CCE-MONROE STAFF & TEAM

During COVID-19 staff connected, celebrated, and collaborated via Zoom. Photo: Staff

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In 2020 CCE-Monroe reached over 20,000 individuals with research-based information and educational programming.

VOLUNTEERS

While volunteerism looked different this year, we simply could not accomplish our mission without each and every one of our volunteers. Even through COVID-19, volunteers found creative ways to support CCE-Monroe from handling the Gardening Helpline remotely, pivoting consumer workshops to online formats, putting together deliverable education kits, serving on committees, and more! Thanks to all our volunteers who helped us navigate 2020. Their contribution cannot be adequately measured. Cornell Cooperative Extension further impacts Monroe County because of them!

4-H youth and club leaders support the 2020 Chicken BBQ. Alyssa Basset, left, Niki Whilden, center, Renee Basset, right. Photo: Staff
From the Director’s Desk...

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE-Monroe) started the year 2020 like many, looking forward to a year of continued growth and development. We set out to expand both our capacity and reach to support Monroe County with the research-based resources and education that residents and businesses have relied on for over one-hundred years. And like many, our organization and our reach within the county were threatened by COVID-19, as well as a year of extreme challenges economically, socially, and politically.

HOWEVER, through the strength of the Cornell Cooperative Extension statewide system, the ability of our stellar CCE-Monroe team to creatively pivot programming formats, and the support of our Board of Directors, volunteers, donors, and community partners, CCE-Monroe has shown its ability to rise above the challenges of 2020 and continue to provide programming that ensures the vitality of agriculture, strengthen families, promote health and well-being, and improve our communities. In fact, in many cases CCE-Monroe has turned the challenges we experienced this year into new opportunities to support all of Monroe County.

The pages that follow are filled with stories of hope, creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness. These stories reflect the people who make CCE-Monroe one of the greatest assets our community has; an asset that continues to stand against the test of time and challenges.

My best to you as we close out 2020 and look forward to a new year.

Andrea M. Lista
Executive Director

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Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County believes in shared leadership through locally elected Board of Directors and active program development committees. Our dedicated staff and volunteers work with Cornell faculty, agriculture, nutrition, and 4-H youth development teams to put research to work to grow, strengthen and sustain a healthy, vibrant and economically strong Monroe County.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.
MONROE COUNTY 4-H YOUTH ARE EXEMPLARY LEADERS IN SERVICE

From creating dog toys to donate to local animal shelters, to sorting food packages at local food banks, to weeding flower beds in local parks, Monroe County youth care about supporting their community. 4-H members participate in community service through community, club, and school events.

In December, youth had the opportunity to make seasonal decorations and gingerbread houses with residents in the Memory Care Facility at Creekstone, an assisted living community. Over 25 youth, parents, and residents participated in this event. “Decorating gingerbread houses at Creekstone was a great opportunity for our club members to spend time sharing, learning from, and helping others,” Leslie Pude, 4-H Friends club leader, said.

Some Monroe County 4-H clubs strive to participate in at least one community service activity a month. Posh Ponies club member, Beatrix, reflects on one of her 4-H club service experiences. “While we were at the non-profit Pencils and Paper we helped to sort supplies and clean, it was a great experience,” Beatrix shared. “Even though it had challenging aspects, it had very fun ones too! It was educational and taught me many things about schooling that I did not know. I cannot wait to volunteer there again.”

Some clubs mainly focus on community service. For example, the Busy Bees 4-H club classroom at Mary Cariola Children’s Center has completed a number of projects for the community at large and the Mary Cariola Community. According to Busy Bees club leader, Kathy Lee, the Busy Bees club recently hosted a pajama party to collect pajamas, toys, and pillowcases for a local shelter. The club invited other classes at Mary Cariola to join the party and collected over 100 pairs of pajamas to be donated.

During the past year, two Monroe County 4-H clubs collaborated to host a “Baby Shower” at Cameron Community Ministries. Items such as baby wipes, diapers, toys, and clothing were collected by members of the Hilton Horsemen and Posh Ponies clubs and the group made over 15 fleece blankets for the shower. “The kids sat around the tables talking and laughing while tying the blankets. The different projects that the kids get involved with help them develop new skills like teamwork, patience, leadership, thinking of others, and above all the importance of giving back,” 4-H volunteer Luann Lanzatella shared.

Club collaboration is seen all around Monroe County. A favorite community event for 4-H youth is the Mary Cariola Center Petting Zoo. This event has 4-H members bring in animals of all sizes for the benefit of the students at the Mary Cariola Center. During COVID-19 this was accomplished through videos. “The students at Mary Cariola have significant challenges and have often never seen farm type animals,” Whilden, 4-H Posh Ponies club leader, shared. “Our members brought rabbits, a turkey, chickens, and a hedgehog for students to pet and visit with. We love participating in this event each year; our kids love to share and talk about their animals.”

Pledging “Our Hands to Larger Service” is part of the 4-H pledge and Monroe County youth participants certainly demonstrate that skill!

4-H Program Highlight - Roc Kids Grow

CCE-Monroe, along with 8 other partner organizations, collaborated to form Roc Kids Grow after they realized the impact COVID-19 had on food security for many in the community. They recognized the need to limit barriers to access, and provided all materials for free.

Over 100 families in the Rochester City School District participated in the program to learn about and experience gardening during the time they were socially distanced from school.

4-H Educator Lori Koenick led viewers through soil preparation, reading seed packets, best growing locations, and actually planting in the provided containers through a series of Zoom workshops.
4-H Goes Virtual

With the help of innovative volunteers, 4-H is carrying on with learning and developing a sense of belonging in youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social connection and learning has not stopped in Monroe County. 4-H clubs and school programs have continued to meet, using virtual learning and meeting platforms. 4-H members and volunteers are using video software and online classrooms to maintain connection.

Despite social distancing, 4-H groups are still able to share meals together and play games. The Posh Ponies club has incorporated food into part of their club meetings, eating dinner together and asking people to bake something in advance to “share” with the group virtually. Virtual meetings allow groups to see aspects of each other’s lives that perhaps they would not see under typical conditions, such as pets. Games can still be played with a little creativity - the Posh Ponies were still able to practice for horse bowl through an online trivia game.

All ages are able to participate in these virtual connections. 4-H Friends, a Cloverbud group in Monroe County, is meeting online. Club members are reading books to one another, singing songs, and baking soft pretzel treats. During one meeting, club member Avery led the groups in making a paper flower craft.

Mariah Meadows 4-H Club also met virtually. They took the time to connect and were thrilled to see each other. The Westside Science and Nature Explorers have also turned to electronic devices to keep in touch. The 4-H UNITY (Urban Neighborhoods Improved Through Youth) group continues to meet weekly. They have been participating in virtual icebreakers and forging ahead with their community action project.

School based programs are continuing to meet! The Bishop Kearney High School Horticulture class has been meeting virtually and completing online assignments. Students took part in a food scavenger hunt in the home to learn about the food system and how they participate in it. Students have also engaged in online workshops on plant growing zones and kitchen scrap gardening.

The Green Team, an afterschool club at Children’s School of Rochester, has been meeting virtually every week. During these meetings, the group shares stories from the week through photos and other creative means. To celebrate Earth Day, group members made Earth collages. The team works on individual and group projects. Individual projects include measuring how high squirrels can jump and germinating maple seedlings. The group participated in kitchen scrap gardening and soil workshops.

4-H Program Highlight - FLX Learning Launchpad & Zooming Into Summer

FLX Online Learning Launchpad “Launched” in Response to COVID-19, a Collaborative Effort of 8 CCE Associations in the Finger Lakes Region

Launchpad activities (including live videos, webinars, and worksheets) provided the high-quality 4-H experience that families value in a safe online environment, maintained a sense of connection with other 4-Hers, and complemented at-home learning.
The Launchpad Facebook has 819 followers, and has gotten over 35,000 views since launching in March. The first video reached 2,480 people and was shared 29 times!

Zooming into Summer

The Monroe County 4-H Fair Zooming into Summer program offered virtual learning challenges, public speaking opportunities, community service options, and fun.
Moving to online programming resulted in a 200% increase in outreach in some areas!
MILK DRIVE SUCCESS - DAIRY FARMERS OF AMERICA GIVE AWAY 4,000 GALLONS OF MILK TO MONROE COUNTY RESIDENTS

On Monday, May 11, 2020, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE-Monroe), in partnership with University of Rochester, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), NYS and Monroe County Dairy Princesses, and local dairy farmers and DFA members, Mike and Cassandra Balonek, owners of Mumford Dairy and Meat in Mumford, N.Y., hosted a drive-thru donation event. With the help of a team of volunteers, these organizations distributed over 4,000 gallons of donated milk and 3,000 2 oz bottles of hand sanitizer (provided by Monroe County) to area residents.

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused widespread closures, keeping people at home. Due to these supply chain disruptions and shifts in consumer-buying habits, demand for dairy products has drastically decreased. At the same time, many families are facing unemployment, which has caused an increase in demand at food banks. Despite the pandemic, dairy cows continue to produce milk daily which has created an excess of product in the marketplace. Rather than dumping product, Dairy Farmers of America has donated more than 150,000 gallons of milk to organizations and communities in need throughout the Northeast United States. Local DFA farmers donated over 4,000 gallons of milk to Monroe County for the event on Monday.

“With so many in our community facing economic hardships due to COVID-19, we were looking for a way to help,” said Michael Balonek. “We reached out to our local Cornell Cooperative Extension office in Monroe County and decided the best way to serve those in need was by partnering with CCE-Monroe, DFA, and the University of Rochester to get milk to those who needed it most in the Rochester communities.”

Drivers were queued up at University of Rochester’s campus to receive drive-thru donations. Drivers were asked to pop their trunk or open their windows while the volunteer team loaded multiple half-gallon milk jugs and hand sanitizer into their cars.

“This is awesome,” said Andrea Lista, Executive Director of CCE-Monroe. “To be able to do this for the community and work in collaboration with the Dairy Farmers of America, the University of Rochester and great farmers like the Baloneks, is just an amazing feeling. We are so glad that we can be a help to people in our community. This is people helping people. That’s what it’s all about.”

With the help of Marty Schutt (Schutt’s Apple Mill & Farm) additional milk was distributed to food pantries, schools, and community outreach organizations across Monroe County.

COVID-19 COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE FOR FALL 2020 AGRITOURISM ACTIVITIES

In September, the CCE Ag Program offered a NY Forward Safety Plan advisory service for Monroe County farms that provide fall entertainment to the public to ensure their seasons were successful and safe. The service proved helpful to Joe's Farm in Brockport. Joe, a GVRMA Agritourism training graduate, has developed a profitable fall agritourism business in the last two years. Halloween activities such as the haunted house, hayrides, and corn maze were very popular with the public, as well as some of his main income sources.

But due to the pandemic, Joe was very concerned about being able to open this year, especially given that a fire marshal’s permit was also required. Many farms with similar entertainment closed due to pandemic and Joe wanted to capitalize on the low supply and high demand. He reached out to the CCE Ag Program for help. After visiting Joe’s farm and going step-by-step through the planned activities, the Ag Program educator wrote a detailed COVID-19 Compliance Safety Plan. The Plan was presented to the fire marshal who granted permission. This October, Joe’s haunted house brought in more income during two weekends than the entire fall season in any other year. This made farmer Joe very happy!
ENSURING MONROE COUNTY FARM OPERATIONS THRIVE

On a brisk morning in May, well ahead of schedule, a line of trucks was already forming at the Department of Public Works in Chili. Farmers, known for being early birds, arrived to pick up a supply of hand sanitizer and masks for their farms. This was a distribution event organized by CCE-Monroe to benefit the health and safety of Monroe County farmers, their families, and employees. While waiting, farmers gathered outside and chatted about farm matters such as the unusually cold spring and the crop forecasts for this year. But when some of the Chili DPW employees joined in, the conversation turned to the heavy machinery and equipment – a familiar subject for them all. The sanitizer drive gave participants a rare opportunity to socialize and network during these difficult times!

Free hand sanitizer and masks, provided by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, were available to farms of any size and type, including farm stands, CSAs, greenhouses, and U-Pick operations. Farmers’ market managers were also invited to come and get the supplies for their staff and volunteers. To show their support several officials attended. These included NYS Assembly members Marjorie Byrnes and Harry Bronson, NYS Senator Robert Ortt, and our County Legislator Tracy DiFlorio, all lending their hand and enjoying meeting the farmers.

Purchasing protective equipment, limiting the number of employees to assure social distancing, and stopping operations for frequent sanitizing can be costly. According to Nate Savage of Sunscape Farms, his COVID-19 related expenses reached $3,000 by mid-June and the cost for protective equipment, sanitizer, and cleaning run at about $1,000 per week. With two major drives and smaller individual deliveries, CCE-Monroe distributed over 1,300 gallons of hand sanitizer and 2,500 masks worth over $57,000 to help alleviate some of this cost.

“Our collaboration with NYS Ag & Markets is essential to local food production and agritourism. No farm is untouched by the pandemic or the economic fallout and we want to help,” said Andrea Lista, Executive Director, CCE-Monroe.

Without exception, every farmer expressed gratitude for the CCE’s effort to help them safely carry out their operations during these challenging times. Gail Miller of Lehman Farm summed it all up. “It really helps us farmers to meet New York State regulations; free hand sanitizer and face masks save us money and support our efforts to do the right thing on our farms. This is absolutely awesome!” Nothing can be more rewarding than helping local farmers thrive!

Regional Agriculture Teams

Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock, Field Crops (NWNY)
Serving a 10-county region in the western part of the state, the NWNY team’s specialists work together with Cornell faculty and extension educators statewide to provide service to farms large and small, focused on dairy, livestock, hay, corn, wheat or soybeans.

Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP)
Serving a 14-county region, CVP is a team of vegetable specialists providing educational programs and information to growers, processors and agri-business professionals, arming them with the knowledge to profitably produce and market safe and healthful vegetable crops. The program focuses on food safety, variety evaluation, market development, pest management, and cultural practices.

Lake Ontario Fruit Program (LOF)
Serving a 5-county region, LOF provides educational programs for the commercial fruit industry using research-based information to help the tree fruit and berry industries in NY compete in the world market and provide safe, high-quality produce for consumers.
MONROE COUNTY NEW HOME OF EASTERN BROCCOLI PROJECT VARIETY TRIAL

The Eastern Broccoli Project is a multi-state, multi-disciplinary, multi-year and multi-million dollar project that has the ambitious goal of increasing the Eastern broccoli industry to $100 million. A major part of the project is to develop new varieties that can tolerate the hot nights of the Eastern US and not get stressed which produces unmarketable heads.

CCE CVP Specialist, Christy Hoepting, has been a part of this project since its inception in 2007. Her role is to vigorously field-trial newly developed broccoli varieties that are either just released or in the near pipeline. Although she has moved the 0.6 acre variety evaluation across the CVP region, it has been hosted by Bauman Farms in Webster, NY in Monroe County in 2019 and 2020. Monroe County accounts for about 23% of New York broccoli industry, where 125 acres are grown on 18 farms, valued at about $1 million. In its second-to-last year, the Eastern broccoli project is close to reaching it’s $100 million goal and seen an entire shift in the industry’s standard varieties to new heat-tolerant ones.

Wegmans is an important market for broccoli grown in Monroe County. Bill Strassburg, Vice President of strategic initiatives at Wegmans, was quoted as crediting the Eastern Broccoli Project with the supermarket’s shift from 100% West Coast sourcing of broccoli to 80% East Coast sourcing.

To evaluate improved tolerance to heat, Christy tests new broccoli varieties in large-scale on-farm trials during the most challenging time of the growing season (planted in mid-June and harvested in August). Varieties that are being tested now are head-and-shoulders more heat-tolerant than they were 9 years ago when the project first started.

DEER REPELLENT STUDY TO PREVENT CROP DAMAGE TO CHRISTMAS TREES

White-tailed deer populations are overabundant in many locations in Monroe county, New York State and the Northeast. In such areas, the costs of crop and landscape plant damage continue to rise. Growers and homeowners need reliable repellent products to protect their plant material from deer browsing damage.

During the winter of 2019-20 we evaluated a new deer repellent (TRICO) at a farm in Scottsville and two other counties. This product is expected to provide 6 months of control with a single spray application. Although due to the mild winter conditions deer feeding on conifers was light in Monroe County, we did find that TRICO repellent tested, along with a commercial product (Plantskydd), prevented deer damage to Christmas trees on a test site where there was deer feeding for the entire winter. As these results were very encouraging, follow-up replicated farm and Monroe County landscape trials are being conducted this winter and in the 2021 growing season.

IPM is a system for managing pest problems using a range of safe, least-toxic methods. It is integrated because it uses biological, organic, cultural, mechanical and chemical options for managing pest problems. IPM rarely relies on just one tactic—it integrates tactics to prevent pests entirely or reduce them to livable levels.
HELPING BLUE BARN CIDERY, GREEN ACRE FARMS, AND WEST WIND FRUIT FARMS REOPEN DURING THE PANDEMIC

When the pandemic took off in NYS in March and April and businesses were shut down, Jeremy and Jill Wolfe, owners of Blue Barn Cidery, Green Acre Farms, and West Wind Fruit Farms in Hilton, were preparing for the start of the season for their multiple agribusinesses. All of their businesses – a craft cider tasting room, two U-Pick farms, and a farm market – are public-facing retail and hospitality businesses. They generate all of the revenue for their farm operations. Whether they could reopen these businesses – let alone how they would reopen – was a daunting question.

Early on in the crisis, Cornell went to work on tools and resources to assist all aspects of agricultural businesses to navigate the COVID-19 crisis. In mid-May, CCE-LOF Team Leader Craig Kahlke reached out to Jeremy to check in, and he noticed that their operation was not currently enrolled in CCE-LOF for the 2020 season. After a long phone conversation, Jeremy voiced his concerns over his business re-openings and had a number of questions. Craig then directed him to Mark Wiltberger, the Business management specialist with CCE-LOF. In early June, Mark worked with Jeremy and Jill to provide guidance on reopening their multiple retail operations. For their farm market he provided the Cornell templates and guidance for creating a NY Forward Business Reopening Plan for farm retail businesses, required by NYS for all businesses to reopen. For their U-Pick business he pointed them to the guidance Cornell created in April for U-Pick operations, Best Management Practices for U-Pick Farms During the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the cidery tasting room, he directed them to the guidance Cornell created in May, Best Management Practices for Craft Beverage Tastings During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All three operations have been thriving safely since then. U-Pick operations have been proceeding since July and continued through September into the apple harvest. This segment of their operation has also seen much higher business than last year. Customers are going to their U-Pick as a destination where they can pick fruit safely. The farm market reopened and has seen significantly more business than last year. Jill tells Mark that customers have told her they feel more comfortable coming to their farm market than big stores. The cidery has seen excellent business as well. They expanded several-fold the number of outside tables, spaced six feet apart. Jill tells Mark that the Town of Greece required their business to submit a NY Forward Business Reopening Safety Plan in order to reopen, and to send updates when changes to the plan occurred. The Cornell Safety Plan templates and guidance tailored to their farm retail businesses were invaluable for making that plan. Also, they received many calls from customers before the season started asking if they were going to reopen and what the rules would be. Having a path forward to reopening proved important to maintaining their customer relationships, and pointing to best practices from Cornell and guidance from NYS allowed them to reassure customers that they were not implementing arbitrary rules. They could share with their customers the authoritative sources from Cornell and New York State and apply consistent rules that made sense to their customers.

BEST WISHES FOR A PEST-FREE RETIREMENT TO LYNN BRABAND, NYSIPM COMMUNITY IPM EDUCATOR!

“Statewide, regionally, nationally, and even internationally, Lynn Braband made things happen through his determination, eagerness to learn and then share, his passion for the environment, and his reputation as an all-around naturalist and reliable, genial collaborator.”
- Debra E. Marvin, Community IPM Program Assistant, Cornell University

Lynn Braband
Photo: Staff

Cars line up for a car parade that drove by Lynn’s home. With car decorations and lots of honking, staff and friends sent Lynn off to retirement in a COVID-19 safe way. Photo: Staff
WELCOME TO OUR NEW COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE PROGRAM LEADER, MARCI MULLER!

For the last quarter of 2019, the Horticulture Team Leader position was vacant. Marci Muller was hired in January of 2020. While she was just getting acquainted with the job duties, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and all work became remote.

Throughout the month of March, Marci spent a great deal of her time monitoring what was permissible for commercial horticulture businesses to pursue. The restrictions and permissions changed on a daily basis and there was much confusion within the industry concerning who could work, and how to go about that.

As the spring wore on and restrictions on the type of work were lifted, with safety precautions implemented, Marci continued to work with members of the industry to help them make the most of a severely delayed season. Weekly communication through the local trade association, Plant GFLX, and through a number of social media sites, helped expand the number of commercial businesses getting information from CCE.

At the same time, Marci worked on bringing the Rochester Landscape Technicians Program, a workforce development program that operated for 20 years prior to being shut down in 2012, into the CCE family of programs. The Landscape Technicians Training Program will launch in the winter of 2021. CCE-Monroe has been established as an Eligible Training Provider with RochesterWorks and ACCES-VR, which will allow students to tap into training dollars to cover tuition. This program is highly supported by the local horticulture industry; a majority of the instructors are employees of local landscape companies and nurseries.

Requests for landscape consultations on commercial properties have been addressed. There have been many emails and phone calls seeking assistance with a variety of horticulture issues.

Additionally, Marci has become the Coordinator for the Urban Ag Working Group, a member organization that helps support community gardening and urban farming in Monroe County. The UAWG also provides connections for people, gardening resources, and many educational opportunities. Through this position, CCE-Monroe will become more involved with the educational aspects and community connections, as well as promoting and supporting policy changes that make it easier for people to grow food.

FROM LAB TO CLINIC, HERE FOR YOUR DIAGNOSTIC NEEDS

The Plant and Insect Diagnostic Lab name has changed to the Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic. Clinic is a more representative word of what we do and can be defined as diagnosing problems based on the study of the signs and symptoms.

Due to COVID-19, we set up a dropbox on the porch. This arrangement has been very successful and will continue even after the office has reopened. In most categories, samples are down 50%. Homeowners bringing in plant and insect samples is the only group that maintained the same number of submitted samples as 2018-2019.

A series of 10 classes that make up the 30 Hour Pesticide Applicator/Technician Certification program was held in January 2020. Speakers included educators from CCE-Monroe, Cornell University, Monroe County Department of Environmental Services, NYS DEC, and NYS IPM Program.

Certified Nursery Landscape Professionals (CNLP) is part of the NYS Nursery and Landscape Association, a statewide professional trade association. As the regional chairperson for our area, Liz’s objective is to work with members who want to receive their CNLP certificate - a way of showing they have additional knowledge of the lawn and landscape industry. This year the entire training manual was rewritten with Liz covering the chapters on diseases, insects, and weeds of ornamental plantings.
NATIONAL COMMUNITY GREENING AWARD GIVEN TO CCE-MONROE FOR BLOCKS IN BLOOM PROGRAM

CCE-Monroe has been awarded the American Horticultural Society's 2020 Community Greening Award for their Blocks in Bloom Program. This award recognizes exemplary contributions by an individual, institution or company demonstrating the application and value of horticulture in creating livable communities that are greener, healthier and more equitable.

ABOUT BLOCKS IN BLOOM

Blocks in Bloom began in 2014 as a pilot initiative of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County's Master Gardener program. It aims to bring together low-income communities in the City of Rochester by providing free perennials to resident participants. Master Gardener volunteers educate residents in preparing, planting and maintaining their front yard flower gardens. In 2018, a leadership development component was added to the program, enabling local residents to become mentors to other community members just starting their gardens.

Blocks in Bloom has grown from serving two blocks with 15 households back in 2014 to serving fifteen blocks with 135 households in 2019. The program is designed to be both sustainable – relying on volunteers and material donations – and replicable.

The 2020 Greening Award is one of the Great American Gardeners Awards that AHS presents annually to individuals, organizations and businesses that represent the best in American gardening. Each of the recipients has contributed significantly to fields such as scientific research, garden communication, landscape design, youth gardening and conservation.

Master Gardeners maintained Highland Park's Poet's Garden. Photo: Staff

MASTER GARDENER OUTREACH - 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

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19% increase in inquires for May - August season
12.8% increase in speaking engagements
13% increase in site visits
30% increase from 2018
SNAP-ED NY NUTRITION LESSONS DURING SOCIAL DISTANCE AND THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRESCRIPTION (FVRX) PROGRAM

CCE-Monroe’s SNAP-Ed NY program nutrition educators have taken advantage of the unique opportunities for online learning during COVID-19. The FVRx Program links the Health Care Systems and the Community Health Organizations to help meet the nutritional needs of SNAP/SNAP-eligible families. SNAP-Ed NY also collaborates with health care providers by receiving referred patients with chronic diseases such as Diabetes and Hypertension.

SNAP-Ed NY Nutrition Educators delivered, to those referred, 6 nutrition classes which consist of nutritional information, physical activity, and a food demonstration. After each class, participants receive $15 in vouchers which can be redeemed for fresh fruits and vegetables at FoodLink’s Curbside Market, local farmers markets, farm stores, and produce stands. The FVRx program is looking forward to collaborating with grocery stores in the near future.

SNAP-Ed NY Nutrition Educators normally teach in-person classes only, but are now prepared to also offer virtual nutrition classes through Zoom. After receiving training for online teaching, a plan was developed to restart the SNAP-Ed NY FVRx Program. Thanks to recruiting efforts by Finger Lakes Community Health, educators are currently teaching socially distanced in-person classes in Ovid, Port Byron, and Sodus. In addition, virtual nutrition classes in English and Spanish are offered for participants who prefer to learn from home. SNAP-Ed NY is also collaborating with Wilson Health Center to offer virtual nutrition classes.

Collaborating with Finger Lakes Community Health and Wilson Health Center improved our enrollment numbers and made the transition to virtual classes seamless. Total enrollment for last year was 55 participants, but this year we surpassed our 2020 enrollment goal of 100 participants in September. This is an 80% increase! Giving the option of a virtual class has increased people’s ability to attend the different sessions and ensure they receive their vouchers.

CCE-Monroe’s SNAP-Ed NY Nutrition educators know that FVRx program enrollment numbers will only continue to grow and educators will be able to meet the nutritional needs of a diverse community.

Master Food Preservation

HAVE YOU MET MICHELE CONNERS, CERTIFIED MASTER FOOD PRESERVER?

Michele made her first jar of jam in 1995 under the watchful eye of her Mom. It was strawberry and they sealed the jars with wax. Fast forward to 2014 when she became a Certified Master Food Preserver and now teaches participants to NEVER seal with wax.

Michele began volunteering with CCE-Monroe in 2018. To say she is a food preservation expert is no exaggeration. In her work as a fruit and vegetable trader, Michele sources frozen fruits and vegetables from around the world and sells them to industrial processors in the US. When traveling for work, it is to visit customers around the United States or it’s internationally to agricultural farming regions and world food shows.

Michele feels fortunate to be spending her entire career and volunteer time working with fruits and vegetables. And CCE-Monroe is fortunate to call her a team member. Michele has been very busy this year, despite COVID-19 social distancing. She has presented several food preservation workshops via Zoom, hosted a socially distant pressure gauge testing event, and answers countless emails and phone calls helping residents who have turned back to the earth to preserve the fruits of their labor. Follow Michele’s blog on the CCE-Monroe website for updates on all things food preservation.
MAKING NUTRITION IMPORTANT DURING COVID-19

Andrews Terrace is a public housing facility that houses over 500 residents in the City of Rochester. Unfortunately, there is a high number of Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease among these residents. COVID-19 has left these individuals searching for information on nutrition as well as food access on limited resources.

As direct education opened in the NYS Forward phase, the Andrews Terrace agency coordinator and the SNAP-Ed NY Nutrition team of CCE-Monroe worked together to offer residents Nutrition classes in an effort to help with the daily struggles of food access. At first Zoom workshops were offered, but the team quickly learned many residents didn’t have the resources to log on for these types of meetings. The next class was held with COVID-19 safe practices in place. With masks, social distancing and a safe, clean environment, 10 individuals joined the class. Many came with questions on canned and processed foods, access to fresh produce, portion control, and sodium concerns.

Due to overwhelming interest, a series of 4 classes was developed to cover all of these topics, taught by Nutrition Educator Michelle Weiler. The next week following the Nutrition class, the group went outside to meet with Foodlink’s Curbside Mobile Market. The Foodlink coordinator explained how participants can purchase a fresh box of produce at a reduced price each week. All of the individuals signed up to participate in this weekly produce drop! CCE-Monroe’s SNAP-Ed NY Team continues to find new and innovative ways to teach Monroe County residents how to Save Time, Save Money and Eat Healthy.

SNAP-ED NY TAKES OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

Due to the pause of in-person education during COVID-19, CCE-Monroe SNAP-Ed has fully dove into the social media world, and has reached unprecedented online engagement numbers. Our educators have been doing more than ever to make sure that what people are seeing on the internet helps contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Within 6 months, SNAP-Ed NY Facebook posts have seen engagement numbers of over 50,000 views. Recipes, nutrition articles, and videos are just a few of the many ways SNAP-Ed NY has been able to share nutrition content.

Each week, SNAP-Ed NY has focused on various topics to educate the community. Focus areas included: tips on in-season produce and recipes, how to shop/eat healthy on a budget, how to decrease food waste, where to find local food pantries or food distribution sites, how to eat healthy according to MyPlate, healthy breakfast options, how to incorporate protein into a vegetarian lifestyle, grill safety tips, healthy snack tips for parents, etc.

Pictured to the right is one of the many ways SNAP-Ed NY has shared nutrition content. With over 1,700 people reached, 34 likes, 2 comments, 8 shares, 4 photo views, 14 link clicks, and 18 other clicks, this peach salsa recipe became one of the most popular posts on the CCE-Monroe Facebook page. Other popular posts include watermelon basics with 1,085 views, infused water ideas with 1,161 views, kale basics with 1,023 views, and milk basics with 1,177 views. These are just a few of the ways to show that although SNAP-Ed NY hasn’t been able to reach as many people in-person, we are still reaching thousands of people in other ways.

SNAP-ED SHIFTS TO ONLINE PROGRAMMING

“I enjoyed the classes very much. They were very informative and interactive. Due to the classes, I now read food labels which has been eye-opening! I thought you did a great job!”
- Cindy, a participant in a 6 week online nutrition course.

Cindy is a Rochester resident who lost her job due to COVID-19 and was searching for ways to fill her fridge and learn about nutrition. She didn’t think she could afford nutrition education, but was so thankful she was able to find programs like SNAP-Ed NY during times like these.

At the end of the 6 week course, Cindy explained to SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, Jessica Kouzan how much she had learned and was grateful to come across a SNAP-Ed NY flyer!
MASTER NATURALISTS ATTEND EDUCATIONAL EVENT TAUGHT BY NY-PRISM PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Hilary Mosher, Coordinator for the Finger Lakes-Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management at the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, led an educational event at Powder Mills Park in Pittsford, NY. The event was meant for Finger Lakes region Master Naturalists to safely meet up during COVID-19 while learning about nature in Monroe County.

Hilary led participants on a nature walk while talking in depth about invasive species that plague the woods including Japanese Stiltgrass, Buckthorn, and Pale Swallow-Wart. She discussed the environmental and economic damage that invasives can cause in an area.

The Master Naturalist Program is a high-quality, science-based training program designed to teach adults about New York’s natural resources, empowering them to educate others and participate in on-the-ground conservation and monitoring projects. Volunteer activities include conservation, monitoring activities, and educational outreach. Examples include removing or monitoring invasive species, collecting citizen science data for research, inventorying wildflowers, restoring riparian buffers, conducting wildlife surveys, and monitoring water quality. Outreach activities may include leading a “woods walk”, writing articles, giving presentations, or developing educational brochures. We are excited to continue working with and providing more opportunities for our region’s Master Naturalists next year!

MASTER FOREST OWNERS (MFO) ATTEND ONLINE “WOODS TALK” TAUGHT BY MFO NORTHWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Laura Bailey, Northwest Regional Director of the Master Forest Owner (MFO) Program, in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Monroe County, presented a socially distant Facebook Live “Woods Talk” on vernal pools in early spring. This virtual talk was presented from the edge of a vernal pool in the woods. Participants learned about the unique geology and hydrology of these seasonal wetlands, the animals that depend on their occurrence, and the plant communities associated with them. They listened to the calls of different frog species that depend on and visit these pools, identified the tree species surrounding the pool, and got an in depth look into one of the few thermogenic plants in the world – the skunk cabbage.

The Master Forest Owner Program provides private woodland owners of New York State with the information and encouragement necessary to manage their forest holdings wisely. In addition to the complimentary visits MFO volunteers provide to woodlot owners, they also offer annual workshops and wood walks for the community and encourage all who are interested to attend.
HEALTHY FUNDING PROVIDES THE ROOT SYSTEM IN WHICH CCE-MONROE GROWS

CCE-Monroe is a subordinate governmental agency with an education mission that operates under a form of organization and administration approved by Cornell University as an agent for the State of New York. It is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

The CCE-Monroe Association is part of the national cooperative extension system. As New York’s land grant university, Cornell administers the system in this state. Each Cornell Cooperative Extension Association is an independent employer that is governed by an elected Board of Directors with general oversight from Cornell. CCE-Monroe is supported by public and private funding. We acknowledge the County of Monroe as a primary partner.

2020 REVENUE SOURCES - $1,151,771 TOTAL

The Foundation, also known as Friends of Extension, is a separate 501(c)(3) established to support the work of CCE-Monroe. This dedicated group seeks to ensure long term sustainability of CCE-Monroe’s impact on Monroe County.

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