

# Rural Futures

NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

Summer | 2016 ISSUE

## Building Future Leaders

*How the FFA changes the lives of students*



Photo courtesy of Ms. Jen Segarra

**Ms. Jen Segarra with one of her favorite horses at her stable in Cobleskill, New York.**

For Ms. Jen Segarra, joining the FFA felt like a risky endeavor, but it is a choice that continues to pay off today. It became a critical step in her life, in what is becoming her journey toward an agricultural career.

“I had no idea where my future would be, I had a rough start, and FFA really helped me change my ways,” said Ms. Segarra.

Ms. Segarra became an active FFA member and officer while attending Cobleskill-Richmondville High School. She graduated in 2014. Her story is representative of the countless examples of how FFA changes students.

After moving to Cobleskill-Richmondville, Ms. Segarra was in the difficult process of making new friends in a new school. Like any community, there were people who could be positive influences and others who would not. Some of her new friends

who were involved in FFA encouraged her to join the club. The close-knit community of FFA members welcomed Ms. Segarra with open arms and helped set her on a path toward success.

Additionally, Ms. Segarra found enjoyment in the animal science class in which she was enrolled. Her animal science teacher, Mrs. Deborah Fletcher, also extended a warm invitation for her to join the FFA.

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## Summer 2016 Rural Futures

### NEWS OF INTEREST ABOUT RURAL NEW YORK STATE

A Publication of the NYS Legislative  
Commission on Rural Resources

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



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Co-Chair



**Assemblyman Frank Skartados**  
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“The value of the FFA program extends beyond agriculture. It is an opportunity to develop leadership skills, and it provides experiences that students would not have otherwise. Students can travel out of state, they build teamwork skills, and they learn how to set and achieve goals,” said Mrs. Fletcher.

When Ms. Segarra joined, she was unsure what her career plans were going to be. But that began to change.

Even though her career path was initially uncertain, Ms. Segarra took advantage of every opportunity she could, and she thrived in this atmosphere. She became deeply involved in FFA, attending three state conventions and two national conventions. She often participated in many competitions, including in one of her favorite areas – food science. Along the way, Ms. Segarra earned one of the highest levels of honor in the State, receiving her Empire degree.

She learned and developed some very useful life skills, including building her experience as a public speaker, which is an activity that can be downright frightening for many people. Along the way, she also improved her knowledge of agriculture. Ms. Segarra plans to take on a career in the agricultural industry. She is currently studying Agriculture Business at SUNY Cobleskill, and she cares for her own horses.

One of the most profound things that FFA accomplishes is transforming students. When a student first joins FFA, it does not matter if that student is a shy individual from New York City who knows little about agriculture, or if that student was born into a fourth generation farm family in the Adirondacks. In each case, FFA strives to ignite and develop a passion for leadership and agriculture.

The National FFA Organization began in 1928, a result of the efforts of 33 students who gathered in Kansas City, Missouri. Originally known as the Future Farmers of America, FFA was established to create the next generation of agricultural leaders who would be able to feed the growing population. Much has changed since 1928, and this group of young leaders has spread to all 50 states and two U.S. territories. Today, well over half a million members are represented within more than 7,000 chapters located throughout the United States.

New York State is home to about 4,000 of these dedicated and passionate FFA members. FFA chapters are located throughout the State, from the Capital Region to the North Country, from Western New York to Long Island.

Ms. Jen Segarra is just one of the countless FFA members, present and past, who is accomplishing great things in the world and can credit much of their success and leadership skills to their experiences in FFA. It is clear that FFA provides students with opportunities to channel their boundless energy into positive endeavors.

“It truly gives members a sense of purpose, responsibility, and accountability,” said Mrs. Fletcher.

*For more information about FFA, please visit the New York State website at [nysffa.org](http://nysffa.org) or the national website at [ffa.org](http://ffa.org).*



## FFA in the Budget

Agriculture is a vital part of the New York State budget. Funding agricultural programs is a priority for Senator Ritchie, who serves as both the Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Co-Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.

Supporting educational organizations like FFA is especially important to Senator Ritchie. This year's budget included \$492,000 for FFA, which is a \$100,000 increase over last year's funding. This record funding will help the FFA continue to build upon its legacy of excellence in agricultural education.

It is a worthy investment in the next generation of leaders and in New York State's agricultural industry.



FFA members attend a Senate Agriculture Committee meeting in Albany, joining Senator Rich Funke, Senator Leroy Comrie, and Senator Patty Ritchie – Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, (pictured from left to right).

## Senator Ritchie Named Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

In January, as the 2016 legislative session began, Senator Patty Ritchie took on the new role as the Senate Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. She was elected to the State Senate in 2010, and became a member of the Commission shortly after taking office. Senator Ritchie also serves as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

"It has been a privilege to serve as a member of the Rural Resources Commission," said Senator Ritchie. "As Chair of the Commission, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to address the wide range of issues facing our rural communities across the State."

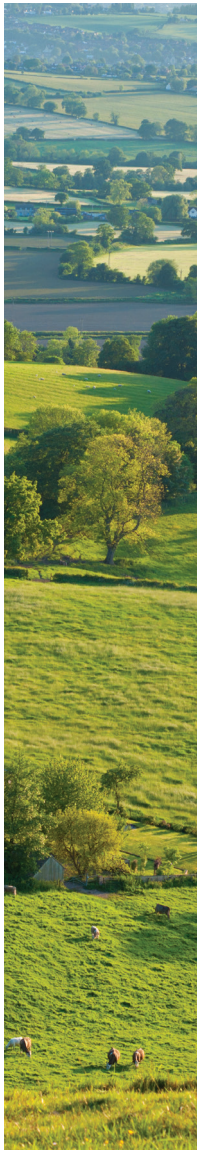
As a lifelong resident of Upstate New York, she has developed an appreciation of the challenges faced by rural areas, along with identifying opportunities to overcome them. Senator Ritchie grew up in DePeyster, in St. Lawrence County, graduating from Heuvelton Central High, Mater Dei College, and SUNY Potsdam. She chose to stay in Northern New York and raise her family, and she currently makes her home in the Town of Oswegatchie.

During her tenure as Chair of the Agriculture Committee, Senator Ritchie has worked to strengthen family farms by cutting taxes and red tape. She authored the two percent cap on farmland assessments, which has helped stop runaway property tax increases that threaten farmers' success. She is also a leader in the fight to sustain state funding for agricultural research, marketing, and education programs.

To encourage a new generation of family farmers, she proposed the "Young Farmers NY" program, enacted in 2014. In 2015, she introduced "Grown in New York," an ambitious plan that aims to increase connections between consumers and local farmers, and bring more New York farm products into schools and homes. In this year's state budget, she built upon the work of previous years through her plan called "Planting Seeds," which restored agricultural budget cuts and introduced new programs to grow the industry in New York State.

Senator Ritchie also serves on the following Senate committees: Alcoholism & Drug Abuse; Civil Service and Pensions; Crime Victims, Crime and Correction; Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation; Energy and Telecommunications; Finance; Higher Education; Libraries; Local Government; and Transportation. Additionally, she serves on the Heroin Task Force and the Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases – both issues of great importance in rural New York.

"The Rural Resources Commission has a long history of addressing issues such as economic development, broadband access, healthcare, education, environmental conservation, and agriculture in rural areas," said Senator Ritchie. "I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Commission as we strive to strengthen our rural communities that are integral to the well-being of New York State."



## A Look at the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

### Commission History, Priorities, and Accomplishments



Senator Patty Ritchie, Co-Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, taps a maple tree to collect sap.

Historically, rural areas have been underrepresented and geographically isolated. To address this issue, the New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources was established by law in 1982. It is a two-house, bipartisan group comprised of members of the State Senate and the State Assembly. The group is charged with examining the impact of rural resources on the State’s economy, reviewing existing laws and regulations that impact non-urban communities, and developing new initiatives that seek to strengthen New York’s rural communities.

In January, Senator Patty Ritchie was appointed as the Senate Co-Chair, joining Assemblyman Frank Skartados, the Assembly Co-Chair, to lead the Commission. Senator Ritchie has been a member of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources since 2011. She also serves as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee – a role that allows her to further support New York State’s rural communities by working to strengthen New York’s farming industry.

Throughout its history, the Commission has focused on issues of great importance to rural New York State, and it continues to do so today. In particular, healthcare, broadband, and rural development programs were at the forefront of discussion during this year’s annual meeting of the Commission.

Mr. Scott Collins, Acting State Director for USDA Rural Development, also attended the annual meeting. He presented background on the diverse range of programs, grants, and loans that his organization makes available to help rural communities across New York State. (See the article on page 11 for more information about USDA Rural Development’s Value Added Producer Grant Program and Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Program.)

The 2016 Legislative Session recently wrapped up, and it is important to highlight some of the Commission’s accomplishments so far this year:

- Increased funding in the State Budget for the University at Buffalo Rural Dentistry Pilot Project and an accompanying study. The funding will extend this important program for a third year.
- Included funding in the budget for a second year to support the New York State Dental Association rural dental demonstration program, which takes place at Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals.
- Supported funding in the budget for a new “Take-A-Look” tour program by Iroquois Healthcare Alliance that will introduce medical residents to rural residency programs and their communities.
- Included funding in the budget for a subsidy to rural public transportation systems to assist with operating costs.
- Passed a bill in the State Senate to increase Medicaid reimbursements to critical access hospitals. The bill would direct reimbursement at 101 percent of the cost of delivering services to Medicaid patients.
- Passed a bill in both the State Assembly and Senate that will allow volunteer firefighters from other states to offer their services to volunteer fire departments in New York State. This will be especially helpful in areas that see a seasonal increase in tourists and a greater demand on the emergency services systems in the area.



Assemblyman Frank Skartados, Co-Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, on his farm in Ulster County, New York.

Of course, there is much more to accomplish, and the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources will continue its mission to address the challenges faced by rural communities across New York State.

The Legislative Commission on Rural Resources publishes *Rural Futures*. More information about the Commission can be found at [nysenate.gov/committees/legislative-commission-rural-resources](http://nysenate.gov/committees/legislative-commission-rural-resources).

## Right Place – Right Time

*An Education Experienced at SUNY Cobleskill*

“SUNY Cobleskill is the right place, right time,” said Dr. Jason Evans, Associate Professor of Agricultural Business Management at SUNY Cobleskill.

It is a direct reflection of the location of SUNY Cobleskill, the nature of the agricultural and other educational programs offered at the college, and its importance within both the local community and New York State.

Historically, the Schoharie Valley was referred to as the “The Breadbasket of the Revolution.” It is a statement highlighting the area’s agricultural output and access to transportation routes, enabling the region to provide critical support for the American Revolutionary War effort.

In Dr. Evans’ view, the same traits hold true today. Schoharie County is still an area of rich agricultural production. It is centrally-located, with access to a wide range of markets within New York State, as well as larger markets such as Boston, New York City, and even Philadelphia.

SUNY Cobleskill is found right in the middle of this “breadbasket.” Its location provides unique opportunities to help food producers, along with developing future leaders within the agricultural industry who will provide locally-sourced food to an already large and continually growing market of potential consumers.



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*

Schoharie County, along with much of Upstate New York, produces a large variety of agricultural products. Farms that grow and raise products as diverse as dairy, fruits, vegetables, maple, wool, and meat are found throughout New York State, many in close proximity to SUNY Cobleskill. Furthermore, with western portions of the United States facing drought conditions, New York State agriculture may see even greater opportunities in the years to come to produce an increasing amount and range of products that feed our country and the world.

It is a need that Dr. Evans and his colleagues at SUNY Cobleskill are working to meet by providing a practical approach to education.

The motto of SUNY Cobleskill is “Real life. Real learning.” This institution has established a reputation

for a hands-on approach to education. Increasingly, Dr. Evans finds that students are not looking to college as just an interlude of self-introspection between high school and their entry into the workforce. Rather, students view their education and experiences at SUNY Cobleskill as a vital stepping stone in the process of becoming career-ready. Students do not simply sit in lecture halls. Instead, they obtain real-world life skills necessary to be successful and competitive throughout their careers.

To accomplish this, students are required to complete a 15-week internship where they gain at least 600 hours of work experience. Students intern at a variety of work places including the New York State Legislature, United States Department of Agriculture, Cornell Cooperative Extensions, or a range of companies – including agricultural corporations and farms. There are even international internships available, including an excellent dairy science program in New Zealand. Not only do these experiences expand the

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breadth of students' experiences, but they often lead to employment after college. About three-quarters of all internships provide students with a full time job after graduation.

Students also apply their knowledge through local experiences. A new business incubator project is being established to allow the college to invest its facilities and expertise in local agricultural businesses. The project is being developed in cooperation with the Center for Agriculture Development and Entrepreneurship (CADE), a non-profit based in nearby Oneonta, New York. CADE's mission is to increase the number of successful farm enterprises and related businesses. These two institutions are coming together to provide a mutually beneficial approach that will help businesses and provide hands-on learning experiences for SUNY Cobleskill students.

Part of the incubator project includes training and workshops. These are scheduled to begin during the summer. Additionally, a dairy processing center that will create value-added products such as cheese or ice cream is being built. It is expected to open in the spring of 2017. There will also be physical retail space on campus for these products to be sold to the public.

In conjunction with these plans, an organization called SCORE will have office space on campus. Through the efforts of volunteers, SCORE provides free guidance and counseling to small businesses in the area. Volunteers are active and retired business owners who share their depth of knowledge and experience with other business owners and entrepreneurs.

"It is an avenue for every student on campus," said Dr. Evans, describing the involvement of students in this project. For example, students studying agriculture business, food systems, and animal science would benefit from the production aspect of the incubator. Students who are studying marketing or have a graphic design background will benefit from the advertising side of the business. Students will be there both to learn and to help.

Dr. Evans summarizes SUNY Cobleskill's strategy as "applied education," and he is confident that it will continue to benefit students, the local community, and the future of agriculture.

*For more information about SUNY Cobleskill, please visit [cobleskill.edu](http://cobleskill.edu).*



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*



## Profile of a Professor

*Dr. Jason Evans, SUNY Cobleskill*

Dr. Jason Evans, Associate Professor of Agricultural Business Management at SUNY Cobleskill, portrays his teaching experience as a journey of personal reeducation.

Looking back to when he began teaching at SUNY Cobleskill in August 2009, he describes himself as initially being an academic with a theoretical focus. In subsequent years, he has found himself becoming a strong proponent of a hands-on approach to education.

His eyes light up as he extols the benefits of this method at SUNY Cobleskill. Not only do students participate in an off-campus internship for at least one semester,

but they also gain experience at school that takes them outside the traditional classroom. A campus visitor might see students looking after livestock, caring for tomato plants in a greenhouse, working with farm machinery, or even tending to the school's indoor fish hatchery. Of course, classroom time is still an important part of the educational process, but there is tremendous value in these activities that directly relate to students' courses of study.

Dr. Evans talks about the importance of this approach with an urgency that directly relates to his predictions of the roles students will take on after graduation, especially within agriculture.

He sees a tremendous need to help create the next generation of agricultural leaders, especially within New York State. He predicts that New York State will see greater diversification in agricultural products, and he believes the State is in a prime position to grow in agricultural importance. He is excited that the students at SUNY Cobleskill will become the innovators who develop the methods and technology to increase productivity, along with creating the food systems that will meet local and global demand for food in the future. "I want to create a problem solver," he said.

In a similar manner, Dr. Evans has adapted and changed his focus as an educator to better meet the needs of his students. "The sky's the limit for a faculty member when you can jump in and get your feet dirty," said Dr. Evans.



*Photo courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill*

**Dr. Jason Evans at SUNY Cobleskill**

## Six Months with Rural Resources

*An Internship through the New Visions Law & Government Program*

Earlier this year, the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources was privileged to have Ms. Mathilda Scott join the team. Ms. Scott was an intern through the New Visions Law & Government program, a career-exploration and honors, advanced placement, and college credit-granting program.

Ms. Scott’s internship with the Rural Resources Commission was no accident. Mr. Richard Bader, Coordinator & Instructor for the New Visions Law & Government Program, requested the placement after learning about her interests.

“Mathilda has an indomitable spirit, and with a deep passion for agriculture, I knew she would be a good fit for the Rural Resources Commission,” said Mr. Bader. “She views rural issues not as matters of geography, but as matters of social justice.”

“Interning for Senator Ritchie with the Rural Resources Commission has been an amazing experience. I have improved my writing skills and worked with amazing mentors,” said Ms. Scott.

The program is offered by the Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical School. Participating students are honors-level, college-bound high school seniors. Students attend the program in Albany for a half-day and then return to their home high schools the other half of the school day. They are also assigned internships in the Albany area, spending a few hours each week gaining practical experience.

“Participating in New Visions Law & Government has been an eye opening experience. It has expanded my knowledge on a variety of subjects including the court system, political theory, and Constitutional law,” said Ms. Scott.

The success of the program is evident from the accomplishments of the students enrolled in it. Ms. Scott, together with ten of her classmates, won the New York State championship for the *We the People: The Citizen and Constitution* competition. It was the second year in a row that a New Visions Law & Government team won this state championship.

In April, the team visited Washington, D.C., to compete in the national finals. To succeed in the competition, the team had to demonstrate their knowledge of constitutional principles. Over two days, the students participated in a simulated congressional hearing where they showcased their knowledge by “testifying” in front of constitutional experts such as state supreme court judges and college professors.

While the team did not advance to the last round of competition, they did win the Northeastern States Award. To win this regional prize, Ms. Scott and her classmates bested 137 finalists from nine other states and the District of Columbia.

Their success was a direct reflection of the value of the New Visions program.

“An educational program like New Visions Law & Government is critical to teaching and fostering the level of civic knowledge and the skills, including vital communication skills, necessary to be an effective, informed, and engaged citizen,” said Mr. Bader.



*Photo courtesy of Mr. Richard Bader, Coordinator for New Visions Law & Government Program*

**Ms. Mathilda Scott, (front row – third from the left), and her classmates visit with Congressman Chris Gibson at the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.**

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Ms. Scott brought a wide range of experience to the Commission. She has been involved in FFA throughout her time in high school, most recently serving as the chapter president. She also participated in a prestigious fellowship program where she worked at a USDA facility in St. Paul, Minnesota, assisting with crop systems research.

Along with conducting various research projects, Ms. Scott contributed several articles to this edition of *Rural Futures*.

She recently graduated from high school and will be attending college in the fall where she plans to study International Relations. Certainly, she has a bright future ahead of her.

“Mathilda was a pleasure to have in the program. I think her maturity of insight, matched by intellectual curiosity and the desire to challenge herself, provides the rich promise for her success and excellence in her future pursuits,” said Mr. Bader.

Best wishes, Mathilda!

## Training for Grain Bin Rescues

Grain bin rescue simulator at Empire Field Days



Photo courtesy of the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety

Using a simulator filled with 100 bushels of corn, National Education Center for Agricultural Safety personnel provide instruction on grain bin rescue.

One of the most dangerous places on many farms can be found inside a grain bin. Not only is it a confined space with all the inherent air quality concerns, but those piles of grain can also be deceptively dangerous. A sudden slide of grain along a wall, or a collapsing air pocket can result in tragedy. In mere seconds, an individual inside a grain bin can become entrapped. Worse yet, in just a few more moments that individual can be engulfed – completely buried in grain that stubbornly prevents extrication.

It is a deadly scenario, and one in which first responders in rural areas should be familiar. It is vital that firefighters know how to safely respond to such an emergency. Receiving hands-on training for grain bin rescue is especially helpful for first responders who might face such a scenario.

That is why the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS), in Peosta, Iowa, brought its grain bin rescue simulator to the 2016 Empire Farm Days. NECAS offered two free training days for firefighters in partnership with the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, Empire Farm Days, Farm Credit East, and the NY Farm Bureau Member Services Safety Group 486.

The grain bin safety training for emergency personnel included one hour of classroom education and three hours of hands-on training with the simulator.

Additionally, each day of Empire Farm Days, there were 20-minute demonstrations at the grain simulator to help farmers learn how to protect themselves from grain dust and mold when working near a bin.

For more information about grain bin safety training, please contact Jim Carrabba with the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health at 800-343-7527, ext. 2216.



Senator Patty Ritchie, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, and Ms. Mathilda Scott at the dais in the Senate Chambers in Albany.

## Monitoring a Pest

### *Western Bean Cutworm in New York State*

Throughout history, farmers have faced a myriad of challenges that threaten their crops. Among the most devastating are the wide variety of insects that destroy crops or reduce yields. Some of the smallest living creatures, in large enough numbers, can be immensely destructive.

It is a problem that is much easier for farmers to manage when they understand the characteristics of the pests they face and how widespread the problem is.

That is why monitoring the spread of new pests is so important. Farmers may be able to adjust their practices to protect their crops or implement methods to keep the pests under control.

Over the last decade, the Western bean cutworm (WBC), a threat to corn and dry bean crops, has made its way into New York State. This moth is native to the far western United States, but it has been spreading eastward. It was first detected in New York State in 2009.

The New York Western Bean Cutworm Monitoring Program, based at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, has been monitoring WBC populations since 2010. Using pheromone traps, and with the help of volunteers, farmers, and other organizations, the program has determined that the WBC population in New York State is increasing annually. The highest populations are found in Western and Northern New York.

An adult moth can be identified by its cream-colored stripe on the leading edge of its wings. A boomerang or kidney bean shape on its front wing also helps identify the adult version of this pest.

But it is not the adult that directly causes the damage. Adult moths emerge during the summer, with the peak emergence in New York State typically taking place in late July or early August. The adults lay masses of about 20 to 200 eggs on the upper surfaces of leaves near the tassels of corn plants, or on the underside of leaves of dry bean plants. When larvae hatch from the eggs, they make their way to the tassels of corn plants to feed on pollen, and later move on to the ears of corn. For dry beans, they feed on the bean pods.

Not only does this directly reduce the yield produced on the farm, but the damage to corn kernels can leave the ears of corn susceptible to fungal ear molds.

During the late summer, the mature larvae drop from the plants, burrow into the ground, and overwinter underground. The cycle continues again as the adults emerge the following summer.

Unfortunately, this pest is continuing its eastward flight. Knowing the extent of its spread can only help New York's farmers.

For more information about Western bean cutworm, along with other pests, please visit the Weekly Field Crops Pest Report at [blogs.cornell.edu/lipmwpr/](http://blogs.cornell.edu/lipmwpr/).



Western bean cutworm moths. Each is about three-quarters of an inch long with a cream colored stripe on the leading edge of its wing, and distinct circular and boomerang shapes behind the stripe.



A Western bean cutworm egg mass. Eggs are spherical with a striated pattern, similar to that found on a cantaloupe.



A Western bean cutworm larva on an ear of corn. The larva is tan with dark stripes on the plate behind its head. It is smooth with no hairs or bumps on it.

**All photos above courtesy of the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program**

## USDA Assisting Rural Entrepreneurs and Farmers in NY

*Programs are investing in small business development and supporting job growth in rural economies*

**By Gary Pereira – Business Programs Specialist / State Energy Coordinator, USDA Rural Development**

USDA Rural Development provides much-needed capital in rural areas, often in partnership with private-sector lenders and community-based organizations. The capital may be in the form of loan guarantees, direct loans, or grants to individuals, rural businesses, cooperatives, farmers, public bodies, non-profit corporations, and Native American Tribes. The funding is intended to help improve the quality of life in rural communities by enhancing economic opportunities.

USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service offers more than a dozen programs designed to support business development and job training opportunities for rural businesses and entrepreneurs. These programs help provide capital, technical support, educational opportunities, and entrepreneurial skills to help rural residents start and grow businesses or access jobs in agricultural markets and in the bio-based economy.

### Value Added Producer Grant Program

The Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of agricultural products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the goals of this program. Priority scoring points are awarded for beginning farmers, veteran farmers, socially-disadvantaged farmers, small or medium-sized farms structured as family farms, farmer cooperatives, and farmers who propose to develop a mid-tier value chain.

The VAPG application window varies from year to year. National program funding for 2016 is approximately \$44 million. Maximum grant amounts are \$75,000 for planning and \$250,000 for working capital, but smaller, farm-scale projects can request less than \$50,000 and submit a less detailed application. Applicants are required to provide at least 50 percent of total project costs. In recent years, New York has been one of the most successful states in this nationally competitive program, thanks to its highly diverse agriculture and proximity to major consumer markets.

Since the VAPG program's inception, USDA Rural Development has funded more than 90 projects, investing nearly \$15 million in rural New York. In 2015, more than \$1.86 million in VAPG funds were awarded to support 14 projects from New York dairy, beef, wine grape, apple, poultry, market vegetable, fresh greens, honey, and timber producers. Each of these grant recipients is adding value to their commodity products and realizing a greater share of the consumer dollar.

### Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Program

The Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Program (B&I) bolsters the existing private credit structure



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## Spotlight on the Splendor of Rural NYS

By Senator Patty Ritchie

**New York is rich in history. It is a direct result of the connections held by every corner of the Empire State to the people, places, and pivotal events that shape who we are today. In this edition of *Rural Futures*, I share some of the most historically significant places in the region I represent that are available for you to visit, enjoy, and, of course, learn from.**



Photo courtesy of Boldt Castle

### Boldt Castle and Singer Castle

The area I represent is home to not one, but two, historic castles, both located in the amazing Thousand Islands region. The first, Boldt Castle, which is located on Alexandria Bay’s Heart Island in Jefferson County, was built by millionaire hotel magnate George C. Boldt for his wife, Louise, who passed away before its completion. Today, the restored castle stands as one of the premier attractions in the Thousand Islands.



Photo courtesy of Singer Castle

Further north is Singer Castle on Dark Island in St. Lawrence County. Built at the turn of the century by Commodore Bourne, president of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, the massive structure initially served as a hunting lodge. Both castles are open to the public and accessible by private boat or tour boats. For more information, visit [www.boldtcastle.com](http://www.boldtcastle.com) or [www.singercastle.com](http://www.singercastle.com).

### The “Honor the Mountain” Monument

The men and women of the 10th Mountain Division are an important part of New York State’s past—and its future. Jefferson County is home to Fort Drum, a place where thousands of 10th Mountain Division troops and their families are stationed. The unit is a special, significant part of the region I represent. To honor the contributions of the 10th Mountain Division, which is the most deployed combat division in our entire Army, a monument designed by Susan Raymond, a Colorado-based sculptor known for her creation of military themed monuments, was built this year in Watertown’s historic Thompson Park. Located in the Park’s Tower Square, the new structure pays tribute to the history of the 10th Mountain Division, and the sacrifices of its troops and their families.



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Photo courtesy of Fort Ontario State Historic Site

**Fort Ontario State Historic Site**

For more than 250 years, Fort Ontario has been an important part of history and the City of Oswego. The site played a critical role throughout the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812. Throughout World War II, it was used by the United States Army, and from 1944 to 1946, it served as the only refugee camp in the country for victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Located at the Fort Ontario State Historic Site is the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum, which pays tribute to the nearly 1,000 refugees from World War II who were housed at Fort Ontario. Today, the Fort is open to the public and hosts a number of special events throughout the year. You can find out more information by visiting [www.fortoswego.com](http://www.fortoswego.com).

**Pickens Hall**

Built in 1858, Pickens Hall—which is located in Heuvelton, in St. Lawrence County—first contained a post office, a meeting hall, the original Pickens General Store, an opera house, and served as home to the *Heuvelton Bee* newspaper. Decades later in 2001, after learning of plans to demolish the building, community members began work to save the historic structure. Just recently, crews completed renovations to the building’s third floor, which at one time was a concert hall that hosted performances by renowned opera singer Bessie Abbott, the granddaughter of the original builder of Pickens Hall. Today, the building, which is part of the State and National Historic Registers, hosts community and cultural events and pays tribute to the local Amish population by offering their locally made products in the Pickens General Store.



Photo courtesy of Pickens Hall

*(Continued from page 13)*

**Frederic Remington Art Museum**

Located in Ogdensburg in St. Lawrence County, the Frederic Remington Art Museum houses a comprehensive collection of artwork by Frederic Remington, a native of Canton who is best known for his works depicting soldiers, cowboys, and Native Americans of the Old West. For more information, visit [www.fredericremington.org](http://www.fredericremington.org).



*Photo courtesy of the Frederic Remington Art Museum*



*Photo courtesy of the Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site*

**Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site:**

In June of 1812, after war broke out between the United States and Great Britain, Sackets Harbor—which is located in Jefferson County—became the focus of our country’s military and naval activity for Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence Valley. Today, visitors learn about the region’s role in the War of 1812 at the Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site, which features exhibits, guided and self-guided tours, reenactments, and more.

(Continued from page 14)



Photo courtesy of the Antique Boat Museum

**Antique Boat Museum**

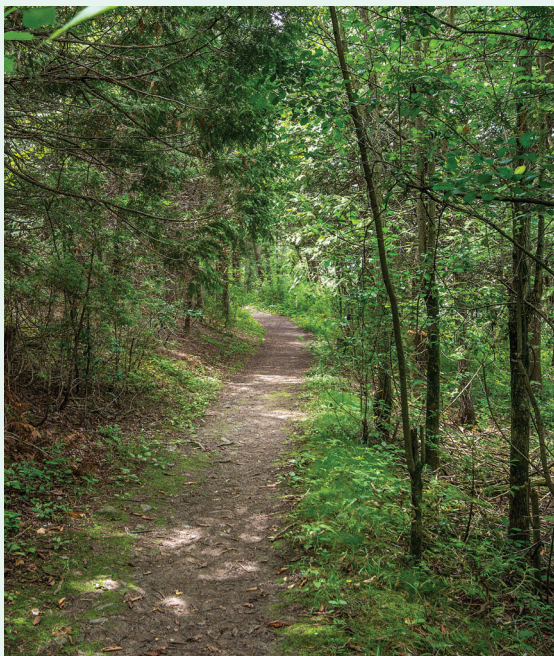
Located along the Thousand Islands in Clayton, the Antique Boat Museum features more than 300 beautiful—and unique—boats from yesteryear. The museum pays tribute to the boating history of North America, and specifically, the St. Lawrence River. In addition to perusing the Museum, visitors can also enjoy speed boat rides, take part in educational programs, and attend special events.

**Honoring Dr. Mary Edwards Walker**

Did you know that the only woman ever to receive the Medal of Honor, America’s highest military award, is from Oswego County? Dr. Mary Edwards Walker served as a contract civilian surgeon in the Civil War and as a strong advocate for women’s rights. A statue in her honor stands today in front of the Oswego Town Hall.



Photo courtesy of the Town of Oswego



**New York State Parks**

From Southwick Beach State Park in Henderson, to Coles Creek State Park in Waddington, and Selkirk Shores State Park in Pulaski, Central and Northern New York are home to a number of great State Parks. These scenic gems offer everything from campsites to fishing opportunities. For more information about them, please visit [www.parks.ny.gov](http://www.parks.ny.gov).

I invite you to learn more about the above locations and people, and the roles they played in making the Empire State what it is today. Be sure to check out the next edition of *Rural Futures*, where we will travel to another part of New York State, to learn more about its contributions to our State’s great heritage.

## Local History, National Impact

*Upstate New York's unique role in the fight for equality*

Women's right to vote was won after a long campaign of struggle and sacrifice. This historic journey made its way through Upstate New York, with a pivotal stop in Seneca Falls.

History lovers, students, and anyone interested in learning about women's rights can visit the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York.

This museum tells the story and struggle of the first Women's Rights Convention, which was held from July 19-20, 1848. At the convention, approximately 300 attendees listened as famous suffragettes, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, spoke about human rights, civil rights, and equality for women.

The park includes a number of historic buildings in Seneca Falls and Waterloo, New York, such as the Wesleyan Chapel which was the site of the convention, the Stanton House, and the M'Clintock House. The buildings are packed with information and background materials that connect visitors to the convention. Ranger-led tours are provided, along with a short film that summarizes this memorable event. Tours and admission are free, but visitors may want to plan their trips in advance as there are limited tour times available.

*The Visitor Center is open year-round from 9 am to 5 pm, Wednesday through Sunday. For more information, or to plan a trip, please visit [nps.gov/woril/index.htm](http://nps.gov/woril/index.htm).*



*Photo courtesy of the National Park Service*

**Statues of attendees of the first Women's Rights Convention that took place in Seneca Falls, New York.**

*(Continued from page 11)*

through the guaranteeing of loans for rural businesses, allowing private lenders to extend more credit than they would typically be able to. Eligible applicants include Federal or State chartered banks, Savings and Loans, Farm Credit Banks, and Credit Unions who have legal authority, sufficient experience, and financial strength to operate a successful lending program.

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development has guaranteed more than 130 B&I projects, supporting over \$270 million in private investments in rural New York.

For example, the Heidelberg Bread Company – a well-known local bakery in Herkimer County – is utilizing the B&I loan program to build a nearly 30,000 square foot commercial bakery in Frankfort, New York. This expansion, once complete, will create good paying jobs locally, increase production capacity six-fold, and expand the market reach of their products in the State and beyond.

Examples of eligible projects include: business acquisitions, purchase or improvement of real estate, business expansion, repair and plant modernizations, development costs, equipment and machinery, startup cost and working capital, pollution control/abatement, and refinancing of existing projects. The B&I loan program is open year-round. Questions regarding eligibility, terms, and conditions can be directed to Gary Pereira via email at [Gary.Pereira@ny.usda.gov](mailto:Gary.Pereira@ny.usda.gov), or by phone at 315-736-3316, ext. 129.

*To learn more about these and other programs offered by USDA Rural Development, please visit [rd.usda.gov/NY](http://rd.usda.gov/NY) or call 315-477-6400, ext 4. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*



*Photo courtesy of the National Park Service*

**The Wesleyan Chapel, site of the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848, now part of the Women's Rights National Historical Park.**



## Beyond Books

*How Canton Free Library expanded their collection*

The dreaded list of weekend chores frequently includes tasks such as gardening, home repair, or household cleaning. Often, such a list requires the acquisition of a tool or two. And for residents of Canton, New York – and elsewhere in St. Lawrence County – completing these tasks might just begin with a trip to the public library.

Of course, borrowing a good book is a great reason to procrastinate, but this library visit has an entirely different purpose. Instead of checking out the latest mystery novel or a recent movie on DVD, patrons of the Canton Free Library can borrow a wide range of tools.

In addition to the typical assortment of books, magazines, and movies, the Canton Free Library maintains a diverse collection of nearly 100 tools.

Need to use some pruning shears or a cordless drill? The library has them. Perhaps an orbital sander or a soil pH meter is required. They are available to borrow. The library’s catalog lists common tools like screwdrivers, pliers, rakes, and shovels. It also includes a range of baking supplies, pruning equipment, and specialized tools.



**Ms. Emily Owen Hastings, Canton Free Library Director, uses a hand saw and sawhorses from the library’s tool collection to trim a curtain rod to be installed in the library’s meeting room.**

On the surface, it might seem like an odd choice for inclusion in a public library’s collection. According to Ms. Emily Owen Hastings, Library Director for the Canton Free Library, many libraries are looking into loaning items beyond books. Furthermore, she and her library staff recognized a need in the community for a tool collection.

The local community has a “do-it-yourself” attitude according to Ms. Hastings. Homeowners, hobby farmers, and gardeners could use the tool library as an opportunity to try out a tool before buying one. Other individuals, such as those renting apartments or college students in dorm rooms, might not have the space to store tools. Borrowing them from the library could be ideal.

The collection came about through a grant from the local Canton Community Fund. It was also supported through the generosity of local community members and a tool manufacturer, Snap-on, who donated tools to the collection.

The library is looking to expand its collection of tools, and it would not be surprising to see the establishment of collections like this at other public libraries.

In the future, that chore list could very well include a trip to the library.

*For more information about the Canton Free Library’s tool collection, including a link to the tools in their catalog, please visit [cantonfreelibrary.org/tools](http://cantonfreelibrary.org/tools).*



## The Joy of Angling

*Free Fishing Clinics and Free Fishing Days in New York State*

A young girl stands uncertainly on the shore of a pond. It is her first time holding a fishing rod, and she stares intently at a bobber just a few feet from shore. Just as her grandfather fears that she will become bored, the bobber twitches, leaving circular ripples in the water. Suddenly, the tip of her fishing rod bends toward the pond, and the battle is on. In an epic struggle, and with expert coaching from her grandfather, she reels in a small bass.

For many people, fishing is a tradition easily passed on to the next generation. Others may have less familiarity, or they might be looking for a refresher on the basics of fishing.

To meet this need, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation sponsors free fishing clinics during the summer at locations across the State. No fishing license is required for these events. Participants can learn more about fishing techniques, fish identification, fisheries management, and more. Most importantly, they also provide future anglers with opportunities to cast their own lines into the water.



New York State also offers a number of Free Fishing Days where anybody can fish in the State without a license. The next Free Fishing Day is scheduled for Friday, November 11th.

From salmon fishing in Oswego County, to angling for walleye and bass on waterways in St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties, there are no shortage of places where outdoors enthusiasts—both new and old—can enjoy the sport.

For that young girl, the experience is bigger than her catch. After holding the fish in front of her for the obligatory photo, she beams with pride as she releases it back into the pond.

The fish may have gotten caught, but it is the young girl who is hooked on her new hobby.

*For more information about New York State's Free Fishing Clinics, please visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27123.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27123.html).*

## Grant Opportunity: Public Engagement with Historical Records



The availability of information online has been rapidly increasing for many years. Fortunately, this trend has resulted in greater access to documents and information about the history and culture of our communities, state, and nation.

Yet, making this information publicly available is not necessarily an easy task. Creating the tools necessary to provide wider access to historical documents can be a time consuming and costly endeavor.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) of the National Archives is supporting these efforts through a “Public Engagement with Historical Records” grant. This grant program will fund projects that develop technologies and methods that improve public access of historical records, and encourage the use of such materials by individuals and organizations.

NHPRC expects to award up to three grants nationwide. Each grant would likely cover a project period of one to three years in the amount of \$50,000 to \$150,000. The grant can be used to cover up to half of the total direct project costs. The deadline for the application is October 6, 2016.

*For more information about the Public Engagement with Historical Records Grant, or to obtain details on how to apply, please visit [archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/engagement.html](http://archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/engagement.html).*



A fire tower on the Woodhull Mountain Trail.

## Take a Hike

The weather is warmer, and it is time to enjoy the great outdoors without having to be bundled up like a polar bear in a parka. One of the best ways to do so is to take a hike through the woods, up the hills, or along the waterways of New York State.

For residents and visitors to Herkimer County, there is a great resource provided by Herkimer County HealthNet – maps, details, and guidance for 20 trails located within the county.

Different options include scenic walks along lakes and through the woods. Hikers can climb to the top of a fire tower in Old Forge or enjoy the sounds of cascading waterfalls. Others might prefer a brisk walk to visit a canal lock or other historical sites. There are even fitness trails listed in the guide created by Herkimer County HealthNet.

Many of the trails are multi-use, allowing biking as well as hiking. For those seeking winter adventures, many trails also allow snowshoeing or cross country skiing.

There are many opportunities throughout the State to enjoy trails that showcase the natural beauty and exciting attractions in rural New York. With the added health benefits of exercise, it is always a good time to take a hike.

For more information, including details about each of the trails and a link to a brochure, please visit [trails.herkimerhealthnet.com](http://trails.herkimerhealthnet.com).



Caves found along a trail at the Outdoor Learning Center of the Owen D. Young Central School District.

Photos courtesy of Herkimer County HealthNet

## Share the News...

To request additional copies of current or previous editions of *Rural Futures*, please contact the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources at [RuralRes@nysenate.gov](mailto:RuralRes@nysenate.gov)

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



## SAVE THE DATES!

Summer is **County and Youth Fair Season**. For a complete list of fairs in New York State visit: [agriculture.ny.gov/fairshome.html](http://agriculture.ny.gov/fairshome.html) or [nyfairs.org](http://nyfairs.org).



**New York State  
Association for Rural Health  
15th Annual Conference**

**September 22-23, 2016**

Harbor Hotel, Clayton, NY  
[nysarh.org](http://nysarh.org)



**New NY Broadband Program Phase 2  
Funding Applications will be accepted:**

**October 17 – November 30, 2016**

[nysbroadband.ny.gov](http://nysbroadband.ny.gov)



**Northeast Livestock Conference**

**November 11-12, 2016**

Ramada Inn, Watertown, NY  
[ccejferson.org](http://ccejferson.org)

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