

Greene County Agricultural Society, Inc.

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P.O. Box 84 ~ Greenville, NY 12083
www.thegreencountyouthfair.com
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Prepared by President Alex Johnk

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Our Mission

The Greene County Agricultural Society, Inc. is responsible for organizing the annual Youth Fair and furthering agricultural education within the community.

What We Do

Held for four days each July, the Greene County Youth Fair is one of the last free fairs in New York. The fair honors the accomplishments of local youth who will keep our agricultural legacy alive for years to come.

We are part of the New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs, whose goal is to promote agriculture, horticulture and domestic arts. All members of the Greene County Agricultural Society are volunteers, and no one receives a paycheck.

The Greene County Agricultural Society meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Greenville Public Library Community Room. Meetings are open to the public.

2021 Directors

President Alex Johnk • Vice President Jessica Winoski • Assistant Vice President Alana Sheldon • Treasurer Jessie Shields • Assistant Treasurer Laurie Jennings • Secretary Patty Ross

Directors and Associate members: Carl Kohrs, Donna VanOrden, Cindy Shanley, Rebecca Johnk, Fawn Landry, Dianne Lewis, Linda Tripp, Terry McGee-Ward, Karen Pautz, Janet Partridge, Shelby Minshell, Ed Ross, Haley Zurawel, Craig Seaburg, Cathy Salisbury, Wayne Myhre, Crystal Harring, Zaia Ivan, Alice Zabel, Kathy Schlenker

Why Ag Education?

Agriculture is one of New York State's top industries. In fact, New York's farm economy generates more than \$4 billion each year.

Covid 19 has gotten people thinking about where their food comes from. Interest in locally produced products has never been stronger. Backyard agriculture is making a comeback. The public is planting gardens, raising livestock, and learning how to provide for themselves. We have a unique opportunity to continue to educate these people and to share our experiences and knowledge with them.

As our population continues to shift to a more urban and technology-based demographic, it is the responsibility of Agricultural Societies to educate the public on the importance of food production and its future.

Many families come to the fair for the music, rides, fireworks and, of course, the food, and leave with a newfound knowledge of agriculture. Fairs and livestock shows are the original flagship for agriculture promotion in our society, and events like the Greene County Youth Fair help the children of today become the experts of tomorrow.

Fair kids go on to become not only farmers, but pursue careers in veterinary medicine, engineering, education, public service and many other agricultural careers. Equally as important, because agriculture is one of our state's top industries, young adults have the opportunity to pursue these types of careers without being forced to leave New York State. We are also seeing young adults return and volunteer on the board.

Quick Facts:

Greene County, Youth and New York's Farm Economy

- Of Greene County's roughly 48,000 residents, approximately 17 percent (8,160) are under the age of 18.¹
- Greene County has a median household income of \$53,601.¹
- Approximately 12 percent of Greene County residents live below the poverty level.¹
- 44 percent of Greene County children qualify for free or reduced-price meals in their school district.²
- In 2020 approximately 100 local youth participated in the "Quarantine Classic" virtual Greene County Youth Fair
- An estimated 10,000 people attend the Greene County Youth Fair each year.
- Greene county produces over \$22 Million in Agricultural products annually 2012 and \$19.7 million in 2017
- Over 35,000 acres in Greene county is used for agriculture

New York Agriculture

New York is a leading agricultural state, worth \$5.75 billion in revenue 2017. Below is the latest data available, provided by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Farm Credit East.

According to the USDA 2017 Ag Census, there were 33,438 farms in New York State and 6,866,171 acres in production. New York farms employ 55,363 people. Dairy and milk production accounts for nearly 26,000 jobs in New York State. Grain and oilseed farming employs nearly 15,500. Veggie and melon farming is responsible for 7,750 jobs. All sectors of agriculture, including processing, are responsible for nearly 200,000 jobs in New York State.

- 98% of farms in New York are family owned
- 6,866,171 acres in production, down from 7,183,576 in 2012
- Average farm size is 205 acres, up from 202 acres in 2012
- 21,860 female producers and 35,985 male producers
- Average producer age is 55.8 years old.
- 6,718 producers under the age of 35

New York's National Ranking in 2017

1st— yogurt, cottage cheese, sour cream

2nd— apples, snap peas, maple syrup, cabbage

3rd— dairy cows, milk production, grapes, and total Italian cheese

4th— corn silage and total cheese

5th— tart cherries, green peas and squash

New York's Top 10 Agricultural Products

1. Milk
2. Corn for grain
3. Hay
4. Cattle and calves
5. Apples
6. Floriculture
7. Cabbage
8. Sweet corn
9. Potatoes
10. Tomatoes

Value of New York Farm Products

Cash receipts by commodity in 2017 was:

- Dairy Products and milk -- \$2.7 billion
- Apples -- \$343 million
- Corn--\$256 million
- Cattle and Calves --\$333 million
- Poultry and Eggs--\$153 million

¹ U.S. Census Bureau

² Council on Children and Families, Kids' Wellbeing Indicators Clearinghouse

History of the Greene County Youth Fair

Alfred Partridge, leader of the Ashland Blue Ribbon 4-H Club, organized a 4-H Club Fair at the Sutton Hollow School in Ashland in 1949 to give his club members an opportunity to display their projects before family, friends and the community. From this small beginning, the youth fair has developed into the showcase it is today.

Alfred's club held its second fair in 1950 at the Sutton Hollow School. The next year, the fair was in Jewett and other 4-H Club members in the area joined in.

From 1952-1956, the 4-H Club Fair, as it was then known, was held at the VFW Hall on Route 23 near Windham.

In 1954 the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets recognized the fair as an agricultural fair and donated \$5,000 annually to be given in premium money to the exhibitors. Another \$500 was appropriated by the Greene County Board of Supervisors. By this time, the fair was officially called the Greene County Youth Fair and open to all youth who lived or attended school in Greene County.

By 1957 the fair had expanded to two dairy tents, a poultry and rabbit tent, and a sheep and goat tent. A new home was found at the Durham Central School, currently the Durham Elementary School, on Route 145. In addition to the tent space outside, there was ample space in the school for food and clothing exhibits, vegetables, flowers, entomology, arts and crafts.

During the late 1960s, a trade tent was added by the local merchants, as was a horse show, and the fair became a three-day event.

The Greene County Youth Fair stayed at the Durham School for 38 years, with the exception of 1973 when, due to alterations at the school, the fair was held at the Durham Town Building on Route 81.

In the fall of 1995, a committee was formed to find a new home for the fair, which by that time was in its 41st year. The Town of Cairo was more than willing to offer the use of Angelo Canna Town Park as a location centrally located in the county, and a new chapter in the fair's history began.

The fair was extended to a four-day event in 2001 and that same year Senator John Bonacic helped obtain a grant for a new public address system at the fair.

In 2002 the youth fair had a new attraction. An agricultural tent, bustling with activities to educate and entertain visitors of all ages. Part of the tent was filled with youth displays and agriculture, as well as forestry and conservation displays for adults.

In 2003 the Greene County Agricultural Society was incorporated for the purpose of running the fair.

We were not able to have an in person fair in 2020 due to Covid 19. The board decided to go virtual and provided an outlet for youth to showcase their projects without actually standing in front of a judge. We had a tremendous response as over 100 youth showcased their exhibits.

It is impossible to know how many young people have been involved in exhibiting and participating in the Greene County Youth Fair over the years. There are statistics indicating more than 2,000 exhibitors over the years.

So, Alfred Partridge's dream of a youth fair dedicated to the talents and interests of all youth of Greene County has come true. He worked many years for this project, but he would be the first to acknowledge all of the willing people who worked side-by-side with him. The list is endless.

Today, the fair attracts more than 10,000 people and is one of the only fairs in New York State to offer free admission and entertainment. The Greene County Youth Fair remains a celebration of the talents of local youth, enabling them to strive for higher goals and receive support from family, friends and their community.

Today's Greene County Youth Fair

A priority of the Greene County Agricultural Society has been and always will be to keep admission to the Greene County Youth Fair free for all ages.

Today's Youth Fair offers a wide variety of entertainment, attractions, music, rides, food, vendors, fireworks, fire department and police displays, a talent show, classic car show, educational displays and so much more. Of course, the focus of the fair will always be agriculture, but as society – and kid's interests – change, we need to get creative about how we attract them to the fair and ultimately expose them to agriculture.

The 2021 fair, scheduled for July 22-25th at Cairo's Angelo Canna Town Park, will offer a wide variety of entertainment and educational exhibits, including magic shows, animal demonstrations, a flying dog show, singing and dancing groups, exotic animals, timber competition, and much more.

We intend to have the fair be as normal as possible in 2021, but realize we have many challenges to overcome. At this point nothing is set in stone as we are awaiting direction from state and county agencies on what we are and are not allowed to do. We have a planning committee assessing different scenarios so we can adapt to whatever challenges arise. Our current plans are to cut our spending as much as we can because donations are down significantly. Our two biggest expenses of entertainment and tent rental will see substantial cuts. Social distancing requirements are of upmost importance and significant changes will be implemented to fulfill these requirements. We are also looking into condensing the fair into 2 or 3 days until things can return to a more normal state. We are also pursuing different fundraising routes as chicken barbeques which are proving to be a very good fundraiser in these difficult times. We held a successful barbeque in August of 2020 and have another planned for April of 2021 with possibly of adding more to our schedule. We have limited our dates so other groups can have the opportunity to fundraise. We will adapt to these changes and put on a successful fair in 2021.

The Future of the Greene County Youth Fair

It has been said, quite simply, “If you ate today, thank a farmer.”

Unquestionably, the agricultural industry has changed enormously from the time our nation was founded. Technology, population shifts, nutritional awareness and even social change such as the industrial revolution has played an enormous role in how food is produced today. And it will continue to change.

By 2050 – only 30 short years away – the agricultural sector is going to face enormous challenges in order to feed the 9.6 billion people that the United Nations predicts will inhabit the planet. Feeding this many people will require a food production increase of 70 percent. Who will be the farmers, scientists and agribusiness leaders working to ensure the world is fed three decades from now? The youth of today.

Greene county has lost numerous dairy farms in the last few years and as of right now there are only 4 farms in the county shipping milk. There is a huge disconnect between the general public and farmers. Fewer people know where their food is coming from and how it gets to the supermarket shelves. The Greene County Youth Fair helps to open educational lines of communication so fair-goers can get a sense of how agriculture plays a vital role in the local economy. Currently the average age of a farmer in Greene county is 55 years old. This means that organizations like the Greene County Agricultural Society need to continue its mission to educate and encourage local children and teens to be involved in agriculture. We are fortunate to have locally involved partners in this mission, such as 4-H and FFA, but we must constantly continue to find new, creative and unique ways to attract youth and families – and generate funds to do so. We are proud to say that many of our former exhibitors have continued to pursue agricultural careers. Many of our former exhibitors have gone on to earn degrees from Cornell and SUNY Cobleskill. We must continue to provide this fair to the youth of Greene County. Often times these exhibitors return to our communities and use their skills to further benefit of communities.

Going forward, the Agricultural Society recognizes that one of the keys to generating new ideas is to encourage participation from new people. Over the last 5 years a major focus of our organization has been to recruit younger members to our board. Usually these are individuals that had previously exhibited at the fair and want to see the fair continue into the future. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome new members.

Any questions may be directed to greenecountyagsociety@gmail.com

The 2021 fair is July 22-25 at Angelo Canna Town Park in Cairo. See you at the fair!

