Senator Helming Announces Farm-to-School Grant for Seneca County

SENATOR PAM HELMING   January 17, 2018

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension has received Farm-to-School funding through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The $89,442 grant will allow Cooperative Extension to continue and expand its services through the Farm-to-School program, which benefits 3,886 students at 13 schools in the four school districts in Seneca County. The program connects school districts to local farmers and provides students with healthy, fresh, locally grown food at their schools.

"The Farm-to-School program supports not only our communities and schools but also our local producers and growers. It provides students across our region and our state with nutritious meals during their school day, while also supporting our farmers. I fought hard to expand these opportunities through increased funding for the program in the state budget, and I will continue to advocate for Farm-to-School funding and the many benefits that it brings to our communities. It is fantastic that Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension once again received funding for its Farm-to-School services in our local school districts, and I'm hopeful that the programs will continue to grow. I am especially appreciative of Executive Director Ave Bauder for making this project a reality," Senator Helming said.

During her first legislative session last year, Senator Helming was part of the effort that tripled the Farm-to-School funding in the New York State budget from $250,000 to $750,000. At her Food Access and Health in Rural New York roundtable discussion in July, she invited Todd Fowler, Food Service Director for the Bloomfield Central School District and Canandaigua City School District, to educate participants about the Farm-to-School program and how he began collaborating with local farmers to supply his schools and surrounding districts with fresh fruits and vegetables. This year, she plans to continue promoting the purchase of New York State agricultural products, which includes supporting additional funding for the Farm-to-School program.

The funding will allow Cooperative Extension to tailor the Farm-to-School program for each of the four school districts in Seneca County with such services as school gardens, field trips to farms, staff and equipment to prepare meals with local produce, taste samplings in the cafeterias, and agricultural lessons in the classroom. Cooperative Extension plans to meet with each district to discuss its particular program, and the organization will continue to offer local foods – such as New York apples – on school menus and work with farmers and distributors to make local foods more readily available. Cooperative Extension also offers

nutrition education on local foods to students and parents, connects schools to appropriate Cornell resources, and provides newsletters and recipes.

"We are so excited to continue bridging the regional culinary bounty of the Finger Lakes with our schools through this Farm-to-School funding. It is so rewarding to see students try a food for the first time, such as Butternutty Mac n Cheese or simply a fresh strawberry, and watch their face light up as they say, 'This is really good!' and know that it is also very healthy and grown by the farmer down the road. This program creates so many wins for our youth, our local economy, and the community as a whole. I am so glad that Senator Helming is passionate about this program, as it truly is important for our youth and our farmers," said Moira Tidball, Nutrition Issue Leader for Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The Foodlink regional food hub, whose 10-county territory includes Monroe, Wayne, Ontario, and Seneca counties, also received a $98,000 grant to install a processing line for slicing and preserving local apples to include in school meals. The funding will allow Foodlink to work with 50 apple farmers and supply 250,000 students with local apples.