



## MEET NEW YORK FARM BUREAU'S PROMOTION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*To Serve and Strengthen Agriculture*

### Promotion and Education Chair — Ann Peck

*Newark, N.Y (Appeared in the April 2009 issue of Grassroots.)*

The new chair of the Promotion and Education Committee is Ann Peck, who in addition to this role also serves on the New York Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Ann's background and commitment to promotion and education is evidenced through all of her activities. Ann has served on the ProEd committee as the District 3 representative and was elected to the position of Chair at the Promotion and Education Business session held during the State Annual Meeting in December 2008.

A graduate of SUNY Oswego, Ann's teaching career includes 23 years in the classroom teaching fourth grade, preschool and at Finger Lakes Community College. She and her husband, Jim own ConsulAgr, Inc., an agricultural consulting firm that provides nutrient management services, farm business planning and other related services covering 50,000 acres in New York State. ConsulAgr is responsible for 35 CAFO and other nutrient management plans.

Ann and Jim were partners in El-Vi Farms for many years. The farm is now owned by other family members and partners, which employs Ann and Jim's son, Wade. Several years ago Ann and Jim left the farm to concentrate on their consulting business.

Ann's busy life has included the roles of Executive Director for the New York Corn Growers Association and Project Coordinator of Empire Biofuels, LLC (she is still in charge of membership relations and other administrative details). Ann is a member of the New York State Agricultural Society, the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (she is the past president of the northeast chapter), the New York Corn Growers Association, NYSABA, Wayne County Cooperative Extension (where she has served on the county board), and seven years of service on the Field Crops Program Work Team at Cornell University.

Ann and Jim have four sons: Jay, a licensed fly fishing guide, Tim, a dispatcher for Pinnacle Airlines/US Air Force National Guard - Loadmaster of a C5A, Wade, chief mechanic and harvesting equipment operator at El-Vi Farms and Eric, a large equipment operator. Their busy family also includes ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Ann strongly feels that the general public does not understand what it takes to produce food, fiber and fuel in New York. She notes that people tend to believe untruths and half-truths about how their food is produced, which allows special interest groups to affect attitudes about agriculture that stretch from the consumer to the legislature.

Ann says, "New York Farm Bureau has many excellent programs already in place, such as the Be Aware of Agriculture Contest and programs sponsored by the Farm Bureau Foundation for Education. I would like to see the Promotion and Education Committee expand their programs to environmental issues, promote agricultural careers, and educate the public on the costs, stresses and other issues involved in agriculture today. I am convinced that the agricultural community needs to keep up a relentless campaign to educate all Americans on the importance of agriculture in our economy."

The goals of the Promotion and Education Committee include efforts to increase member involvement, using the strength of a grassroots organizational structure through reliance on membership and development of leadership within that body. The committee is working to convey, in a positive manner, a better understanding and awareness of the Farm Bureau, agriculture, and the inherent value to members, consumers and the country.

If you have ideas for the Promotion and Education Committee, please feel free to contact your district representative or Ann Peck.



*Ideas are what fuel our victories!*

## District 1 — Phyllis Couture

West Valley, N.Y. (Appeared in the January 2010 issue of *Grassroots*.)

We are pleased to introduce our new District 1 representative Phyllis Couture, who resides in West Valley in Cattaraugus County. Phyllis and her husband, Charles, have been actively involved, long-time NYFB members. Phyllis has just retired as District 1 Director and is taking some time to focus on agricultural promotion and education, which has been an important part of her life.

The Couture Family has had a greenhouse operation since 1970, growing bedding plants, geraniums, hanging baskets, and poinsettias. They sell plants and vegetables at four local Farmers' Markets and some wholesale. They have about a one acre vegetable garden. From August 1988 to July 2009 Phyllis owned two retail florist shops.

Phyllis and Charles are the proud parents of Curt 43, Brian 42, and Stacy 38, PLUS eight grandchildren ages 9 - 21. In addition to raising the family and being busy with the family businesses, Phyllis found the time to devote to her industry. She served as Cattaraugus County President, Vice President, and Board member. She sat on the NYFB Board of Directors representing District 1 for a full term from 2003 - 2009 and served on the Task Force on reorganization of Women's committee to our present Promotion and Education status in the early 90's.

On a local level Phyllis has strongly supported 4-H as a leader on the 4-H Youth Development Committee, Cattaraugus County Cooperative Extension Board of Directors and received the Cattaraugus County Meritorious Service Award in 1987. She also serves on several United Methodist Church committees. She is a member of the Springville Monday Club, R.E.A.P (Farmers market organization) acting as Secretary from 2008 to present.

Phyllis' education background equips her well to work with the Committee. She received a B.S. majoring in Home Economics Education from Albright College in 1963 and a M.S. in Home Economics Education from SUNY at Buffalo in 1974. She worked as a substitute teacher in several school districts and taught Home Economics and Horticulture on a part-time basis.

Phyllis Couture feels that Farm Bureau has given her the opportunity to be more politically aware - starting with learning about the legislative process in N.Y., and then getting up courage to go to lobby days and actually meet with the legislators. Today she enjoys a "first name" relationship with both her State senator and Assemblyman. She emphatically states, "I feel Farm Bureau is the only farm organization which has a finger on the pulse of all agriculture and has the best record of legislative accomplishments and credibility at both the state and national levels. I feel that education of school children and the public is very important, and I want to be part of that effort as a member of the Pro-Ed. Committee."

New York agriculture is blessed with a membership that cares enough to take an active role. We look forward to Phyllis' expertise as we move forward to enhance and raise the level of agricultural literacy and understanding.



---

## District 2 — Jenny Lundberg

Honeoye Falls N.Y. (Appeared in the February 2010 issue of *Grassroots*.)

The New York Farm Bureau State Promotion & Education Committee recently welcomed a new District 2 representative, Jenny Lundberg, who hails from Honeoye Falls, a suburb of Rochester, in Monroe County. Her love for horses and the outdoors led Jenny to 4-H, Farm Bureau, and the world of agriculture. She works at the Lehman's farm stand in Pittsford, N.Y. during the summer months, and during the pumpkin and Christmas tree seasons she can be found on a wagon at Stokoe Farms in Scottsville, N.Y. Jenny's perspective and background will add tremendous depth and breadth to the committee.

Jenny serves as a Monroe County Farm Bureau Director as well as Co-Chair of the County 4-H Program (since 2008) and is a member on the Monroe County Fair and Recreation Board. She holds a BA in Economics and is presently pursuing a Masters Degree in Elementary and Special Education where she has chosen to incorporate many of the Ag in the Classroom plans into her lessons.

Jenny was appointed to serve on the State Promotion & Education Consumer Education Committee, which is working to develop a program with a specific focus that addresses concepts of safe food production with environmental consciousness, in addition to a local message of positive economic impact, farmers deserving of a decent living, community involvement and reaching out to engage the youth, who will be our producers in the coming years.

Jenny looks forward to working with the Counties in District 2 and all the volunteers who feel that educating the community is an important step in the relationship process.



## District 3 — Eileen Taylor

Newark, N.Y. (Appeared in the August 2009 issue of *Grassroots*.)

Our District 3 representative on the State ProEd Committee is Eileen Taylor from Newark in Ontario County.

Taylor has been a New York Farm Bureau member for more than 20 years. Born in Syracuse, she and her parents moved to a 100-acre farm in a small town outside the city when she was one. In 1963 they moved to a larger farm in Waterloo where she lived until 1968 when she married John Taylor, also a farmer. John Taylor worked with his parents on their dairy and crop farm. Then the young couple purchased the farm in 1974 which, over the years they have expanded and updated. Starting with 40 cows, the operation then grew to 120 cows. Eileen and John have two sons, Jonathan (who is currently serving as NYFB District 3 Director and on the Executive Committee) and Stephen. In 2007 the farm was sold. Eileen is now a full-time seamstress, utilizing her creative skills, and her husband works on the home farm for the new owners.

When asked why Farm Bureau is important to her, Eileen Taylor answered, "I was a member of the Farm Bureau for many years, first in Wayne County and then in Ontario. When our oldest son, Jonathan, joined and became more involved, I realized how important Farm Bureau is to all farmers through government involvement, networking or helping with the issues, whether it is local, state or national."

She has worked tirelessly on Ontario County's award winning "Fun on the Farm" event as a member of the committee, as well as the District 3 scholarship selection committee. Her involvement has also included the role of Adviser for the Wayne County Jr. Holstein Club (1985-2006); Dairy Bowl coach, Wayne County Holstein Club from 1985-2006, taking two teams to national competition after winning the state competition; Wayne County 4-H Dairy Bowl coach where she had many 4-Hers go on to state and national competitions; Wayne County 4-H Program Development Committee and Wayne County 4-H Advisory Board-dairy representative. Taylor was honored in 2008 for 22 years of volunteer service to Wayne County 4H.

In 1974 when the Taylor's oldest son was ready to start preschool, she looked around town and did not find the learning environment best suited for him, so she started her own, the Newark Cooperative Nursery School. The preschool ran successfully for 32 years. Ann Peck (present Promotion & Education Chair) was hired as the first teacher. This preschool was just the beginning of Eileen's many years working with youth of all ages in her church, her community, county 4-H and Holstein associations. The education seed was planted in her life and continues to grow. It is nurtured by her dedication and enthusiasm in which New York Farm Bureau members can all benefit from.



---

## District 4 — Stephanie Bergen

, N.Y (Bio Coming Soon)

## District 5 — Rainy Vickers

Norwich, N.Y. (Bio coming soon)

---

## District 6 — Audrey Donahoe

Frankfort, N.Y. (appears in the April 2012 issue of Grassroots newspaper.)

District 6, which includes Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego County, now has the voice of Audrey Donahoe on the NYFB State Promotion & Education Committee. Audrey and her husband, Jeff, own and operate Atrass Farm in Frankfort, Herkimer County, which includes 200-head of registered Holsteins and registered Brown Swiss. Atrass Farm crops about 400 acres, raising the feed for their herd.

Audrey has been active on a county level for a number of years. She and her husband have six children; Arnold (age 24), Thomas (age 22), Rick (age 20), Allison (age 15), Samuel (age 11), and Seth (age 10). Audrey is a fifth generation dairy farmer (all from Herkimer County) and her family is pleased that one of their sons will be continuing on the farm when he finishes college this spring.

A busy life on the farm has also included a good deal of involvement within the community and the dairy industry. She serves as director and county Promotion & Education Chair for the Herkimer County Farm Bureau. Other organization involvement includes the ADADC, Inc. Board of Directors from 2001 to present; UDIA director/Herkimer County Dairy; recipient of the Silver Cow Promotion Award; two terms on the National Dairy Board, and Herkimer County Cooperative Extension Board of Directors.

Audrey's enthusiasm and expertise will certainly complement the Promotion & Education Committee. She feels that Farm Bureau is a diversified organization that suits so many of our needs in the agriculture industry. After attending a training session for Food, Land and People, she has added another opportunity to her repertoire of promotion and education tools. We officially welcome Audrey and look forward to working with her.



## District 7 — Jo Ellen Saumier

Chateaugay, N.Y. (Appeared in the February 2013 issue of *Grassroots*.)

Jo Ellen Saumier from Chateaugay in Franklin County was recently confirmed by the NYFB Board of Directors as the District 7 representative to the NYFB State Promotion and Education Committee. The District that Jo Ellen represents includes Clinton County, Essex County, Franklin County and St. Lawrence County.

Today Jo Ellen and her husband, Kirby Selkirk, run about 250 head of sheep and sell their products based in lamb and wool, at farmers' markets and from their home farm. They share a keen interest and enthusiasm for agriculture.

JoEllen writes about her road to the present, "Some of my fondest memories of growing up are of roaming the fields and following the brook on my uncle's, formerly grandfather's, farm. I loved to help my mother uncover the tips of daffodils and tulips coming up through the piles of leaves that had kept them insulated all winter. I helped my grandmother or mother with the needlework they were doing. Little did I realize that these activities would lead me to a second career.

For 27 years I developed and implemented consumer science programs for Cornell Cooperative Extension. My programs ranged from nutrition basics to installing septic systems and from teaching basic skills to helping organize a housing coalition that built affordable housing in a high cost market.

After retiring from Cornell Cooperative Extension, my husband and I turned a portion of his former dairy farm into a fruit and vegetable farm market. When a chance encounter with 20 sheep needing a new home occurred, we added them to the mix.

It turned out that sheep really like vegetables and fruit. When it got to the point that they were eating more of the vegetables and fruit, than we could harvest, the vegetables and fruits were phased out. This gave me the opportunity to explore the fiber side of farming.

Having been taught to knit by my grandmother as a little girl, I realized after attending a Sheep and Wool Festival that I could indulge myself in the creative needle arts that I had set aside. Instructions to knit a lamb and a needle-felting kit to make a Father Christmas started me on the road to making and selling needle-felted figures, ornaments, and kits from our wool and knitted and felted hats and purses from purchased yarn. I sell them alongside of our retail lamb cuts at farmers' markets, sheep and wool festivals, and from my home."

JoEllen's involvement includes serving on the NY Farm Bureau Organic and Locally Grown Commodity Committee plus serving on the Board of Directors of the Adirondack Farmers' Market Cooperative Inc. for 11 years; serving for 13 years as the Manager of the Chateaugay Lakes Farmers' Market; as President and Board member of the North Burke Rural Cemetery Association; as a Member of New York State Association of Extension Home Economists, including holding several offices including District Chairperson twice; and State President of the National Association of Extension Home Economists. Her education includes an MBA in Management from Pace University, a BS in Home Economics Education from SUNY Plattsburgh and continuing education in Financial Planning. Her extension work and life experience has well prepared her for her role in agriculture and she will be a tremendous asset to the State Promotion and Education Committee.



---

## District 8 — Jennifer Jennings

Amsterdam, N.Y. (Appeared in the September 2009 issue of *Grassroots*.)

The District 8 representative is an extremely busy person, as she serves on BOTH the Promotion & Education and the YFR State Committees. Jennifer Jennings lives in Montgomery County, but she is originally from Connecticut, where her parents and brother operated a hay business. Her family moved to Florida, N.Y. in 2002 where they started milking cows full time. Jennifer moved to the farm from London, England in late 2002/2003. She currently works for the Agricultural Stewardship Association, an agricultural land trust that works in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

Although Jennifer has only been a Farm Bureau Member for four years, but has become very involved. On the county level she assumed the role of YFR chair, newsletter editor (2006 - 2008), Political Advocacy Committee (co-chair), Pro-Ed member (2006 - 2008), and Sundae on the Farm Committee (Marketing and Advertising, 2007-present). On the state level she has been a member of the YFR Committee since 2007 and was recently appointed to the Promotion and Education Committee.

Jennifer is involved in the "The Taste of Rensselaer County" (2009 planning committee) and the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce: The Innovative Leaders of Tomorrow (2006 - 2007).

Her background includes a Bachelors of Arts Degree in History from Bryant College; a Masters of Science Degree in Urbanization and Development from the Dept. of Geography and the Environment at the London School of Economics; and recently the AFBF "Boot Camp" in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer feels the Farm Bureau is a meaningful and effective way to be involved in a grassroots organization that shows the democratic process and public participation in action. "The State Annual Meeting is a way of having our voices heard. The policy we develop in those few days are truly what we want on a whole. The fact that the final vote may not be *your* vote is just part of the process and you have a chance to go back again next year to fight for a different result."

When she returned home from London, England she was looking for an outlet to put all of these high ideals of grassroots, democratic processes and public participation into action. She has found that and more through involvement with the Farm Bureau. Over the years she has worked with Young Farmers and Ranchers on county and state levels, participating in the YFR Discussion Meet, working on the collegiate Discussion Meet and America's Second Harvest. She believes that involvement in the program helps to develop well-rounded, well-spoken leaders for New York agriculture, but there is still a lot to be done. Farmers are a romantic ideal to most Americans who are far removed from the realities of day-to-day farm life. It is important to find an effective way to reach out and educate, introduce and invite the general public to know what we do. With that in mind, her position on the State Promotion and Education Committee will propel her forward to meet the challenges and take advantage of all opportunities.

New York agriculture is blessed to have Jennifer's energy, enthusiasm and talent working with Farm Bureau members to make a true difference.



## District 9 — Winnie Nelson

Schoharie, N.Y. (Appeared in the December 2009 issue *Grassroots*.)

The District 9 representative on the State Promotion and Education Committee is just finishing up her first year. Winnie Nelson, from Schoharie County, wears a variety of hats and looks good in all of them! She and her husband, Paul, raised Holstein steers in Delanson from 1979 to 1981. Then they moved to their present farm, which they operated as a dairy from 1981 to 1986 and from 1993 to April of 1998, when their dairy barn burned. Since 2000 they have utilized intensive rotational grazing for beef feeders. Winnie and Paul have two children, Nick and Nate and two grandchildren, Verity and Jack.



Winnie's B.S. in math/education (1967) and MLS in college/special libraries (1971), serves her well in her position on the Committee. She has taught high school math, worked as a reference librarian in three college libraries, as a school librarian, and was the project director at Schoharie County for a NYS grant program to institute and develop a records management program for Schoharie County and all the 16 towns and 6 villages. Since 1995 she has worked as an Information Representative for the NYS Teachers' Retirement System.

Serving as the Schoharie County Farm Bureau President since 2007 and as the secretary in 2006. She has become totally enmeshed in the organization at many levels. As the County Farm Bureau representative on the Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, she represents one of the County's "Four Partners", which includes the Chamber, Farm Bureau, SUNY Cobleskill and County Legislators. Her promotion and education talents have lent themselves to planning and executing a variety of projects and programs to improve the understanding of agriculture and Farm Bureau throughout the community.

Winnie's 97 year old mother came to live on the farm in February of 2008 and delights in telling tales about her experiences growing up on a farm and feeding the threshing crew, boiling the maple syrup using natural gas, and doing all the farm chores when her father was terribly sick during WWII and her brother and husband were both away in the Army. Those stories are a part of her "ag history" lesson to showcase the true spirit of dedication and hard work exemplified throughout the farming industry.

When asked why Farm Bureau is important to her, Winnie answered, "I grew up as a "townie" but remember my grandparents, my uncle and others in the farming community talking about Farm Bureau and Home Bureau. It didn't mean anything to me at the time but they considered it important. We are an organization whose members get involved to interact and lead not only to support agriculture and ag businesses but also to strengthen our community, our society and our country." Winnie wanted to be sure we noted that her husband has been most supportive of each and every part of her involvement in Farm Bureau. Our hats off to Winnie for all she does!

---

## District 10 — Linda Fix

N.Y. (Bio Coming Soon)

## District 11 — Kristina Sidor

Riverhead, N.Y. (Appeared in the April 2011 issue of *Grassroots*.)

District 11 is now represented on the State Promotion and Education Committee by Kristina Sidor.

Kristina has deep agricultural roots on the east end of Long Island. Her mother's family runs a 50 year-old farm stand in Northville, where she continues to help out in the busy months of summer and fall. Her father's family grows corn feed, and she assists during planting season in the spring. Her father's family is well known in the community for starting North Fork Chips, which began as a means of keeping the family farm in operation during a struggling economic time. While Kristina is not involved full-time at either farm, she still remains an active advocate for agriculture. She believes the industry serves a great purpose: Feeding people.

Kristina has taken over organizing and running the school education program, where approximately 1,500 fourth grade students are visited by a local Long Island farmer each year. Kristina hopes the program will teach healthy eating habits to children. She has also spent the last couple of years volunteering her time on the Young Farmer & Rancher committee, helping to organize dinners, speakers and farm tours that allow young farmers to network and socialize.

"This organization understands the importance of farming and advocates for the rights of farmers," said Kristina. "NYFB has taught me so much in my past few years on the board." Kristina works hard to share her knowledge of agriculture with everyone she meets. We look forward to working with her on Promotion & Education programs and projects.



---

## At Large Member — Klaus Busch

Delanson, N.Y. (Appeared in the June 2012 issue of *Grassroots*.)

Another strong voice for Promotion and Education is that of Klaus Busch, who has joined the State Committee in an at-large position. Klaus resides in Delanson, NY. He has been an active New York Farm Bureau member for five years, working as a NYFB Field Advisor for several years after his graduation from Cornell University. He currently works full-time as territory manager for DEKALB/ASGROW in Eastern NY/New England. Pursuing his passion for agriculture, his position provides a diverse territory where he has the opportunity to promote and educate for the leading corn and soybean brand for the Monsanto Company.

Klaus is also active on his farm. As a partner at Busch Farms, located in Knox, NY, where 400 acres of hay, straw, corn, and small grains are grown and marketed locally. They provide delivery as far as New York City. He also operates Valley Fresh Farm, in Wright, NY, as a vegetable delivery business ([www.valleyfreshfarm.com](http://www.valleyfreshfarm.com)).

As a general rule farmers are busy people, and Klaus' is no exception. With many avenues of interest, he keeps super busy and well-informed. He also serves as the Young Farmer and Rancher Chair, and Membership Chair for Albany County Farm Bureau. In addition, he is a member of the Upper Hudson Leadership Forum and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Growing up in agriculture and his involvement in a variety of roles within the sector, equips Klaus with a unique skills set and expertise that will play an important role within the Promotion and Education Committee.

When asked "Why is Farm Bureau important to you?" Klaus replied, "Farm Bureau provides a voice for agriculture and fosters a network for sharing ideas and uniting on issues." We are looking forward to a busy year, which will satisfy Klaus' affinity for sharing ideas and expanding his network as he fills the role of committee representative with a history of success for promoting and educating!



## At Large Member — David Teter

Clinton Corners, N.Y. (Appeared in the June 2009 issue of *Grassroots*.)

The NYFB Promotion and Education Committee is lucky to have an experienced ag promoter and educator as part of its team. Dave Teter, a well-known agricultural advocate from the Hudson Valley, brings his broadcasting expertise and Cooperative Extension background to become a super resource!

Born and raised on a family dairy/crop farm in the Finger Lakes, Dave's education continued at Cornell University. He worked as a Cornell Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agent for 31 years in Herkimer and Dutchess Counties. Today he is a Dutchess County resident with a long history of ag involvement.

Having served as Vice President of the Dutchess Putnam Westchester Farm Bureau, Dave is well acquainted with the many facets of the organization. In addition, he served as the District 10 State Promotion & Education Committee member for a full three terms, served on the State Annual Meeting Committee and is currently on the Membership Committee. After retiring from the ProEd Committee, he enjoyed a bit of a respite to work more on a local level and has been recently appointed to the At-Large position.

Dave is extremely active in a variety of roles such as Vice President of the Dutchess County IDA, Treasurer of the Pine Plains Vo Ag Advisory Board, the Dutchess County Ag Society, Vice President of the NYS Ag Society, Past President and Board Member of the Cornell CALS, and Past President and Outstanding Young Agent and Distinguished Service Award from the NYS County Ag Agents Association.

He also serves on the Witter Ag Museum Board, the Dutchess Land Conservancy, plus has donated his time, energy and assistance to many other organizations and events. He was recognized for his talents and dedication when presented with the Cornell CALS Outstanding Alumni Award.

Dave presently represents his town as Supervisor and enjoys his free time with his wife, Louise, and children Brian, Mike and Eric and his grandchildren Nick, Melanie, Aiden, Felicia and Cadence.

Dave feels that Farm Bureau is important as it is an organization that speaks up for farmers and agriculture and has clout

---

