

# Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia & Greene Counties



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Columbia & Greene Counties

## 2014 Annual Report



Nathan Chittenden,  
President



Chuck Brooks,  
Executive Director

*Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.*



In 1914, one hundred years ago, Cooperative Extension was established with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act. This legislation authorized cooperative extension work between the state land grant colleges/ universities and the USDA in each state. These colleges or universities were to establish extension departments to give instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics through field demonstrations, publication, and other methods. An additional component of Cooperative Extension was to develop programs directed to rural youth development—later named 4-H.

Federal funds were authorized and the amounts for Cooperative Extension were to be allocated partly to states on an equal basis and partly on the basis of a state's share of the U.S. rural population, with the latter matched by state funds.

This act and related legislation established a unique partnership structure that has sustained the Cooperative Extension System to this day. Today, in every state, an institution exists that is part of a nationwide system known as Cooperative Extension—a network of largely off-campus educators who extend research-based knowledge to the public and engage people in life-long learning. In New York, Cornell University is the land grant

university providing the services of Cooperative Extension to the residents of the state.

The Cooperative Extension system consists of university, regional or area level and county personnel. Hence, this system links together the 3,000 plus U.S. counties to the land grant universities, and local clientele can draw upon individuals who have a range of scientific expertise in a broad range of areas. Furthermore, the integration of teaching, research, and extension education enables Cooperative Extension to employ research-based information and education programs to meet the needs of local clientele who are at various stages in their lifecycle of existence.

CCE of Columbia County and CCE of Greene County were both organized in 1917. They merged in 2012. Over the past year, our association has five program areas that we focus on to benefit the residents of our two counties –

*Natural Resources and the Environment*

*4-H and Youth Development*

*Nutrition, Parenting, and Wellness Program*

*Community and Economic Vitality*

*Agriculture and Horticulture*

Over our 100 year history, especially in recent times, there are a few things we know -

- Our association focuses on not only traditional, time tested **Programs** that have been a part of our history but also on new and innovative programs.
- CCE **Employees** are passionate about their work. They work hard and make a difference in the lives of the youth, adults, and families every day!
- The **Funding** streams for CCE are changing. As our traditional funding streams stay the same (and in some cases, decrease) while our expenses, like every other organization, continue to grow, we need to continue to identify support.
- Our association will be working to increase our revenue through fundraising and special events.
- On-line program registration is now available for individuals to register for CCE programs and events.

*Continued on next page*

- We have established a Grant Research Team to seek out new grants and financial resources to support our current as well as programs of the future.
- We have also established a Memorial Gift Program and Endowment Fund Program including a “Named Fund” program, that allows gifts to be placed in an individual’s name to perpetuate a memorial to the individual as well as to help provide funding in our future.
- We need to take a look at our **Facilities** – both in Acra and Hudson. If we are going to provide first rate programs, we need to make sure our facilities – one of the tools of our services – are also first rate.
- We know we will continue to establish our association as a **Highly Visible Organization** that is a part of the community bringing our expertise and help whenever and wherever we need to be.
- One of the primary goals of our association is to establish **Internships** for college students.
- We know that our **Strategic Plan’s** goals are pretty accurate when it comes to the programs and services of our association for the future.
- We will diligently convey the relevance of agricultural commerce and importance of the agricultural culture and country landscape to our rural area.
- In partnerships with local planning officials, we will be the leader of the development and promotion of Columbia County and Greene County as key areas for regional agricultural economic development and as agri-tourism destinations in NYS.
- We will present excellence in service through our Consumer Horticultural Program.
- The Agroforestry Resource Center and Siuslaw Model Forest will be seen as a premier regional natural resource and outreach education center and key regional tourism destinations.
- 4-H Youth Development programs will reach all towns in Columbia and Greene Counties.
- We will develop and implement health, nutrition, food safety and security, and wellness programs for individuals, families and the community.
- Individuals, families, and youth will acquire information and resources they need to improve their basic financial and consumer literacy skills.
- We will be regarded as a leading community resource in the area of community and economic vitality (CEV), based on the ability to access and utilize regional and state organizations and agencies, including Cornell University.

CCE of Columbia and Greene Counties will continue to expand and provide the high quality programs that you expect. Your generous support and interest will help us achieve these goals for a healthy and sustainable future!



Nathan Chittenden, Board President



Chuck Brooks, Executive Director

## Natural Resources & the Environment (NRE) Program

The Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE) program area has a mission “to protect and enhance regional natural resources, promote energy conservation and alternative energy options and provide healthy and safe home environments.” During 2014, NRE staff achieved a number of accomplishments that are examples of our “Cornell Cutting Edge” (“CCE”) mentality that is the norm for our natural resources team.

Secured close to \$290,000 in funds to support the Association and the NRE staff in fulfilling our mission.

Coordinated 89 events reaching over 2,500 participants directly.

Worked with municipalities, landowners and forest industry professionals to increase understanding of climate change and threats to our natural resources.

### Forest Stewardship

- Ron Frisbee delivered a presentation about CCE’s state-wide forestry initiatives to the NYS Society of American Foresters.
- Ron’s successful implementation of the Windham Trees in Bloom project resulted in the planting of 21 trees on 19 properties in Windham.
- Ron’s planning and execution of woods forums in Otsego and Putnam counties contributed to the continued development of the woods forum as an education and outreach tool. These forums galvanized support for the methodology amongst our partners and empowered peer to peer relation-

ships between 34 woodland owners and 20 resource professionals.

- Marilyn Wyman provided over 100 loggers with important programs to ensure safe and appropriate timber harvest in our forests.
- The entire staff participated in the continued development of our distinctive Siuslaw Model Forest, which had over 690 visitors who attended 24 events.
- Summer intern Tracey Testo assisted with maintenance, research and programming in the Siuslaw Model Forest, which included working with our partners at the Watershed Ag Council to re-inventory plants in the forest compartments and create an herbaceous field guide.

### Water Resources

- Liz LoGiudice, Audrey Kropp and Ron Frisbee collaborated with Cornell University, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, and other CCE Associations to provide the Hudson Estuary Watershed Resiliency Project, a flood outreach

and education effort for municipalities, providing 13 seminars throughout the Hudson Valley. Find more info at [www.hudsonestuaryresilience.net](http://www.hudsonestuaryresilience.net).

- Liz LoGiudice participated as a member of the Catskill Waterfront Resilience Task Force, which recommended methods to reduce flood vulnerability in the Village of Catskill.
- Staff continues collaborations with Riverkeeper to investigate and document sewage contamination in the Catskill Creek.

### Invasive Species

- Marilyn worked with Cornell University and other Extension staff across the state to increase awareness about the threat of invasive species through a three-day in-service on campus.
- Marilyn and Rick Burstell provided guidance and coordination to five other county extensions in our region to support a network of CCE Associations with the capacity to address issues related to invasive species, including the development of a comprehensive invasive species identification guide.



*The lean-to at the Siuslaw Model Forest*



*Logger First Aid Training*



*Streams 101*

## 4-H Youth Development



Our **4-H Club Program** hosts almost 50 4-H clubs with 300+ 4-H club members. More than 200 adults volunteer their time to work directly with these youth as they explore and participate in hands-on activities in project areas such as rabbits, the environment, foods and nutrition, photography, dairy cattle and gardening. As many as 300 additional volunteers provide support in the area of fund raising, judging and chaperoning.

Community educational programs, providing six hours of in-depth, hands-on learning in a particular subject area, take place in school classrooms, community libraries, summer recreation sites and afterschool programs. Over 2,000 youth participated in these programs in 2014 covering such topics as rural and farm safety, environmental awareness, healthy eating and active living, science and robotics. Finally, CCE's staff reached over 6,000 additional youth through fairs, community events, and other short term learning opportunities.

Following are just a few examples of the many youth involvement programs that took place in 2014.

**Environmental Awareness - The Windham-Ashland-Jewett Elementary Science Club.** Students visited CCE's Agroforestry Resource Center six times to participate in hands-on educational programs on topics including biodiversity, indoor gardening, owls, damsel and dragonflies, and pond ecology.

**Environmental Awareness Day.** Introduces students to their local natural resources and environment with a series of presentations by area scientists, environmental educators and natural resource professionals. Held outdoors along the nature trail at CCE's Suislaw Model Forest. **Project WILD Educator Training.** Teachers, 4-H club leaders and other educators learned from DEC staff how to use this curriculum with youth.

**Animal Science - Clinics and Educational Opportunities.** 4-H members participated in hands-on learning experiences hosted by local farms and Cornell University where they were able to increase their animal care knowledge as well as showmanship skills. **Quiz Bowl.** In this competitive event, youth learn how to compete and work as a team as well as learn about a particular animal species. In 2014, a local 4-H member was team captain of the NYS 4-H horse bowl team and another was a member of the NYS 4-H dairy bowl team. She was also top performer in the national dairy bowl competition. **Market Livestock Project.** 4-H members are challenged with real-life issues of raising an animal for market, culminating in the 4-H livestock auction. **County and State Fairs.** Youth see how their hard work on their animal project is viewed by the judge. **4-H Vet Science Workshop.** Youth explore an animal's basic needs and health, understanding differences of species in body styles, systems, breeds and life stages. **Agriculture Safety and Awareness Day.** Third grade

students spend a day interacting with experts who teach them about rural and farm topics such as Dog Safety, ATV Safety, Lawn Mower Safety, Dairy Farming, and Outdoor Safety.

**Career Awareness for Teens – Local Dairy Farm Tour, Regional Dairy Visions and NYS Dairy Leaders.** Youth build their knowledge and interest in careers in the dairy cattle industry. **Cornell Career Explorations.** This three-day experience on the campus of Cornell University finds teens connecting to Cornell departments by experiencing activities led by professors and teaching assistants and experiencing life on campus. **Agribusiness Career Conference.** Younger teens interested in learning about careers in agriculture and natural resources enjoy this two-day trip to SUNY Cobleskill. **4-H Capital Days.** In this three-day trip to Albany, teens not only meet with their legislators and learn about the NYS government processes, but also gain an awareness of career opportunities in government. **NYS 4-H Forestry Weekend.** Participants in this camp program are immersed in hands-on forestry activities and gain an awareness of related career options. **Citizenship Washington Focus.** Spending a week in Washington DC, teens meet with others from across the US to learn about the importance of civic and social responsibilities of living in the U.S.



*4-H Candle-Lighting Ceremony*



*Assembly Peter Lopez with 4-H Club Members*



*Mountain Rangers 4-H Club*

## Board of Directors

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Eileen West, Program Educator

Marilyn Wyman, Issue Leader

### *Our Mission*

*Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.*



Cornell Cooperative Extension of  
Columbia and Greene Counties

## *Agriculture & Food Systems*



**We'll try to straighten the paths, and flatten the learning curves...**



The Agriculture Program of Columbia & Greene Counties is dedicated to helping area agricultural and horticultural producers get applicable, relevant answers to their issues through many different avenues of transmission. One-to-one and group instruction, farm and site visits, and consultations, as well as planned programs and events – are all aimed at assisting our patron-clients and producers with the best tools possible to work with, in order to help get and keep folks on and of the land, firmly in place.

The two regional agriculture programs we have been working with for the last few years are wonderful additions to the instruction and guidance offered to the producers in our counties. The world-class expertise of the various team members in their specific program areas is unsurpassed and unparalleled anywhere. The Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program (CAAHP) is operating well in our counties, as more and more folks are becoming familiar with, and engaging the specialists with more local issues, as well as more programs being offered. The newly expanded Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program (ENYCHP) team members are busy in their work in the area, and all the people that utilize their

talents give excellent reviews about how well they do their jobs. As of this year, specialists from both teams seem to be spending more time here in our “sister counties.” It is anticipated that there will be even further utilization of the regional teams and the general concept as time goes on. More thought and planning should be devoted to the installation of our Agroforestry component into a regional team format as well, with all the benefits that may be derived from the already operational, regional program we have in place.

In order to offer an organized, comprehensive system to best serve our patron-clients, there has been much improvement in the last year in optimizing our Community Horticulture Program and in utilizing the Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) more effectively. We have added 22 new MGV trainees this year to bring the grand total to over 50. The MGVs have spent more than 2,600 hours responding to the requests of more than 7,800 clients. The MGVs have also been involved in many worthwhile programs and events this year, with even more to come next year.

There is great interest in incorporating the Valatie Research Farm into our CCE

operations. This facility continues to be an invaluable agricultural resource for the entire Northeast, and if it is at all possible for CCE to “take the reins” of the operations, it would offer an opportunity to assist many more of our producers in making “proven-practice,” “progressive-production” management decisions.

Locally, Mick Bessire has worked and visited with approximately 260 aspiring, beginning and established producers this year in helping them to plan for and to achieve objectives for their operations. Mick also prepared 13 grazing plans and made 28 follow-up visits to grazing producers through a contract with Hudson-Mohawk RC&D. Thirty-eight additional farm visits were made this year. Through other connections and programs, we’ve made approximately 514 contacts through the ag department this year.

Our “mission-maxim” is: We’ll try to straighten the paths, and flatten the learning curves – toward helping our patron-clients attain successful undertakings in agricultural and horticultural “fields.”

## Community & Economic Vitality

“De-Clutter & Get Organized” programs provided 23 consumers with strategies to help them better control their papers and possessions, and resulted in two spin-off workshops. “How to Hold a Successful Garage Sale” provided nine consumers with useful tips to turn their “trash” into someone else’s “treasure.”

“Organizing Household Records” was presented at workshops held in Canaan, Copake, Livingston, Philmont & Valatie in Columbia County and Acra, Athens, Catskill, Coxsackie & Jewett in Greene County. Nearly 200 individuals received information on how to organize their personal, financial, legal and real estate records.

While being organized is critical, so is protecting one’s personal information. Over 55 individuals attended sessions on safeguarding personal information in Catskill, New Lebanon, and Valatie. Saving money at the grocery store is also uppermost in consumer’s minds. “Cashing in with Coupons” reached 64 participants in Catskill, Hudson and Valatie. “Having a Gift Thrifty Holiday” encouraged attendees to develop a gift giving budget, shop at home first, think creatively, and comparison shop. This program reached 31 individuals at programs held in Chatham, Philmont and Hudson.

Saving money on energy costs while being comfortable in one’s home is



the mantra of the “Save Energy, Save Dollars” workshops that were offered last year in Athens, Cairo, Catskill, Chatham, Hudson, New Lebanon and Philmont. Sixty-one consumers received conservation tips, free CFL bulbs and information on the Home Performance with Energy STAR assessment program. A “Heating with Wood” workshop enabled 12 individuals to learn the latest on wood heating equipment and best management practices.

Community & Economic Vitality staff coordinated the Columbia County Housing Advisory Board’s Landlord/Tenants Right Forum, which attracted 45 community members and provided a venue for housing professionals to share information about their organization’s resources. CCE hosted HAB’s Fair Housing Poster Contest Awards reception which recognized the artistic talents of six third & fourth graders.

While over 80% of Americans want to age in place in their homes, many do not know how to achieve that end.

Programs on aging in place and universal design were presented to over 100 individuals in Canaan, Chatham, Copake, Livingston, Philmont, Stuyvesant and Valatie.

CEV staff organized the Columbia County Environmental Management Council’s Good Earthkeeping Awards and served on its Water Quality Task Force. Staff also took part in Habitat for Humanity’s Re-Store Earth Day Celebration and promoted consumer rights and energy conservation at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golden Gathering. During 2014, CEV staff partnered with many agencies, groups and organizations such as nursing homes, public libraries, Berkshire Farm, Head Start, Mental Health, and Office for Aging to deliver programs to residents of Columbia and Greene Counties.



## Regional Programs

### Capital Area Agriculture & Horticulture Program (CAAHP)

Winter Dairy Discussion Group meetings continued in 2014 in Columbia and Greene Counties. Participation in both counties continues to grow. The team also provided fertilizer recommendations and ways to improve crop yields, as well as consulting with people on pasture improvement, seeding mixes and application of herbicides.

Farm Management - Basic Farm Business Management Planning meetings were held in both counties in 2014. Several local beef farms have started to ship beef through the ADK Grazers Cooperative to receive a better price than other alternate markets.

New Farmer/Market Development - The Team worked with various landowners in Columbia County and Greene County to discuss the potential for using the land (or thinking of purchasing) for growing or producing an agricultural product. An initial conversation with many is to review the soils on the property. Once that information is known, a discussion can take place on what crops may be suitable for those soils. A meeting was held in Columbia County to give mainly vegetable and fruit producers ideas on how to capture more money for the products they produced.

Livestock - Spoke with several producers on lamb marketing alternatives and recorded lamb prices at the lamb sale at Empire Livestock sale barn in Chatham. Residents of both counties attended beef quality assurance meetings sponsored by the team and answered phone calls on various livestock topics from producers in Columbia and Greene Counties.

Commercial Horticulture - A variety of participants from Columbia and Greene Counties attended several of the Commercial Horticulture Training Events including a Christmas Tree Farm visit, Landscape Architects training, 30-hour Pesticide Training, Certified Nursery Landscape Training, Pesticide Recertification Training, Rules of the Road DOT Training, Emerald Ash Borer Training, and many others. The team completed at least eight site visits to various farms in Columbia and Greene Counties pertaining to Commercial Horticulture. Consultation visits to small cut flower operations were made to diagnose disease and insect issues and make IPM control recommendations.

### Greater Capital Shared Business Network (SBN)

The Shared Business Network (SBN) model allows local associations to have access to knowledgeable “leads” in the areas of Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology (IT). The SBN leads in these functional areas provide statewide continuity and shared guidance between campus administration and the local associations. Additionally, the SBN leads work with association staff to assist in addressing local business needs. 2014 featured an increase in support and coordination in the following areas:

Human Resources - Policy and procedure interpretation; employee relations; unemployment and reduction in force support; position description and classification review; compensation and staffing/recruiting; staff and supervisor trainings; HR compliance; and HR Information System (HRIS) / “Workday” business processes.

Finance—ACCPAC (accounting software) and work load efficiencies; merchant services; support for statewide updates and requirements; federal, state and year-end review; technical support for various finance issues; and guidance on indirect cost rate (IDC) for local finance staff.

Information Technology- Full service IT; regional inventory database; ongoing server migrations (move toward a single SBN wide domain structure); Windows 7 migration; compliance and security; and staff training.

Our CCE mission continues to focus on business operations that support local programs and services. Our association is a member of the Greater Capital SBN which includes: Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Saratoga, Washington, Warren, and Fulton/Montgomery county associations.

*GC-SBN Supervising Executive Director— Lisa Godlewski*

*Finance Lead - Michael Ryan*

*IT Lead—Eric Yager/Michael Bartholomew*

*Human Resource Lead— Jim McNaughton, PHR*

*Regional Programs continued on next page*

## *Nutrition, Food Safety & Security*



### **Nutrition Programming**

Eat Smart New York! (ESNY) was the main nutrition program CCE offered during 2014. It was a program that offered free nutrition education classes to low-income families, individuals, seniors, and youth in Columbia and Greene Counties. During the 2014 program year, ESNY reached 4,983 people directly through lessons and 30,000 people indirectly through media outlets. In October 2014, ESNY became a regional program through CCE of Albany County.

CCE also offers additional nutrition education through the Hudson Fish Advisory Contract. This contract is with the Dutchess County

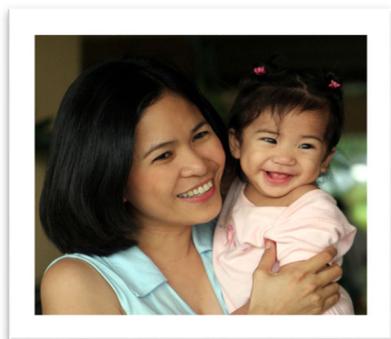
CCE, who contracts with the Department of Environmental Conservation. Through this program, participants take a short survey about their fishing practices in the Hudson River and its estuaries. They also receive a brief lesson on safe fish to eat and the best ways to prepare fish that are caught for consumption, along with a full lesson on another nutritional topic.

### **Parenting Program**

Through a contract with the Greene County Department of Social Services, CCE Parenting Educators provide hands-on parenting education in Greene County through in-home visitation and parent skills classes offered at the Department of

Social Services. During the 2014 program year we reached 129 people directly.

Parenting staff are also available to contract with other organizations to deliver parenting education classes to their staff and clients. In March, we finished a contract with the Office of Family and Children Services to offer parenting skills classes at the Columbia Girls Youth Detention facility and the Brookwood Secure Youth Detention facility. We reached roughly 200 youth with this program.



*Parenting Skills Classes are offered*

### *Regional Programs continued...*

#### **Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program (ENYCHP)**

Since the beginning of January 2013, the ENYCHP has enrolled 95 growers from Columbia County and 25 growers from Greene County. These farms are growing a mix of vegetables, small fruit, tree fruit and grapes. The team has also been actively conducting research trials in the two counties. Growers from Columbia and Greene County attended a Pruning Demo at Yonder Farms Hotaling location; Thinning Twilight meetings at Fix Bros.; International Fruit Tree Association Post-Conference Tour; Capital District Small Fruit and Vegetable Growers Winter meeting; ENYCHP Summer Disease Twilight meetings, and a number of other programs and workshops. The team was also responsible for establishing, monitoring and reporting sweet corn pheromone trap catches weekly for four major sweet corn pests throughout the season and scouted many different crops on a weekly basis. Since January 1, 2013, team members have made approximately 280 visits and over 400 phone and email consultations to Columbia and Greene County growers.

## 2014 Financial Supporters

### Down Home Dinner Sponsors

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to donate to Cornell Cooperative  
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Please see page 11  
for more details.**

## *Make Your Tax-Deductible Donation Today!*

**REMEMBER CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF COLUMBIA & GREENE COUNTIES WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR CHARITABLE DONATIONS!**

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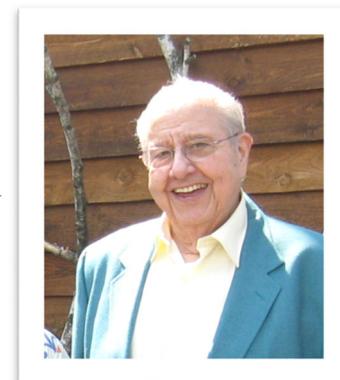
A way to honor a friend or family member on a birthday, graduation, anniversary, retirement, or other event.

### **Named Funds**

*The use of a "Named Fund," including its earnings, may be specified for a defined purpose – program, facility, or project – consistent with the mission of CCE of Columbia and Greene Counties. Gifts to these funds continue to honor the memory of the individuals, as well as help secure the future of the Cornell Cooperative Extension in your community. These gifts are placed in an investment fund supervised and monitored by the CCE Board of Directors.*

### **Paul and Maria Morra Scholarship Trust**

Established in 2011 with a bequest from the estate of Paul & Maria Morra, long-time friends and supporters of CCE. Dividend and interest from the fund will be used to provide scholarships to area students interested in pursuing post-high school academic work in the fields of horticulture, agriculture, forestry or natural resources.



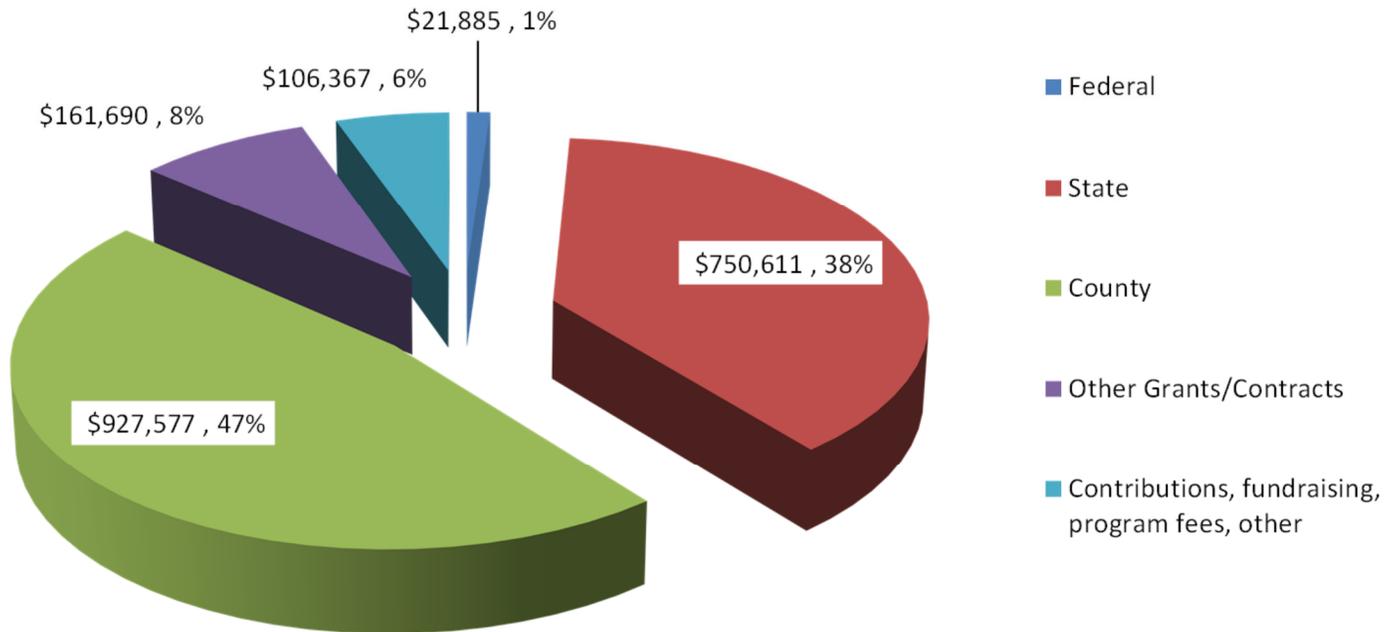
### **Michael C. Greason CCE Memorial Fund**

Established in 2013 in memory of Mike Greason, a long-time CCE supporter, board member, and local forester. Interest from this fund will be used to support forestry programs, projects and initiatives of CCE.

To make a donation to any of the above gifts or funds, or to establish a fund in the name of an individual or family, contact Executive Director Chuck Brooks at (518) 622-9820 X35 or (518) 828-3346 X108 or email [cb657@cornell.edu](mailto:cb657@cornell.edu).

Tax-deductible donations are also accepted via PayPal on our website [www.ccecolumnbiagreene.org](http://www.ccecolumnbiagreene.org)

# Financial Support



**Cornell University**  
Cooperative Extension  
Columbia & Greene Counties



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