

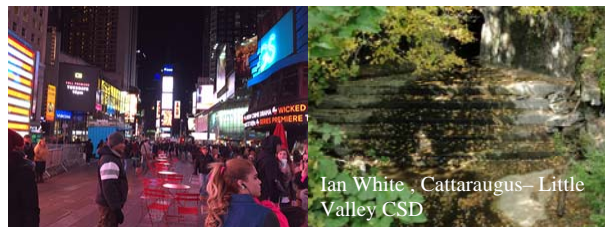


# RSA TODAY

News for New York State's Rural Schools

July 2017 Issue

Rural Schools Association of New York State



I don't live in New York , I live In New York !

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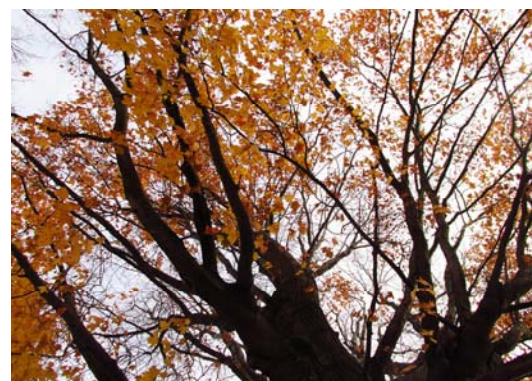
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## RSA ADVOCACY ISSUES PAST AND FUTURE

Summer is a time for reflection on the past school year and to plan ahead for next fall. The same goes for your Rural Schools Association's legislative advocacy on your behalf: So let's review.



Christina Trieu, Carthage CSD  
Fall Perspective

The 2017 legislative session could have been disastrous. In years where the legislature is not up for election, state aid to schools is typically tepid at best. It's worse in years when a governor hasn't just been elected or is about to run for re-election. This trough between the waves of political need to show support for public education has taken place under virtually every administration in the last 50 years. Add to that the fact that the Small Cities school funding case received an unfavorable result, state finances were not flush and there was trepidation regarding funding losses at the federal level (that would necessitate state increases to maintain areas like Medicaid) and our schools could have come up short. Really short. It didn't happen.



Schools received an aid increase of almost a billion and a quarter. Just as importantly, proposals to do away with the funding formula altogether were rejected by the legislature. Add to that the fact that the formula they did use resulted in most of the new aid flowing to high need districts (like most rural schools) and 2017's state budget was largely a success. Pat yourselves on the back for making the calls, sending the emails and talking with your representatives in a way that resulted in them sticking with their schools.

Beyond funding, 2017 also saw movement on longstanding issues like amending the tax cap to exempt BO-CES capital projects, adjusting the District Superintendent salary cap and allowing districts to create a TRS retirement reserve fund for teaching staff. All great wins for public education. On the defensive side, we beat back yet another effort to divert vital funds away from public schools to create a tuition tax credit benefitting private and parochial schools. All in all, for what could have been a “down” year, it ended up being a pretty helpful legislative session.

As we look ahead to the 2018 session, it’s appropriate for us to anticipate issues and assess our priorities. Early in the fall, your RSA will be sending you a survey to help us develop our legislative priority platform, but some issues already jump out at us. This is the year that the APPR moratorium ends. What will the state’s response be and will it adjust appropriately to the unique circumstances of our small and rural school districts? Funding will be of paramount importance, of course, as we try yet again to get the state to produce a transparent, responsive and permanent Foundation Aid funding formula. And...

The federal government will have a big say in what happens in our state this coming year. Proposals at the federal level to eliminate Medicaid funding for school-based services to children, to cut federal education programs by billions of dollars and to divert funding toward voucher and charter school initiatives will all need to be vigorously opposed. At the state level, funding for pre school and pre school transportation will be a “must” as we know that pre school holds the key to overcoming the effects of increased poverty in our rural districts. So too will Community Schools need our support as we try to use excellent school space created by Excel Aid and (sadly) decreased student enrollment to address the increased health care, afterschool, weekend and other social needs of our students through the use of school based community services and programs.



Finally, looking ahead, I would add that we must fight for a state response to the problem our schools are facing with teacher recruitment and retention. Just because the state as a whole isn’t facing this issue doesn’t mean it isn’t harming our rural districts. The crisis is upon us and we need to act accordingly.

The good news folks, is that in all my years of educational advocacy, I have never seen rural issues take the forefront like they are currently being displayed. In recent meetings with the governor’s education staff, most of the educational community was talking about how things affect rural districts. In meetings on Community Schools (which began as an urban initiative), the talk is about how it must happen in rural schools. Whether or not last fall’s national election was a wake-up call highlighting the peril of ignoring rural constituents, our leaders are paying attention to rural schools and the communities that support them. Let’s not miss the opportunity to impress our needs upon them.

So congratulations on a successful 2017 and best wishes for using our momentum to make great gains for rural students in 2018!





## CUBA RUSHFORD TEACHER SCOTT JORDAN NAMED NATIONAL RURAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Cuba Rushford Central School District teacher Scott Jordan has been named the National Rural Educator of the Year by the National Rural Education Association. Mr. Jordan was nominated and supported by your RSA as New York State's designee for the award.

Here in New York State's rural communities, Scott is a hero and a legend. RSA is hopeful that his selection for this award will raise the profile of this phenomenal program, allowing our rural states (that are perfectly suited to replicate this program) to bring its benefits to the thousands of students who would benefit. Said RSA Executive Director David little, "Two years ago I was approached by a BOCES board of education member from Scott's area, who simply said that I had to see this program and that I 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 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 agencies, contributing directly to our knowledge base. Their list of other science based student activities is lengthy and unparalleled.

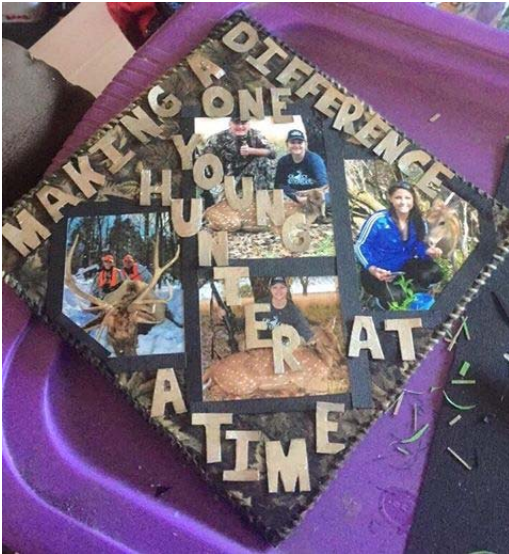


**Wildlife Research Center on the Campus of  
Cuba-Rushford Central School**

The creation of the facilities alone is mindboggling. In addition to the deer park and hatchery, the Cuba Rushford 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- persons. Each aspect of the program is used to fulfil 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.



**Mikayla Rix's 2017 Graduation Cap Says It All**

As a result of the program, Cuba Rushford regularly wins 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.

According to RSA Executive Director Dave Little "I have served as a local school board president for a decade, directed governmental relations for a state school boards association for another two decades and now have directed the Rural Schools Association of New York State for nearly three years. In all of my work and all of my travels, I have never seen 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. This is a well- deserved honor."

Scott Jordan went to the National Rural Education Association annual conference last fall and presented on this work. Those in attendance went away shocked at the potential. Lin King, Chair of RSA's Board of Directors said "The Rural Schools Association of New York State is honored to have such an educator within our borders and we are eager to use this honor to spread the educational possibilities of this program to rural districts throughout the nation. The educational and developmental benefits to students of the widespread use of this program in rural areas would be life altering."



**Cuba Rushford Central School Outdoors Display**





## 2017 RURAL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

### A SMASHING SUCCESS!



**Chazy CSD  
Superintendent  
John Fairchild**

From Cutting Costs to Cutting Edge! On July 9, 2017 over 200 people from rural school districts in NY descended upon the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown, for the Rural Schools Annual Summer Conference.

The conference opened with a Sunday evening dinner recognition of the association staff, board of directors, conference planning committee, and a brief run-down of the Association's work this past year. Appreciation Awards were bestowed on Member of Assembly Pete Lopez and Senator Betty Little. Rosemary Joy received the Amy Paulin Award for service through the Rural Schools Association and the Deming Award was presented to Superintendent Bob McKeveny of Seneca Falls for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of rural students. RSA also presented a special recognition award to the Chazy Central Rural School District for their centennial designation of being the first centralized school district in New York State and one of the first in the nation. NYS Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and the governor's Assistant Secretary of Education Daniel Fuller provided an update on the latest efforts at the State level.



**NYS  
Commissioner of  
Education  
MaryEllen Elia**

A conference highlight was the "conference only" after dinner reception held at the National Baseball Hall of Fame's Great Hall, the plaque gallery where all the bronze plaques for the more than 300 Hall of Famers are housed. There, attendees (thanks to the generosity of TRANE) had the chance to network while admiring baseball's greatest.

One of Monday's highlights was an inspirational talk by Dr. Jim Mahoney, Executive Director Emeritus of Batelle for Kids, an organization dedicated to improving public educational systems. Dr. Mahoney inspired a standing-room-only crowd to reconnect with the basic passions that drive positive educational outcomes.

Our Monday lunch speakers were also inspirational! Monday's lunch is always reserved for our FFA Public Speaking State Award winners. This



**NYS Assistant  
Secretary of  
Education Daniel  
Fuller**



**New York State  
Assemblyman  
Peter Lopez**



**Ann Paulin  
Award Winner  
Rosemary Joy**



**William Deming  
Award Winner  
Bob McKeveny**



**Dr. Jim Mahoney, Executive Director, Emeritus Battelle for Kids**



**Dr. Allen Pratt, Executive Director NREA**

year's winners were Cheyenne Matulewich from Tri-Valley CSD for Prepared Public Speaking (Advisor: Tara Berescik) who spoke to us about the history of the watershed in her area. Jake Leyva from Pioneer CSD was the winner for Extemporaneous Public Speaking (Advisor: Jon Clayson), who spoke to us about the entrepreneurial spirit of rural youth. Both were indeed, phenomenal speakers, showcasing the value of rural education!

Monday's dinner speakers came to us from the National Rural Education Association. Each year, they select a National Rural Teacher of the Year. The current award winner is Virginia Sautner from Lake Havasu High School in Arizona. She shared with us her philosophy on how individual teachers can drive positive change in their districts, from the individual student level to the program level, in the face of financial and structural challenges on many levels. Dr. Allen Pratt followed, inspiring us with an account of how the smallest, most rural school uses relationship building to leverage strengths within the district and its students to achieve outcomes one would not expect possible.

In between all the food, we also offered twelve presentations from school districts and four from sponsors, demonstrating a variety of school improvement projects, lessons learned and ideas for implementation in other districts. The sessions were as follows:

#### **Session 1**

- \* Rethinking Health Insurance
- \* Rural Schools & Special Education: Exploring New Partnerships & Opportunities
- \* Regional Professional Development: Building & Sustaining Leaders
- \* SuperEval: The Online Evaluations of Educational Leadership

#### **Session 2**

- \* Maximizing Student Engagement with Minimal Costs
- \* Surviving the Closing of a Community Schools
- \* Politick-tock: Making the Most of the Time & Resources You Have Through Political Activism
- \* Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) As A Supplement to Traditional Capital Projects

#### **Session 3**

- \* Achieving Efficiencies & Enhancing Programs through Administrative Restructuring
- \* Agricultural Studies Academy
- \* Connecting for Kids: Building Regional Capacity for Professional Learning
- \* Using Data for Strategic Decision Making

#### **Session 4**

- \* Personalizing Education through Student Generated Shared Services
- \* Middle Level Career & Technical Education Program at Madison-Oneida BOCES
- \* How Do Industry Challenges Integrate Authentic Learning & Professional Skills at W-FL P-TECH
- \* Managing Your Curricula Online with the University of Buffalo's NYLearns.org



**FFA Public Speaking Award Winners  
Cheyenne Matulewich,  
Tri Valley CSD  
Jake Leyva,  
Pioneer CSD**



**Virginia Sautner,  
National Rural Education  
Association, Rural Teacher  
of the Year**



Soon, there will be a link on our new website ([www.RSANY.org](http://www.RSANY.org)) where you can access materials and contact information from the presenters, in case you want to share information with your home districts, or contact presenters with follow up questions.

Each year, the conference attempts to produce not only good information for school districts, but information from attendees that can be used to help all rural schools. Last year Assistant US Secretary of Education Lucy Johnson used conference attendees as a focus group to produce a report on rural education for Congress. This year RSA set up a table near registration for a Cornell research group headed by Dr. Sharon Tennyson. This group was collecting some exploratory data on school-community partnerships, particularly the school-based health clinics. Several attendees were able to offer 10-15 minutes of their time so that the group could interview them. The group is seeking additional interviewees, so if you are interested, please contact Gretchen Rymarchyk at [gkr1@cornell.edu](mailto:gkr1@cornell.edu) and she will put you in touch with them. Soon, there will be links on our website ([www.RSANY.org](http://www.RSANY.org)) to connect you to them directly, so keep an eye out for that.



**Robert Mahaffey, Executive Director of the National Rural School and Community Trust**

This year's conference also featured Robert Mahaffey, Executive Director of the National Rural School and Community Trust, who shared information from their recent report titled Why Rural Matters. He was followed by Dr. Andrew Van Alstyne, Deputy Director of Education and Research at the NYS Association of School Business Officials with his examination of the state of rural NY's schools. Together, these researchers provided both a national and state look at where our schools are headed.

The conference featured 30 vendors occupying the entire south end of the Otesaga, several informational sessions, two cocktail receptions, a dessert reception and a coffee break to promote networking; all of which were well-attended.

RSA staff, board members, and members of the planning committee received a good deal of positive feedback about this conference, including several statements that this was the best one ever! If you attended and have not yet filled out the evaluation form, we are still seeking feedback about what to keep and what to continue working on. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts with us at one of the links in the following article.

See you next year!



**Dr. Andrew Van Alstyne, Deputy Director of Education and Research at the NYS Association of School Business Officials**



**2017 Presentation Participants**



## **2017 Conference Evaluation**

For those of you who attended, thank you for attending the 2017 Rural Schools Conference last week!

We would like to get as much feedback as possible about this year's conference, so if you did not fill out a paper evaluation form, to please take a few minutes to give us some feedback about what we should keep and what we should keep working on to make next year's conference better.

**Dr. Gretchen Rymarchyk,**  
**Deputy Director RSA**

If you were a **regular (non-vendor/sponsor) attendee**, please fill out this evaluation: [https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5cjm04rhqFFBxUV](https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cjm04rhqFFBxUV)

And if you were a **vendor or sponsor**, please fill out this evaluation: [https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0MXaHOkI9HXO4Hr](https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0MXaHOkI9HXO4Hr)

All responses come in anonymously, unless you choose to provide identifying/contact information.

**If you did NOT attend the conference**, and would like to give us some feedback about what it would take to get you to come next year, please choose the appropriate form from above, and use the comment section to tell us about it.

Thank you so much for your time, and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Gretchen Rymarchyk at [gkr1@cornell.edu](mailto:gkr1@cornell.edu) with your ideas or a request for a phone call if you would prefer.

## **New Website for RSA NY**

Your RSA has a new website, packed with information for rural schools. Check it out at [www.RSANY.org](http://www.RSANY.org).

Features include:

**Advocacy materials** including scripts for contacting your representatives, that you can edit as you wish, provide in newsletters to parents, distribute as you see fit to increase staff, teacher, and parent engagement in urging lawmakers to consider impacts on rural education.

### **Conference information**

**Works by John Sipple** including some interactive materials designed to help you become familiar with his data tools, and how you can use them to your advantage.

**Blog space from Gretchen Rymarchyk** featuring new and relevant research, programs with outcome evidence

### **Annotated web resources**

### **Membership materials**

**Access newsletters, Albany Alerts, Washington Watches and other communications.**

And, coming soon...

- \* Spotlight on successful programs happening around the state
- \* Membership registration
- \* Conference registration
- \* Forum for dialogue

And more!



## **NYSSBA Mental Health Summit, May 2017**



The New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA) held a summit on May 20 entitled “Your Role in Addressing the Growing Mental Health Crisis Among Students,” featuring the Rural Schools Association, among others.

The day consisted of morning and afternoon sessions. Each began with an address from an expert in the field, followed by concurrent breakout discussions facilitated by additional experts.

Dr. Katharine H. Briar-Lawson, Professor and Dean Emeritus of the School of Social Welfare at SUNY Albany gave the morning address connecting the research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with the current mental health trends among students in NY’s public schools. Discussions following this address centered around opening up communication with parents, building early detection and rapid response capacity in schools, and how school administrators can begin this work district-wide.

Dr. Hal Lawton, Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership and Social Welfare from the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership at SUNY Albany started the afternoon with a talk highlighting some small steps that even non-mental health professionals can take to create a safe environment for students to express needs, and give students opportunities to manage emotions before they escalate into crisis. Discussions following this address included professional development for non-mental health professionals, policy advocacy strategies, and developing place-based partnership strategies. This last discussion was facilitated by Rural School Association’s Deputy Director, Dr. Gretchen Rymarchyk. School based attendees arrived with confusion about what “place-based” means, and multiple obstacles and solutions to creating partnerships with community mental health providers. Take-aways included ensuring input from ALL stakeholders, especially school-based counselors and students, from the beginning to help minimize unforeseen obstacles; making sure school-based and community-based counselors have clearly defined and separate roles with students; minimizing stigma for students to attend; involving parents as partners, since children’s mental health issues are the symptoms of larger obstacles the family struggles with. Several benefits of having community-based mental health providers in the school include students having more consistent services while missing fewer instructional hours; being able to include families in therapy who wouldn’t otherwise be able to travel to the community-based clinic; continuity over school breaks; and having more mental health professionals available to consult with teachers around classroom behaviors.

This was a very well-attended summit, in spite of having to give up an entire Saturday of gorgeous weather, which speaks to the level of awareness AND need that public schools have around student mental health. NYSSBA collected a great deal of data from the discussions and will be using it to inform future summits, as they described this as the beginning of a larger project state-wide to improve the lives of students. For materials from this summit, visit NYSSBA's resource page [here](http://www.nyssba.org/paperless-events/summit-material-for-registrants/). <http://www.nyssba.org/paperless-events/summit-material-for-registrants/>

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\*Does not include residency or technology fees.

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# Community Schools Are an Effective School Improvement Strategy, Brief Says

By Evie Blad on June 5, 2017

Done well, community schools can be an effective school improvement strategy, a new research brief says. And a survey of existing data suggests community schools could meet the standard of an "evidence-based" school improvement intervention under the Every Student Succeeds Act, concludes the brief, which was released Monday by the Learning Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.

"We conclude from our review that the evidence base on well-implemented community schools and their component features provides a strong warrant for their potential contribution to school improvement," the brief says. "Sufficient evidence meeting ESSA's criteria for 'evidence-based' approaches exists to justify including community schools as part of targeted and comprehensive interventions in high-poverty schools. This evidence also supports community schools as an approach appropriate for broader use."

Community schools work with community partners and organizations to offer more comprehensive supports, assisting students with things like access to food, health care, and tutoring opportunities. The strategy has taken hold in districts around the country, include New York City, which has expanded community schools as part of its school turnaround efforts.

For students to succeed in the classroom, they must often confront out-of-school factors, like hunger, that can keep them from learning, advocates for community schools say. And, while community organizations like food pantries are often eager to provide those supports, a coordinated approach that uses the school as a hub can make their work more effective, they say.

The new research brief was released at an event hosted by the Coalition for Community Schools, which also gave New York City an award for its efforts Monday. It comes a few months after separate studies of the community schools approach questioned its effects on attendance and achievement.



The Learning Policy Institute defines a community school as a "place-based school improvement strategy" that typically includes four key components: integrated student supports, expanded learning time, family engagement efforts, and collaborative leadership and practices.

The research summary concludes that community schools efforts have a higher likelihood of success if they include the following:

## **A comprehensive approach**

Community schools should include all four "pillars" mentioned above. And strategies should be concerned with effective implementation. For example, that means not just providing extended learning time, but being thoughtful about how that time is used, the brief says.

## **A local focus**

Schools should be mindful of both local assets and local needs. And they should use data to determine if strategies need to be adjusted. Data should measure whether programs are meeting their goals and also how many children are exposed to particular services and strategies.

## **Effective planning**

When creating a community schools plan, educators and policymakers should take time and build trust between the school and the community. And the process should involve input from parents, students, and other community members.

## **Support research**

Policymakers should support researchers who seek to do more rigorous evaluations of the approach, the brief says.

Read the whole brief [here](http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Community%20Schools%20An%20Evidence%20Based%20Strategy.pdf).

<http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Community%20Schools%20An%20Evidence%20Based%20Strategy.pdf>





## Reporter's Notebook: Local Schools, Farms Expand Lunch Program

By Mark Boshnack Staff Writer - The Daily Star

Jun 16, 2017

Farm Catskills recently celebrated the expansion of its Cow to Cafeteria program to Andes earlier this year and announced that South Kortright Central School is participating in the fall.



Looking to build off the success of the pilot program held at Stamford Central School in 2016, Farm Catskills received a grant from the O'Connor Foundation, which is being matched in part by the Watershed Agricultural Council and Farm Catskills member donations.

According to a media release, the goal of the Cow to Cafeteria program is to provide Delaware County schools with nutritious, safe and delicious school lunches; develop student knowledge of the health benefits of eating local; develop an increased understanding of local beef farm businesses and their contribution to the economy; and to support local agriculture through the purchase of local ground beef for schools. Other objectives are to provide in-classroom lessons to students of all ages.

"Cow to Cafeteria is an exciting and important local food project for Delaware County schools," said Pam Benson, Farm Catskills Board President. "We are grateful to our funders, local farmers and school staff for working with us to make it happen."

This is Farm Catskills' second year working with the Eklund family in Stamford who donated beef to the pilot program in 2016. Students at Andes Central School already participated in the program with beef bought from Gladstone Farm in Andes.



South Kortright Central School plans to serve three meals in the fall of 2017, including spaghetti with meat sauce, tacos and hamburgers also with local beef. About 100 - 200 pounds of beef has been procured from local farmers within each school district, depending on the student body size, according to the release.

More information on the Cow to Cafeteria Program or Farm Catskills is available at [www.farmcatskills.org](http://www.farmcatskills.org)