



## And So My Journey Begins....

By Mark Modzeleski, Class 15, The Voss Group

**B**ack in January 2012, I was sitting at the NYS Ag Society meeting at a table with a few folks from the ProDairy Program and our

firm, and the forum host asked for all the LEADNY graduates to stand and be recognized. Much of the room stood, which peaked my interest. I asked the person next to me to tell me more about LEADNY, which they did.

Fast forward to September 2013, when the new class met for the first time at Camp Oswegatchie. My journey to the first meeting started with an email from a stranger really, a woman I met briefly at our orientation meeting. She asked me and another classmate if we wanted to ride up together. I couldn't have guessed it at the time, but our carpool group became fast friends. Over the next three days we met the rest of the class, and other friendships began to form.

We were told that the program board of directors spends significant time, effort and deliberation to put together a class. Like other groups before us, our class is a good mix of fruit and vegetable producers, cash crop, dairy and chicken farmers both small and large scale. We have bookkeepers, accountants, bankers, insurance agents, planners and teachers. There are those who sell tractors, seed, fertilizer and farm services. The common bond is that we are all dedicated to supporting New York State agriculture. We come from Long Island through the Hudson Valley, Albany and west to Syracuse through Rochester, Buffalo and many points north and south. We even have one token Massachusetts delegate this year. A few things stood out from our first

meeting. The most striking for me was the openness of the group. We were all asked to spend 10 minutes in front of the class to talk about ourselves, and we were asked to be creative with our self-introductions (which was easier for some more than others). Now remember we have never met our classmates and have very limited knowledge of the class makeup or personalities. Nonetheless the things that were shared were more than just facts; they were personal experiences that shaped people's lives, items that could leave one feeling vulnerable. I was surprised and moved by the level of commitment the people were willing to put forth to quickly develop relationships so we could together learn to trust and grow.



Another experience that stood out for me was the group's willingness to work together and listen to each other's input. Could this be a trait of all adult groups? I think not! From our night hike (aka... let's take a walk at night in the woods on what was expressed later as one of the darkest nights the leader has ever lead... Thanks Todd) to the ropes course experience, the listening workshop through dance or the time at the bonfires, it is evident the class has the desire and passion to better themselves.

We also started thinking about this thing called "leadership". The idea of leadership seems to be best described as

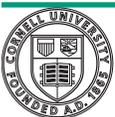
something that is easy to see but difficult to define. The class has begun to help me - and I believe much of the class would agree - with the idea that leadership is more than just a title or position, but the recognition of each individual's gifts and strengths. The ability to recognize not only your own attributes, but also the leadership potential of others, when used in the proper way can lead to productive influence. That ability to align several people with the same vision, utilize their strengths and create positive momentum can really lead change.

I am so excited to learn to lead, grow and change over the next two years. The program has a reputation of being "Great", and after just a few short days I can better see why so many describe the program this way. The opportunity that we have been given to grow individually and network within our class and outside the class, I believe, will in fact help this class as it has the groups before us. We will "carry the flag" and help lead the vast and diverse agricultural industry here in NY.

With Larry's guidance and leadership and Sarah's organization and support I truly believe that Class 15 will be worth the investment for all involved, and we will continue the tradition of excellence in LEADNY.

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**Perspectives** By Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director

**Do You Tango?**  
*Find out what's new with LEADNY*

In our last issue of Cultivating Leadership, I announced the new members of class 15.

So that is the most obvious answer to the question “What’s new with LEAD?” But there are a bunch of other new developments with the program beyond having a new class. Allow me to share a few of them with you, and encourage you to find out more by talking with some of our current class members, or better yet, joining us for one of our seminars.

**Do you Tango?**

I’m pretty sure that none of our alumni can say they ever danced in a LEAD seminar (at least not as a formal training activity – I can’t vouch for everything that goes on after-hours). Class 15 has already had a little Tango lesson. What does that have to do with leadership, you ask? Improvisational dance actually serves as a great metaphor for active listening, and Cornell Communications Professor Poppy McLeod led the group through a great listening workshop using dance during our teambuilding retreat. How’s that for something new?



**From dancing to games – what’s going on here?**

Many of our “recent” alumni – those in class 10 and later – will remember the *Libertyville* simulation we do in our local leadership seminar. Class 14 also experienced *Congressional Insight*, a computer-based simulation of what it’s like to serve as a member of congress. Class 15 will experience an additional simulation called *Our Town*, and there

may be more. For the uninitiated, these activities may seem like little more than games, but for those that have experienced them, you realize the powerful lessons that can be gleaned from these role-play based workshops. Look for more of them in the future.

**If you’re in the class, you’re at the podium...**

Role plays are not the only ways in which we are actively involving class members. For several classes now, we have been increasingly using current class members (as opposed to outside speakers or alumni) as speakers, tour hosts, or panelists. It’s not that our outside speakers or alumni do a poor job; on the contrary, most of them are great. But we have come to recognize that not only do our current class members bring a lot of expertise to the table, but putting them “in the hot seat” provides another opportunity for them to practice important skills and develop greater confidence in their abilities. So if you were to sit in on our seminar activities, in many cases you should notice that current class members are serving in the speaker/panelist role. The same is true for our locations, by the way. Although we have enjoyed many years of visiting some tried-and-true tour locations (which we still do in some cases), we are increasingly making an effort to visit the businesses operated by current class members.

**And the study trip is going to...**

OK, this is just a tease. The LEAD board actually hasn’t made this decision yet, but we expect to make an announcement this winter on the study tour destination for class 15. What I can tell you is that the board previously committed to extending this trip to 14 days (3-4 days longer than previous trips), which will allow us to consider other travel options. Suffice it to say that this study trip will take us somewhere we have never been before, and it WILL get class members out of their comfort zones!

**Join us!**

Of course, the best way to learn what’s new with LEADNY is to get involved. Talk to our current class members about their experience. Better still, we invite you to join us for a portion of one of our class seminars (see the class schedule below). If we are in your neighborhood, please consider coming to a meal function, or even tag along on a tour if that interests you. All we ask is that you let the LEAD office know so that we can get an accurate head count. Copies of our seminar agendas are available from the office about 2 weeks in advance of each seminar, and invitation emails are sent to area alumni prior to the seminars as well. We hope to see many of you there!

**Class 15 Year 1 Schedule, 2013 - 2014**

<p><b>Oswegatchie, Sept. 26-28</b> Retreat, introductions, teambuilding, MBTI #1, listening, leadership theory intro</p>
<p><b>Rochester, Nov. 7-9</b> Consumers, marketing, food away from home, business etiquette, fundraising basics, speech training, 360-degree feedback</p>
<p><b>Batavia, Dec. 5-7</b> Production ag. issues, processing and distribution, technology, persuasive speeches, debate training</p>
<p><b>Syracuse, Jan. 9-11</b> Ag. Society – The Next Generation of Agribusiness Professionals, practice debates, cooperatives, equine industry, media training</p>
<p><b>Albany, Feb. 3-5</b> State government, shadowing activity, lobbying, writing skills, conflict management</p>
<p><b>NYC/LI, Mar. 2-6</b> Food distribution/marketing, finance, urban consumers, LI agriculture, farmland preservation</p>
<p><b>Southern Tier, Apr. 9-12</b> Local government, Libertyville, meeting management and board service (spouses invited)</p>

## News You Can Use

### Alumni News, Opportunitites & Events

#### Representing the Industry in the Political Arena

*Liz Van Buren (class 14)*, manager at Saputo Dairy Foods in Delhi, represented her company and served as a speaker about the economic impact of the dairy industry at an event hosted by Senator Gillibrand in Delhi this past summer. Liz credits LEAD with helping her develop the confidence and skill necessary to take on such a role.



*Liz Van Buren, Class 15 (right) speaks at an event hosted by Senator Gillibrand (middle)*  
Photo Courtesy of SUNY Delhi

#### Transitions: Alumni on the Move

*Kate Mendenhall (class 11)* announced this summer that she will be leaving her position as Executive Director of NOFA-NY to return to her home state of Iowa. During her tenure, the organization tripled its budget, staff and programming activities, and achieved nearly all of its objectives in their ambitious 5-year strategic plan. Nice job Kate!

After 15 years of dedicated service to New York Farm Bureau, *Julie Suarez (class 7)* has left her post as Director of Government Relations at NYFB, to join the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences administration team as Assistant Dean for Government and Community Relations.

Yet another LEAD alumunus is coming to Cornell as well: *Melissa Osgood (class 12)* left her position with the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council (ADADC) to join the Cornell University Media Relations Department this past summer. Welcome aboard, Julie and Melissa!

#### Networking Beyond Our Borders

*Tom Sutter (class 14)* led a group of NY producers on a tour of North Dakota agriculture. In organizing the trip, he was able to work with the staff of the Rural Leadership North Dakota (RLND) Program, and connected with several RLND alumni while they were there.

*Steve McKay (class 11)* attended the International Leadership Alumni Conference (ILAC) again this year, which was hosted by Oklahoma. Steve reports that it was another very worthwhile networking event, and encourages other LEAD alumni to attend the conference next year. Colorado will host ILAC in the late summer of 2014.

#### Other Current Class Members in the News

*Chris Whipple (class 15)* and his brother, Justin, were featured in an on-line article in Orleanshub.com about their role in reviving the hops industry in NYS. The brothers purchased a 92 acre farm in Kendall last year and plan to produce hops for the state's growing brewery industry.

*Steve Ammerman (class 15)* together with *Julie Suarez (class 7)* and *Tara Wiley* were recognized by the American Farm Bureau Federation for their outstanding communications efforts. *Grassroots* was selected as the best newspaper in its category. Congratulations Steve, Julie, and Tara.

*Tristan Zuber (class 15)* is developing a plan to expand accessibility to Cornell's Dairy Food's Extension Certificate Program. Tristan is working with local professionals, colleges, and economic development centers to bring the program's short courses to employees in Western New York. The courses will train employees in the areas of fluid milk, fermented dairy and cheese processing.

#### LEAD Alumnus Publishes Book

*Michael Farrell (class 13)* recently published a book titled *The Sugarmaker's Companion: An Integrated Approach to Producing Syrup from Maple, Birch, and Walnut Trees*. The book contains a great deal of information on how to develop an efficient, profitable, and enjoyable sugaring operation.

#### Our Condolences

We are sad to share that *Kevin Carhart (class 9)* passed away at home on November 19, at the age of 57. He is survived by his wife of 27 years, Connie, and their 3 children. We extend our deepest sympathies to the Carhart family.

#### Cornell to Host Ag Society Panel

Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will host an Ag Society Panel and Reception "The Future of Agriculture: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders". The event will be held on January 8, 2014 in Liverpool, NY. For further information visit <http://events.cornell.edu>.

## News You Can Use

### Alumni News, Opportunites & Events

**IAPAL to Conduct an Alumni Survey this Winter**  
Colleagues from the University of Florida will be conducting a survey of ALL agricultural leadership development program alumni later this winter. This will be a very important survey; the most extensive study of the thousands of agricultural leadership alumni undertaken to date. Keep an eye out for an email from me shortly after the New Year with a link to the survey. Please take time to provide your feedback to this very important research effort - results will be very helpful to LEADNY and all of our sister programs.

### Class 15 Conducting Alumni Fundraising Calls This Fall

Members of Class 15 will soon be reaching out to LEADNY alumni that have not yet made a personal financial contribution to our current annual campaign. So, alumni, when you get that call, please take the time to have a conversation with that class member. Ask them about their experience to date, and continue that networking tradition that LEAD is known for. And don't forget to support the program!

### Farm Credit Makes Major Gift to Cornell

For those familiar with LEADNY, it is no secret that Farm Credit has been a huge supporter of our program for the past three decades. Recently, a joint gift made by Farm Credit East, CoBank, and *Sheldon Brown (class 1)* will provide \$600,000 of support to fund research in sustainable agriculture and provide scholarships. Brown is a former LEADNY board member, as is Farm Credit East CEO Bill Lipinski.



*Bill Lipinski, Farm Credit East CEO; Sheldon Brown, Cornell Class of '68; Kathryn Boor, Ronald P. Lynch Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University; and Scott Markham, CoBank Board Member.*

### Attend the NYS Agricultural Society Annual Forum on January 9, 2014

Please mark your calendars today and plan to attend the NYS Agricultural Society Annual Forum in Syracuse on January 9, 2014. The theme for this year will be: "The Next Generation of Agriculturists: Millennials' Perspectives on Their Future in Agriculture". In addition to an energetic Keynote speaker (Bob Milligan) and a dynamic panel of agriculturists, this event is always one of the best networking opportunities of the year, and a great chance to meet our new class members.

Don't forget to stop by the LEAD hospitality suite following the forum! In addition to seeing current LEAD members and alumni, try your bidding hand at the class 14 sponsored auction. All proceeds will support the LEADNY program. We hope to see you there!

### Job Opportunities

Carolina Eastern - Crocker, LLC  
Agronomy Sales and Consulting  
Le Roy, NY

Established, successful, full-service agribusiness in Western NY is seeking a conscientious, self-motivated individual looking for a career in sales of Ag Fertilizers, Ag Crop Protection Products, Seed Lime, and related Ag Services. This is a full-time, year-round position open immediately due to the growth of the company.

For further information visit: [www.cecrocker.com](http://www.cecrocker.com)

Marshall Arms Group, Ltd.  
Clinical Veterinarian  
Western New York

Marshall Farms Group, Ltd. a global leader in the breeding of purpose bred animals is seeking a full-time clinical veterinarian with an interest in herd health and production medicine for their Western NY facility. The primary responsibilities will be for the ongoing health and care of domestic and foreign canine populations as well as overseeing the health and routine preventative care of the ferret colony.

For further information email inquiries to: [clinicalveterinarian@gmail.com](mailto:clinicalveterinarian@gmail.com)

**LEADNY thanks the following individuals and businesses who have invested in the future leadership of our industry and communities:**

*Represents contributions to the class 15 operating budget received from July 1, 2013 to November 15, 2013. If you have made a donation since then or we have inadvertently omitted your name, please accept our apologies.*

Over \$25,000:

\$5,000- \$24,999:

\$2,500 - \$4,999

\$1,000 - \$2,499:

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We wish to thank the following businesses and individuals, which have established Endowment Accounts for the benefit of the LEADNY Program:

**George & Diane K. Conneman**



Northeast Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

**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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my  VISA  MASTERCARD for the amount indicated above

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This is a  personal gift  corporate gift Does your employer match gifts?  Yes  No

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 the form above with your contribution to: LEADNY, Cornell University, Academic Surge B - 182, 220 Tower Rd., Ithaca, NY 14853.**



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