



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

At Mexico Farm, Aubertine, Verizon Foundation Announce Support for NY FarmNet Hotline

DARREL J. AUBERTINE December 16, 2009

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**



Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, Verizon Vice President of Government and External Affairs David J. Lamendola, Dairy Farmer Nancy Weber and Cornell Professor Wayne A. Knoblauch share a laugh in the snow outside Weber's milking parlor at Mexican Pride Farms on Tubbs Road in Mexico, New York.

Foundation Gift of \$25,000 Funds “Verizon Farm Crisis Hotline” to Provide Advice and Support to New York’s Farmers

MEXICO, NEW YORK (December 16, 2009)– The Verizon Foundation has given \$25,000 to NY FarmNet in support of the “Verizon Farm Crisis Hotline,” a 24-hour toll-free hotline for New York State's farming community. The NY FarmNet hotline has historically received more than 4,000 farm related requests annually. The current economic and agricultural crisis is increasing the call load and creating a significant demand on resources associated with timely response to farmer concerns.

The “Verizon Farm Crisis Hotline” will help farm families work through these stressful times to develop a plan for future success. Through the Hotline, NYFarmNet offers farmers assistance in managing personal and financial stress, improving family communications, and enhancing farm viability. The work of NYFarmNet will help these farm businesses become more profitable and create an environment conducive to farm business expansion via merging business and farm family goals.

The funding was announced at Mexican Pride Farms, the farm of Nancy and Sam Weber.

“The agricultural community has been hit hard by the combination of low prices, rising input costs, and adverse weather,” said Edward Staehr, Executive Director of NY FarmNet. “This year, requests for assistance and information are at an all time high of over 6,000 inquiries to the office or program staff, with a significant percentage coming from Northern New York. We are grateful to the Verizon Foundation’s unrestricted gift for its support of the “Verizon Farm Crisis Hotline,” which provides assistance and advice to New York’s farmers.”

“Agriculture is New York State’s number one industry. It generates wealth and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and many industries throughout the state, even those that sometimes might not be directly associated with farming,” said state Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee. “I want to commend the Verizon Foundation for recognizing the vital role our farmers play in the state’s integrated economy with this generous contribution to FarmNet. These are difficult times, especially for our dairy farmers, and the variety of services provided by Farm Net makes a difference tending to the well being of our farmers.”

“Verizon has a long-standing commitment to the agricultural communities of Northern New York,” said Verizon Vice President of Government and External Affairs David J. Lamendola. “We are very pleased to be able to support NY FarmNet and its Farm Crisis Hotline, to support New York’s farmers during this particularly difficult period.”

New York FarmNet was established in 1986 to provide farm families with a network of information, contacts and services that are uniquely suited to the financial and personal challenges of agricultural business management. This network covers every aspect of high-pressure decision making from partnerships and transfers to stress management, family communication, domestic concerns, and disaster response. FarmNet is a working resource to help build positive solutions for future success via free, confidential on-farm consulting. Key program support is provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and NY Farm Viability Institute. For more information on NY FarmNet, visit <http://www.nyfarmnet.org>.

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon Communications, supports the advancement of literacy and K-12 education through its free educational Web site, Thinkfinity.org, and fosters awareness and prevention of domestic violence. In 2008, the Verizon Foundation awarded more than \$68 million in grants to nonprofit agencies in the U.S. and abroad. It also matched the charitable donations of Verizon employees and retirees, resulting in an additional \$26 million in combined contributions to nonprofits. Through Verizon Volunteers, one of the nation's largest employee volunteer programs, Verizon employees and retirees have volunteered more than 3 million hours of community service since 2000. For more information on the foundation, visit www.verizonfoundation.org.

###