

Class 17: Challenges, Opportunities and Magic



By Jaclyn Zaleski,
New York Farm Bureau

Here we are. Class 17 of the Empire State Food and Agriculture Leadership Institute, LEADNY. Each and every class member is completely unique and talented, and we each have something to learn from each other. I remember Larry and other alums talking about the Oswegatchie weekend and how integral it is to the success of each class. But, of course, I didn't totally buy in to it. Okay, so you spend a weekend in the woods with a bunch of new people and it's supposed to be the start of a life-changing experience? Boy, was I wrong.

We have been told that this was the most competitive applicant pool for this program in nearly 20 years, and that we are all selected based on how well we will function and grow as a class, among other things. Well I can tell you that each and every one of my classmates is impressive, and I am so glad and humbled that we are on this journey together. Anyone that knows me knows I don't just say things to say them; this truly is a life changing, eye-opening experience unlike anything else.

I asked three random classmates to tell me what their favorite part of LEADNY has been so far, in three words or less. I broke down their responses with my elaborations on what the response means to me.

Community, Challenge, Safety-net

We, as Class 17, are a community. A community of individuals who seek to do better in our own communities, to help others where we have strengths and to ask for guidance when necessary. We all belong in this community of LEADNY, and it is our responsibility to further ourselves and others around us with what we learn.

LEADNY is a challenge itself—from the application process to the homework—but it challenges us to break out of our comfort zones. It challenges us to look at issues and ideas from a different perspective, it challenges us to understand others. It challenges us to have the confidence in ourselves to make a difference on our farms, in our rural and urban communities and within our organizations. It challenges us to have difficult conversations. It challenges us to go on farm tours in central New York during the “bomb cyclone” of 2018, or as much of Class 17 would call it the “snow bomb”, which featured snow, wind and temperatures so cold even I was chilly.

We act as each other's safety-net. We can bounce ideas, situations, conflict and solutions off each other without fear of judgement or ridicule. We can fail, learn and grow because we have each other's backs. There is genuine comradery and a passion for us to watch each other succeed.

Broader Horizons

Class 17 is a mix of talented individuals from many different backgrounds, in different levels of management, at different stages of their careers, who are all going through the program for similar reasons. The opportunity this program offers to build a broader network within the food and agricultural industries while benefiting from an intense leadership development curriculum is second to none. I have learned something from each of my classmates each and every seminar. Whether it's trying to understand our different conflict management styles and how they interact, comprehending how different local issues have affected a classmate's community, being cognizant of

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

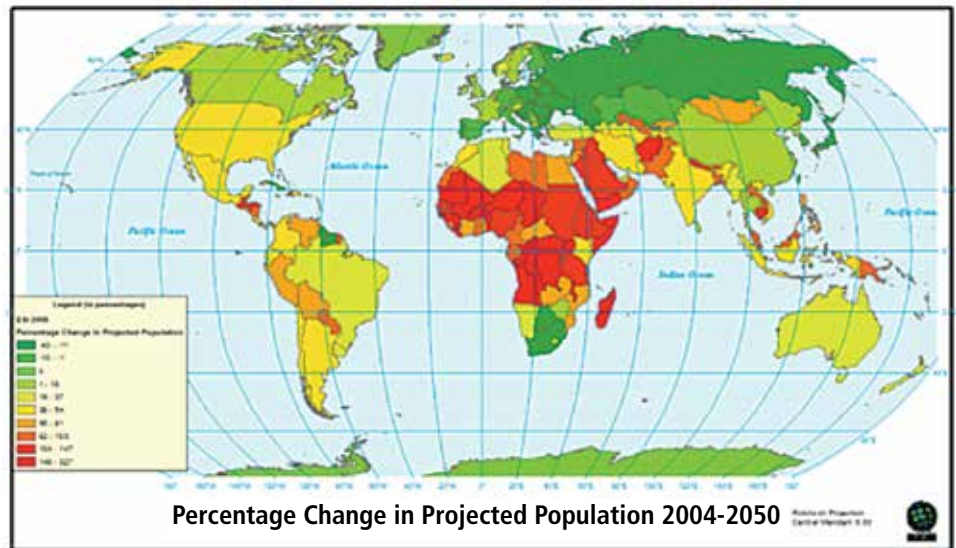


Population Growth, Food Demand and Agricultural Development

Class 17 Fellows will travel to Kenya in 2019 to learn more!

We've all seen the projections – global population is expected to increase to between 9 and 10 billion people by around 2050. Most of us are also aware that over half of the world's population presently lives within a circle that encompasses China, India and Southeast Asia. But that statistic tells us where the majority of humanity *currently lives*, not where they *will be* in 30 years.

The vast majority of population growth in the next three decades will occur in sub-Saharan Africa.



Population growth is not the primary topic of concern to our program, of course, but it is important. LEADNY is a leadership development program for the **food, agriculture and natural resource industries**. Population and economics play a huge role on resource demand in all of these sectors. By some estimates, global food production will need to double by 2050. In addition to knowing that the greatest population increases will occur in Africa, we also know that there will be huge increases in demand for food (and other resources) in this part of the world, and in developing countries in general (as much as 90% of the increased food demand will occur in Africa and SE Asia). About half of these increases in demand can be attributed to the growth in population (more mouths to feed = more food demand, obviously), and the other half of the demand increase can be attributed to increasing levels of income in these same countries. In other words, when a poor

family in a developing country earns more money, the first thing they spend it on is food.

Many of our readers have probably heard the phrase “America’s farmers will feed the world”. Unfortunately, when it comes to meeting global food demand in 2050, this will likely be a myth. It’s not that our farmers aren’t efficient or productive, it’s just that we probably won’t be able to trade or export our way out of this problem. Chris Barrett of the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell has suggested that as much as **70 percent of the increased food production will need to take place where the demand exists** (“Food for the World in 2050”, September 12, 2013). When it comes to agricultural development, we need to figure out how to produce more food in developing countries!

Of course, the issues of population growth, food demand and agricultural development are complex and multi-fac-



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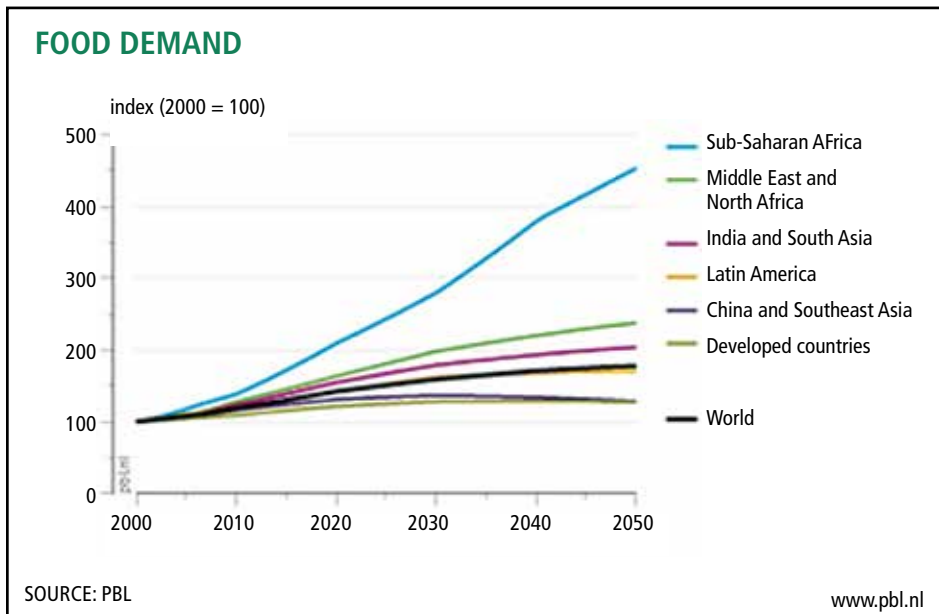
passions or beliefs that are different from our own, or simply just working to relate to a classmate's personality and quirks. We are learning about the food and agriculture industry inside and out, from different technologies and farm practices to business and organizational models and advocacy and communication strategies. Questions and conversations quickly promote a deeper thought process about solutions and problems, and networking provides new opportunities and connections.

Self-Discovery

Besides networking, self-awareness and self-discovery were among the most typical answers I received from LEADNY alumni when asking them what the best thing they got out of the program was. Wow. You're going to tell me that this program is going to teach me more about myself and my character than your average leadership development program? Yes. It will, and we are. Maybe you are much more compassionate than you thought you were, or maybe you're trying too hard to make too many people happy, or maybe you need to learn how to stick up for yourself, or maybe you didn't realize that you steamrolled others in conversations. Maybe, this class has helped you realize that you're a great person with a lot to contribute to society, you just need the confidence to be you. We are learning to be aware of our strengths and battle our weaknesses. Between the different personality and preference assessments, different discussions as an entire group or on the side, and personal reflections on all of those "tools," you really get a 360 degree look into yourself, your character and your personality. I have already witnessed growth and awareness in myself and my classmates.

Not only was the Oswegatchie "magic" real for Class 17, it has continued throughout all of our sessions so far, and I am confident that it will continue. We are growing as a class and as individuals, we all belong here, and I hope that we can continue to feed off of each other's energy to try and make our world a better place. Participating in this program is a big commitment but it is most certainly worthwhile.

Here's to Class 17! 🌱



eted. I certainly can't get deep into the weeds on any of these issues in such a short newsletter article. Nor can our LEADNY Fellows truly understand these complex issues from a few short presentations or reading assignments. That is why we will immerse them in these issues during their international study trip to Kenya in February 2019. Here, they will not only gain

greater understanding of the issues, but they will practice and develop their critical thinking and analysis skills. As I shared in an earlier *Perspectives* article (Spring 2017), we hope to help them develop an "ecological world view" through this intense study abroad activity. It will likely be a life-changing experience for most of them. 🌱

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank...

the Northeast Agricultural Education Foundation and the DFA Charitable Foundation for their major sponsorship of this trip. We couldn't provide this and other valuable learning opportunities to our class members without the generous and loyal support of our program investors. Stay tuned for more following the trip!

CLASS 17 DONOR ROSTER

The roster below represents all donations received for Class 17, with the exception of endowment contributions. The donation period represented is July 1, 2017 through February 2, 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!

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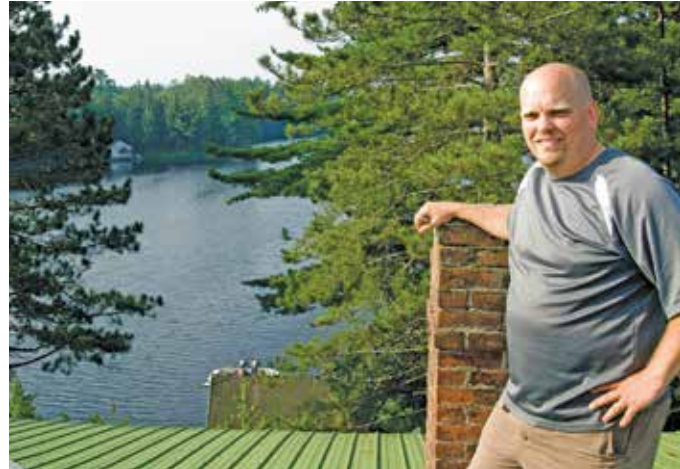
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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT ON...

Todd Lighthill (class 12) Executive Director NY FFA Leadership Training Foundation



LEAD: Please tell us a little about your current position.

TL: I'm the Executive Director of the New York FFA Leadership Training Foundation, Inc. I oversee fund raising operations for the New York FFA and also provide executive leadership to the operations of the Oswegatchie Educational Center, also known as the Oswegatchie FFA Camp.

LEAD: The target audiences may differ in age, but the work of both the NYFFA Foundation and LEADNY is actually similar: both organizations work to develop better leaders for our industry and communities. What are some of the parallels you see? How do our efforts complement each other's work?

TL: Encouraging both youth and adults to think passionately, and advocate knowledgeably about the agricultural industry are important skills. While leadership development can be attained from a myriad of experiences and institutions, the fact the FFA and LEAD NY are grounded in agriculture makes us very special. In FFA we aim to give young people a direction while their minds are open to a world of possibilities. In LEAD NY we are pushed to open our minds to a view or opinion that we may not agree with or have considered. In the end, the aim is to develop impassioned & purposeful voices to advocate for agriculture.

LEAD: During your tenure as executive director of the foundation, Camp Oswegatchie has experienced dramatic growth in both physical facilities and also programming. Under your leadership, you've built Foster Lodge, the Berkey Bath House, a new pavilion, a new barn and shop by the sawmill, upgrading your maple syrup evaporator, etc. Programatically, camp has really shifted from primarily a summer camp for FFA youth to a year-round training facility for all sorts of groups. What's next for camp? What does the future hold?

TL: We are embarking on the design and construction of a new kitchen and dining

facility that will double as a certified test kitchen and food science education classroom. A state grant through Empire State Development was awarded in 2017. This addresses a severe facility need, but more over will provide public access to test new products, learn about food science & safety, and provide training/experience on how to utilize fresh foods including NY Grown and Certified products to create wholesome and nutritious meals.

LEAD: In addition to your role as executive director of the foundation, you have also been active in your community. Please talk about some of the other leadership roles you fill.

TL: LEAD NY was the catalyst that literally pushed me out of the woods of Oswegatchie to serving the greater Lewis County community. I currently serve on the advisory board for our local Ag education and FFA program, service to the Beaver River Board of Education for 9 years, and am an active member of our local Lions Club. In each of these roles I have chosen a different approach to leadership, choosing to lead from a position of participant rather than formal authority. I have learned that active participation and "doing what you say you will do" earns you the respect of someone with influence and good leadership can come from those who actively serve.

LEAD: How did LEADNY prepare you for these roles, or help you be successful in your executive director's position?

TL: Relationship building! My position is all about relationships. Most people give to charity because it is the right thing to do. In some cases, however, a person gives because they have confidence that an organization is running well. The FFA is successful because we have a team of people who work tirelessly, seldom say "no" to an opportunity, and are always prepared to serve the greater good of the whole. This is possible because of strong, trusting relationships.

LEAD: Our initial seminar – the team-building retreat at Camp Oswegatchie – has become a centerpiece of the LEADNY curriculum. Many of our class members and alumni still talk about that "Oswegatchie Magic". What's the secret sauce?

TL: It goes to the basics of being present. For everyone joining LEAD NY, there is a step of going outside of their comfort zone. When you take away the security of being "connected" to everything all the time, and allow yourself to focus on the here and now, you allow yourself the ability to open your mind, reflect on what is important, and focus on yourself if only for a few days. I am proud that Oswegatchie continues to be the location of choice for kicking this experience off, and hope that we can continue to provide a unique experience that pushes adults beyond their comfort zones.

LEAD: What's your favorite memory from your LEAD experience?

TL: In general the monthly gathering of my fellow classmates; sharing our struggles, successes, points of view, and our experiences. Specifically traveling abroad, standing in a wine cellar in Spain that was 400 plus years older than our own country, and realizing that I do not have answers to all of life's questions, and that is OK.

LEAD: Any advice you would like to give to the current class members?

TL: Say yes to as much as possible. No doubt LEAD NY is a sacrifice that affects each class member differently. However it is also an investment in you.....take time to invest as much as possible, for within that time spent you will become a stronger spouse, parent, employee, friend, and most importantly leader.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

ALUMNI NEWS,
OPPORTUNITIES
& EVENTS

Three alumni appointed to statewide USDA-FSA committee

Judi Whittaker (class 11), Larry Eckhardt (class 2) and Barb Hanselman (class 12) have all been appointed to the 5-member USDA-FSA advisory committee for New York State. In addition, Whittaker will chair the committee for the coming term. Thanks for your service on this committee!

ILAC to be hosted by Louisiana in 2018

The International Leadership Alumni Conference (ILAC) will be from Monday, November 5 – Thursday, November 8, 2018. Come see agriculture in Louisiana, continue leadership skills and meet people with great ideas. Add this to your calendar and see you there!



LEAD alumni recognized at 2018 NYS Agricultural Society Annual Forum

Top Photo: Together with his brother Brett, John Kast (class 15) of Kast Farms in Albion was recognized with one of the Next Generation Farmer awards at the 2018 NYS Agricultural Society Annual Forum in Syracuse, NY.

Bottom Photo: Jean O'Toole (class 16) and her team at the NY Beef Industry Council were recognized with one of the Ag Promotion Awards. Craig Yunker (class 3) served as one of the panel moderators as well. Congratulations to you all!

Start Planning Now! LEADNY Alumni Study Trip planned for 2020

We had a wonderful inaugural alumni study tour to Ireland and Scotland this past July. Based on that success, we tried to host another tour to Costa Rica this past January, but the notice was just too short for many people to change their winter plans, and we had to cancel the offering. We are not discouraged, though, and plan to host another alumni study tour in January or February of 2020. Don't worry, it will be someplace warm!

Start making plans now to allow yourself to join us for what is sure to be another great alumni offering!

LEAD Alumni serving NY FarmNet

Erin Tones (Class 13), Manager of Marketing and Logistics at the Sunoco Fulton Ethanol Plant, recently joined the FarmNet Board of Directors.

Other alumni already serving on the board include Sheldon Brown (Class 1) and John Fessenden (Class 5), and Rick Zimmermann (Lead Board Member). Ed Staehr (Class 11) and Dan Welch (Class 15) work for NY FarmNet.

Sheila Marshman (Class 11) and Becky Wiseman (Class 9) serve as NY FarmNet consultants.

NY FarmNet's mission is to guide NY State farms through periods of transition, opportunity or challenge by providing free, confidential, on-farm consulting services.

Mary Jo Dudley, Cornell Farmworker Program, conducting "Good to Great: Navigating the Ag Labor Maze" workshop

Do you hire, or are you considering hiring, migrant or foreign-born labor? Do you want to improve your skills in supervising employees who come from different cultures, especially workers from Mexico and Central America? This workshop is for you! In conjunction with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Mary Jo will hold this workshop on April 12 in Geneva, NY.

To register, visit <https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=882>.



Paul Molesky Jr. wins NYFB Excellence in Agriculture Award

Paul Molesky Jr. (Class 15) won the NYFB Excellence in Agriculture Award at the 2017 State Annual Meeting and went on to compete in the AFBF competition in Nashville. In addition, Paul was appointed to the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers committee.

CONGRATULATIONS PAUL!

Thayer helps bring Farm2School to Buffalo

Cheryl Thayer (class 16), Harvest New York Local Food Distribution & Marketing Specialist, along with educators from CCE Erie and CCE Niagara, teamed up with Buffalo Public Schools to deliver a Farm2School program that provides nutrition education for students and parents while also locating and obtaining locally grown produce for school lunches.

You can view the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vssTim8odRU&feature=player_embedded. This is a shining example of CCE's impact on urban communities and agriculture producers. Great work, Cheryl!

If you have news to share...

If you have news to share, please send it to lv4@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!



CLASS 17 FELLOWS WILL TRAVEL TO KENYA IN 2019



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