Once you know better, you can do better

As I sit here, looking at my Year 1 diploma for Leadership Fundamentals, I am struck by all that we, as a class, accomplished. We went from our team building events in Oswegatchie to increasing our self-awareness and knowledge of issues in the food, agriculture and natural resources sector. We could not have done this without each other. Our unique backgrounds and passion allowed everyone to contribute a different perspective to an issue, whether it was in class, the hospitality suite or in the seminar evaluations.

Ability to lead. At different times throughout Leadership Fundamentals, many of us questioned our ability to lead, especially after receiving the 360 Voices feedback from our colleagues, mentors, bosses and friends. However, at each session, we were given different tools to build our own confidence but more importantly our confidence within our teams. We learned that it is not only important to develop ourselves, but to provide development opportunities for our teams as well because they are those we trust to take care of business when we are at conferences and seminars (like LEAD NY). A great leader nurtures others to be leaders. As this occurs, teams are being built that have experience, integrity, and greater productivity.

A change of perspective. Throughout the first year of LEAD NY, the word perspective comes to mind. Many of us have gained a new perspective and appreciation for the leaders in our lives as well as the diversity of agriculture. We constantly hear the saying that “leaders are born, not made,” however, after meeting leaders throughout the program, many began their leadership journey with little or no training at all. It was experiences that taught them tough lessons, which is why they stated that programs like LEAD NY are important as it provides tools for decision making and team building. Due to the diversity in agriculture, the question that came up in a few evaluations was about our perspective of what constitutes a farmer. Does it include equine or a 70 acre woodlot owner who is managing harvests every ten to twenty years? Does farming relate to only food production agriculture or does it include so much more than that? My answer to that question is yes, it includes all of the above. It was experiences that taught them tough lessons, which is why they stated that programs like LEAD NY are important as it provides tools for decision making and team building. Due to the diversity in agriculture, the question that came up in a few evaluations was about our perspective of what constitutes a farmer. Does it include equine or a 70 acre woodlot owner who is managing harvests every ten to twenty years? Does farming relate to only food production agriculture or does it include so much more than that? My answer to that question is yes, it includes all of the above.

Never underestimate the important role you can have with local leadership. Local leaders are those who care deeply about helping the community and they have the ability to influence the people living there by determining what will have the greatest impact. I always knew local leadership was important but after meeting with local leaders throughout the first year, especially after Watkins Glen, I was blown away by each leader’s passion for their community and how each day they felt as though they were making an impact. Community leadership is not just about policies, processes or procedures. More than anything, it is about people.

Now that we know better, we can do better. In Year 2, all of us are looking forward to becoming more involved in our communities where we live and work as well as challenging each other more on issues as we travel to Washington D.C., Canada and Kenya. As a class, we have created a community where we can bring up controversial issues and discuss professionally. Year 2 of LEAD NY will be the time to showcase this. Many of the leaders we met throughout Year 1 discussed the importance of having passion for what you do each and every day. Now that we have the knowledge and find ourselves working on understanding what our own values, passions, skills, strengths and weaknesses are, we will gain the ability to admit and learn from mistakes and to seek information to fill knowledge gaps. While some people know exactly what their passion is, Year 2 will bring about the challenge for others to find that passion and focus on it. Now that we are self-aware of our strengths and weaknesses, we have the ability to make change happen in the communities that we live, work and love.
Actively Seeking New Perspectives
An External Review Update

Farmer-to-farmer discussion groups have been around for decades, and their popularity has not diminished in recent years. In New York, many of you are probably most familiar with dairy profit discussion groups (see: https://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/production-management/dairy-profit-discussion-groups), but the practice has certainly been adopted by other agricultural sectors as well. In general, most of these discussion groups bring together farmers from a related sector to discuss issues of common interest and to brainstorm new approaches to problem solving. Other experts are often involved in the process as well. For example, in a dairy profit discussion group this might include the farm’s veterinarian, nutritionist, crop advisor, cooperative field staff, lender, accountant, lawyer, etc.

Regardless of the sector or specific membership of the discussion group, one of the overarching reasons such groups work so well is that they bring new perspectives to the analytic process. Perhaps that other farmer faced the same challenge you are now facing, and dealt with it in some novel way. Perhaps that consultant has technical expertise that could help you do your work more efficiently. And frequently the novel solutions that discussion group members suggest are actually pretty obvious – the only reason we don’t see them ourselves is because we have been stuck looking at the issue from a somewhat limited perspective. An outsider’s perspective on your operation can be very beneficial, indeed.

This good advice for farmers applies to LEAD New York as well.

The LEAD New York Program has been in continuous operation for 33 years. During that time, we have conducted a number of internal reviews and evaluations, and have revised our program accordingly. In all that time, however, we have never conducted a truly external review. That is why this past winter we assembled a team of five external experts and asked them to serve on our review team. For the past several months, they have been reviewing program documentation (e.g. syllabi, seminar agendas, session evaluations, and other materials) in order to prepare for an on-site review.

That on-site review event took place at the end of May in Ithaca. About 75 people participated in the various focus group discussions, including CALS administrators, LEADNY board members, alumni, current class members, donors, employers, and even several non-applicants. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all those that committed their time to help us with this review process – we genuinely appreciated your input.

The review team and I were very pleased with the overall level of engagement of the various focus group participants. For their part, the review team took their charge seriously and worked diligently to make the most of the on-site process. They even passed on a relaxing dinner at the end of the day, instead working through the evening synthesizing all that they had heard throughout the day. They were up early the next morning and worked right up until it was time for them to travel home. I look forward to receiving their final report and recommendations in the coming months. We will be sure to share their findings with our stakeholders this fall.

PERSPECTIVES – that has been the heading of my contribution to this newsletter for over 17 years – and now we look forward to using the perspectives of our review team members and focus group participants to inform our continual program evolution!
CLASS 17 DONOR ROSTER

The roster below represents all donations received for Class 17. The donation period represented is July 1, 2017 through June 11, 2018. 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 BOLD have established endowment accounts for LEADNY. Donors in italics are LEAD alumni. Keep in mind that as of July 1, 2017, we began a new class fundraising cycle. If you want to be recognized as a donor to Class 17, please remember to make a contribution!

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 $25,000
American Agriculturist Foundation Endowment Fund
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Northeast Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Over $10,000
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IN SOME WAYS MY LEAD EXPERIENCE SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY while in other ways it was a lifetime ago. I started the program at a pivotal point in my life where I was well established in my role as a Professor in Equine Business Management at Cazenovia College and looking for new opportunities for personal and professional growth. Just last summer, I entered another pivotal point retiring from my role as a Full Professor at Cazenovia College (after 28 wonderful years!) and accepting the position of Executive Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Madison County. Larry reached out and asked me to answer a few questions about my experiences with LEAD NY, my new position within CCE, and the role the program has played in my professional career. Obviously I said yes (how can you say no to Larry?!).

My experiences with LEAD NY (Class 10) expanded my understanding of, and interest in, the full realm of NY agriculture. It pushed me to become more involved with understanding, promoting, and protecting agriculture. As a result, I accepted leadership roles with organizations such as New York Farm Bureau and also embraced roles on several task forces/committees with the NYS Department of Ag and Markets. As my involvement grew, so did my passion. That passion evolved to include the desire to have a more direct role in youth, adult, and community education and development around agriculture. When the opportunity appeared to take on a new role that could feed that desire, I knew it was something I could not walk away from. Transitioning to this new position as an Executive Director within the Cornell Cooperative Extension system is both humbling and exhilarating and provides new opportunities to serve in the Land Grant Mission by engaging in researched based solutions that improve and advance our communities.
The broad agriculture experiences offered through LEAD NY have been of immense help in understanding and navigating the opportunities and challenges within NY Agriculture; and thinking about ways the extension network can help with each. While my prior professional path was in private higher education I came up through a land-grant system at the University of Illinois and had direct involvement in extension programs and programming. However, the extension system in NY is unique in its operation and structure and the learning curve for the Cornell model has been steep! Fortunately, so is the support and the endless opportunities for training and professional development. The broad agriculture experiences offered through LEAD NY combined with the emphasis on professional development in problem solving, critical thinking, and communicating with different audiences has been of immense help in this new position.

A passion for horses is still foundational to who I am and what my family and I are involved with. My husband and I founded a not-for-profit in undergraduate equine academics 10 years ago - National Association for Equine Affiliated Academics (NAEAA) – and we organize annual meetings and research projects with equine colleagues throughout the country. We also provide equine college and career talks and run equine industry career fairs at different events each year. And for the past few years we have organized and operated the World of Horses Exhibit at the NSY Fair. Recently, I’ve become part of the national equine extension group that organizes, creates, and promotes content for HorseQuest, and just this past week I kicked off the first in a series of workshops on the new agritourism legislation as it pertains to equine operations. The passion for horses hasn’t changed but I now see it in a much broader light within the context of agriculture as a whole.

My most memorable experience from Class 10 was having classmates who were adamant that horses were not agriculture begin to think differently about horses and the horse industry. I’ve been told that prior to Class 10, the equine part of NY agriculture hadn’t been a specific focus for class member recruitment. To that point, I vividly remember being part of an equine group that Larry met with to ask for help in recruiting potential class members from the equine community in NY. I applied, joined, and began an experience unlike any I had before. When it came time for taking on roles organizing aspects of each program, Larry asked if I would help organize a program on the horse industry as that was a commodity group that hadn’t been part of prior classes. I truly saw a shift in how classmates thought about the horse industry as a result of that program. It was then that I realized it was time to have those conversations, and make opportunities for those conversations, in a large and more committed way. None of us can survive on our own in Agriculture and any presence of an ‘us-against-them’ mentality becomes a downward spiral if not redirected through respectful and informative conversations. We spend a lot of time in our silos – LEAD NY breaks apart those silos so we see how far we can go together and how limited we are when we let barriers separate us.

LEAD NY truly expanded my interests in taking a hold of opportunities to make a real difference in agriculture AND in making additional opportunities to do so. The networking opportunities are vast and I see LEAD alums at events throughout the State. I also get to work with a LEAD NY Alum on a regular basis as Corey Mosher (Class 15) is the current Board Chair for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Madison County. I think he would agree with me that showing up, listening, making connections, reading frequently, thinking deeply, and seeking on-going opportunities for lifelong learning are core values solidified through time with LEAD NY.

My advice to current and future class members is the same advice I’ve offered to students, colleagues, and friends over the years. Be a sponge not a rock. Be open to all you don’t know – soak it in. It’s when you realize all you don’t know that the real learning begins.
**OPPORTUNITY**

The Global Leadership Summit

In several recent issues of this newsletter, I have written about the importance of lifelong learning and taking advantage of additional leadership development opportunities. One such opportunity came to our attention from alumnus Jamie Zimmerman (class 2). The Global Leadership Summit is a two-day leadership development event (August 9 – 10, 2018) made available through local hosting sites. One such local hosting site is the Grace Christian Fellowship in Cortland NY. The speaker lineup is world class. Visit [www.willowcreek.com/summit](http://www.willowcreek.com/summit) for more details and to register.

**WELCOME**

New board members

Six new board members will begin three year terms on July 1. They are: John Burns (Tops Markets), Jackie Czub (NYSDAM), Richard Erdle (Erdle Farm), Pat McCormick (Robbiehill Dairy), Kristine Rogers-Ganz (Cargill) and Kate Wheeler (BASF). We wish to thank the board members they are replacing, including: Larry Eckhardt, Dave Fisher, Phil Giltner, Dave Rockwell, Harold Smith and Rick Zimmerman.

**NEWS**

**YOU CAN USE**

ALUMNI NEWS, OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS

October 1-5, 2018 Cultivating Inclusive Leadership Institute

Seeking to develop diverse leadership and improve your organization's impact? Cornell University's Cultivating Inclusive Leadership Institute will show you how.

This change-oriented program, set for October 1–5 in Ithaca, NY, brings together practical tools, research-based content, experiential small-group activities, and personalized learning to help you hone Inclusive Leadership awareness, skills, and behaviors.

At the end of this immersive week—led by dynamic instructors from the Natural Leaders Initiative, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Cornell Team and Leadership Center—you'll have developed a concrete action plan, a network of like-minded peers, and renewed confidence in your ability to sustain diverse relationships and address complete challenges. You may register at [https://www.sce.cornell.edu/ps/cil/index.php](https://www.sce.cornell.edu/ps/cil/index.php)

Nominate an alumnus for our Outstanding Alumni Award

We are currently accepting nominations for our Outstanding Alumni Award (OAA). We certainly have lots of alumni that deserve such recognition, but we always struggle to get enough nominations from our network, so please nominate someone today! Nominations can be sent to Patience Fryssinger, chair of the board alumni committee, or directly to Larry at ljv4@cornell.edu. We present this prestigious award to a deserving LEAD alumnus at the Fellows commencement ceremony in Ithaca on April 12, 2019. Help us recognize a deserving alumnus for the leadership they provide to our industry and/or their community!

LEADNY alumni invited to join AALP alumni study tour in September

Speaking of alumni study travel, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) of Ontario, Canada is offering a limited participation Tour of the Netherlands, Belgium & France: Agriculture, Tourism and Memorials, and they are once again extending an invitation to participate to our alumni as well. The departure date from Toronto will be September 15th with a return on September 25, 2018. Arrangements for this exciting tour are being handled exclusively by Scott Allen at Frederick Travel, Waterloo, the official travel service provider to ROI and AALP. To reserve your place on the tour or if you have any questions, please contact Scott by email at scotta@ftwaterloo.com or by phone at (519) 745–1860 (Ext 303). You can also register on-line at [www.worldwide.on.ca/AALPAcademic2018](http://www.worldwide.on.ca/AALPAcademic2018)

Empire Farm Days’ Ag Leadership Luncheon — RSVP by July 23

Farm Credit East, the Empire State Potato Potato Growers Inc., and American Agriculturist invite you to Empire Farm Days’ Ag Leadership Luncheon at 11:30am, Wed., Aug. 8, Empire Farm Days, 2973 State Route 414, Seneca Falls, NY 13148. The event celebrates leadership, youth, experience, service, innovation and all things ag. Due to limited seating, reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Email RSVP with name and organization to info@empirefarmdays.com by Mon., July 23, so we will have enough food and seating for all.
Class 17 farm products present in GrowNYC warehouse
As part of our March seminar in NYC, we visited the GrowNYC warehouse in the Bronx managed by class member Olivia Blanchflower. It was interesting to note that the warehouse contained product from at least three other class members: Dylan Dembeck (Minkus Family Farms, New Hampton), Karin Reeves (Reeves Farms, Baldwinsville) and Chris Oakes (LynOaken Farms, Lyndonville). Great to see the connections from upstate farms to NYC consumers, facilitated by our very own class members!

New fundraising mailing later this summer
Thanks to all those who have already supported the class 17 fundraising campaign (see the donor roster). If you do not already appear in this roster – or would like to increase your giving level – please consider making a donation today! A new fundraising mailing will go out later this summer, but you don’t need to wait until you receive that letter – you can use the donation form on the back cover of this newsletter. Thank you for your continued support!

Remember to mark your calendars for the next alumni study tour in 2020
We plan to offer our next LEAD alumni study tour in January or February of 2020. The exact location is still TBD, but will definitely be somewhere close and warm (i.e. Central America or the Caribbean). So don’t make your 2020 vacation plans until you have thought about joining our next alumni adventure!

If you have news to share…
If you have news to share, please send it to ljv4@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!
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 this form with your contribution to: LEADNY, Cornell University, 275B Warren Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.