



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey Announces \$200,000 to Help Build Outdoor Classroom at CCE of Columbia and Greene's Agroforestry Resource Center

MICHELLE HINCHEY July 25, 2024

Senator Michelle Hinchey

CAIRO, NY – Today, at the Greene County Youth Fair, Senator Michelle Hinchey announced that she has provided \$200,000 in state funding to support the construction of the Rasmussen Outdoor Classroom (The ROC) at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties (CCECG) Agroforestry Resource Center in Acra. The outdoor classroom will be situated within the 142-acre Siuslaw Model Forest and will facilitate year-round educational programming for 4-H, Master Gardeners, Master Forest Owners, and the broader community, promoting place-based learning. Programming will focus on agroforestry, climate resilience and mitigation strategies, and specialty crops like shitake mushrooms and ginseng, which thrive in woodland environments.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “After visiting the Siuslaw Model Forest with CCE Columbia-Greene, it was obvious what incredible potential this site has for hands-on agroforestry education, especially for our next generation of agricultural and climate stewards. I’m happy to provide \$200,000 in state funding to support the construction of the Rasmussen Outdoor Classroom, a dynamic space where field experts and future leaders can learn about sustainable practices and woodland biodiversity in the Catskill Mountain region. The knowledge cultivated here over time will lead us toward a better future and help our

communities and the environment for generations to come.”

Lisa Gallina, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties, said, “I am grateful for Senator Hinchey’s commitment to climate and the environment! We hosted her and her team in the Siuslaw Model Forest a couple summers ago to share the work we do in Agroforestry. The Senator showed her commitment by selecting us for the \$200,000 in CREST funding! Once the ROC (Rasmussen Outdoor Classroom) is completed we will be able to offer classes year-round in our amazing forest while looking out to the northern escarpment of the Catskill Mountains.”

The Rasmussen Outdoor Classroom will be named in honor of Eric Rasmussen, Master Forester and Greene County Resident who donated the property to CCECG in 2006 following over five decades of stewarding the Siuslaw Tree Farm and Model Forest. Rasmussen initiated CCECG’s Environmental Awareness Days program in 1969, which engages over 400 students annually in learning about environmental challenges and sustainable forestry practices.

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