I don’t live in New York, I live in New York!

RSA TODAY
News for New York State’s Rural Schools
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Rural Schools Association of New York State

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CUBA RUSHFORD’S SCOTT JORDAN IS NEW YORK STATE NOMINEE FOR NATIONAL RURAL EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Each year the National Rural Education Association designates a recipient of the Monsanto National Rural Educator of the Year. This year’s National Rural Educator of the Year is Virginia Sautner of Lake Havasu, Arizona. She will be a featured presenter at the RSA Summer Conference in July, in Cooperstown.

RSA is honored and thrilled to announce that Scott Jordan of the Cuba Rushford Central School District is New York State’s designee for next year’s Monsanto National Rural Educator of the Year. Here in New York State’s rural communities, Scott is a both hero and a legend. If selected as the national recipient, we are hopeful that his selection will raise the profile of the phenomenal program he runs, allowing our rural states (that are perfectly suited to replicate this program) to bring its benefits to the thousands of students who could benefit. Two years ago RSA was approached by Gil Green, an RSA and local BOCES board member from Scott’s area, who simply said that we had to see this program and that we wouldn’t believe it. He was right. For Scott to have accomplished such a comprehensive undertaking in a rural community was a financial, educational and political miracle. Think of it! Scott created a fully functioning fish hatchery (on school grounds, including

National Rural Educator of the Year nominee Scott Jordan- seen here with a Deerasic Park resident.
the construction of the pond, using students interested in law to obtain the needed federal and state wetlands permits) that coordinates
with our NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, making his students vital components of wildlife management. He created
a deer management park (Deerasic Park!) that allows students to study rut, gestation periods, disease management, life cycles and
general health monitoring.) Their research is compared with field studies they conduct and coordinate with state and federal a-
gencies, contributing directly to our knowledge base. Their list of other science based student activities is lengthy and unparal-leled.

The creation of the facilities alone is mindboggling. In addition to the deer park and hatchery, the Cuba Rush-
ford Central School District has a wildlife instructional center and singlehandedly films two dozen episodes of a
wildlife television show for the Outdoor Network. Students are incorporated into the program according to
their science academic curricula, with freshmen being supervised by upper class- students. Each aspect of the
program is used to fulfill state required science courses, with students invariably receiving outstanding scores on
state testing. Beyond that, students interested in television writing, production, filming and performance are all
incorporated into the program.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Scott’s accomplishment (remember, he created, then sold the idea to
the entire school and surrounding community that has supported the program financially) is that this program is
not only active learning at its finest, but it is active learning based on the well-defined interests of these students.
Wildlife and the outdoors is what they love. For many it is their intended vocation and this program alone is responsible for a great many of these rural students being selected over and above hundreds of other applicants for state and federal wildlife positions.

For students, the culmination of the program is a once in a lifetime hunt; often in an exotic area where the hunt is used as a wildlife
management tool in cooperation with local authorities. Students not only raise their own funds for this trip, but raise funds within
the community so that they can take needed supplies to the children and schools of the area they visit. It is difficult to overestimate
the educational and humanitarian benefits derived from this astounding work.

As a result of the program, Cuba Rushford is regularly competitive in regional and national ecological student competitions. All of this in a
small rural community. Everyone in the area supports the program in one way or another and it is a source of tremendous pride that they have
something for their students that is virtually unmatched anywhere else in the world. All of this is the brainchild and the life’s work of Scott Jordan.

It is difficult to envision a program that is as inclusive for all students, as effective in its educational impact or as beloved by its students, teachers
and supporting community.

Last fall, Scott Jordan traveled to Columbus, Ohio to present his work to the National Rural Education Association annual conference. Those in
attendance went away shocked at the potential for educational outcomes, as well as employment opportunities and the development of leadership
skills. Your Rural Schools Association of New York State is honored to have such an educator within our membership and we are
eager to use this award to spread the educational possibilities of Scott’s program to rural districts throughout the nation. The educa-
tional and developmental benefits to students of the widespread use of this program in rural areas would be life altering.
Imagine it’s the middle of July. School’s out, the budget’s settled, you’ve had your annual meeting. Just one more thing to do before heading out for some well-earned R and R: Get to the annual RSA Summer Conference in Cooperstown! RSA’s premiere educational event is growing and improving, with a third more educationally related vendors in our educational expo and new networking opportunities (including a Sunday night “RSA-Only” reception at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.) If you’ve attended the conference in the past, you know that it’s the perfect retreat from the day to day work in the district, allowing you to relax while hearing from top education experts and the latest in programs and services from your peers.

Demand from vendors has increased to the point where for the first time, this year’s expo will be expanded to two full rooms. Attendance has increased dramatically of late, but the setting still provides an intimate and relaxing experience. Tough to beat learning the latest, while winding down! Perhaps the most appreciated feature of the summer conference is the ability to personally interact with top state and national educational leaders. Here are just some of the leaders you’ll meet at this year’s summer conference:

1. MaryEllen Elia, NYS Commissioner of Education
2. Dr. Jere Hochman, NYS Deputy Secretary of Education; the governor’s top education advisor
3. Dr. Jim Mahoney, Internationally recognized educational innovator of Battelle for Kids
4. Dr. Allen Pratt, Executive Director of the National Rural Education Association
5. Ms. Virginia Sautner, Monsanto National Rural Educator of the Year
6. Hon. Sen. Pamela Helming, Chair of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources
7. Rob Mahaffey, Executive Director of the National Rural School and Community Trust (author of “Why Rural Matters”)
8. Cheyanne Matulewich and Jake Leyva, NYS FFA Student Oratorical Contest Winners

In addition, the conference is full of seminars designed to highlight programs and practices you can easily use in your own district. Here are some of this year’s offerings:

1. Regional Professional Development: Building and Sustaining Leaders
2. Rethinking Health Insurance
3. Rural Schools and Special Education: Exploring New Partnerships and Possibilities
4. Maximizing Student Engagement with Minimal Costs
5. Politick-tock: Making the Most of the Time and Resources You Have Through Political Activism
6. Surviving the Closing of a Community School
7. Achieving Efficiencies and Enhancing Programs Through Administrative Restructuring
8. Agricultural Studies Academy
9. Connecting for Kids: Building Regional Capacity for Professional Learning
10. How Do Industry Challenges Integrate Authentic Learning and Professional Skills at the Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES?
11. Middle Level Career and Technical Educational Programs at the Madison Oneida BOCES

Throw into the mix the fact that all of this is taking place on the shores of one of the world’s most beautiful lakes and one of the country’s most picturesque villages and it’s easy to see why this RSA conference is becoming a rite of summer for so many rural school leaders.

Recognizing the fiscal constraints placed on many rural districts, RSA has made every effort to minimize costs for participants. Conference registration is less than half of that charged for similar conferences. Housing arrangements with several nearby hotels are in place for those who require accommodations less expensive than The Otesaga. Sponsorships have been secured to enable all receptions to be provided free of charge (including the Baseball Hall of Fame reception.) Finally, the cost of accommodations at The Otesaga has not only been held at last year’s level, but flexible meal plans are in place for those who do not wish to combine the cost of conference meals and overnight stay.

Note: Registration is open and rapidly filling up. Please register now to assure your spot.

The RSA Summer Conference: Relax, Learn and Improve Your District!
FOOD AND FARM EXPERIENCE ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR NEW CLASS

New York Farm Bureau’s Foundation for Agricultural Education has announced the 2017 Food and Farm Experience will once again provide middle and high school career counselors with a unique opportunity to learn about agriculture. The repeat focus is a response to the overwhelming success and feedback from last year’s program that highlighted career exploration and development for New York students.

The two-day event, held this year at The Beeches Inn and Conference Center in Rome, NY, is an annual summit focusing on learning about agriculture and making connections with a full array of people connected to farming and food production. This year’s in-depth experience will connect participants to an industry that offers more than 300 ag-related career opportunities. The participants will meet with industry experts, employers, and post-secondary educators. Participants will be selected via nominations and applications, with a goal to develop extensive agricultural understanding, networking, and connections.

FFX will be packed with essential and useful information about agriculture for a focused group of up to 35 career educators. The materials provided will include the tools, resources, and connections needed to assist their students who may be interested in agricultural careers. Participants will visit a variety of locations over the two days, from farm to fork, and participate in interactive workshops and panel discussions to get a feel for the multitude of career opportunities available in agriculture.

The 2017 Food & Farm Experience is:

A two-day program for 25 to 35 target group members – starting with a reception and dinner on Wednesday, October 18, The Beeches Inn & Conference Center in Rome, NY. The FFX will include tours, panel discussions and more before winding down Friday, October 20 at noon after a morning filled with exciting presenters to wrap up the experience.

An application is necessary for inclusion in the annual Food & Farm Experience.

Food, lodging, and workshop material costs will be covered by the NYFB Foundation.

Deadline for applications is July 14, 2017, Postmarked or Electronic Submission

For those interested in attending the 2017 Food & Farm Experience or if you know someone to nominate, please contact New York Farm Bureau’s Foundation for Agricultural Education at 1-800-342-4143. More information is available at www.nyfbfoundation.org or by contacting Sandra Prokop, New York Farm Bureau Foundation 518-431-5633 (Office) sprokop@nyfb.org
Cornell Cooperative Extension Online Conference
Gretchen Rymarchyk attended Cornell Cooperative Extension’s online conference April 4-6. Please check out your local Cooperative Extension as a partner for school initiatives. Two of the many programs you might be interested in:

Smarter Lunchrooms: https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/
This was a fascinating presentation, full of free assessments and interventions aimed at improving students’ food choices in the cafeteria. Some interventions were as simple as moving where the garbage cans are placed, and putting healthy food choices where students will see and take them most. Many resources for you can be found on the website listed above.

Military Family Support: http://vetmilfam.cce.cornell.edu/
Whether you have a military base in your district or not, chances are you have military families in your district. According to the website:
- New York State is home to nearly 900,000 Veterans
- Seventy-two percent served during periods of combat
- Home to approximately 30,000 active duty military personnel as well as 30,000 National Guard and Reserve personnel
- New York has the 4th largest number of veteran-owned small businesses in the country
- New York hosts the largest military base in the northeast, Fort Drum, home to 18,000 Soldiers, 18,000 military family members and just under 4,000 civilian employees
- New York is also home to the oldest service academy, the United States Military Academy at West Point which trains about 4,400 future Army officers annually
- Outside of Fort Drum there are 3,600 Active Duty military members in New York
- The New York Army and Air National Guard have a combined strength of 16,000 men and women
The federal reserve forces of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps reserves count another 14,500 New Yorkers among their ranks

CCE has several programs designed to support military families and veterans that directly impact students in your districts. Please consider these free initiatives for students in your districts.

Institute for Rural Vitality
In case you missed it, SUNY Cobleskill recently announced the launch of their Institute for Rural Vitality, intended to collaborate “with regional partners to enhance community and economic vitality in rural New York” (from http://blog.cobleskill.edu/2017/03/02/suny-cobleskill-launches-the-institute-for-rural-vitality-to-expand-educational-opportunities-and-support-regional-development/#.WRs2T_vfDE). The institute is funded by a large USDA grant to address regional development from several angles: agriculture and food business, art and culture, community and business advancement, and legal and policy issues. You can be sure your RSA will keep an eye out for collaborative projects that could benefit our members.
Book Talk

On Friday May 12 Drs. Gretchen Rymarchyk and John Sipple attended a talk by Dr. Kristin Wilcox, Assistant Professor of Research and Development at SUNY Albany, and Director of NYKids entitled NYKIDS’ COMPASS-AIM: Research-to-Practice Partnership Project. Dr. Wilcox reviewed some findings from a study she wrote about in her book Innovation in Odds-Beating Schools: Exemplars for Getting Better at Getting Better. She then shared some data from 40 projects where she and her team have assisted schools to implement school improvement processes that incorporate data and prioritization into the context of local resource inventories. We discussed applicability to rural and resource-strapped districts, and opportunities for partnerships. This appears to be a well-informed and grounded process for evaluating and implementing change that returns significant results in the desired direction, and a measured means for assessing timing and appropriateness for new initiatives, and systematically implementing policy mandates to gain the most benefit. Skaneateles School District Superintendent Ken Slentz has taken his district through some of this process and testified to its power for performance improvement. We hope to develop an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship with Dr. Wilcox and her colleagues.
RSA IN LAKE PLACID THIS FALL

It’s hard to come up with a more beautiful place than Lake Placid in the middle of October. Crisp autumn days, spectacular foliage, the Adirondack High Peaks and Olympic history combine to leave a lasting impression on the soul. Put that together with the chance to learn about the most innovative programs and practices specific to rural schools and you have an event well worth the drive!

This fall, RSA is partnering with the New York State School Boards Association to make the NYSSBA Convention a highlight of any rural school leader’s year. Not only has NYSSBA selected a rural setting for the annual event, but they are featuring a Rural Strand of programming, selected by your Rural Schools Association. Rural school leaders will be able to attend sessions throughout the conference that are provided by and for rural school districts. The presentations run a gamut of beneficial programs and practices, but they all have one thing in common: They can be easily replicated in rural districts! All of the presentations will be located in one convenient area staffed by your Rural Schools Association.

Not only will the convention feature this rural summit, but RSA will host its annual Rural Schools Breakfast on Friday, October 13th in the High Peaks Resort (one of the primary convention hotels) from 7-8 a.m. The breakfast will feature a preview of both federal and state legislation and school funding prospects. Registration is a snap, as you simply need to add the breakfast to your NYSSBA convention registration form. Be prompt in registering though, as space is limited to the first 130 people to sign up. Last year there were more than 130 attendees and some folks didn’t make it in, so once registration opens up, don’t delay!

Your RSA will once again have a booth in the Education Expo Hall. This is your chance to have your questions answered by RSA staff and board members! Stop by and learn about RSA programs and services, arrange for an RSA visit to your district board meeting or just shoot the breeze. Your RSA staff looks forward to this event each year as the time we get to really talk with rural school leaders. It’s as important to us as it is to you, so plan to make a visit to the RSA booth a part of your convention experience.

When you’ve had your fill of new and relevant information, networked with rural colleagues from throughout the state and learned about how your RSA can help your district efforts, you’ll drive home through some of the world’s most spectacular scenery. As you go, give a wave back to your RSA Board of Directors, who have chosen to stay an extra day for their annual planning retreat (rather than meet separately two weeks later in early November.) Piggybacking the two events frees up a weekend and saves district expenses, as your board sets 2018 legislative priorities and RSA program goals.

RSA partners throughout the year with both NYSSBA and the New York State Council of School Superintendents (The Council.) This fall, RSA also plans to participate in The Council’s Fall Leadership Summit. Your RSA is pleased to provide “rural-specific” programming in convenient meeting places for our rural school superintendents, administrators and board of education members. Look for the red and white RSA logo.
whenever you’re attending these events, for the most up to date and relevant information for your rural school!

Note: The Rural School Strand of the NYSSBA Convention will take place in the Gore Room, on the 3rd Level of the Conference Center at Lake Placid. Here is a breakdown of our sessions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBL Experiences in a Rural School</td>
<td>3081</td>
<td>10/12/17</td>
<td>01:00 PM - 02:00 PM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Inspired Learning in a Rural School</td>
<td>3133</td>
<td>10/12/17</td>
<td>02:15 PM - 03:15 PM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Pre-Kindergartners</td>
<td>3029</td>
<td>10/13/17</td>
<td>08:30 AM - 09:30 AM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-Community Partnerships in Rural Areas</td>
<td>3132</td>
<td>10/13/17</td>
<td>11:00 AM - 12:00 PM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Opportunities in Small School Districts</td>
<td>3151</td>
<td>10/13/17</td>
<td>01:45 PM - 02:45 PM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrupting Rural Poverty</td>
<td>3013</td>
<td>10/14/17</td>
<td>08:30 AM - 09:30 AM</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Level 3 Conference Center</td>
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FULLY ONE-THIRD OF all public schools are in rural areas and one-quarter of all public school students are enrolled in rural schools, which means rural school leaders need their voice to be heard when it comes to federal education policy.

Noelle Ellerson Ng, associate executive director of policy and advocacy, and Sasha Pudelski, assistant director, head up activities related to rural school districts. The department presents at state association meetings on federal policy issues and works on Capitol Hill to educate federal policymakers on K-12 education issues.

The following interview by AASA managing editor Liz Griffin has been edited for length and clarity.

Describe our rural school members and how their concerns differ from urban and suburban superintendents.

Superintendents in small districts are often the principal, the head of finance, the curriculum director and the substitute social studies teacher and bus driver. This is true for other staff as well. In one isolated K-8 district in Montana I visited, there were 14 students; multiage groupings were common and teachers taught several grade levels.

Rural schools may be disproportionately isolated from other communities with no other schools within 50 miles. Isolation brings unique challenges for such things as connectivity, transportation and recruiting and retaining staff.

Can you elaborate on connectivity challenges in isolated districts?

It is not uncommon to have only one internet service provider and for them to say it is not profitable to lay down lines in outlying areas. Even when service is available, high-speed internet may be prohibitively expensive. The end result is that rural districts may have insufficient bandwidth to deliver online courses.

Improving connectivity is hugely important because a rural district cannot justify hiring a teacher if only one student is qualified to take, say, AP Calculus.

Currently, are federal education policy and rural school reality out of sync?

Federal policymakers are professional policymakers, but not experts in education. They may not recognize nuances of how legislation will impact rural schools differently.

Consider legislation requiring well-qualified teachers in every classroom. While that's a highly desirable goal, it simply may not be possible in an isolated, rural district. The Montana district with 14 students was more than 50 miles from another district. One teacher taught K-2 to comply with regulations, that teacher would have to have nine certificates! So districts must balance the desirability of certifications with reality.

That is why AASA is always talking to people on the hill and educating them about the diversity among school districts.
What are the goals of AASA’s advocacy efforts for rural schools?

The vast majority of issues that school superintendents face — whether they are rural, suburban or urban — are the same. The core issues include looking for ways to improve opportunities for students, to address learning gaps, to hire and retain qualified staff, to provide transportation and to ensure equity.

We look at new administrative burdens, competitive funding streams and mandates from the viewpoint of rural school leaders. How will they be able to comply? How do we ensure their districts will receive this money? How will reporting a few more pieces of data impact the day-to-day of the school administrator who wears many hats?

How has the Rural Education Achievement Program helped rural school leaders?

AASA helped create the REAP program in the late 1990s and successfully lobbied for its inclusion in the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind. REAP remains a direct, dedicated and flexible source of revenue for rural school leaders. During the latest reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, we ensured the program was updated to target districts that are truly rural.

What resources and events may interest rural members?

Contact us for information and updates about federal education policy. I’d also recommend the AASA Policy Blog. Members can e-mail me at Noellerson@aasa.org and put “Subscribe Policy Blog” in the subject line. I’d also recommend the summer advocacy conference and the National Conference on Education.

A full version of this interview can be found at www.aasa.org/SAInside.aspx

RSA works with AASA through the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition, that we recently participated in their annual Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. that included meetings with our NYS Congressional Delegation, Senate staff and Education Committee staff members. RSA partners with Noelle, Sasha and their AASA colleagues in our federal advocacy work. RSA is a member of the group’s National Rural Advocacy Coalition.

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