FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Julie Suarez to receive LEAD New York’s
Third Outstanding Alumni Award

Presentation at Class 12 Commencement Ceremony on April 24, 2009

We are pleased to announce that Julie Suarez, LEAD Class 7, will be the third 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 agricultural industry.

With over 300 alumni, the selection committee's task was especially difficult as so many of our graduates have made significant contributions to our industry. Personal testimonials spoke volumes about the leadership style of this year’s recipient: “Julie’s leadership skills have brought her to her current position...Always having her eye on what needs to be accomplished, she has been a great asset to everyone around her.” said one nominator.

Julie Suarez serves as the Director of Public Policy for the New York Farm Bureau and is responsible for coordinating the local, state, and federal public policy agenda for the largest agricultural grassroots organization in New York. She graduated from SUNY Albany with a Master’s Degree in Political Science and has been the recipient of leadership awards from the FFA, Agrimark Dairy Cooperative, and the NY Wine and Grape Foundation. Prior to her appointment as Director, she served for eight years as the Deputy Director of Public Policy at the NYFB and was a liaison with other statewide trade associations and agricultural groups. Julie began her career as the recipient of a NYS Senate Fellowship, and subsequently served as the State Senate Agriculture Committee Director under John R. Kuhl’s chairmanship prior to joining the NYFB.

Although Julie’s participation as a class member in LEAD New York was 10 years ago, she maintains strong ties with the program. She has often spoken to subsequent LEAD groups when they have visited Albany and has given them insightful tips on lobbying and its role in the agricultural industry. During Julie’s time at the NYFB, she has
helped with the enactment of numerous laws to benefit New York’s agricultural industry, including authorizing interstate direct shipment of wine, allowing access to the empire zone’s program for agricultural cooperatives, and various tax incentives to assist the farm community compete in the global marketplace. She often shares this knowledge with different LEAD NY class members and that has helped them in many more ways than she even knows. One nominator said, “The impact Julie has had on the agriculture community has been outstanding…(she) has her heart in agriculture and knows what farms need to help them succeed in their business”.

While Julie works tirelessly for agriculture, she also leaves time for her family, which includes her husband, Daren, and her two wonderful daughters. In addition, she is an active volunteer with her church and her daughters’ Brownie troop.

The award will be presented at the LEAD class 12 commencement ceremonies on Friday, April 24, 2009. The celebration will take place at the Statler Hotel on the Cornell University campus. All LEAD alumni, and Julie’s friends and colleagues, are encouraged to attend and help us recognize this exemplary leader. Formal invitations will be mailed later this spring.

Currently, there are 313 LEAD New York alumni. These individuals serve in local, state and federal government positions, not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions. As one LEAD New York alum stated, “LEAD New York was an eye-opening experience for me. I not only made lifelong friends, I also learned key skills that have proved useful throughout my career. LEAD New York changed my perspective and has helped me be a more knowledgeable advocate for agriculture.”

For more information, contact Larry Van De Valk, Director of LEAD New York at 607-255-7907 or at ljb4@cornell.edu. Additional information is also available on the LEAD New York website at www.leadny.org.

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