

2025 Annual Impact Report

Neighbors You Know, Knowledge You Trust



Cornell Cooperative Extension | Jefferson County

Thoughts from the President

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Jefferson County is proud to present the Association’s 2025 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.

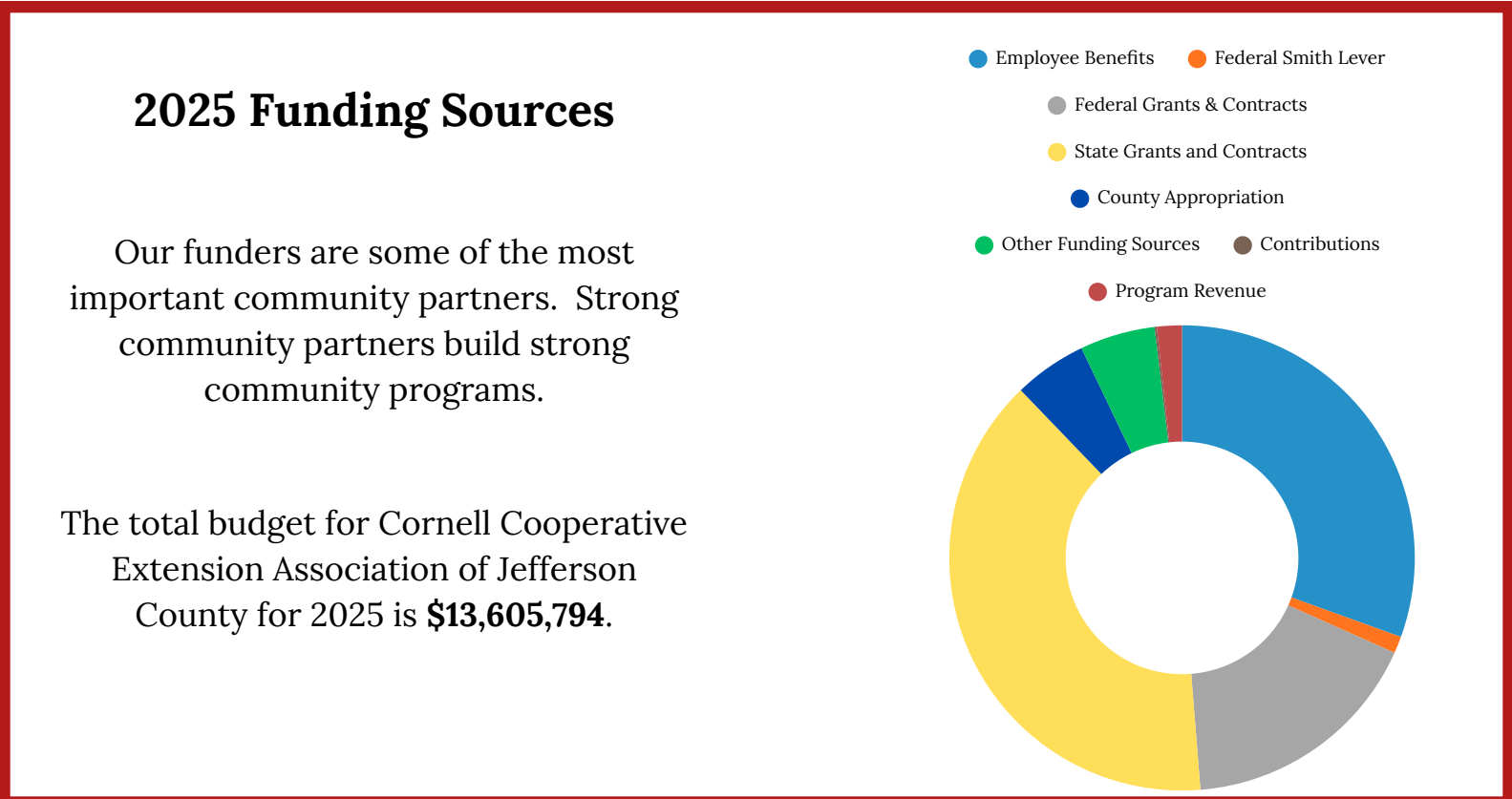


Steve Jennings,
President

Of significant note and focus this year has been continued work on 4-H Camp Wabasso. For the first time in the Association’s history, a strategic plan was completed and adopted for 4-H Camp Wabasso, focusing on facilities, camper experience, and the need to have perpetual resources to invest in the Camp’s upkeep and future. Significant, needed capital improvements to Camp infrastructure occurred over these last few years, but this year, the kitchen was expanded, a project that essentially caps a series of projects that have greatly improved and enhanced 4-H Camp Wabasso.

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.

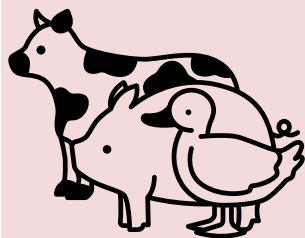
Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and involvement with CCE of Jefferson County!



Agriculture and Local Food Production Education & Support

Connecting Youth to Agriculture at the Jefferson County Fair

310



students from the 4-H Afterschool Summer Programs visited the Jefferson County Fair and learned about various aspects of agriculture such as agriculture careers, livestock and dairy animals, small animals, showing animals at the fair, how dairy products are made, and 4-H and FFA programs.

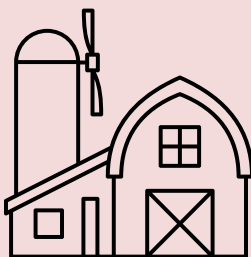
More Youth Education

529

youth participated in agriculture and local food system education including County Fair and Cornell University Career Explorations. Youth learned about equine science, local foods, and various ag careers.

Fast Track to Farming

The Fast Track to Farming program featured specialized presentations and farm tours focused on topics such as maple production, value-added dairy products, hay field and pasture renovation, mushroom production, and cut flower farming.



Technical Assistance for Farmers

104

farms were provided specialized education and hands-on programs, including dairy farm support, equine care, beef farming workshops, sheep farming discussions, farm visits, and research trials, all aimed at improving farm operations.

Tri County Ag Team (TCAT)

The Tri County Ag Team officially launched in the last year, offering technical expertise in dairy management systems, crop production, and farm business management. Assistance is provided through one-on-one consultation, group programming, applied research, and as a resource to industry, community, and governmental organizations. The TCAT team has built relationships with producers, industry professionals, and leaders of governmental and agricultural organizations to introduce their services and better understand the challenges facing individual operations and the industry. The specialists are actively collaborating in local and statewide efforts to position the dairy industry for growth in the milk processing sector, find solutions to labor challenges, improve agricultural practices, and answer economically important questions for farmers by conducting applied research.

Taste NY & Farm to Fork

Students in grades 6-12 explored multiple agricultural career paths in Jefferson County through the Taste & Travel / Farm to Fork program. They learned about sustainable farming, food entrepreneurship, cooking with local foods, and the economic impact of shopping local.



Food Processing Facility Feasibility Study

The Local Foods Team conducted a feasibility study on the need for a shared-use kitchen facility in Jefferson County. It revealed strong demand with **157 of 668 survey respondents** expressing interest. Seventy seven of the respondents interested already own, or plan to start, a food business. Interest in products like baked goods, jams, sauces, and cultural foods highlights the need for a versatile facility that could drive economic development, support entrepreneurship, and create local jobs.

Reducing Nutrition Insecurity Through Education & Action

Mobile Food Pantry

634

households were served by the Mobile Food Pantry, which delivers fresh, nutritious products directly to communities reducing barriers to healthy food access. Food items such as grains, produce, dairy, and meats were distributed. Over the last year, the Mobile Food Pantry provided **24,240 meals**. This project is a collaboration between Community Action Planning Council and CCE Jefferson.



Local Food Guide

10,000

copies of the Jefferson County Local Food Guide were distributed to the community, guiding people to local farm businesses and fresh, local foods grown right here in Jefferson County.

Local Food to You Program



2,012

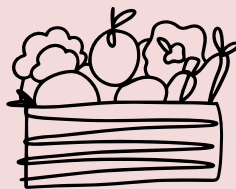
people participated in cooking classes, food demonstrations, and other local food education through workshops held at farmers markets, on Fort Drum, and at partner community organizations.



Building Healthy Habits in Our Community



Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program



784

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

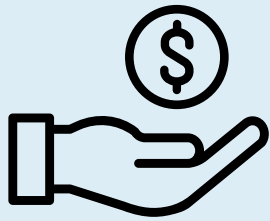
SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education



2,719 youth and **169 adults** participated in SNAP-Ed nutrition workshops focused on 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.

Educating Communities on Clean Energy

North Country Energy Hub



\$1.18 million

in energy efficiency upgrades were made across Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Hamilton, Clinton, and Essex Counties. Energy Advisors assisted **118 residents** with completing applications for the energy efficiency projects through Empower+. They also provided support in accessing other home improvement wrap-around services.



Natural Resources

The Ag & Natural Resources team assisted **142 community members** with inquiries on tree health, tree planting, wildlife management, wildlife habitat, invasive species, forest carbon programs, and woodlot management.

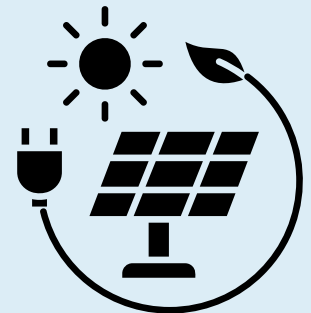


Jefferson County Solar Case Study

In June 2024, CCE launched the Community Centered Solar Development (CCSD) project, funded by Michigan State University and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, to help communities navigate decisions about solar energy. Guided by a local steering committee, the project engaged **46 residents** through community sessions and surveys, combining education with opportunities for input.

Key recommendations include:

- **Safety:** Fire department training for lithium battery fires.
- **Land use:** Avoid prime farmland, protect scenic views, and prioritize alternative sites.
- **Zoning & infrastructure:** Strengthen setback compliance, plan for transmission lines, and upgrade the grid.
- **Environment:** Ensure decommissioning plans, habitat protection, and wildlife safeguards.
- **Community benefits:** Use agreements to support lower utility costs, training, education, and preservation projects.
- **Governance:** Expand local decision-making, improve transparency, and restore home rule authority.
- **Agriculture:** Promote agrivoltaics to balance farming and renewable energy.



The Jefferson County CCSD project showed the value of early, structured community engagement. Residents recognized solar benefits but stressed protecting farmland, preserving community character, and ensuring transparent, inclusive planning. The report provides municipalities with guidance to align solar development with both sustainability goals and local priorities.

Building Youth Resiliency & Teaching Life Skills

4-H Camp Wabasso

This year, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of 4-H Camp Wabasso by welcoming **387 youth** during the summer residential camp season and **1,579 youth** during off-season camp programming.

Programming at 4-H Camp Wabasso focuses on healthy lifestyles, physical activity, team building, and science. New this year, **55 summer campers** learned American Sign Language!



Life Skills Development

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

The Parenting Team supported **72 parents and families** through home visits addressing various topics like routines, discipline, and child development.

975 family members participated in family engagement and literacy events. These events included a first responders appreciation dinner, meet and greets with local authors, cooking classes, energy conservation, family financial literacy events, internet safety events, gardening programs, student showcases, and so much more!



4-H Afterschool

Through 4-H Afterschool programming, **1,993 youth** engaged in social and emotional learning activities that strengthened coping, decision making, and communication skills, supporting their success in school and active participation in their communities.



Community Schools

Students at LaFargeville Central School are revitalizing a basketball court near the school through the Community Schools program. This program helps youth develop advocacy and leadership skills. The students have been working with the Town of Orleans to resurface the court, make the parking lot safer, improve drainage, and install lighting. They have also built benches and flower boxes. The project has been very successful, with one youth even considering running for the town board in the future. To read more about this project, visit bit.ly/LaFargevilleYouth.



Supporting the Military Community

224

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



930

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



1,500

Soldiers and family members created individualized budgets and **5,237** learned money management skills through Financial Readiness Program classes.



203

Soldiers, family members, and retirees were assisted by Army Emergency Relief in meeting financial obligations. Army Emergency Relief provided **\$280,421** in aid through emergency relief loans.



3,521

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

Northern New York Veterans in Agriculture (AgVets)

Since 2020, AgVets has reached more than 2,200 service members through free farm tours, classes and workshops, and mentorships with local farmers. More than 50 participants have gone on to ag-related jobs, started or expanded their own farms, or obtained higher education in agriculture. Learn more about the impact AgVets has had on our community at bit.ly/CCEJeffAgVets.

SCAN HERE



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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.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County

203 N. Hamilton St.

Watertown, NY 13601

Phone: 315-788-8450 Fax: 315-788-8461

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