We Are LEAD Class 16
“I” became “we” at Oswegatchie

By Anna Supp, Farm Business Advisor, Farm Credit East

It was already dark as we set off on foot down the road, the group percolating with a nervous energy. Light-hearted chatter and laughter peppered the cold night air. Perhaps it was the novelty of the situation, or the stress of the long day finally bubbling over, but we were giddy, almost childish in our jokes and banter. As we turned off the road, and into the woods, the disorienting darkness crept in quickly. It pressed down around us, and we turned to each other for guidance. Is that you? Give me your hand. Hold my jacket. Who’s at the end? Watch out for the roots, step up ahead! Looking like a troupe of circus elephants—and not particularly quieter—we guided each other through the dark. Log to your left. Is everyone ok? Don’t worry, I’m right here in front of you.

Don’t worry. I’m right here.

If we had a weakness as a group, it was staying quiet, and the laughter and chatter continued on deep into the night. Trekking along in near blindness, swapping stories and laughing aloud, we moved as one unit, as one class. Occasionally we stumbled, but somewhere in the middle of the line, in the middle of the woods, in the middle of the night—“I” became “we”, and we became LEAD class 16.

LEAD class 16 is a group unlike any other. It is made up of individuals, and as individuals we are diverse, to be sure. All of these people have come from different backgrounds, different schools, different companies and careers. They grow grapes, beans, hops, cranberries and cows. They are educators, advisors, producers, salesmen and lenders. They work in the public sector, on family farms, for themselves and for private corporations. They have faced adversity, they have received diplomas, degrees, awards, and accolades.

They represent a range of religions, hobbies, hometowns and opinions. They have been to other countries, come from other countries, and speak other languages. They have built businesses, built families, and they have built communities. They are parents, spouses, siblings, fiancées and friends. They are introverts, extroverts, dreamers, planners and doers. Each individual, in their own right, has accomplished great things.

But together, WE are LEAD class 16. We are supportive, inclusive and accepting. Together we are something greater than we were alone. We have heard the stories of the classes before us, that’s true. We’ve heard of...continued on page 5
Leadership development really is a journey, not a destination. Many of you probably realize that the most effective leaders never stop learning. They read, attend conferences, take classes, and accept leadership roles that force them to expand their current skillset. All of these activities can be pursued relatively easily on your own. Below, I’d like to highlight a few of the more intensive opportunities that our alumni have pursued, and encourage the rest of you to do the same.

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TRAVEL
One of my favorite sayings is “The world is a book. Those that don’t travel read only one page.” It speaks to the powerful learning that can occur when we travel to new places, see issues from different perspectives and experience unique cultures. Of course, we do travel as part of the LEAD curriculum. I know of several class members (now alumni) that had not travelled extensively prior to their participation in LEAD, but once they did, they were inspired to continue that practice after graduation. Structured study tour opportunities exist, and several of our alumni have travelled with other leadership program alumni (for example, on a recent tour to Ireland with the Ontario leadership program). While these trips are certainly relaxing on a beach with your favorite beverage. They usually involve a focused tour program with ample networking opportunities. Regardless of whether it is a structured study abroad experience or a self-directed trip to a new destination, pack your bags and go! It is worthwhile for those wishing to have a structured study abroad experience or a self-directed trip to a new destination, pack your bags and go! It is worthwhile for those wishing to have a

DO ANOTHER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
All of you know that LEADNY is one of the best programs of its kind, right? (I wouldn’t be doing my job if I didn’t make that kind of a promotional statement!) There are, however, several other good leadership development programs available to our graduates. Many of you work for employers that offer their own, in-house leadership programs. Farm Credit, for example, has its own leadership programs, and they view LEADNY as an integral part of their mix of leadership development opportunities for their employees. Several of our alumni have gone on to complete the Cornell Dairy Executive Program, which is intended specifically for people involved in the dairy industry or related service areas. Cornell’s Food Industry Management Program offers a Future-Leaders-in-Produce program (TEPAP) through Texas A&M, which is an international program intended specifically for agricultural producers. A few others have gotten involved with groups like Farm Journal’s Top Producer Executive Network. Still others have participated in programs offered by the American Farm Bureau Federation or commodity groups. All of these programs offer our graduates an opportunity to continue to refine and practice their leadership skills, and to broaden their professional networks even further.

There are a few more opportunities that are even more intensive. As I write this, I was meeting with an Eisenhower Fellow from the Philippines that requested a meeting with me to discuss leadership development strategies for rural municipal governments in her country. Though there are dozens of Eisenhower Fellowships awarded annually, only one US fellowship is awarded specifically for a young farmer or rancher each year. One of our alumni was a finalist for this position a few years ago. While acceptance to this program is competitive, it is worthwhile for those wishing to have an intensive, international experience. If interested, see https://ewfworld.org/our-programs/aia.

In recent years, several of our alumni have hosted visiting Nuffield Scholars for home stays. Most of these folks have come from the UK or Australia. This is a very intense, travel-heavy fellowship experience for young adults in the food, agriculture and natural resource arenas, and the personal growth and international networking opportunities are amazing. The Nuffield organization has been making a concerted effort to launch a program that would work for US scholars. In 2014 they created the Nuffield International Scholarship, and interested US citizens are invited to apply. So while still a relatively new opportunity in the US and very competitive to get in to, this would be an outstanding program for some of our most ambitious alumni. If interested, contact Jean Loncar at jeanloanc@gmail.com or visit www.nuffieldinternational.org.

As you can see, there are several leadership development paths that continue beyond LEADNY. I encourage each of our alumni to choose the one that makes sense for them, and keep moving! It is worthwhile for those wishing to have a
class 16 Donor Roster

The roster below represents all donations received for Class 16, with the exception of endowment contributions. The donation period represented is July 1, 2015 through November 11, 2015. If you have made a donation since this issue went to press, or we have inadvertently omitted your name, please accept our apologies. Donors in italics are LEAD alumni. Keep in mind that as of July 1, 2015, we began a new class fundraising cycle. If you want to be recognized as a donor to Class 16, please remember to make a contribution! You should have received new solicitation materials this past summer, or you may use the donation card in this newsletter and send in your contribution today.

We sincerely appreciate your continued investment in our program. Without your support, we would not be able to continue to offer this high-quality leadership development experience to our future industry and community leaders. Thank you!

Over $50,000:
Northsate Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Over $25,000:
American Agriculturist Endowment Fund

Over $10,000:
Farm Credit Endowment Fund

$5,000 - $9,999:
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Diane and George Conneman Endowment Fund

$2,500 - $4,999:
Lowell Smith Circle of Courage Fund
Northeast Ag Education Endowment Fund
Monsanto Endowment Fund

$1,000 - $2,499:
Walmart Ridge Dairy
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New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association
New York Farm Bureau
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.
David DeLaVergne
Greg Wickham
Holts-Nelson Dairy Consultants - Corwin Holts
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M-B Farms, Inc. - Kenneth Mattingly
Royal J Acres, LLC - Keith Pierce

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We Are LEAD Class 16... continued from page 1

We recognize that what may mean. We have accepted this challenge, this journey before us, and we welcome it. It is not something we take on lightly. As individuals, we are anxious about the years ahead. We worry about the time away from families and careers; we worry about testing personal limits and comfort zones, and exposing weaknesses. As a class, however, we are unique and wholly our own. We are poised to create our own identity over the next two years, and thank you, Ted, for the rest of our lives. We are LEAD class 16. We are a team, a class, an army and a congregation. We are the future of this industry we all serve. As leaders we are young, just beginning to recognize what that may mean. We will complete this leg of our journey, hand in hand. We’ll take a final head count, be sure everyone arrived safely, and the lines will blur again. We will become as we were individuals, and go back out to our communities, our companies, our families and our businesses as leaders- and at the same time, we will become more. We will become LEAD alumni, and we will link hands with a fraternity of leadership that spans generations, industries, and countries. Together we will all be something far greater than we were alone. We are LEAD class 16, and we’re on our way.
SPOTLIGHT ON...

Abby Youngblood (Class 13), Executive Director, National Organic Coalition

By Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director, LEAD New York

LEAD: This past January, you were named executive director of the National Organic Coalition. Please tell us a little more about that organization, and your responsibilities in the role of executive director:

Youngblood: The National Organic Coalition or NOC is a national alliance of 14 organizations that are working together to make sure the organic label is meaningful, that organic standards are strong and have integrity. We do a lot of work in Washington, D.C. with the USDA, members of congress, and other federal agencies. In addition, we participate in meetings of the National Organic Standards Board, the citizen board that advises the National Organic Program on policy and regulations, two times each year.

As executive director I am responsible for facilitating our collaborative work with input from all coalition members, cultivating donors and foundation partners, working with our policy director to develop strategy for federal policy work, and planning our annual lobby day and meetings in Washington, D.C.

LEAD: What lessons from LEADNY helped prepare you for this position?

Youngblood: I have certainly had the opportunity to use the knowledge I gained regarding federal policy issues and lobbying. Shadowing a state legislator, meeting with federal agencies, and our D.C. visit were all relevant experiences to my current position. Calling LEAD alumni to ask for contributions was also good practice for the fundraising I currently do. Learning to communicate more effectively with those who have different viewpoints from my own has also been helpful in my current facilitation role. And finally, participation in LEAD-NY gave me the confidence to see myself as a leader and to pursue a leadership position such as this one.

LEAD: When you were in LEAD, you were working at Just Food in NYC. Following our program, you also completed a graduate degree. Was LEAD at all instrumental in your decision to pursue continuing education?

Youngblood: Because of LEAD-NY, I gave more consideration to the skill set I needed to develop to help run a non-profit organization and this led me to pursue a graduate degree in public policy and non-profit management at NYU.

LEAD: What was your favorite thing about LEAD? Is there a particularly memorable experience, speaker, lesson, etc.?

Youngblood: I loved helping to plan and organize our LEAD-NY visit to NYC. It was great to share some of my experiences working on food justice issues with our LEAD-NY classmates. I think the highlight of that visit was going to East New York Farms with my LEAD-NY classmates. East New York Farms is a community organizing and youth development project that promotes sustainable agriculture and community-led development in an under-resourced neighborhood. For me, it was exciting to give my classmates the opportunity to learn about issues they may have not been familiar with beforehand and for them to enter that comfort zone and for me, I really valued the opportunity to visit dairies and some of the processing facilities in upstate New York – this was a new experience for me.

LEAD: Any other comments you wish to share?

Youngblood: I have several enduring friendships and professional contacts from my LEAD-NY experience. The conversations that happen outside of the formal LEAD-NY activities during your time with classmates are also invaluable.

Class 16 to host auction following Ag Society Forum on January 7

In keeping with a tradition established several years ago, the members of class 16 are organizing an auction to benefit the LEAD program. The auction will take place in the LEADNY hospitality suite following the Ag Society dinner on Thursday, January 7. Class members are already securing lots of great donations, including a brand new Stihl chainsaw! What we really need is lots of bidders! Please plan to join us for this fun event, and help raise money to support our program. If you would like to make a donation or have other questions about the event, please contact the LEAD office at 607-235-7907. We look forward to seeing you there!

Jobs:

Executive Director, NYS Association of Conservation Districts
Submit resume, professional references and letter of application to NYACD President, Dan Farrand at farrandc@yahoo.com or Mail NYACD, 415 West Morris Street, Bath, New York 14810

NE Crop Insurance Marketing Agent
Farm Credit is searching for a crop insurance marketing agent to work in their Rutland/Geneva service area. Crop Growers agents develop risk management plans for farmers that protect their investment and preserve their equity. We work to protect farm businesses so they can continue to support our nation for generations to come. Contact: David.kibler@cropgrowers.com.

Corn Procurement, Sunoco Ethanol Plant, Fulton
See the following link and find the position by clicking on the “careers” tab at the top of the page: www.sunocoethanol.com

Alumni well represented at Harvesting Opportunities Conference

American Farmland Trust recently hosted their Harvesting Opportunities Conference in Albany. Over 60 speakers presented in six different conference tracks, including Larry Eckhardt (class 2), NYS AFT Director David Haight (class 9), Sandie Prokop (class 2), Larry Van De Valk (class 6) and Jessica Ziehm (class 10). Bob Smith (class 1) represented Farm Credit East, a major sponsor of the event. Several other alumni and current class members were in attendance. Just one more example of LEAD alumni taking an active role in related organizations.

If you have news to share...

If you have news to share, please send it to lead@cornell.edu. This might include your own promotions, service activities, honors or awards. We can also run short pieces about funding or job opportunities, as well as upcoming events that might be of interest to our newsletter readers. We might even post your news on our website. Help us promote the good work that LEAD alumni do by sharing your news with us!

Daniel Parish Wittmer: Museum seeks volunteers

There are numerous ways in which you might enjoy helping the museum. You could become involved by joining one of their exhibit or program committees or supporting the work of the museum by becoming a member, or both! You may have ideas for new exhibits and improving existing exhibits. If interested, please contact Bob Bizz at 315-345-8887.

Mourning the loss of George Conneman

Few people have touched as many lives during their tenure at Cornell University as George Conneman, who passed away on July 13, 2015. An incredibly popular and award winning teacher, advisor, administrator and community servant, many who knew George recall the positive impact that he had on their lives. When he married his second wife, Diane Knack Conneman, he became a central figure in the LEAD program as well. Following their retirement, Diane and George generously established an endowment fund for the benefit of LEAD New York. George will certainly be missed and fondly remembered by many who had the privilege to know him.

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YES, I recognize the tremendous value of the LEAD New York program and wish to support it with a gift.

I have enclosed a check for: ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ $500 ☐ $1,000 ☐ Other $________

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☐ We are interested in sponsoring a LEAD NY workshop session or event.

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If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to LEADNY, please fill out and mail in this form with your contribution to: LEADNY, Cornell University, 275B Warren Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

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