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Annual Report

Neighbors You Know, Knowledge You Trust

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Thoughts from the President...

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Jefferson County is proud to present the Association's 2024 Annual Report to residents, elected officials, funders, and community stakeholders. CCE of Jefferson County puts experience, research, and evidence-based solutions to work, which connects people with effective programs and practices. CCE of Jefferson County's ability to match Cornell University resources with community needs helps this Association play a vital role in the lives of individuals, youth, families, farmers, businesses, and communities throughout Jefferson County. The programming featured in these pages would not be possible without the continued support of government partnerships, grants, Cornell University, and the work of staff, volunteers, and partnering community agencies.



*Steve Jennings,
President*

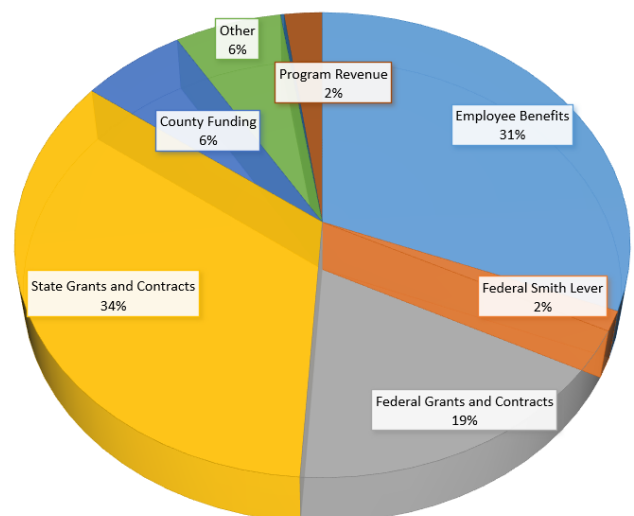
Our work and our success rely heavily on the solid foundation of support we receive from our collaborators. We are proud and grateful for our many volunteers, community partners, farms and agricultural organizations, schools, local and state elected officials, youth leadership building organizations, and the small business community, all of whom support and strengthen our mission, which is to educate youth, families, farmers, and communities using research-based knowledge for practical application and lifelong learning. This report well-reflects our commitment to this mission.

Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and involvement with CCE of Jefferson County!

2024 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 2024 is **\$11,167,044.**



Agriculture and Value-Added Food Production Education and Technical Assistance

1,233 youth participated in agriculture and local foods systems education, connecting them to career exploration opportunities, including Farm & Home Safety Day, Ag Extravaganza, County Fair, NYS 4-H Youth Agri Business Conference, and Cornell University Career Explorations.



Working with NYS 4-H, a local foods curriculum was developed for high school students to be introduced to agriculture related careers. It was successfully piloted in 4-H Afterschool, Jeff-Lewis BOCES, and at Oswegatchie Education Center with **109 youth**.



Ag staff supported **87 farms** with specialized education and hands-on programs, including dairy farm support through calving and calf care demonstrations, beef farming workshops on pasture management and antibiotic usage, and sheep farming discussions on grazing and meat quality, all aimed at improving farm operations and decision-making.



78 farm stands and local businesses were featured in the Jefferson County Local Food Guide. The Local Food Guide directs people to fresh, local foods grown right here in Jefferson County.



Fast Track to Farming provided accelerated quarterly courses on marketing, livestock, horticulture, and more for transitioning soldiers and farmers.

The Ag Team provided on-farm consultations and support to a diverse range of agricultural enterprises, including organic growers, produce farms, dairy, and livestock operations. Additionally, CCE horticulturists responded to approximately **875 inquiries** from community residents and businesses, offering expert guidance on topics such as plant selection, soil management, pest control, and sustainable garden practices.



“**Taste NY** has significantly supported my journey as a vendor over the past two years. Their expertise helped me navigate marketing and production challenges, allowing me to gather vital community feedback to shape the product. Engaging with local consumers at various markets provided key insights that boosted customer buy-in. I appreciate the dedication of Taste NY staff, who actively checked in and visited my farm, fueling my motivation to promote this new regional product. I highly recommend Taste NY as an essential support system for entrepreneurial vendors!”

- Duane Smith, Seaway Coldhardy Grapes

Reducing Nutrition Insecurity in Our Community

In collaboration with Community Action Planning Council, a Mobile Food Pantry was launched, which served **612 households** from April-September. At five sites around Jefferson County, food items such as grains, produce, dairy, and meats were distributed. The food was sourced through partnerships with the Food Bank of CNY, local producers, and donations from grocery stores in Watertown.



The Local Foods Program partnered with **5 Stewart's locations** in designated food deserts (areas with limited or no access to grocery stores) to offer fresh, local products for preparing nutritious meals. To date, **7 local producers** have joined the initiative, resulting in the sale of **6,153 products** totaling **\$40,054.23**.

Master Gardener Volunteers provided **1,190 hours of education**, supported community beautification projects, and grew **522 pounds** of produce for local food pantries through the Mission Garden and Vegetable Variety Trials.

Preventing Chronic Disease Through Nutrition and Physical Activity Education



1,242 youth participated in 4-H research-based nutrition education which included programs such as 4-H Choose Health: Food, Fun, and Fitness; Cultures Around the World; and Food Science.



1,531 youth and **546 adults** participated in SNAP-Ed nutrition workshops aimed at increasing vegetable and fruit consumption, drinking more water rather than sugary beverages, being physically active, eating balanced meals and snacks, and using food resources wisely.

66 adults participated in North Country Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program workshops aimed at increasing vegetable and fruit consumption, increasing food security and reducing diet-related chronic disease.

Reducing Energy Consumption and Increasing the Use of Clean Energy

Working with the North Country Clean Energy Hub, the CCE Energy Program conducted an analysis which identified significant barriers for residents to access funding and resources that will improve home energy efficiency. Challenges included the region's vast rural size, limited contractor availability, and insufficient wraparound services for disadvantaged communities and low-moderate income households.



- The opportunities discovered include growing residents' interest in clean energy solutions like heat pumps, as well as strong demand for energy efficiency improvements across small businesses, nonprofits, and homeowners.
- Key benefits from the analysis include guiding future strategies to increase access to clean energy programs/funding (e.g. NYSERDA Empower+), improving workforce development, and tailoring messaging to emphasize comfort, safety, and affordability for homeowners.
- The recommendations focus on addressing barriers, enhancing regional partnerships, and expanding workforce training to meet the demand for clean energy jobs, ultimately supporting an equitable and sustainable energy transition across the North Country region. This will guide our work going forward.

CCE Energy Advisors assisted residents in completing **81 applications** for state funding to support home energy audits and energy efficiency projects across Jefferson, Lewis, Hamilton, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties. This contributed to a total of **540 residents** served throughout the North Country Region.



The Seagrant project focused on protecting Lake Ontario's water quality by educating waterfront communities on stormwater management, erosion control, and the use of native plants. Through educational programs, tabling events, and technical assistance, the project provided **273 residents** with resources aimed to reduce runoff, prevent erosion, and promote sustainable landscaping practices.

Building Youth Resiliency



425 youth participated in the summer residential camp season and **780 youth** participated in off-season camp programming at 4-H Camp Wabasso focusing on healthy lifestyles, physical activity, team building, and science.

99% of youth reported they feel like they belong at camp.

1,714 youth in 4-H Afterschool participated in Social and Emotional Learning activities further developing social-emotional skills to increase their abilities to succeed in academics and within the community.



Life Skills Development

224 parenting educators gained knowledge and understanding of the latest research and evidence-based parenting education practices.

1,183 parents participated in family engagement events such as Mindfulness and Yoga, Book Clubs, Emergency Preparedness, Home Energy Solutions Workshops, Wellness Fairs, and Internet & Social Media Safety Nights

focusing on community engagement, developing strong interpersonal skills, and connecting to resources to assist in making informed decisions to support themselves and their families.

1,389 youth in grades K-8 participated in a minimum of 15 hours of life skills focused enrichment programming through 4-H programs.



Supporting Military Affiliated Individuals and Families at Fort Drum

706 military youth participated in 4-H research-based education leading to enhanced decision making, problem solving, and communication skills.



1,379 Family Advocacy participants experienced positive changes in relationships and learned new parenting or communication skills.



1,225 soldiers and family members created individualized budgets and 4,544 learned money management skills through Financial Readiness Program classes.



845 soldiers, veterans, and family members were supported with services that enhanced career skills, individual career assistance, and transitioning career goals.



Army Emergency Relief assisted 772 soldiers, family members, and retirees in meeting financial obligations and provided a total of \$977,188 in aid through emergency relief grants and loans.



Relocation Readiness assisted 3,352 participants in finding an increased awareness of community supports and services to enable personal and family stability in times of change.



“Today was my last day with David. It was a good productive time on the farm. We did farm maintenance. We cut a couple pastures, fed the cattle, did some bailing, met some other farmers and he showed me the day to day of how he works his farm. Overall, I had a blast. It was definitely worth my time and I’d go back in a heartbeat. I can’t wait to learn more from the next farm.”

- Will, Transitioning Soldier and Ag Vets Program Participant

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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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