

# Greene County Agricultural Society, Inc.

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P.O. Box 84 ~ Greenville, NY 12083

[www.thegreencountyouthfair.com](http://www.thegreencountyouthfair.com)

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Prepared by President Alex Johnk and Andrea Macko

## **Our Mission**

The Greene County Agricultural Society, Inc. is responsible for organizing the annual Youth Fair and furthering agricultural education within the community.

## **What We Do**

Held for four days each July, the Greene County Youth Fair is one of the last free fairs in New York. The fair honors the accomplishments of local youth who will keep our agricultural legacy alive for years to come.

We are part of the New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs, whose goal is to promote agriculture, horticulture and domestic arts. All members of the Greene County Agricultural Society are volunteers, and no one receives a paycheck.

The Greene County Agricultural Society meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Meetings are open to the public.

## **2024 Directors**

**President Alex Johnk • Vice President Jessica Winoski Vice President Alana Sheldon Treasurer Jessie Shields • Secretary Patty Ross**

Directors: Carl Kohrs, Donna VanOrden, Cindy Shanley, Rebecca Johnk, Dianne Lewis, Terry McGee-Ward, Karen Pautz, Janet Partridge, Shelby

Minshell, Laurie Jennings, Craig Seaburg, Cathy Salisbury, Wayne Myhre, Zaia Shields, Sarah Trafton, and Nathan Wolfersheim. We also have 14 associate board members and 5 organizational representatives

## **Why Ag Education?**

Agriculture is one of New York State's top industries. In fact, New York's farm economy generates more than \$4 billion each year.

Covid 19 has gotten people thinking about where their food comes from. Interest in locally produced products has never been stronger. Backyard agriculture is making a comeback. The public is planting gardens, raising livestock, and learning how to provide for themselves. We have a unique opportunity to continue to educate these people and to share our experiences and knowledge with them.

**As our population continues to shift to a more urban and technology-based demographic, it is the responsibility of Agricultural Societies to educate the public on the importance of food production and its future.**

Many families come to the fair for the music, fireworks and, of course, the food, and leave with a newfound knowledge of agriculture. Fairs and livestock shows are the original flagship for agriculture promotion in our society, and events like the Greene County Youth Fair help the children of today become the experts of tomorrow.

**Fair kids go on to become not only farmers, but pursue careers in veterinary medicine, engineering, education, public service and many other agricultural careers. Equally as important, because agriculture is one of our state's top industries, young adults have the opportunity to pursue these types of careers without being forced to leave New York State. We are also seeing young adults return and volunteer on the board.**

## **Quick Facts:**

### **Greene County, Youth and New York's Farm Economy**

**Our numbers grew to 109 exhibitors in 2023 and we are excited about the strong numbers of younger children that will continue to keep our fair strong.**

**We were down slightly in 2022 with 85 exhibitors, but expect that number to go up in 2023**

**In 2021 we had 98 exhibitors exhibit at the fair with approximately 950 projects**

**In 2020 we had 100 youth present online videos displaying their exhibits.**

**-In 2018 approximately 125 local youth exhibited at the Greene County Youth Fair**

**An estimated 10,000 people attend the Greene County Youth Fair each year.**

**-Greene county produces over \$22 Million in Agricultural products annually 2012 and \$19.7 million in 2017**

**-over 35,000 acres in Greene county is used for agriculture**

**New York is a leading agricultural state, worth \$6.36 billion in 2015. Below is the latest data available, provided by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Farm Credit East.**

**In 2014 there were 35,537 farms in New York State and 7,183,576 acres in farmland.**

**Dairy and milk production accounts for nearly 26,000 jobs in New York State. Grain and oilseed farming employs nearly 15,500. Veggie and melon farming is responsible for 7,750 jobs. All sectors of agriculture in New York State is responsible for 197,745 jobs.**

#### **New York's National Ranking in 2015**

- 1st— yogurt, cottage cheese, sour cream
- 2nd— apples, cabbage, snap peas, maple syrup
- 3rd— dairy cows, milk production, grapes
- 4th— squash, pears, calves
- 5th— tart cherries, onions, corn silage, sweet corn

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> Council on Children and Families, Kids' Wellbeing Indicators Clearinghouse

## **History of the Greene County Youth Fair**

Alfred Partridge, leader of the Ashland Blue Ribbon 4-H Club, organized a 4-H Club Fair at the Sutton Hollow School in Ashland in 1949 to give his club members an opportunity to display their projects before family, friends and the community. From this small beginning, the youth fair has developed into the showcase it is today.

Alfred's club held its second fair in 1950 at the Sutton Hollow School. The next year, the fair was in Jewett and other 4-H Club members in the area joined in.

From 1952-1956, the 4-H Club Fair, as it was then known, was held at the VFW Hall on Route 23 near Windham.

In 1954 the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets recognized the fair as an agricultural fair and donated \$5,000 annually to be given in premium money to the exhibitors. Another \$500 was appropriated by the Greene County Board of Supervisors. By this time, the fair was officially called the Greene County Youth Fair and open to all youth who lived or attended school in Greene County.

By 1957 the fair had expanded to two dairy tents, a poultry and rabbit tent, and a sheep and goat tent. A new home was found at the Durham Central School, currently the Durham Elementary School, on Route 145. In addition to the tent space outside, there was ample space in the school for food and clothing exhibits, vegetables, flowers, entomology, arts and crafts.

During the late 1960s, a trade tent was added by the local merchants, as was a horse show, and the fair became a three-day event.

The Greene County Youth Fair stayed at the Durham School for 38 years, with the exception of 1973 when, due to alterations at the school, the fair was held at the Durham Town Building on Route 81.

In the fall of 1995 a committee was formed to find a new home for the fair, which by that time was in its 41st year. The Town of Cairo was more than willing to offer the use of Angelo Canna Town Park as a location centrally located in the county, and a new chapter in the fair's history began.

The fair was extended to a four-day event in 2001 and that same year Senator John Bonacic helped obtain a grant for a new public address system at the fair.

In 2002 the youth fair had a new attraction. An agricultural tent, bustling with activities to educate and entertain visitors of all ages. Part of the tent was filled with youth displays and agriculture, as well as forestry and conservation displays for adults.

In 2003 the Greene County Agricultural Society was incorporated for the purpose of running the fair.

We were not able have an in person fair in 2020 due to Covid 19. The board decided to go digital and provided an outlet for youth to showcase their projects without actually standing in front of a judge. We had a tremendous response as over 100 youth showcased their exhibits.

It is impossible to know how many young people have been involved in exhibiting and participating in the Greene County Youth Fair over the years. There are statistics indicating more than 2,000 exhibitors over the years.

So, Alfred Partridge's dream of a youth fair dedicated to the talents and interests of all of the youth of Greene County has come true. He worked many years for this project, but he would be the first to acknowledge all of the willing people who worked side-by-side with him. The list is endless.

Today, the fair attracts more than 10,000 people and is one of the only fairs in New York State to offer free admission and entertainment. The Greene County Youth Fair remains a celebration of the talents of local youth, enabling them to strive for higher goals and receive support from family, friends and their community.

## **Today's Greene County Youth Fair**

A priority of the Greene County Agricultural Society has been and always will be to keep admission to the Greene County Youth Fair free for all ages.

Today's Youth Fair offers a wide variety of entertainment, attractions, music, rides, food, vendors, fireworks, fire department and police display, a talent show, classic car show, educational displays and so much more. Of course, the focus of the fair will always be agriculture, but as society – and kid's interests – change, we need to get creative about how we attract them to the fair and ultimately expose them to agriculture.

The 2024 fair, scheduled for July 25-28<sup>th</sup> at Cairo's Angelo Canna Town Park, will offer a wide variety of entertainment and educational exhibits, including animal demonstrations, singing and dancing groups, exotic animals, a woodsman competition and more. We have a full slate of entertainment ranging from crowd favorite Buffalo Barfield to new acts including a dog water jumping competition. By expanding our entertainment, we hope to expose more of the public to our youth and the great projects they are doing for our communities. We are welcoming new acts and educational displays to really bring in more people to experience what Greene County has to offer. This year we will be welcoming back a lumberjack skills competition that has become an annual part of the fair. We have added additional opportunities for livestock and will now offer an alpaca show as well as a cavy show and are expanding the swine show. We are also adding opportunities for Greene County farmers to reach the public about their products and showcase them.

In 2021 no one really knew what to expect after not having the fair in 2020. We downsized, adjusted and made the best fair that we could. In our opinion it was one of the best fairs we have ever put on. By downsizing it allowed us to focus on what we feel are the most important reasons why we put on the fair. We were able to enthusiastically support the youth and put the focus on all their projects and hard work. The trade tent was able to showcase local businesses that really needed a pick me up after Covid hit. By really boiling it down to the most important parts of the fair we were able to provide a more intimate setting were our kids were allowed to thrive.

We are expanding our means of fundraising. We will be having 2 Brooks BBQ fundraisers in Greenville. We are bringing back our butchered hog raffle and will be having our calf raffle again. We are canvassing the county for donations. We thank you for all your support as well.

## **The Future of the Greene County Youth Fair**

It has been said, quite simply, "If you ate today, thank a farmer."

Unquestionably, the agricultural industry has changed enormously from the time our nation was founded. Technology, population shifts, nutritional awareness and even social change such as the industrial revolution have played an enormous role in how food is produced today. And it will continue to change.

By 2050 – less than 30 short years away – the agricultural sector is going to face enormous challenges to feed the 9.6 billion people that the United Nations predicts will inhabit the planet. Feeding these many people will require a food production increase of 70 percent. Who will be the farmers, scientists and agribusiness leaders working to ensure the world is fed three decades from now? The youth of today.

Greene county has lost numerous dairy farms in the last few years and as of right now there are only 4 farms in the county shipping milk. There is a huge disconnect between the general public and farmers. Fewer people know where their food comes from and how it got to the supermarket shelves. The Greene County Youth Fair helps to open educational lines of communication so fair goers can get a sense of how agriculture plays a vital role in the local economy. Currently the average age of a farmer in Greene County is 55 years old. This means that organizations like the Greene County Agricultural Society need to continue its mission to educate and encourage local children and teens to be involved in agriculture. We are fortunate to have locally involved partners in this mission, such as 4-H and FFA, but we must constantly continue to find new, creative and unique ways to attract youth and families – and generate funds to do so. We are proud to say that many of our former exhibitors have continued to pursue agricultural careers. Many of our former exhibitors have gone on to earn degrees from Cornell and SUNY Cobleskill. We must continue to provide this fair for the youth of Greene County. Often these exhibitors return to our communities and use their skills to further the benefit of their communities.

As the most recent census showed, we are losing farms at an alarming rate. We need to

foster and grow the connection these youth have to the land and the animals. We need to support them and show them that farming is a viable option for their futures. We are exploring new partnerships with new FFA chapters in the county as well as the agriculture BOCES program to provide a place for our youth to showcase their accomplishments. We are working closely with other organizations in the county like Farm Bureau to provide support for these youth, so it is easier for them to exhibit their projects. Agriculture is a vital part of our communities that we need to continue to support, and we appreciate everything the county is doing to support us and our cause.

Going forward, the Agricultural Society recognizes that one of the keys to generating new ideas is to encourage participation from new people. Over the last 5 years a major focus of our organization has been to recruit younger members to our board. Usually these are individuals that had previously exhibited at the fair and want to see the fair continue. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome new members.

Any questions may be directed to [greenecountyagsociety@gmail.com](mailto:greenecountyagsociety@gmail.com)

The 2024 fair is July 25-28<sup>th</sup> at Angelo Canna Town Park in Cairo. See you at the fair!