

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Jessica Ziehm to receive LEAD New York's Seventh Outstanding Alumni Award

Presentation at Class 16 Commencement Ceremony on April 21, 2017

We are pleased to announce that Jessica Ziehm, LEAD Class 10, will be the seventh recipient of the Empire State Food and Agricultural Leadership Institute's Outstanding Alumni Award (OAA). This award was established to recognize the outstanding leadership our graduates provide to the LEAD New York Program, their local communities, and the food, agriculture and natural resource industries.

With nearly 500 alumni, the selection committee's task was especially difficult as so many of our graduates have made significant contributions to our industry and communities throughout the Northeast. Personal testimonials spoke volumes about the leadership style of this year's recipient: "Jessica embodies all that this award seeks to recognize. She has served the LEAD New York program through service on our board and as a frequent speaker in our program. She is an active member of her community, serving on her regional food bank board, among other volunteer activities. And in her role as Executive Director of NYAAC, she has had a tremendous, positive impact on our industry" said Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of the program.

A graduate of SUNY Cobleskill, Virginia Tech and LEAD NY Class 10, Ziehm currently serves as the executive director of the New York Animal Agriculture Coalition (NYAAC), a farmer founded and funded organization whose mission is to enhance the public's understanding of and appreciation for animal agriculture by fostering a dialogue with consumers, engagement with farmers and cooperation among members of the industry. She is responsible for numerous NYAAC efforts, including maintaining an active social media presence, working with collaborating organizations, organizing farm tours and other outreach events. Most notably, she was the driving force behind the very successful Dairy Cow Birthing Center at the NYS Fair. Previously, Jessica served as the communications director at the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, where she was recognized by her national peers for her outstanding communications work on behalf of the department.

LEADNY is a leadership development program for adult professionals in the food, agriculture and natural resource industries of the Northeast. Participants meet monthly from October through April in each year of the program. In the first year, meetings are held at different locations throughout New York State, and the 25 days of training focus largely on self-awareness and leadership skill development. Individuals that successfully complete year one will receive a certificate of completion for the "Leadership Fundamentals" portion of our program, and will be well-positioned to serve in a variety of local leadership roles. At the end of the first year, participants reapply for the second year of the program, which entails 30 days of commitment and involves more out-of-state and international travel, including a 2-week study tour. Individuals

successfully completing the second year of the program will have the distinction of being known as “LEAD Fellows”.

The award will be presented at the LEAD Class 16 Fellows commencement ceremonies on Friday, April 21, 2017. For more information, contact Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of LEAD New York at 607-255-7907 or at lv4@cornell.edu. Additional information is also available on the LEAD New York website at www.leadny.org.

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