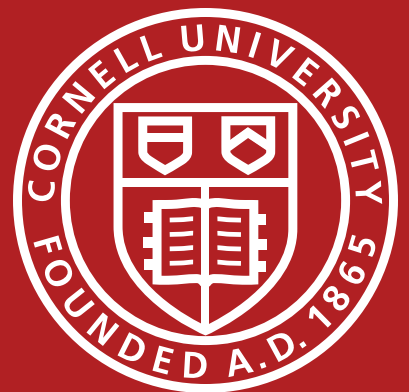




Cornell Cooperative Extension | **Columbia and Greene Counties**

Annual Report 2024



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From the Executive Director

In 2024 we successfully coordinated programs in Columbia and Greene Counties. We have cultivated strong relationships with partners across our community, local government, non-profits and the private sector.

Our relationship within Columbia County DSS has expanded with our Parenting Education contract with Social Services allowing us to offer expanded programs to our youth and families. We can take this on as our Family and Consumer Sciences team truly is exceptional. Our Greene County programs with DSS have received strong accolades throughout the county as well.

During 2024 we offered a variety of special events in Greene County. In the spring we hosted our most

attended Maple Festival in our history with over 300 attendees. We partnered with the Phoenicia Diner and Jourdin's Maple Syrup for a pancake breakfast. Educational programs ran throughout the day on the history, production, and opportunities in the Maple Commodity. In the summer we received a check for \$200,000 from Senator Hinchey for materials for the construction of the ROC (Rasmussen Outdoor Classroom) which we hope to build in our Siuslaw Model Forest in Acra. In the fall we hosted a Woodland Creature-themed fundraiser for our community. We offered face painting, pumpkin painting, a trick or treat trail and we also served grilled cheese and soup cooked over an open fire pit. We also hosted 25 Regeneron volunteers in

our Siuslaw Model Forest, who helped to pull invasive species. Additionally, we offered Forestry Logger trainings and Shitake programs for our community.

At the Extension Education Center in Hudson, we hosted two volunteer workdays with the support of Farm Credit East staff, Master Gardener Volunteers, and community volunteers. We renovated our Meeting Hall Kitchen with the support of the Bank of Greene County and local contractors volunteering. Via a grant from the Health Department, we used our revamped kitchen to have our Family and Consumer Sciences team teach hundreds of families how to cook healthy meals using fresh and local ingredients on a budget. We expanded the footprint of our Think Differently Program offering multiple training for families with bunnies, art projects and kinetic sand.

Our new Agriculture Educator began in February and has offered educational programs in both counties for our agricultural producers. Her area of focus is livestock. She has visited 35 farms! We collaborated on several public programs with our colleagues in Ulster County and via Harvest NY and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). We worked to support both Soil & Water Conservation Districts in spreading the word on the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program to help farmers qualify for

crucial funding for their facilities. Community Horticulture blossomed under the new leadership of our coordinator! We ran our largest class to date with 23 graduating.

The current and new volunteers have found connection through the vegetable trials, Spring Gardening Days, working in the two gardens and conducting outreach in our twin counties. They have also increased outreach at local libraries, farmers markets and our two fairs! Requests for plant and insect ID are being managed with stellar efficiency.

4-H Youth Development programs are growing in both clubs and independent membership. We have increased participation in Public Presentation, livestock and dairy as well as home crafts. Archery has made a huge comeback and is going strong with classes filling up. For “Ag In the Classroom” we were in all school districts in our two counties! One of our club members made it to the National Dairy Bowl in Kentucky!

We have retained key leadership roles over the last few years, promoted from within and added new educators to our roster!

As you peruse this report, you will find some examples of the magnificent work we do and the success stories of those we serve. With the help of our staff, volunteers and partners, I am confident we will continue to build healthy and resilient communities.



Lisa Gallina

Family and Consumer Sciences

The Family and Consumer Sciences Program continues to offer multiple opportunities for families to receive parenting, nutrition and anger management educational services within Columbia and Greene Counties. The In-home Parenting Program, funded through a contract with Greene County Department of Social Services, provides free, in-home parenting lessons to families exclusively referred by the Greene County Department of Social Services. The program currently offers in-home and virtual zoom-based lessons. In our partnership with Greene County Department of Social Services, we have provided effective and empowering education to over 50 families.





Parenting Education

The Family and Consumer Sciences Program continues to offer multiple opportunities for families to receive parenting education within Columbia and Greene Counties.

In 2023, our **In-home parenting program** expanded due to funding through a contract with Columbia County Department of Social Services to provide free in-home parenting and anger management lessons to families exclusively referred by Columbia County Department of Social Services, primarily the foster and preventative units. In 2024, we've maintained the contract and we were able to reach 25 families with our services.

The **Parenting with Confidence Program** is supported through a grant from the Dyson Foundation and is open to all caregivers in Columbia and Greene Counties. The

program currently offers in-home lessons or remote lessons via zoom. Our Parenting with Confidence Program often collaborates with other organizations to offer free, 6-8-week group-based parenting skills series. During 2024, our parenting program was able to offer 6-week series within the Columbia County Correctional Facility and Twin Counties Recovery Series with over 30 participants completing the programs. During 2024, our Dyson Parenting Program has reached over 75 families. Dedicated parenting educators provide support to families through education, skill demonstration and as empathetic listeners for caregivers dealing with the difficult job of parenting in an ever-changing landscape.

Our educators' services are vital to the success of our local families. Often our participants request

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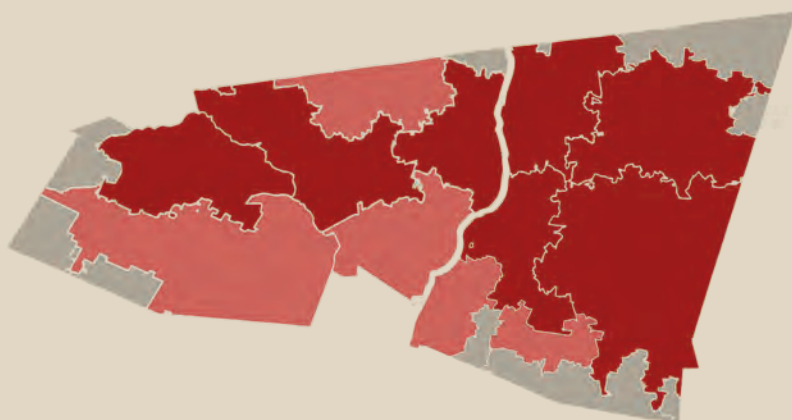
to continue services and prefer our educators to maintain a presence in their lives. Educators are able to continue to provide parenting support to those who have participated in our long-term parenting programs through the Department of Social Services. Our families often reach out to our educators for continued guidance and support pertaining to issues regarding parental loss, co-parenting, separations, difficulties at school and/or home.

These maintenance visits have helped families avoid further contact with Child Protective Services as they can get the help they need before the situation becomes a crisis.

Our parenting educators often inform and provide our families connection to vital resources such as food and clothing pantries, affordable mental and physical health services, legal aid, educational and training opportunities by providing connections or making referrals to other community partners. Over 125 families have received parenting education and support throughout our three programs.

Anger Management

Anger Management Educational Series were provided by a certified Anger Management Specialist to all residents of Columbia and Greene Counties. The Anger Management Program is a low-cost 12-week series held primarily at our Hudson Education Center. Class series are offered multiple times per year and open to the public. Our community-based classes reached over 40 participants in 2024. In 2024, our anger management educator offered an 8-week anger management series in collaboration with Mental Health Association of Columbia County. 15 families participated in the program and received certificates of completion. In 2024, two 4-week anger management workshops were offered to youth aged 13 to 17. Within the two series, 10 youth benefited and received certificates from the program. Our 2025 goal is to increase the number of participants, as well as collaborating with other youth organizations. Cornell Cooperative Extension encourages outside agencies to partner with Cornell Cooperative Extension in order to offer 8- or 12-week series within their agencies.



School Districts We Worked With In 2024

- School districts staff have visited
- School districts volunteers have visited
- School districts CCE was not involved with or are based outside the two counties.

ANGER MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Our community-based classes reached over 40 participants in 2024.

15 families participated in the program and received certificates of completion.



4-H Youth Development

Engaging Over 2,700 Youth through 4-H Programs

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties offers a robust youth development program under the 4-H banner. Our 4-H programs encompass a diverse range of formats and locations, ensuring accessibility and catering to the interests of all youth, from rural to urban communities, ages 5-19. In 2024, we reached over 2,700 youth through our various 4-H offerings. These included after-school programs, summer camps, workshops, clubs, special events, and traditional community based programming delivered in collaboration with schools and other organizations. Through this comprehensive approach, 4-H continues to be a leading force in enriching the lives of young people in Columbia and Greene Counties.



4-H'ers participate at this years regional Fashion Revue.



Dairy Bowl Excellence

At just 17 years old, 4-H'er Randy Albertson (bottom right above) has already achieved something extraordinary, national recognition at the National Dairy Quiz Bowl.

Randy's journey to the Dairy Bowl began when he was just eight years old. He did so following in his mother's footsteps, who was also a dedicated 4-H member. Over the years, his love for dairy showing and competition grew, leading him to the challenge of the Dairy Bowl, a fast-paced, Jeopardy-style quiz that tests participants on their knowledge of the dairy industry. With years of dedication, lots of studying, and the unwavering support of his mentors and teammates, Randy took his skills all the way to the National Dairy Quiz Bowl Event in Louisville, where he earned the highest-scoring written test in the nation.

Randy's journey is a testament to the impact of 4-H and the power of determination. Alongside his Columbia and Greene Senior Dairy Bowl teammates, Harriet Kress, Marian Pirrone, and Levi Blood, he led their team to victory at the Capital District Dairy Bowl and went on to compete at the state level at Cornell University, ultimately securing his place at nationals. The competition was fierce, but with the support of dedicated 4-H volunteers like Roberta Keller and Roy Denniston, Randy and his fellow competitors thrived. More than just a contest, the Dairy Bowl experience helped Randy develop invaluable skills—critical thinking, teamwork, and a deep appreciation for agriculture—that will serve him well in his future aspirations. His story is a reminder that passion, hard work, and community can lead to incredible success.



Agriculture Literacy Week

Over 1,100 students participated in Agriculture Literacy Week in Columbia and Greene Counties

4-H at the NY State Fair

Twenty four 4-H projects made by Columbia and Greene 4-H members were on display at the 2024 NY State Fair in Syracuse, NY

20+

4-H clubs were active in our two counties

200+

Youth participated in monthly 4-H club activities

New York Youth Agriculture Leadership Conference

4-H Member Kasey Purdy was selected to participate in the 2024 New York Youth Agriculture Leadership Conference in Albany, NY.

Public Presentations

Over 40 4-H members participated in our local public presentation day events. Eight youth from our counties participated in the district level 4-H public presentation event.

Environmental Awareness Days

Middle school students from three school districts in Greene County and three school districts in Columbia County participated in Environmental Awareness Days. In total over 330 students attended.

Active in Our Schools

4-H staff led over 200 lessons in after-school programs spanning both counties.

4-H Career Explorations

Four Columbia and Greene 4-H members along with one 4-H volunteer and one CCE Columbia and Greene staff member attend 4-H Career Explorations at Cornell University.



Top: Submissions to the NY State Fair.

Middle: 4-H'ers during the mini barnyard at the Columbia County Fair.

Bottom: 4-H'ers attending the 4-H Career Explorations

Community Horticulture

The Community Horticulture program had a great year, promoting sustainable gardening in Columbia and Greene Counties. We worked with local experts, community groups, and speakers to provide helpful programs and resources for everyone.



Master Gardener Volunteer Training

From March to June, we trained 23 new Master Gardener Volunteers who are now ready to share their gardening knowledge. The training included engaging sessions from Cornell experts, like Paul Curtis, a Wildlife Science Professor, and Karen Snover-Clift, Director of the Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic.

The Master Gardener Class of 2024 was the largest on record for Columbia and Greene Counties.

Gardening Projects and Volunteer Contributions

Volunteers gave over 150 hours to improve gardens in both counties. Some highlights were revitalizing the Acra gardens, installing new beds in the Hudson garden, and getting the Acra hoop house ready for future use. We also participated in Cornell Cooperative Extension's statewide Vegetable Varieties Trials, focusing on the "Cultural Roots of Eastern Europe." Crops like Cosmonaut Volkov tomatoes and Bulgarian Carrot peppers, provided by Hudson Valley Seed Company, were showcased alongside educational signage. Staff and volunteers also enjoyed rating the produce for taste, yield, and ease of growing.

35

talks, workshops, and demonstrations held between our two counties.

Columbia County Fair and Greene County Youth Fair

Our Master Gardeners brought energy and creativity to the Greene County Youth Fair and Columbia County Fair. At the Youth Fair, they discussed healthy, colorful vegetables and soil health with the theme "Eat the Rainbow." At the Columbia County Fair, Master Gardeners transformed part of Columbia Hall into a magical forest with murals, plants, and water features for the theme "Into the Woods."

250+

calls, emails and soil samples from both counties.

We are excited to build on this year's successes while continuing to grow and improve. Thank you to our volunteers, staff, and community members who made 2024 a memorable and impactful year for the Community Horticulture Program!

190

Volunteer hours committed to County Fairs and countless additional hours to support programs and events





Agriculture & Natural Resources

Left: Staff member, Shane Stevens, works on the native tree farm in the Siuslaw Model Forest.

Opposite: Staff member Sam Hopson Jr. operates the evaporator during Maple Fest



Agroforestry

Agroforestry is the intentional integration of trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic and social benefits. For a management practice to be called agroforestry, it must satisfy the four “i”s: Intentional, Intensive, Integrated, Interactive. Our programs are designed to meet growers where they are at and to support their goals in land stewardship and food cultivation.

Agroforestry topics include:

1. Forest Farming programs, including maple, ginseng and mushrooms
2. Wild, edible plants and mushrooms
3. Multifunctional Riparian Buffers
4. Silvopasture (livestock integrated with trees)
5. Food Forests

The **Siuslaw Model Forest**, our 142-acre demonstration forest, has agroforestry practices of varying scales. Key demonstrations staff manage for education include a commercial scale shiitake laying yard, a food forest plot with native crops, a large scale understory planting with native

food and medicinal crops along with deer enclosure fencing systems.

Beyond agroforestry, our model forest offers resources and programming to a variety of audiences including woodland owners, technical service providers, farmers, youth groups, college students and volunteers.

In 2024 over 500 people engaged in 17 tours and trainings in Siuslaw. Some of the groups that joined us in the woods include Columbia-Greene Community College students, SUNY Cobleskill students, BOCES students, Windham-Ashland-Jewett Science Club, Empire State Forest Products Association, Master Gardener Volunteers, Master Forest Owner Volunteers and more.

Siuslaw is also a home to active research projects. This year, we hosted SUNY ESF fire ecology researcher studying the effects of fire on the hydrological cycle. Long term research projects include forest floor fauna monitoring, deer browse monitoring plots, and a Monitoring and Managing Ash project.

General Forestry Education

Throughout our work within the Natural Resources Program area, our team's primary focus is to support woodland owners and woodland stewards so forests are valued, cared for and expanded. 2024 featured a partnership project with The Nature Conservancy to develop an educational series for landowner on Forest Carbon. Over 50 landowners were provided with resources to make informed decisions for their woods on this topic.

16 programs were held in 2024 with almost 500 attendees to learn about topics including:

1. An overview of the Master Forest Owner Volunteer Program
2. Maple Sugaring
3. Living with the American Black Bear
4. Wild, Edible Plants
5. Forest Ecology
6. Invasive Species
7. Forest Carbon
8. Forest Farming

Women Owning Woods

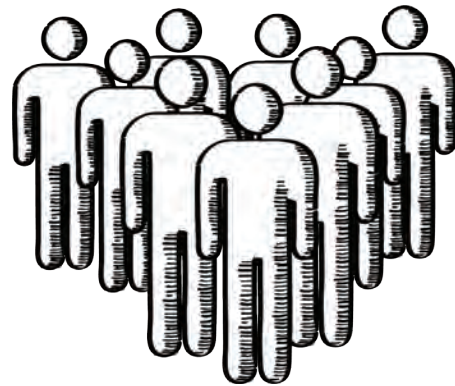
In partnership with the Watershed Agricultural Council and Columbia Land Conservancy, our Association continues to support woodland education geared towards women by hosting a local chapter of this national network. In 2024, classes offered to this network included three Women's Game of Logging classes, a workshop on wild, edible plants, a webinar on Trail Camera 101 along with routine 'Happy Hour' zoom meetings.

Master Forest Owner Program

Our Association continues its role as regional host for this program that supports woodland owners with a free visit from a trained volunteer. These visits help our landowners begin their woodland stewardship journey. Exactly 100 visits were conducted in 2024 with 84 participating volunteers providing management advice on over 2,800 forested acres throughout our region. Landowners list many reasons for requesting a visit.

In 2024, the top 5 reasons are:

1. Forest Management
2. Invasive Species Management
3. Tree Health
4. Timber Harvest Management
5. Plant Identification



**Over 500 people
engaged in
Natural Resource
programs and
tours in 2024**



Agriculture

In 2024 the Association participated in a variety of outreach and educational efforts to meet the needs of our local farmers. 48 visits were conducted in 2024 throughout Columbia and Greene Counties. Our Agricultural e-Newsletter was ramped up, with communications being sent to over 300 recipients twice a month. Events that were coordinated or co-hosted by our agricultural program reached over 250 people. Topics included a biochar field day, a 4R field day at Kukon Bros Farm, a summer pasture walk, Backyard Poultry 101, Meat Pricing and Marketing, NYSEDA Ag Energy, and the handling and basic care of laying hens.

Focus areas of this work during 2024 included connecting farmers to funding opportunities, helping them understand where, how and who to access resources from and providing assistance to connect farm products to the Taste NY store. Our organization continues to connect farmers with the resources offered through the regional teams including Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture and Harvest NY along with the Cornell Hudson Valley Research Lab.

Climate Change & the Environment

In concert with the Climate Resilience Partnership (CRP) CCE staff members work with 14 Hudson Valley communities. This led to working on 19 projects/actions of the NYS Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program that enhance their ability to adapt to climate change.

Climate Resilience in Communities

One of the most important tools local decision makers can utilize to build climate resiliency and make lasting change in their communities is through their local plans and ordinances. Staff utilized the CSC Climate Smart Resiliency Planning tool to help four communities review their existing plans, codes, and ordinances to identify gaps and vulnerabilities to climate change. CCE staff worked to review existing municipal documents and facilitated discussions with members of the community to complete the tool, identify strengths and opportunities for growth related to climate resiliency in the community, and prioritize recommendations for addressing identified gaps. The process also worked to encourage collaboration among elected officials and staff to address priority recommendations.

Incorporate Resilience & Sustainability into a Comprehensive Plan Update

A community's comprehensive plan provides a vision for how the community wants to grow over the near and long term. In 2024, staff worked with the Town of Ghent to develop a vision for their community that worked to balance the 3 E's of sustainability: environment, economy and equity. Staff provided guidance, comments and recommendations throughout the update process that worked to promote smart growth principles in land-use policies, conserve natural areas, decrease dependence on fossil fuels, minimize waste and more. This included incorporating recommendations from past CRP work.

Flood Preparedness Guides

In 2024, we collaborated with the Town of Kinderhook and the Town of Washington to create a town specific Municipal Flood Preparedness Guide, offering residents essential information on flood-prone areas, emergency shelter locations, and pre-, during-, and post-flood actions. The towns intend to distribute the guides at community events in 2025.



Road-Stream Crossing Management Plans

CCE worked with the Town of Kinderhook and Dutchess County in 2024 to complete a Road-Stream Crossing Inventory and Management Plan. Utilizing data collected according to the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative protocol and hydraulic data modeled by researchers at Cornell University, CCE staff created an inventory of all public road-stream crossings and addressed effective management of these crossings for aquatic connectivity and current and future flooding scenarios. CCE staff facilitated workshops with municipal staff to develop a priority list of crossings in need of replacement based on the available data and community feedback. These management plans and priority lists are instrumental in providing communities the information they need to apply to funding to replace these structures and ensure the inroad-stream crossing infrastructure is resilient to future flooding.



An example of a culvert, in the Town of Ancram, that was replaced and resized to allow for increased stream flows and passability of aquatic organisms.

Taste NY



The Taste NY Market at the Capital Region Welcome Center celebrated its seventh year of operation in 2024, having opened its doors in November 2018. The store was staffed with nine full-time and two part-time staff members. Additionally, a seasonal part-time worker provided support during peak summer weekends.

The market continues to showcase a diverse and ever-evolving product selection sourced from New York State farms and producers. In 2024, we welcomed new vendors including Talbott & Arding (Hudson), Laughing Gull Chocolates (Rochester), Alleyway Ice Cream (Saugerties), Hudson Roasters (Hudson), Bucks County Biscotti (Queensbury), Macaron Paris New York), Del's Roadside (Kinderhook), Nat's Nuts (Rochester) and the Phoenicia Diner (Phoenicia).

We strategically expanded our marketing efforts by enhancing outreach and hosting sampling

cont.

events throughout the year. Notable initiatives included product tastings at the opening of the Hudson Meeting Hall at CCE of Columbia and Greene Counties, as well as participation in Maple Fest in Acra. Maple Fest introduced a valuable new platform for our vendors, allowing us to facilitate a successful collaboration between Jourdin's Maple Syrup and Phoenicia Diner for product sampling and sales. Both vendors provided positive feedback, and we plan to further expand vendor participation in 2025.

The market achieved significant success in sales and foot traffic throughout 2024. Data from the NYS Thruway Authority indicates more than 150,000 travelers visited the Capital Region Welcome Center in 2024 than in 2023. This translated to a corresponding increase in transactions at the Taste NY Market, rising from 111,000 in 2023 to 116,000 in 2024. This growth propelled the market to surpass \$1.4 million in sales achieved in 2024. Consistent with industry trends, peak sales continued to occur during summer months and major holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Memorial Day, and Labor Day).

The Taste NY Market at the Capital Region Welcome Center remains a vibrant hub for local products, fostering economic development and community engagement. We look forward to continued success in showcasing the best of New York State agriculture in the years to come.

*Opposite: The entrance of the Capital Region Welcome Center
Top: Jourdin's Maple Syrup display their products during Maple Fest.
Bottom: Nat's Nuts*



1,035,620
visitors came to the
Welcome Center in 2024

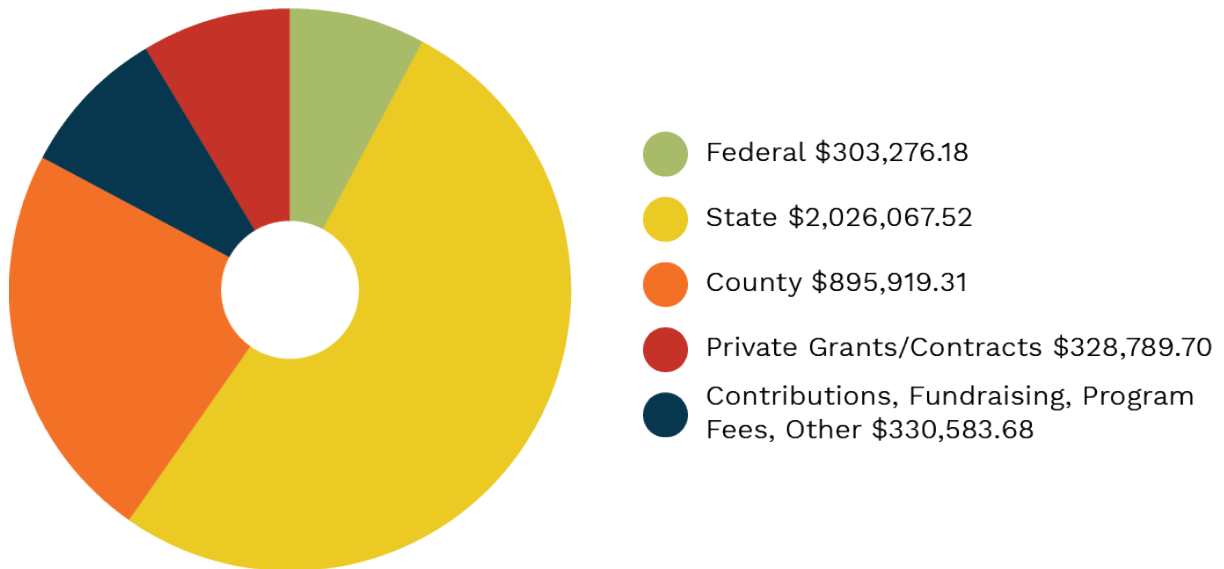


\$1,400,000
in sales in 2024

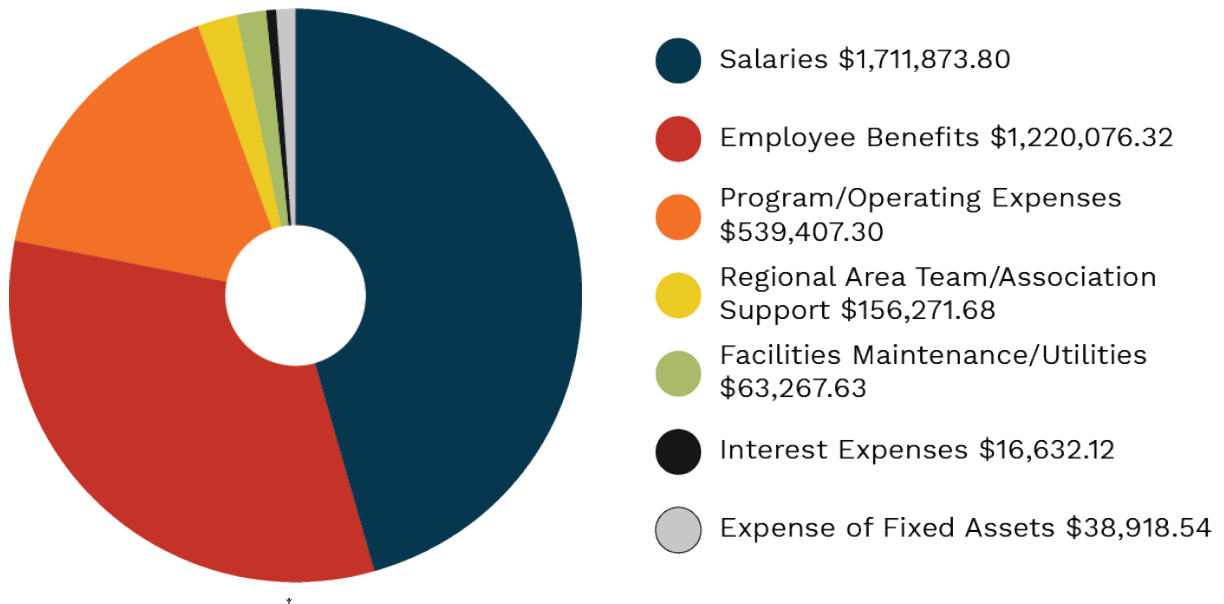


Finances

2024 YTD Revenues



2024 YTD Expenses



Our Staff

Administration

Lisa Gallina, Executive Director
Rebecca Polmateer, Program Director
Jackie Reese, Administrator
Deven Connelly, Communications Manager
Angela Tallarico, Administrative Coordinator
Olivia Gordineer, Finance Manager
Donna Garafalo, Accounts Representative
Joshua Williams, Facilities Coordinator
Chris Boehm, Administrative Assistant
Samantha Goff, Administrative Assistant

Family & Consumer Sciences

Megan Gardner, Resource Educator
Peggy Henne, Program Educator
Sintya Rodriguez-Mendez, Program Educ.
Michael Pagnani, Program Educator

4-H Youth Development

Sara Poggi-Decker, Program Manager
Krystal Perrotti, Program Educator
Samuel Hopson, Jr., 4-H and Natural
Resources Program Coordinator

Environment and Natural Resources, Climate Change and the Environment

Tracey Testo, Program Manager
Lindsey Strehlau-Howay, Program Assist.
Shane Stevens, Program Coordinator
William McCall, Program Assistant
Xandra Powers, Program Coordinator
Ashley Schoenborn, Agriculture Educator
Katie Campbell-Nelson, Northeast SARE
Development Coordinator
Katilyn Sirna, Northeast SARE Grant
Administrator

Taste NY

Chris Lawton, Manager
Gregory Flores, Assistant Manager
Kaitlin Camarda, Market Associate
Joshua Hynes, Market Associate
Sara Ashby, Market Associate
Bernadette Venezia-Rubino, Market Assoc.
Joanna Descourdy, Market Associate
Andrea Schyljuk, Market Associate

Our Board

Virgilia Tegiacchi, President
Matthew Maraglio, Vice President
Joshua Lipsman, Treasurer
Roberta Keller, Secretary
Cathi Annese
Michael Brown
Elizabeth Chiong
Linda Levitt
Amanda Pierro
Rebecca Pinder
Jonathon Farber
Melissa Layman
Paul Spoletti

Timothy Ooms, Columbia County Board
of Supervisors Representative
Sherry True, Greene County Legislature
Representative
Danielle Hautaniemi, Cornell
Cooperative Extension State Specialist



CCE at a Glance

CCE connects communities with Cornell research and expertise to enrich and empower New York State neighbors, local businesses, towns, and cities.

In neighborhoods, homes, workplaces, and schools, CCE educators work to empower individuals and families with raising children, saving energy and money, growing and preparing food, starting, sustaining businesses, and protecting the environment.

Each CCE office relies on county, state, and federal funds to solve local problems and strengthen communities.

CCE Columbia and Greene Counties is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Connect

Agroforestry Resource Center
6055 Route 23, Acra, NY 12405
(518) 622-9820

Extension Education Center
479 Route 66, Hudson, NY 12534
(518) 828-3346

Website: ccecolumbiagreene.org
Email: columbiagreene@cornell.edu

Facebook: @CCEColumbiaGreene
Instagram: @CCECGC

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