



NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

FALL | 2017 ISSUE

## Buying Local: Vance Metal

*Local partnerships promote local economies*



Vance Metal takes great pride in their products.

*Photo courtesy of Vance Metal.*

Above Photo: Family and friends gathered to celebrate community at the Toast the Tank event at Lakewood Vineyards.

*Photo courtesy of Stu Gallagher.*

Vance Metal is a large-capacity metal fabricator and weld shop in Geneva, NY. The company was founded in 1880 and just turned 137 years old this year. Employing 65 people in positions from manufacturing to management, Vance Metal values community.

“We make components that go into a customer’s final product line,” said Pat Farrington, the Sales and Marketing Manager at Vance. He explained that most of the work at Vance Metal involves creating blueprints for rotating equipment like pumps and compressors for unique individual projects. This requires lots of expertise and experience from the employees at Vance, who are well trusted in their community and in fact, are the owners of the company

itself. Vance Metal is an employee owned company, meaning the employees have ownership of company stock.

“It gives everyone an incentive to go the extra mile. It’s pride of ownership,” said Pat. In the spirit of going the extra mile, Vance continues expanding. They are now certified to enter the dairy tank field. Pat explained that they are still looking to expand even more into the food industry.

This spirit of expansion is embedded in the company’s history. In 1990, Vance Metal expanded its repertoire by creating stainless steel beverage tanks. These beverage

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## Fall 2017 Rural Futures

### NEWS OF INTEREST ABOUT RURAL NEW YORK STATE

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The NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources is a joint bipartisan office of the State Legislature.



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The tanks were loaded onto trucks and decorated with banners for the 30-mile journey to Lakewood Vineyards. Photo courtesy of Stu Gallagher.

tanks are primarily used at wineries, distilleries, and breweries. They are the only products that actually carry the “Vance Metal” name on them, since they are the only whole finished product Vance creates. One particularly notable Vance Metal customer is Lakewood Vineyards, in Watkins Glen, NY. Lakewood Vineyards is a long-time customer of Vance Metal, relying on them for all of their beverage tank needs in the last ten years.

To recognize the loyalty of Lakewood Vineyards, this past July, Vance Metal held a “Toast the Tank” event. The company created an event around its tank delivery to Lakewood Vineyards, who had ordered three more 2,500-gallon stainless steel tanks from Vance Metal.

“It shows the faith they have in us to provide them with quality products,” said Pat on Lakewood’s continued use of Vance Metal products.

“Toast the tanks was a much bigger hit than I anticipated. We invited our customers and friends, over 100 people, on a Thursday evening,” said Chris Stamp, President and Winemaker at Lakewood Vineyards.



Vice President Chris Jennings, Senator Pam Helming, John Sabin, Pat Farrington, Bill Snyder, and Jerry Crabtree at Vance Metal.

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“We wanted to celebrate the local purchase and promote buying local,” said Pat. The event began at Vance Metal, where the delivery trucks were decorated with banners promoting local commerce, and Senator Pam Helming, representing the 54th Senate District, joined to see them off. They then traveled the 30-mile journey to the vineyard, where the event continued. At Lakewood, Senator Tom O’Mara, representing the 58th Senate District, met them for a “toast” to the sale and partnership between the two businesses.

“The tanks rolled in here to cheers,” said Chris. “We wanted to illustrate how important the wine business is and how important it is to economic development in the community beyond the vineyard itself.”

Vance has several other loyal, repeat beverage tank customers in New York, Vermont, and Tennessee, Pat noted. Each of these customers have purchased several beverage tanks for their businesses. In total, Vance Metal has beverage tank clients in eighteen different states, including California and Colorado. They also have some clients in Canada.

No matter how far away their tanks are, Vance Metal will always recognize the importance of community. As Chris Stamp put it, “This is the way we live.”

Cheers to buying local.



Lakewood Vineyards is a Stamp family affair. Back row: Ben, Abby and Chris Stamp; Front row: Amelia and Liz Stamp.

*Photo courtesy of Stu Gallagher.*



*Photo courtesy of Stu Gallagher.*

## Technology

### A. Ooms & Sons Invest in Milking Robots

Third generation farm embraces new agricultural technology



A. Ooms & Sons is located in Valatie, NY in Columbia County.

Technology has always played an important role in farming. Always improving, farm technology helps farmers be more productive and stay on top of the ever-changing market. More and more, dairy farmers are now taking advantage of new milking robot technology on the farm.

One such dairy farm is A. Ooms & Sons of Valatie, New York, in Columbia County. The family has dairy heritage dating back to the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, but their American legacy did not begin until Adrian Ooms and his family immigrated to America in 1950. Adrian and his wife, Dinie, began what is now a 900-cow operation. Adrian and Dinie's three sons, Tim, Ron, and Eric, manage the farm with their father.

In 2015, the Ooms family incorporated three LELY milking robots into their farm. Previously, the family only had enough labor resources to milk twice a day, but needed to milk three times a day. On top of that, their milking parlor was getting old. Thus, the Ooms added the LELY robots, until they had seven total. These machines track everything from temperature, milk volume, and milk butter-fat percentage, to expected time it takes each cow to milk.

"It tells you everything," said Tim Ooms, referencing the computer program that works with the robots.

The technology behind the robots is simple but sophisticated. Each cow has a collar with a LELY sensor and unique ID. When the cow goes into the milking station, it must lower its head into the grain bucket for the robot to recognize its presence. Once the robot recognizes the animal, it will begin to wash the udder before attaching to it with a laser sensor. If the cow has already been milked three times that day, then the robot will reject the animal and not give it any grain.

"It's not about how many stalls you have, it's about how many cows you can get through," said Tim. The average box time or time spent at the milking station on the farm is currently around 7 minutes and 18 seconds. If they are able to decrease this number, more cows can be milked. The robots run 24 hours per day, only shutting off three times a day for cleaning. The robots have, in fact, increased their milk production so far.

"Each milking unit has 4 teat cup liners, in each of the cups for each teat. They're flexible sleeves, and the only part of the actual milking machine that touches the cow. Currently we are using silicone liners on our robots," said Emily Ooms, Tim's 19 year old daughter. "Another company has been testing rubber liners on robots, which are supposed to decrease milking time, and would give us the opportunity to milk a few more cows without having to purchase any more equipment."

"A lot of farms that have switched to the rubber liners have taken almost a minute off the box time. Taking a minute off the box time three times a day should mean we are able to milk another 30 or 40 cows," said Tim.

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The family has been able to better use their human resources now that the robots do the milking. The Ooms farm has four full-time employees, a part-time employee, and some truck drivers beyond the brothers themselves. The brothers' kids help out when they can, but school beckons them away for most of the year. For example, Emily is currently away at Cornell University for her sophomore year, where she is studying Animal Science with a Dairy concentration.

The family is milking 400 cows every day, with the possibility of adding 20 more. The seven robots the farm now owns, however, will not be able to sustain more than that, and they have lots of two year old heifers that will be ready to milk soon.

Getting the cows used to the robots is a unique task for the farm. "The young ones born into it will have a few less problems," said Tim, "normally within ten days they're pretty well trained. We have to catch about 5% of them every day [to be milked] but they're probably the ones that are getting older."

The technology is even capable of predicting which animals might be getting sick, based on milk production drops, fat-protein ratio changes, and the temperature of the cow's milk, among other factors.

The investment in this technology goes beyond the robots themselves. The Ooms had to make sure their infrastructure could sustain the seven robots and that the animals were split up efficiently between each robot. This can require building entirely new barns, as it did for them. It also requires the infrastructure to be able to feed the cows grain during milking. The Ooms had to assemble several steel tanks for grain near the robots to do this.

"Ninety-nine percent of every [problem] we've had, they've been able to tell us how to fix it over the phone," said Tim, speaking of the company that manufactures the LELY. "It's a learning curve, for the first six months everything is free. They just ask that you don't try to fix it yourself."

Tim's daughter, Emily, interned at LELY this past summer. The third generation of the farm, Emily has her eye on the ever progressing agricultural technology.

"In the last ten years, the amount of technology that has become commercially available for farmers is amazing, allowing for increased yields, as well as decreased labor with most technology," said Emily.

It's remarkable how many ways there are to milk a cow.

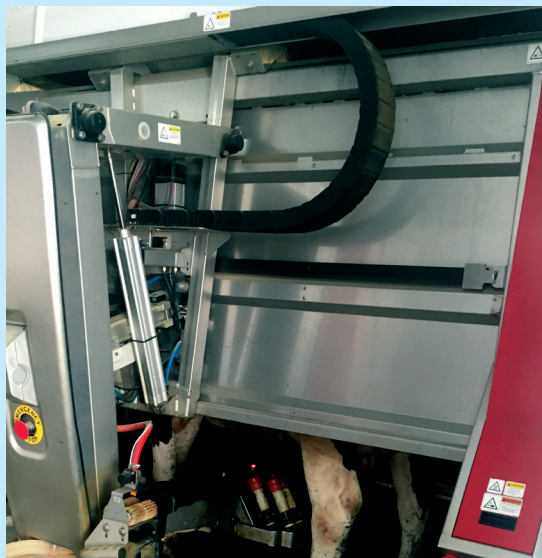


Back row: Eric, Ron, and Tim Ooms;  
Front: Adrian and Dinie Ooms.

*Photo Courtesy of A. Ooms & Sons.*



The farm is currently milking 400 registered  
Holsteins.



The farm utilizes 7 LELY robots.

## Rising Star

### Cheyenne and the FFA



Tara Berescik with her foster child and student, Cheyenne.

*Photo courtesy of Cheyenne Matulewich.*

Cheyenne Matulewich, 18, never thought she would be a part of Future Farmers of America (FFA). Cheyenne moved to Sullivan County from Queens at the age of 12. In foster care, Cheyenne traveled to different families. She ended up at Tri-Valley High School in Grahamsville, NY.

“I have a home now,” said Cheyenne. This is, in part, thanks to the FFA Chapter at Tri-Valley. It all started when she was helping in the library in 10th grade, when “Miss B,” Tara Berescik, noticed that Cheyenne loved animals. She suggested that Cheyenne join the school’s FFA chapter.

“I kind of just jumped in,” said Cheyenne of her initial FFA experience. She also participated in theater club, soccer, tennis, skiing, track, and softball while at Tri-Valley High School.

“I’ve overbooked myself sometimes, but I’ve learned how to manage time better,” said Cheyenne.

In an interesting turn of events, Miss B is now Cheyenne’s foster mom. Cheyenne identifies Miss B as her number one supporter and mentor:

Miss B had a lot to say about Cheyenne too:

“As a teacher, there are students I meet who leave an impact; Cheyenne is one such individual. As a foster child nearly half her life, she has never let a bad situation keep her down, and when given any opportunity she grabs on and goes. As both my student for three years and foster daughter for two, I have been profoundly affected by her enthusiasm, love of learning, and positivity. She is an amazing young person and is a true servant leader.”

Cheyenne is especially thankful for Miss B’s introduction to the FFA, and the role FFA has played in her life ever since. From helping her choose a college, to helping her get involved in her community and giving her a family, the FFA has been a huge part of her life.

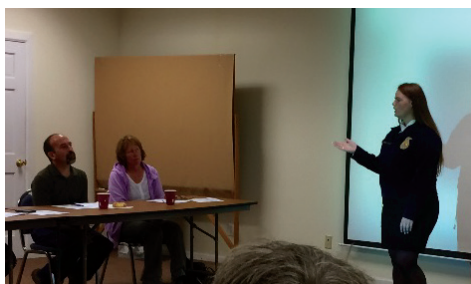
“FFA has made me want to be a better person,” said Cheyenne. She believes the name of FFA is misleading. It is about connections, knowledge, opportunities, and people more than it is about farming.

Cheyenne has truly excelled under the FFA program. She recently won the FFA’s Prepared Public Speaking contest in NY and will be traveling to Indianapolis in October to represent our State in the national competition. Cheyenne competed in the contest last year too, but did not get the scores she needed to win. This year, she devoted time to expanding her research and polishing her presentation in order to go further.

“When she started her Prepared Public Speaking project in 2016 and did not move on to states, she worked harder, knowing she could do better,” said Miss B.

“It’s a really big accomplishment, I didn’t expect it,” said Cheyenne. Armed with determination, she has even sought out opportunities to practice her speech in front of large crowds. This not only helps prepare her for the competition, but also helps her overcome a speech impediment. Since winning the statewide contest, she has practiced her speech at the Rural Schools Association of New York State’s annual conference and at the Walton Watershed Agriculture Council meeting.

“I live in a town called Neversink, and I’ve always heard people talk about the reservoirs,” said Cheyenne. Her speech is entitled “Water Wars: The History of the New York Reservoirs” and



Cheyenne presenting her speech at a Walton Watershed Agriculture Council meeting, in Walton, NY.

*Photo courtesy of Cheyenne Matulewich.*



Cheyenne won the Prepared Public Speaking contest for the FFA and will be representing New York at the national competition in October.

*Photo courtesy of Cheyenne Matulewich.*

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focuses on the two reservoirs surrounding her town that supply water to New York City. In her speech, she highlights the controversy between the towns that are affected by the reservoirs, and the necessity for water in New York City:

*Many of the land-owning farmers were paid only a fraction of what their land was worth, and farmers in the area who did not lose their land rights were forced to install costly measures to prevent pollution.*

*No other reservoir system in the world is as immense in size and scope or is as efficient and clean.*

*My home made all of this possible for the people in New York City; however, for the past 10 years, New York City sued my community and many other reservoir communities to have property values reassessed to reduce the taxes paid to the towns.*

Cheyanne goes on to say that 46% of the land in Neversink is owned and managed by New York City but has little utility—it is unable to be built on and can only be hunted and fished during certain times of the year.

“I used the resources around me to get information,” said Cheyanne. She did much of her research online, but also used the library museum in her town and toured the NYC Department of Environmental Protection to obtain a deeper awareness of the reservoirs’ impact on her community.

“Don’t be afraid of a little bit of work,” Cheyanne advises her younger peers.

Before heading to Indianapolis, Cheyanne has to prepare for another trip—going off to her first year of college. She is starting her first year at SUNY Cobleskill, where she plans to study Agricultural Business.

“I love cows, and I love working with them,” said Cheyanne. Cheyanne works for Thunder View Farms, helping to prepare the Angus beef cattle for shows and fairs. When in college, she plans to be a part of SUNY Cobleskill’s dairy program, since there are no beef cattle on campus. Although she is unfamiliar with dairy cows, as always, she is excited to learn something new.

“I wish every young person had her heart for service and desire to be the best she can be. I have no doubt she’s going to leave a lasting impression everywhere she goes...just like she has at Tri-Valley and in Sullivan County,” said Miss B.



**Cheyanne graduated from Tri-Valley High School in June.** *Photo courtesy of Cheyanne Matulewich.*



**Cheyanne has already joined the student government at SUNY Cobleskill and volunteered with them, washing and waxing police cars.**

*Photo courtesy of Cheyanne Matulewich.*

## Meet the Farmer

### The Osinskis and Their Farm, Widow's Hole Oyster Co.

When talking about farming, few people think of oysters. Nonetheless, nestled in the Peconic Bay of Long Island, the Osinski family has an oyster farm. Widow's Hole Oyster Co. was founded in 2003 by Mike and his wife Isabel, after discovering that their property extended five acres into the water. Now, almost 15 years later, they farm oysters with their two children, Susanna and Mercator.

Once the oyster capital of the east coast, their town of Greenport, NY, was a key supplier of many New Yorkers' main source of protein. It was this history that originally inspired Mike to open Widow's Hole in the first place. Mike observed that oysters are now often recognized as only an appetizer, and not a main course. Mike explained that, starting in the 1960s, beef and pork entered the market as much more affordable options for protein, and oyster farmers could not compete.

"The longer I've done this, the more respect I have for the old-time farmers," said Mike Osinski.

Over the years, Mike and his family have worked hard to produce high-quality oysters that have their own unique place in the local food market. For example, Widow's Hole oysters are aged three years, while most other oyster farms harvest at two years. In addition, after 15 years of farming, Mike and his family began utilizing the "Kushi" method for their oyster farming. This method uses the tide to "tumble" the oysters, allowing them to develop deeper, more desirable cups. During low tide, the oysters self-clean and are otherwise constantly rocking with the movement of the water.

Mike and Isabel also personally deliver their oysters to Manhattan once a week during their growing season, which encompasses all of the "r" months. The 100-mile direct sale ensures that the oysters are as fresh as possible for their customers. The Osinski family's largest client is a restaurant called Eleven Madison Park, who they supply with thousands of oysters a week. The restaurant recently earned the esteemed accolade as the number one restaurant in the world, as decided by the World's 50 Best Restaurants organization.

Despite their many successes, the Osinskis are humbled by their farm's heritage and legacy.

"Watching our kids grow up on the farm has been the biggest joy," said Mike. Mercator is the resident machinery specialist. Mike claims Mercator has had a knack for fixing things since he was 3 years old. He plans to go to college for engineering. Mercator's older sister, however, is planning to take over the farm someday.

Susanna, who is 18 years old, currently studies

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Snow doesn't stop this family. Despite the cold, Isabel Osinski continues business as usual. *Photo courtesy of Mike Osinski.*



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Biology, with a concentration in Marine Biology, at Cornell University. Under Professor Matthew Hare, Susanna is conducting research for the Billion Oyster Project. Oysters clean the water they live in, filtering out excessive nutrients and phytoplankton. Oysters have been functionally extinct in the New York Harbor for some time, and, since then, excessive amounts of nitrogen have been present and most reefs have been lost. Professor Hare and Susanna work with the Billion Oyster Project to reintroduce oysters in the area and do research along the way.

“We were surprised when she wanted to come back to the farm,” said Mike. Mike and Isabel plan to expand their business in order to make it more lucrative for their daughter when it comes time for her to take over.

“The best part is having people tell you that they really enjoy your product after all the hard work you’ve put into it,” said Susanna. She wants to one day expand Widow’s Hole and add a hatchery and algae tanks, in order to spawn her own oysters. Currently, the Osinskis buy their seed oysters elsewhere, as do most oyster farms. Incorporating an oyster seed operation would be a significant expansion to the farm.

“I’ve lived my whole life doing this,” said Susanna. “I hope I’ll be able to [expand] eventually. I don’t know how long that will take but I’ll make it work.”

While the interest in oysters continues to grow on Long Island, it will be exciting to see what the future holds for oyster farmers. Keep an eye on Susanna’s generation, as their ambition has the potential to really impact the oyster industry.



Susanna, Mercator, and Mike Osinski hard at work on the farm.

*Photo courtesy of Mike Osinski.*



Widow’s Hole Oyster, Co. is located on the Peconic Bay in Long Island.

## Broadband Expansion Updates

The Commission continues to monitor broadband expansion programs in rural NY, for both our unserved and underserved communities. Individuals can reach out to the NYS Broadband Program Office directly to obtain address-specific information for expansion, by calling (866) 322-5787, emailing [nysbroadband@esd.ny.gov](mailto:nysbroadband@esd.ny.gov), or writing to New York State, Broadband Program Office, 625 Broadway, 8th Floor, Albany NY 12245.

## Our Best Wishes to Wade, and a Hearty Welcome to Caitlin

Anyone who has enjoyed reading an article in *Rural Futures* in the past several years has probably come to appreciate and recognize the story-telling style of the publication's primary writer, Wade Abbott.

Mr. Abbott takes great pride in telling the stories behind the people who make our rural communities feel like home. He has been a driving force at the Commission since 2013, and recently accepted an opportunity at the Mohawk Valley Library System. Mr. Abbott always had a passion for libraries, and he certainly will be able to put his skills to task in his new position.

Our office is sad to see him leave, and we wish him the best in all of his endeavors. An avid member of American Coaster Enthusiasts, and a former Navy supply officer, Mr. Abbott lives in Rotterdam, NY, with his wife, Ellen, and their two sons, Timothy and Daniel. The voice of the Commission, through the publication of *Rural Futures*, will bear his influence for a long time to come.

A recent graduate from Colgate University, Caitlin Gilligan, will pick up where Mr. Abbott left off. A native of Columbia County, and a former 4-H member, Ms. Gilligan will serve as the Commission's new Communications Specialist and Policy Analyst. With an undergraduate degree in Political Science, and internship experience at both the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ms. Gilligan is an excellent addition to our team. We are so happy to have her on board, and we look forward to seeing her influence on *Rural Futures*, beginning with this edition.

And to that, we say Our Very Best Wishes, Wade, and Welcome, Caitlin!



Caitlin shows a jersey cow at the Columbia County Fair.



Wade in front of the tallest roller coaster in the world at Great Adventure in New Jersey.

## Tick-borne Disease and Animal Health in New York State

Article provided by Cassandra Guarino, Ph.D.



Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases continue to be on the rise in New York State. These pathogens are not only a concern for human health but also represent a challenge to the health of our livestock and companion animals. The New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Animal Health Diagnostic Center (NYSVLD/AHDC) at Cornell University is at the forefront of detection for emerging diseases in animals and is continually working to serve the community in that capacity. At this time, there are few tick-borne diseases found in cattle that have made their way to our State, but we are constantly monitoring both animals and ticks for potentially threatening pathogens.



*Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease in humans, has also been implicated as a cause of disease in dogs and horses. Not all infected animals will go on to develop disease, but those that do can be debilitated by the infection. Common clinical signs in dogs include lameness and fatigue, and in rare cases, potentially fatal kidney disease can develop. In horses, clinical signs include lameness and fatigue and may also include behavioral changes, resistance to work, muscle soreness, and sensitivity to touch. In rare instances, horses acquire eye infections that may lead to blindness, and potentially fatal neurologic disease can develop from infection of the central nervous system. The NYSVLD/AHDC offers the only assay that can diagnose early infection with *B. burgdorferi* in animals and measure response to treatment. In the last year, there were over 1,200 horse samples and almost 900 dog samples submitted in NYS for diagnosis that had evidence of infection with *B. burgdorferi*. It is important to note that these numbers do not necessarily indicate that these animals developed Lyme disease. Nonetheless, the causative agent was present.



The NYSVLD/AHDC also offers a comprehensive tick testing service to the general public. Under the supervision of a board-certified veterinary parasitologist, tick species are identified and then tested for tick-borne disease agents. Our tests currently include the causative agents of Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi* disease, ehrlichiosis, Powassan virus disease, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, all of which can be carried by ticks in New York State. Notably, positive results for tick-borne disease agents do not necessarily mean the infection was transmitted. In addition to the valuable diagnostic information received from tick testing, the test results serve as a crucial resource for continued monitoring of tick-borne pathogens.

It is important to note that individuals should not wait for tick testing results to consult a medical professional for themselves or their animals, especially if symptoms arise. Please note, it is possible for a tick to feed, transmit disease, and detach without being noticed by the individual or animal caretaker.

Protecting yourself and your animals from tick-borne disease requires minimizing exposure to ticks and performing regular tick checks to promptly remove any feeding ticks. Numerous products are available for protecting your animals from ticks. Permethrin-based products have been shown to be extremely effective but should not be applied on or around cats; always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Continued monitoring of ticks and emerging infectious disease through the NYSVLD/AHDC at Cornell University will provide veterinarians, animal owners, and other community members with the information and tools they need to identify and diagnose tick-borne disease in companion animals and livestock.

For more information on serologic testing for Lyme disease in animals at the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Animal Health Diagnostic Center at Cornell University, please visit: <https://ahdc.vet.cornell.edu/sects/Serol/>. For further information on how property management techniques can be employed to reduce tick abundance, please visit: [https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/in\\_the\\_yard.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/in_the_yard.html).

## A new sport at Pal-Mac

Trap shooting team's inaugural year



Dave Dandino coaches Maddie VanGorden at practice.

*Photo courtesy of Pat Breen.*

Palmyra-Macedon High School of Wayne County was one of 19 schools to compete in the New York State Clay Target League State Tournament this past June. This was the club's inaugural year, with five student members, three of which competed in the State Tournament.

Pal-Mac's Maddie VanGorden placed 3rd overall in the Novice High Gun Female group. Everyone who attended the tournament performed their best while there. Both Dave Dandino, the safety officer and John Burgess, the team's advisor, support the team and students on the trap shooting team. Dave hopes to expand to the middle school in order to send more kids to the state tournament in the spring. He also hopes to have a fall league, too.

"We taught them everything. We treat everybody like it's their first time on the range," said Dave. Most of the students on the team do not have prior experience shooting or handling firearms, but even if they do, they are required to start at square one for training and safety.

"It's good for gun safety, especially the beginners. Even for me, already having shooting experience, it helps. It's better experience with more people around, you need to know exactly where to be pointing the gun when there's a lot of people around," said Maddie VanGorden. This was especially helpful to her at the state tournament where there were roughly 25 different stations with everyone shooting at the same time.

"All accidents are preventable," said Dave, who has been teaching hunter's safety for over 30 years for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. He encourages

anyone who is interested in handling a firearm or bow to consult the Department for safety tips and safety class listings. He also cited 4-H as a good resource for information. Pal-Mac's team uses Newark Rod and Gun Club, which covers memberships and clay expenses for the students. Dave said it took a lot of research to find the right gun club to support the team and be their home base.

"There is a lot of archery history in my family," said Dave, whose father, Don, helped create the first bow-hunter education classes in New York State with four of his friends. Don's first wife, Dorothea, was the first female president of the New York Field Archers and Bowhunters Association. Don also served in this position.

In this spirit, Dave is also trying to start an archery league for Pal-Mac. He believes these leagues are important outlets for kids who do not participate in other, more mainstream sports and activities. Maddie supports his push for archery, since many students already participate in this activity outside of school.

"I think our school should have more sports like this," said Maddie. Maddie is a sophomore at Pal-Mac and also plays soccer. Her enthusiasm to expand the program and be involved is comparable to Dave's.

"I just want more people to get involved," said Maddie.



Pal-Mac practices at Newark Rod and Gun Club in Wayne County.

*Photo courtesy of Pat Breen.*

## The Importance of Well Water Testing

Article Submitted by Ontario County Cornell Cooperative Extension

A majority of rural residents rely on private wells for their drinking and household use. Very few of these wells, however, are tested on a regular basis for potability. Potable water is water deemed safe by the standards of the New York State Department of Health. The requirements for such a classification include testing for Coliform Bacteria and E.coli. Water is not considered potable if there is any indication of contamination from either of these bacteria. This means that wells need to be potable in order to provide safe drinking water.

As a brief background, public water systems are regulated through the Safe Drinking Water Act, which is enforced through designated state agencies. Private water systems, including wells, are not regulated. Thus, well owners shoulder the responsibility of determining if, and when, the well should be tested.



Generally, there are two categories of private wells. The first is the drilled well, which is cased (lined) and grouted (sealed). This type of well usually obtains its water from a depth at which bacteria are no longer present. Bacteria is usually filtered out, or dies off, as water infiltrates and slowly moves into the sub-surface ground water environment. However, bacteria can invade ground water when there is insufficient filtration or if travel time between the land surface and the ground water is too short.

The second type of well is a dug well, usually constructed from boards, bricks, stone, or tile. These wells are shallow and often vulnerable to surface water bacterial contamination. Water in dug wells is in contact with saturated soil layers, making them particularly at risk. Bacteria is typically found in these upper soil layers as well as most streams, lakes, and ponds. Other sources of concentrated bacteria can come from inefficient septic systems, farm animals, and storm runoff. Springs are classified similarly as dug wells, and are susceptible to bacterial contamination, too. To combat the multiple sources of contamination for dug wells, many residents install either an ultraviolet (UV) system or a chlorinator, thus making the well water potable.

Well water can be tested for contaminants at a NYS certified Lab. In the chance that a well tests positive for bacteria, a simple procedure of shock chlorinating the well will likely take care of the issue. But, without testing, non-potable water is hard to detect, since Coliform Bacteria and E.coli are odorless and colorless. Testing of the water is the only way to find out if it is present.

For the past 16 years, Ontario County residents have been able to test their private well water for potability (Coliform Bacteria and E.coli) and nitrates at a reduced rate, which was made possible through grants from the Ontario County Water Resources Council. Ontario County has an estimated 10,000 wells, 15% of which have participated in this program. Of those participating, 48% of the wells were positive for Coliform Bacteria and 12% for E.coli. The program also provides education, as well as water testing materials and instructions.

The 2017-18 enacted state budget included an unprecedented \$2.5 Billion for clean water initiatives and established the Emerging Contaminant Monitoring Act. Based on recommendations of the Senate's Health and Environmental Conservation committees, which held a series of water quality hearings throughout the state, a new Drinking Water Quality Council was also established. Among other important initiatives, the Council is tasked with making recommendations to the Department of Health and Department of Environmental Conservation relating to the development of educational materials for private well testing.

**For more information on well water quality, please visit <http://waterquality.cce.cornell.edu>**



Senator Helming sponsored a bill establishing relief for Lake Ontario flooding.

## Lake Ontario Flood Recovery Program

The Lake Ontario Flood Recovery Program was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in June 2017. Funds are now available to assist with the cost of recovery efforts after extensive flooding and windstorms that took place throughout the greater Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence Seaway watersheds between January and July 2017. Funds are available for homeowners, small businesses, neighborhood associations, farms, not-for-profit corporations, and local governments to repair direct flood-related damage along Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, Seneca Lake, the Seneca River, the Oswego River, the Oneida River, Oneida

Lake, and Cross Lake. The program also set aside funds to assist counties in mitigating future flooding.

Owners of residences that sustained direct flood-related property damage between January 1, 2017, and August 31, 2017, may be eligible for up to \$50,000. Secondary homeowners may also be eligible for these funds if their income is less than \$275,000 for the taxable year.

The program offers up to \$50,000 to eligible small businesses, not-for-profit organizations, farms, and homeowners associations, and up to \$20,000 to eligible owners of multiple dwelling buildings, that experienced direct flood-related property damage.

Small businesses that experienced direct, flood-related property damage may also receive up to \$50,000 in assistance for revenue loss, provided that a 15% loss in revenue can be demonstrated compared to the same period in the previous year.

Local municipalities may be eligible to cover the costs of recovery efforts, including repairs to flood walls, roads, sidewalks, culverts, public water systems, and sewer infrastructure.

Finally, the program allows municipalities to lower property assessments where flooding damage has been sustained, and provides certain state income tax exemptions for retirement withdrawals that are used for property repair.

For more information about accessing relief funds, including eligibility guidelines and application instructions, please visit: <https://www.ny.gov/programs/lake-ontario-relief-and-recovery>

## USDA is Opening the Door for Homeownership throughout Rural New York State

Article submitted by Jennifer Jackson, Director – USDA Rural Development - NY Single Family Housing Program

Since 1949, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been assisting Americans achieve the dream of homeownership in rural communities. Well built, affordable housing is essential to the vitality of rural communities throughout America. USDA's Single Family Housing Programs provide families and individuals the opportunity to purchase, build, or repair modest and affordable homes in rural areas. Eligibility for these direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants is, in part, based on income and varies according to the average median income for each area.

*For renters, first time buyers, or an applicant who currently does not own their own home...*

USDA's Rural Housing Service provides homeownership opportunities to low and moderate-income applicants through our Sections 502 Direct and 502 Guaranteed Rural Home loan programs. There is no down payment required for either

*(Continued on page 15)*

(Continued from page 14)

of these home purchase programs. Because USDA can provide 100% loan to value financing, some or all of the closing costs can be included in the loan. In fiscal year 2016, USDA Rural Development helped more than 2,200 individuals and families realize the dream of homeownership throughout New York.

For those who already own their own home and would like to complete repairs, make a home handicapped accessible, or provide energy efficiency improvements...

The USDA offers the Section 504 Home Repair Loan and Grant Program, which is available for qualifying rural homeowners. Home repair loans are offered at a fixed interest rate of one percent, and can be used to repair, modernize, or make a home handicapped accessible. Grants may be available to applicants age 62 or over to remove health or safety hazards and/or to make a home handicapped accessible.

*How to reach us...*

USDA Rural Development has a New York state headquarters office located in Syracuse, NY and 10 area offices throughout the state. We actively engage our housing partners at the state and local levels and participate in many roundtables, housing forums, and workshops throughout the year. If you, or someone you know, are interested in learning more about these or other USDA Rural Development programs, please visit us online at: [www.rd.usda.gov/NY](http://www.rd.usda.gov/NY) or call us directly (315) 477-6400 Ext. 4.



***USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.***

## Share the News...



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Electronic versions of *Rural Futures* can be found on the Commission's website at <http://www.nysenate.gov/committees/legislative-commission-rural-resources>





## SAVE THE DATES!

### **New York Farmland Protection Forums American Farmland Trust**

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#### **Cornell Maple Program Fall Open House**

Arnot Forest Sugarbush  
October 7, 2017  
Van Etten, NY  
<http://blogs.cornell.edu/cornellmaple/2017-fall-open-house/>

#### **North Country Telemedicine**

Third Annual Conference  
November 2, 2017  
Crowne Plaza Resort  
Lake Placid, NY  
<https://3rdannualnctc.eventbrite.com>

Western New York  
November 6, 2017  
1:00-3:00 pm  
CCE Genesee County  
420 East Main St.  
Batavia, NY 14020

Eastern New York  
November 14, 2017  
5:00-7:00 pm  
The Benjamin Center  
SUNY New Paltz  
1 Hawk Dr.  
New Paltz, NY 12561

Central New York  
November 16, 2017  
1:00-3:00 pm  
Wood Library  
134 N Main St.  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

[www.farmland.org/farmlandforum](http://www.farmland.org/farmlandforum)

**If you have any suggestions for upcoming editions,  
Please email the Commission at [RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV](mailto:RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV)**