



## **U.S. State Department Leadership Program brings European leaders to two Chenango County locations**

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New Berlin, NY Chenango County was recently host to policy experts, advisors, and leaders from Europe, taking part in the US State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). Through short-term visits to the U.S., current and emerging foreign leaders experience this country firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their American counterparts.

The leadership program, which traces its roots to 1940, aims to open communications and create mutual understanding between U.S. and Foreign citizens in leadership roles. Of the tens of thousands of participants, more than 335 are present or former Chiefs of State or Heads of government.

Upon the request of Ruth Ragonese, executive director of the International Center of Syracuse, Steven Palmatier, industrial and workforce development liaison, tailored the local itinerary to align with the program's focus on agriculture, trade, and U.S. food policy. International visitors typically start in Washington, D.C and travel to four U.S. communities over three weeks. Locally, tour stops included the Unadilla Valley Central School District's greenhouse and Marshman Dairy Farms in Oxford.

At the Unadilla Valley Central School the visitors were introduced to the Schools' Agriculture and Applied Science program. Both teachers and students offered presentations on approaches, applications, accomplishments, and outcomes. Outside the school, the visitors saw the greenhouse, student-built pond, composting site, forestry project, and other ongoing student projects. The visitors expressed a great deal of interest in the program and, during the several conversations with students throughout the tour, compared its hands-on approach favorably against the usual classroom experience.

"The opportunity to present to the International Visitor Leadership Program was the opportunity of a lifetime for my students," said Jessica DeVries, agriculture and technology educator at Unadilla Valley. "Being able to share their knowledge and skills with others is a valuable life skill that I strive to instill in all of my students. I am so proud of these young people and their passion for and ability to share their love for agriculture education and FFA."

The tour proceeded to Marshman Farms, where the visitors were able to experience a successful New York farm operation first-hand. Sheila and John Marshman, the farm's owners and operators, discussed a wide range of agriculture and dairy-related topics, from U.S. policy to international

markets. “The opportunity to interact, converse, and share ideas with policy makers, from other countries, was an excellent reminder of how fortunate we are to live in Chenango County; a rural community that is a model of the opportunities one can create for themselves and their family in the United States,” said Marshman. “We learned as much from our visitors as they did from us.”

A farm-to-table meal with ingredients from Cascun Farms in Greene, Norwich Meadows Farm in Norwich, Heidelberg Bread based in Hamilton, and cream from Kriemhild Dairy Farm in Herkimer awaited the visitors at the Wild Owl Café in Norwich. From there, the visitors headed to Commerce Chenango for two presentations. Chenango County senior planner Shane Butler, covered the goals of the Chenango County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, and the ways in which Chenango County; Cornell Cooperative Extension; Commerce Chenango; and Chenango County Soil and Water have pursued them. Topics included farmers markets, community supported agriculture, hops, honey, and maple. Sheila Marshman, who is also an associate professor at Morrisville State College, talked about agricultural economics or agronomics, which optimizes the production and distribution of food, and specifically deals with land usage. Potential new markets including hemp were also discussed.

Countries represented for the IVLP program were Bosnia/Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia and the United Kingdom.

For more information on the IVLP visit <https://eca.state.gov/ivlp>.

Organized in 1959, Commerce Chenango is a not-for-profit, community based organization dedicated to enhancing the economic growth of Chenango County and the surrounding area. Visit [www.chenangony.org](http://www.chenangony.org) for more information on Commerce Chenango services and programs.

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