years of their children's lives. Locally, WIC provides services for over 3,000 participants monthly. In many instances WIC provides much more for its participants besides supplemental nutrition. WIC can leave participants with life-changing opportunities and education. The following excerpts are from a letter received at the WIC office:

A young woman became pregnant with her second child. She had just graduated college and had a 5-year-old daughter. This mother worked in a minimum wage position and utilized resources to help make ends meet. She began participating in the WIC program and brought her 5-year-old daughter with her to her last appointment before delivery. While sitting in the waiting room, the little girl noticed another mom breastfeeding her newborn.

The little girl asked her mom, ***"Mama, what is that lady doing to her baby?"***

The mom replied ***"Well, she's breastfeeding her baby. It's when baby drinks milk from Mommy instead of a bottle."***

The little girl asked, ***"Are you going to breastfeed our baby in your belly?"***

The mom had to think for a minute before replying. She hadn't really considered breastfeeding up until this point.

She hadn't breastfed her daughter, and didn't know if she should, or even could, breastfeed this baby. No one in her family had breastfed any children.



She didn't even know where to start. So the only logical response at the time was to ask her young daughter what she thought about it.

***"I'm not sure, Sweetie. Do you think we should feed baby mama's milk?"***

The little girl replied without hesitation, ***"Yes, of course, Mama!"***

So there it was, the mom decided she would give breastfeeding a try. The mom went on to deliver a healthy full-term baby boy but complications developed during breastfeeding. This prompted her to reach out to WIC once again for education from a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor. The mom started attending breastfeeding groups and within a few months she was offered a position at the WIC clinic as a Peer Counselor. She was able to exclusively breastfeed her son for six months.

After becoming a Peer Counselor she realized the potential for professional development to further her career. WIC helped her obtain her Certified Lactation Consultant credential. From there she was able to get over 1,000 clinical experience hours at the clinic helping other moms. She later sat for the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) exam and was awarded the IBCLC credential. The participant is now six months away from graduating from nursing school with an Associate's Degree. She plans to work at one of the local hospitals helping women breastfeed.



## Healthy Schenectady Families

Healthy Schenectady Families (HSF) is a Healthy Families America (HFA) program which is part of the Healthy Families New York (HFNY) statewide network of home visiting programs. This evidence-based model is one of only 14 models that have received approval for Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding. Schenectady County Public Health Services (SCPHS) launched this program in 1998 providing the management, assessment and central intake functions for HSF and other local home visiting programs while subcontracting with other community-based organizations for the direct, long term home visiting services. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County, under contract with SCPHS, began providing the family support worker functions in October 2013.

The goal of HSF is to promote positive parent-child interactions; decrease stresses related to early parenting and promote overall family health and self-sufficiency. This HFA-accredited program adheres to all critical elements to maintain model fidelity. Assessments of family strengths with individualized family goal planning are the foundations upon which the Family Support Workers build their interactive home visit content. Various curricula are utilized that match the family's needs and learning styles. A tiered system of home visit frequency is a critical component that insures intensive support for the first year with gradually decreasing home visit frequency over time.

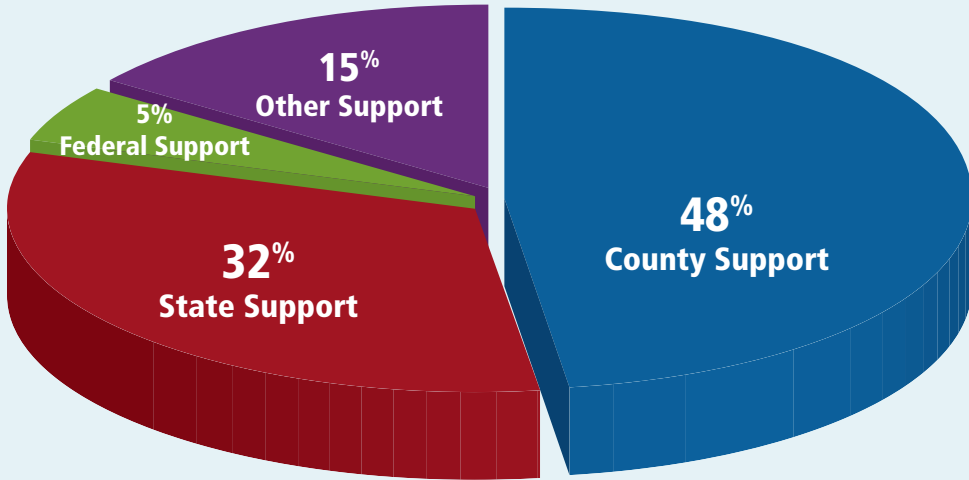
HSF measures success through the HFNY Performance Targets as compiled through the Center for Human Services Research in Albany. HSF has continued success in meeting these targets and the additional HFNY Performance Indicators. In the last year, 184 families participated in HSF and over 2,100 home visits were completed. The successes and impacts of the program are many. To highlight a few: 100% of children in the program have a medical provider, are



up-to-date on immunizations at the ages of 1 and 2 years, and have received at least five well baby visits by the age of 15 months. One hundred percent of target children demonstrated age-appropriate developmental milestones on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire or were referred for further evaluations/services if delays were detected. Seventy-four percent of mothers were enrolled in an education program, job training or job placement program or obtained employment by the child's first birthday.

# Funding

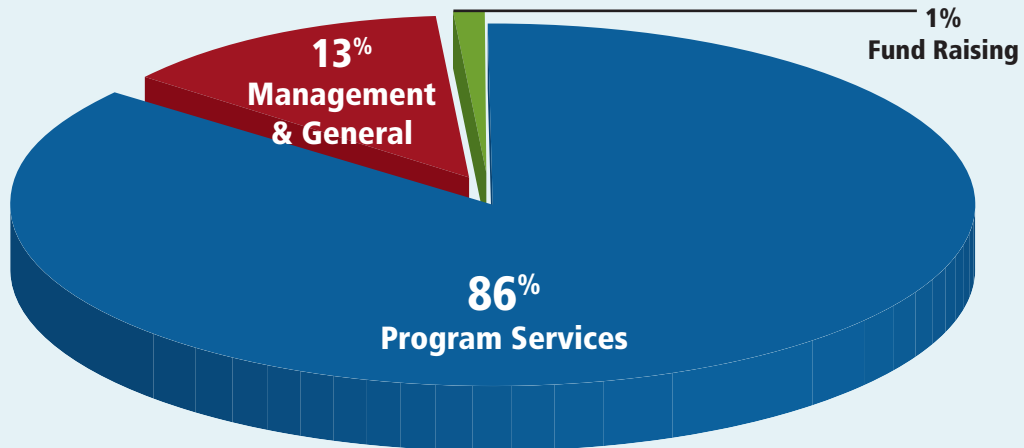
## 2013 Financial Support - Income



### 2013 Program Revenue

Total County Support	\$1,007,710	48%
Total State Support	\$667,745	32%
Total Federal Support	\$101,313	5%
Total Other Support	\$339,160	1%
	<b>\$2,115,928</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2013 Functional Expenses



### 2013 Functional Expenses

Program Services	86%
Management & General	13%
Fund Raising	1%
	<b>100%</b>

*Building  
Strong and Vibrant  
New York  
Communities*



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