

# 2023 Annual Report



## Thoughts from the President...

In January of this year, I became president of our Board of Directors, taking the reins from our good friend Jim Corriveau, who led us as president through the last three years, including the pandemic period, unflinching. I am so proud to take up the torch from Jim to lead this outstanding Association, and what a year 2023 has been for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County! Amanda Root, who became our Executive Director in late 2022, hit the ground running and through the year has led our Board of Directors and staff through the development of a comprehensive strategic plan, which upon completion, will chart our exciting course over the next several years.



Steve Jennings,  
President

Through the year, and as reflected in this report, our Board has been regularly updated on the vital community programs Extension directors and their staff have implemented throughout Jefferson County. The Community Development programs, led by Mitch McCormick, greatly advanced energy, local foods, Taste NY, and NNY Agricultural Development Program initiatives. Youth and Family Development programs, led by Stephanie Graf, ably advanced youth development initiatives through traditional 4-H and 4-H Afterschool programs, parenting programs, and Camp Wabasso. April Bennett, Nutrition Program manager, creatively led numerous nutrition advancement programs and workshops throughout Jefferson County, including food access and insecurity, environmental sustainability, healthy lifestyles adult groups, and the North Country Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program. The Agriculture and Natural Resources programs, led by Mike Nuckols, consistently advanced agriculture, horticulture, and natural resources education to children and adults throughout Jefferson County. Because of their fine work, all of our program directors and staff have demonstrated measurable impacts in our communities, school districts, and Fort Drum. None of our work can be done without strong administrative backing. Special thanks to Frank Marzano and his Finance Department team for their expert work and leadership to support all our programs fiscally. Erin O'Rourke diligently handles our marketing and operations efforts, as well as manages our facilities. Tracy Sanford expertly supports our largest asset, our Human Resources, the people who work for us and advance our mission every day.

4-H Camp Wabasso, one of Jefferson County's crown jewels, experienced long-needed and significant capital investment to improve the infrastructure of the property, from property drainage improvements to road improvements, as well as cottage facility improvements for our campers. All these activities happened during the fair-weather off-season of camp, to better support our in-season live-in campers and day visitors. The improvements have been extremely well-received by visitors and staff. Additional work is slated for the spring of 2024 to ensure this vital Association asset continues to thrive and support current and expanded programming. Special thanks to Sabrina DeRue and Larry Tiller who work tirelessly to keep 4-H Camp Wabasso pristine and welcoming for all our youth and visitors.

Finally, support from Cornell University, and the reason we pursue economic vitality, ecological sustainability, and social well-being for every Jefferson County resident, is appreciated and recognized. Consistent support from Paul O'Connor, our Field Operations director, has been a tremendous help to me, and has helped us to achieve Extension's overall mission to bring local experience and research-based solutions together to help families and communities thrive in a rapidly changing world.



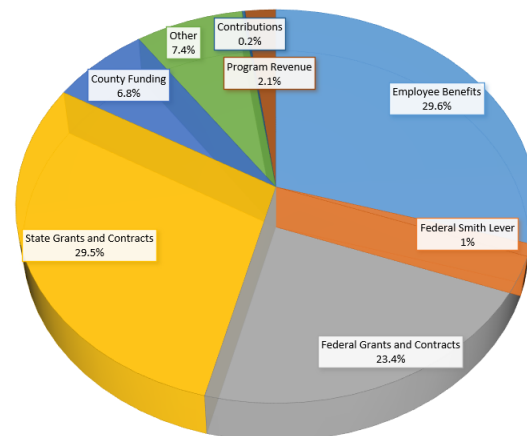
Executive Director  
Amanda Root

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, I am pleased to present our 2023 Annual Report.

## 2023 Funding Sources

Our funders are some of the most important community partners. Strong community partnerships build strong community programs.

The total budget for Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Jefferson County for 2023 is **\$9,997,736.**



# Supporting Production Agriculture

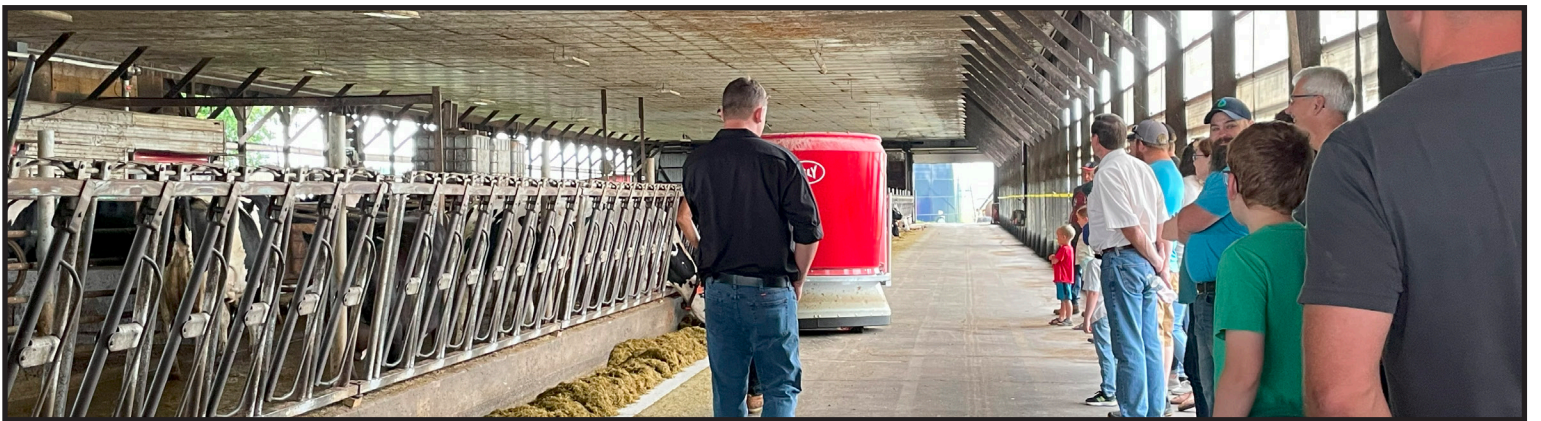
- The North Country Regional Ag Team (NCRAT) hosted events for large commercial dairies, ranging from shop talks on pesticide application to a dairy robotic feeding and milking system tour. NCRAT also presented a Dairy Feeder School to farmworkers in both English and Spanish.
- The Ag Team worked closely with local farms, meat and dairy processors, and Jefferson County Economic Development to expand production of dairy products within Jefferson County.
- The Ag Team provided on-farm consultations and support to a wide range of agricultural enterprises, from organic growers and produce farms, to mushroom producers, to apiaries.
- A pasture walk for beef farmers was held in partnership with CCE Lewis and the NYS Beef Producer's Association focused on forage species, weed identification, and soil sampling.
- Two farm tax workshops were co-hosted with Farm Credit East, addressing topics ranging from recordkeeping to tax law changes related to green energy regulations.
- The Horticulture Team conducted over 100 site visits to homes and businesses throughout the county to diagnose problems in their landscape and gardens.



*Robotic milking demonstration*



*Equine first aid workshop*



*Robotic feeder demonstration at Klock Family Farms in LaFargeville, NY*

## Dairy Prospects Program - Ag Workforce Development

Five youth from Jefferson & Lewis counties completed the Dairy Prospects program in 2023. During this program, youth were exposed to dairy farms around New York State that differ in size and management styles. They were also introduced to different agricultural businesses and learned how they are connected to the dairy industry. Program participants visited two higher-education institutions to explore future opportunities. This program gives youth the opportunity to explore various parts of the dairy industry.



*Dairy Prospects at Hillside Dairy*

# Promoting Local Food in our Community



8 farmers markets  
with vendors  
accepting  
SNAP/EBT



577 people  
assisted at  
farmers markets



8 local farmers &  
food producers  
selling products in  
Stewart's Shops



Over 850 students  
received Harvest of  
the Month nutrition  
education



Over 400 pounds of  
produce was grown  
and donated by  
Master Gardener  
volunteers



54 participants  
learned the basics  
of canning and food  
preservation

The **North Country Produce Prescription Project** addresses rural community food access through a 6-county regional program that reduces food insecurity and food access barriers while improving healthy food preparation knowledge and health equity for low-income individuals and families. Over the 3-year span of this project, 1,080 referral “prescriptions” will be made by healthcare providers for qualifying patients to attend 6 weekly nutrition workshops. For each workshop they attend, they will receive a \$25 voucher redeemable with participating local producers and retail markets. In the first year, the program has already attracted 57 partners across the North Country.

*“The newly branded farmers market materials provided from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County has dramatically increased the foot-traffic, sales, and overall awareness of the SNAP/EBT program at the Watertown Farm and Craft Market. Our busiest day of the year, so far, consisted of 55 transactions distributing \$1,359, which is twice the amount from the busiest day of the year in 2022. The branded materials provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension have increased visibility of our token distribution site, allowing staff to educate the public on the SNAP/EBT token program.”*

**Allison Andrews | Program Director | Greater Watertown-North Country Chamber of Commerce**

# TASTE NY Celebrates 10 Years!

A celebration of the Taste NY program's 10th year was held at the North Country Welcome Center in April. The event consisted of remarks from Commissioner of New York State Ag & Markets, Richard Ball, and vendors providing samples and connecting with customers. The Taste NY program has facilitated many partnerships leading to sales for producers in the North Country region.



Commissioner Ball celebrating TNY at the North Country Welcome Center

171 vendors sold their products in the Taste NY Store in 2023.

*"The Taste NY program was there for me when I needed a safe space to incubate my new business, work through those scaling challenges, test new markets, and build successful relationships. I hope that more food-based startups in New York State will take advantage of this wonderful program."*

**James Munn | Owner | Black River Valley Natural**

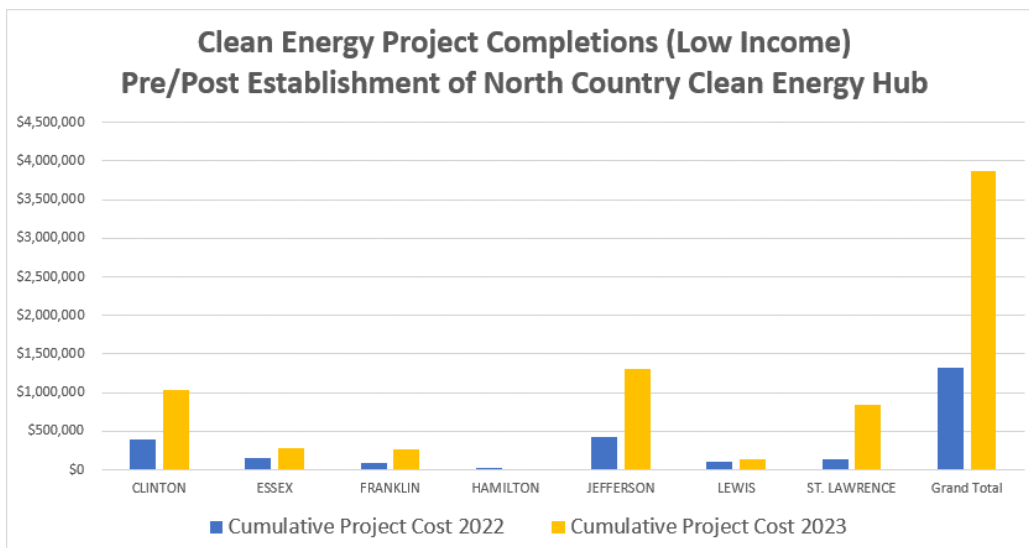
The **North Country Clean Energy Hub** was established in Fall 2022, with the mission of providing residents in a seven county region (Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex, Hamilton) access to energy efficiency and clean energy resources.

Over **900** residents engaged with CCE staff to discuss energy efficiency opportunities, connect to New York State funding to assist with creating safer and more comfortable homes, and discover resources available to meet their clean energy goals.

In the Hub's first year, residents were connected to over **\$3.9 million** in state funding assistance. The programs aided in lowering energy costs by providing comprehensive energy audits, insulation work, and various other solutions to enhance energy efficiency in homes and small businesses.



Clean Energy Advisors comparing insulation types



Learning about solar panels

# Supporting Veterans, Soldiers, and Military Families

7,953 Family Advocacy participants experienced positive changes in relationships and learned new parenting or communication skills.



4,025 soldiers and family members created individualized budgets and learned money management skills through the Financial Readiness Program.



401 soldiers and families were supported with services that enhanced career skills, entrepreneurship with home-based business establishments, individual career assistance, and transitioning career goals.



Army Emergency Relief assisted 716 soldiers, family members, and retirees in meeting financial obligations and provided a total of \$910,938 in aid through emergency relief grants and loans.



Relocation Readiness assisted 973 participants in finding an increased awareness of community supports and services to enable personal and family stability in times of change.



183 military youth attended military summer camps and learned outdoor survival skills and connected to nature!



Career-focused programming for transitioning soldiers and veterans helped build workforce development through Farm Ops.



329 military youth participated in 4-H programming increasing knowledge in healthy living, STEM, and civic engagement.



# 4-H Youth Development

**4-H Afterschool** programs combine fun and learning to help youth develop lifelong skills such as leadership, critical thinking, and teamwork! In the 2022-2023 school year, **1,517** students participated in this impactful programming.



**63%** of regular attendees needing improvement increased report card grades in ELA/Reading from 1st to 4th quarter.

**58%** of regular attendees needing improvement increased report card grades in Math from 1st to 4th quarter.

**85%** of students needing improvement increased classroom engagement from fall to spring.

**98%** of parents are satisfied with the program.

**311** students participated in summer out of school time programs.

*Results based on a survey conducted by an independent evaluator.*

The **Jefferson County Youth Livestock Auction** was held on July 15th at the county fair. **5** animals and **32** non-animal items were auctioned. There were **2 market lambs**, **2 market hogs**, and **1 market goat** sold. **\$4,315** was raised for livestock programming in Jefferson County.



Market goat entry at the Livestock Auction

## Updates at 4-H Camp Wabasso



Cabin upgrades

Many renovations have been happening at 4-H Camp Wabasso! Spruce and Hemlock cabins were completed. Heat was added - allowing us to use them for our first ever winter events. Additionally, front ramps and new metal roofs were added, and the exterior was repainted. Four upper cabins - Elm, GLF, Wehle, and Beech - were updated with new windows and doors, metal roofs, foundations, and painting. The back entrance to camp was the

most impactful facility improvement for 2023. It was re-graded and widened, with new layers of stone poured, transforming the road from a steep, sandy trail that was continually washed out from rain, to a safe, usable road. This improvement allowed us to use the road as a one-way loop on drop off and pick up days, cutting the check in and check out times for families by at least 50%. Thank you to the Jefferson County Highway Department for supporting us with this huge upgrade!



Back entrance to 4-H Camp Wabasso

## My Brother's Keeper Program

Over **4,000** youth and adults in the Watertown City School District were served through the My Brother's Keeper Program. This program provides family engagement activities for students in grades K-12 in the Watertown City School District. Family engagement helps improve students' achievement in school.



Family face painting night

# 2023 Board of Directors

## Officers:

- Steve Jennings, *President*
- Nathan Pistner, *Vice President*
- Tracy Leonard, *Secretary*
- Kate Eves, *Treasurer*

## Directors:

- Bruce Armstrong
- Carmelita Britton
- Scott Connell
- Katie Corbin
- McKenzie Fisk-Kamide
- Mark Gebo
- Sara Murray
- John Peck
- Anne Walldroff

## Mission Statement

Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Jefferson County educates youth, families, farmers, and communities using research-based knowledge for practical application and lifelong learning.

## Thank you...

to all our Extension supporters and partner organizations who help us serve the residents of Jefferson County throughout the year.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County

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