



"Community connections are the source of our resilience."

Letter from the Executive Director

2025 has been a tumultuous year for the Cooperative Extension System, bringing to light our limitations and revealing our potential. The initial proposed federal budget threatened to cut funding for cooperative extension research entirely.

In early summer, we were called upon to make a case for our existence. Fortunately, overwhelming bipartisan pushback helped restore Smith-Lever funds. That moment demonstrated our national community's appreciation for the extension system and their unwillingness to let it fall victim to political crossfire.

Not all funding that we receive from the federal government fared so well. In the final version of the federal budget, the beloved SNAP-Ed nutrition education program was slashed. That funding supported nutrition education in Ulster County for the last thirty years. Because of this cut, we lost our SNAP-Ed nutrition educator, which affects thousands of participants countywide. Right now, we are grappling with the potential for further funding cuts that will jeopardize our ability to provide comprehensive programs to the county.

This year, CCE Ulster served 23,952 people. But numbers alone can't tell the whole story; you have to see it.

This year, we saw a 4-H'er's sense of awe and pride at her first County Fair, a participant's enthusiastic notetaking at a hands-on agroforestry training, a crowd's excitement at our sold-out Catskills Environmental and Research Monitoring Conference, and much more.

Community connections are the source of our resilience. The Farm Bureau stepped up with a strong message to advocate against federal cuts. The United Way of Ulster County executed an exciting inaugural fundraising event to support eight youth-serving organizations threatened by federal funding cuts. Dedicated volunteers wrote and called their Congressional representatives to share stories from their experiences with cooperative extension.

At CCE Ulster, we will continue to refine our strategy and adapt our work to be of service to our fellow Ulster County residents. We are eager to grow education and research opportunities for our communities in the areas of Food, People, and Environment. CCE Ulster **trains** new experts, **translates** research into the real-world, and **connects** communities who, too often, operate in isolation from each other.

It is an incredibly important time to stay connected. Join us. Donate, volunteer, sign up for our newsletters, call the Master Gardener Hotline, and come to a CCE event in 2026. We are stronger together.

Tara Talaber

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Melanie Forstrom

Executive Director

Direction

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Melanie Forstrom

Executive Director

Our Vision

Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County creates measurable change in order to positively affect Agriculture, Families, Youth, Environment, and Economic Development within communities.

Our Mission

Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research-based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

Our Values

Since 1913, Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County has linked university research, knowledge, and experiential learning to the needs and issues facing Ulster County residents.









Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for providing equal program and employment opportunities in accordance with applicable laws.

Execution

Administration

Melanie Forstrom Executive Director
Jenny Burkins Finance Manager
Tanya Jurcic Finance Coordinator
Caitlin Auchmoody Administrative Assistant
Charlie Pane Outreach & Engagement Manager
Pat Ogno Dingman Administrative Assistant

Development

Lauren Kruglinski Development Director
Aimee Trumbore Development Coordinator
Abby Bravo Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Hudson Valley Regional Shared Business Network

Roxanne Churchill Finance Lead
Leah Cadwallader Human Resources Lead
Lenora Grable Grant Finance Lead
Philip DeJan Information Technology Lead
Aaron Walden Information Technology, Regional

Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program

Leslie Zucker Issue Leader

Matt Savatgy Watershed Youth Educator

Max Kelly Watershed Educator

Sophie Grant Event Administrator

Carly Ghee Administrative Assistant

Salome (Sally) Rodgers Education Program Manager

Raychel Gilles Operations Coordinator

Shelly Savatgy Watershed Youth Educator

4-H Youth Development

Andrew Ruiz Issue Leader
Karri Paul FamilyEducation Coordinator
Faith Shultz Youth Educator
Lisa Morganstern-Perl Youth Educator
Alexandra DeStefano 4-H Program Coordinator

Food Systems, Health, & the Environment

(local team dedicated to serving Ulster County)

Christian Malsatzki Issue Leader, Field Crops Educator
Courtney ChurchillCommunityHorticultureEducator&
MasterGardenerVolunteerCoordinator

Ninette Warner SchoolWellnessCoordinator

Mary Brimmer SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator

Uliana Ahashkova SeniorAgricultureEducator: Marketing,Agritourism,EmergingMarkets

Kathryn Brignac Livestock& NaturalResources Educator
Anna Harrod-McGrew NaturalResources Educator

Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Team

(additional expert services available purchased by CCE Ulster)

Ethan Grundberg Vegetables
Elisabeth Hodgdon Vegetables
Elizabeth Higgins Business Management

Elizabeth Higgins Business Management

Mike Basedow Tree Fruit

Chuck Bornt Leader, Vegetables

Dan Donahue Tree Fruit

Teresa Rusinek Vegetables

Crystal Stewart-Courtens Vegetables

Jeremy Schuster Viticulture

Heather Kase Berries



Nutrition

For over 30 years, CCE Ulster provided free and low-cost educational workshops on food-related topics like food safety, nutrition, and healthy eating on a limited budget. Until September 30th of this year, this work was funded by SNAP-Ed, an initiative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that offered educational opportunities to promote healthy eating and exercise and improve access to affordable, nutritious food. The passage of this year's federal budget eliminated the SNAP-Ed program.





SNAP-Ed and the YMCA of Kingston & Ulster County teamed up to bring fun, food, and learning to afterschool students. Hands-on lessons made healthy eating exciting as kids prepared Tomato Bruschetta.

Despite being cut short, Ulster County's SNAP-Ed program reached over 1,300 people across Ulster County through 75 nutrition education workshops. The majority of these participants were youth, supported through partnerships with 38 local organizations.

Beyond direct education, the program advanced 11 community-level initiatives designed to create healthier environments—ranging from School Wellness Professional Development at Ellenville High School to Smarter Lunchroom efforts with the Kingston City School District and a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program in collaboration with Ellenville Regional Health Network and Peter's Market. These projects strengthened food security and food access across the county.

CCE Ulster and its regional partners remain dedicated to supporting communities and to building upon the meaningful progress achieved through SNAP-Ed.

Microplastics

Plastics are everywhere. They're in our bodies, in our water, and in our food. And the research is clear that microplastics harm our health. But CCE Ulster experts are here to help cut through the noise and provide analysis of the latest research from Cornell on environmental changes that impact our health.

This year, we partnered with New York Sea Grant to offer 14 free, specialized programs that simultaneously explained what we know about microplastics and provided solutions to curb plastic use for over 600 people. These events included a filtering water workshop for youth as young as kindergarten, a webinar series focused on microplastics research and solutions, as well as a workshop series educating people on reducing their plastic use during the holiday season.







School Wellness

For the past five years, CCE Ulster has partnered with the City of Kingston to administer the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) program. The need for health and wellness programming in Ulster County is high. 1 in 3 adults in our county do not eat fruits or vegetables daily and 17% of all children struggle with food insecurity. CCE Ulster works directly with Kingston City School District (KCSD) to increase access to healthy food and opportunities for children to be active.

In 2025, CCE Ulster facilitated 24 community events including Spinach Fest, a Big Apple Crunch, taste tests with local produce, and free community cooking workshops. We partnered with all 11 KCSD schools through facilitation of their District Wellness Committee and gave direct support to 5 schools that have their own Wellness Committee.



Meet Kate



Kate is the Principal of Chambers Elementary School. Chambers is able to partner with CCE Ulster thanks to the CHSC program. With guidance from CCE Ulster, the Chambers School Wellness Committee and Kate have worked to integrate health and wellness into every aspect of the school day. Under Kate's leadership Chambers has transformed its approach to food. Students now eat colorful, flavorful breakfasts and lunches, take part in the Harvest of the Month program – in which students try a new, locally grown fruit or veggie every month - and support teachers bringing fresh food into the classroom.

"Now we're offering kids fresh fruits and vegetables they've never tried before and they're excited. They want to try new things. We're opening up their minds and their taste buds."

- Kate

Wellness Committees are designed to meet the needs of their individual schools. CCE Ulster provides technical assistance and training to school staff and parents on how to create a healthier environment. Initiatives that these committed community members took on this year included building an interactive school walking trail, implementing a Harvest of the Month program, holding healthier celebrations that focus on fun over food, and increasing physical activity opportunities during recess before and after school. Our work led to 2 policy updates including one district wide and one at the school level.



4-H Youth Development

A historic and beloved program, 4-H is enacted at a county level in every state across the U.S. and in 70 countries around the world. Beginning in 1902, 4-H is the original youth-driven, out-of-school program that offers opportunities for children to **learn by doing.** Children who participate in 4-H score higher in outcome metrics around civic engagement, college and career readiness, healthy living, and science.

155 4-H YOUTH SERVED

11 CLUBS ACROSS ULSTER COUNTY

98_{4-H}
VOLUNTEERS

CCE Ulster's 4-H program provides the structure and the flexibility for kids to pursue a wide array of interest areas. Over the course of the program, kids research, design, and execute projects on everything from animal science to sewing to public speaking. These projects are developed with guidance from incredible community volunteers who serve as adult mentors and club leaders.

4-H is the best of both worlds; it is flexible enough to meet a wide variety of interests while also providing a strong structure in which our children and youth can thrive.











Meet Zackary

Zackary is an exemplary 4-H'er. Now in his 5th year, Zackary has taken advantage of the numerous opportunities this program has to offer. Deeply immersed in this year's Ulster County Fair, Zackary won 43 ribbons, 2 trophies - and in the Open Show, his rabbit won Best-in-Show.

Through 4-H, he was also able to pursue his interest in engineering. One of Zackary 's Fair entries was a pulse jet jar - a small model of a pulsejet engine made using a jam jar! A core part of the 4-H program is providing leadership opportunities. Zackary has attended three leadership conferences including the Annual



"In 4-H you don't follow a path, you make your own."
- Zackary

4-H Agri-Business Career Conference. Under the guidance of our dedicated 4-H staff and volunteers, youth like Zackary have a safe space to develop the practical, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills needed to flourish in school, work, and life.

In 2025, our 4-H program served 155 children and youth (ages 5-18) through 11 clubs across the county. We also facilitate agriculture literacy week which served 1,355 students this year across 75 classrooms totaling 118 hours of reading. The Ulster County Fair is CCE Ulster's biggest public-facing event. This year there were 256 static exhibits displayed in the youth building and 413 animal entries throughout the various barns.



Relatives as Parents Program

RAPP builds relationships with caregivers and children in kinship families with the purpose of creating a well-rounded community of support. In our community, grandparents often step up as caregivers.

Families in RAPP are viewed as unique. The primary objective of the program is to 'meet families where they are.' RAPP is welcoming, enthusiastic, and uses a compassionate approach with a high level of sensitivity and understanding to build a culture of trust, respect, and safety for families. This foundation keeps families involved in the Ulster RAPP program for extended periods of time. More than two thirds of the RAPP families have been participating in the program for three or more years.



RAPP includes in-person and virtual workshops on many important issues such as parenting, nutrition, financial literacy, and stress management. RAPP also offers support groups and fun community events. RAPP is a hub of resources and connection for families in need of referrals for mental health services, assistance with food security, housing, and wellness services such as vaccination programs. In 2025, RAPP served 75 individuals in 28 kinship families.

Sherry is a remarkable grandmother whose strength and compassion shine through every aspect of her life.

At the age of 70, Sherry is the primary caregiver for her two young grandchildren, ages 7 and 10, who were born with drug dependencies and faced the tragic loss of their parents due to overdose.

In the face of these hardships,
Sherry has stepped forward, committing herself wholeheartedly to
her family and her community. She
dedicates her time to transporting
individuals in recovery, advocates
passionately for addiction treatment
programs, and supports initiatives
that provide care for unhoused people struggling with mental health and
substance use.

Meet Sherry



For more than eight years, Sherry has been an active member of RAPP where she has become a trusted source of kindness, wisdom, and encouragement for other kinship caregivers. Her resilience, generosity, and unwavering commitment to helping others make her an extraordinary role model and an inspiration to all who know her.



Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Have a gardening question? Master Gardener Volunteers are here to help! The Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) program trains committed community liaisons to provide gardening expertise on topics ranging from invasive species to soil health. The MGV program is special because it provides personalized, science-based horticulture education to anyone in Ulster County who needs advice. CCE Ulster trains our MG volunteers through a rigorous 120-hour program and requires volunteers to complete 100 hours of service within two years of joining the program.

The Master Gardeners were everywhere this year including in local libraries and at popular community events like the Garlic Festival and the Ulster County Fair. They also offered dozens of in-person workshops and community events such as their annual Plant Swap and Pollinator Party. During the growing season, folks with questions can call the Master Gardener Hotline. This year, the phone rang off the hook. Volunteers answered over 776 calls, emails, and walk-in visits.

Volunteers are committed to continually learning and sharing that knowledge with their neighbors. This year, volunteers served 3,334 Ulster County residents with over 3,600 hours of service. This service provides a \$125,244 investment in the local economy, supporting Ulster County's economic vitality.



Meet Dawn



A long-time Kingston resident, Dawn gives back to her community by providing horticultural education. Dawn joined the program five years ago to dig deeper into her love of gardens. She has thrived and grown through the program, exemplifying the beauty of volunteerism.

Dawn is one of 72 Master Gardeners who donate a minimum of 50 hours per year, offering expertise at various workshops and outreach events. Dawn does all of this on top of a busy schedule of running a cut flower farm, developing her own cultivar of dahlia, and being a mom.

"Knowledge should be for everybody. When I get to share my passion for gardening and spark that passion in someone else, it's so rewarding. The heart of the program is giving back to our community."

- Dawn







Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program

AWSMP works in partnership with communities to protect and restore stream corridor stability and ecosystem integrity in the Ashokan Reservoir watershed. This watershed includes the upper Esopus Creek, Bushkill, and other streams draining into New York City's Ashokan Reservoir.

AWSMP is a joint effort between CCE Ulster, the Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. These three agencies work collaboratively to maintain the health of streams in the watershed.

The program works to improve stream stability and reduce erosion threats to water quality and infrastructure, mitigate potential damage from flooding, and enhance aquatic and riparian habitat. AWSMP delivers programs to educate and inform the community about stream stewardship best management practices, and coordinates stream management activities in the watershed.

Stream assessments and stream management provide the basis for the program's activities. In addition, the stream program delivers a flood mitigation program that assists municipalities with identifying the causes and solutions to flooding in population centers. In 2025, AWSMP offered more than 500 events and educational opportunities to nearly 1,800 youth and adults including students, teachers, landowners, professionals and municipal officials.





As administrator for the Town of Woodstock's Planning Board, Melissa needed information to help the town implement local wetlands and watercourses policies. Enter CCE Ulster!

AWSMP offered Melissa a scholarship to the NY State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NYSFSMA) conference where she learned the latest floodplain management strategies.

Melissa also completed a Floodplain Administrator Basic Training series that we offered in partnership with the Ulster County Department of Environment.

Now, she uses Flood Insurance Rate Maps, assists landowners, and inte-

Meet Melissa



grates standards for community flood resilience. Our resources have been invaluable to Melissa's work with the Town Board, New York City, and the state.

"Attending the NYSFSMA conference is extremely helpful for me every day in presenting, vetting and preparing wetland and watercourse permits within the town. The more knowledge I have, the better I can perform my responsibilities to the Planning Board."

- Melissa





Agriculture

Our agriculture programs provide research-based information to the farming community through fielding inquiries, visiting farms, and offering numerous educational events. Our efforts strengthen the local food system and foster environmental sustainability practices which ensure the economic and environmental resilience of Ulster County's farming industry for generations to come.

Ulster County is one of New York's most important agricultural regions. Our team supports crop production by empowering farmers to make well-informed decisions that work for their specific needs. This year we connected directly with 16,737 farmers, community members, and small business owners on topics including field crop production, variety selection, disease pressure, and pest management.





CCE Ulster educators provided local farmers with best practices in management and production practices. For example, this year we continued our New and Beginning Farmers series, which covered pasture management, forages, meat science, and regulations for chickens, cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats.

Meet Cari



Cari and Jason started Heirloom Farm in 2015 with fruits, vegetables, 3 Icelandic sheep, 2 llamas, and 20 chickens.

"We hadn't raised livestock before and needed support. A farmer we knew pointed us toward CCE Ulster. Jason signed up for one of your programs on raising sheep, and that was a game changer for us."

Cari and Jason continued attending workshops on poultry, sheep and goat diseases, and managing floodplains. This year they hosted our FAMACHA training on assessing sheep and goat health. Now, they're certified in using this valuable system to make decisions about treating and managing their herd.

"Access to hands-on-learning from CCE experts has been priceless to us."

As their knowledge has grown, so has their farm. Today they have 45 sheep and 400 chickens and sell produce, eggs, wool products and other handmade items.

"The resources and support [CCE Ulster] provided gave us the confidence to expand our farm and our business."

- Cari







We assist farmers with business planning, direct-to-consumer marketing strategies, creating value-added products, and acquiring licensing. Our agritourism resources help increase profits while preserving important agricultural traditions. We offer support with everything from getting started in agritourism, to risk management, to visitor health and safety guidelines.

This year we hosted our first annual Cut Flower Conference, which sold out. Cut flower farming is currently the fastest growing farming industry in the Hudson Valley, reflecting a national trend toward sustainably produced and locally sourced ornamentals. New York state ranks #6 in floriculture sales in the U.S.

With an eye toward sustainability, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, better energy efficiency, and increased farm resilience, CCE Ulster agriculture specialists and educators closely monitor the rapidly changing environment farmers are working within. We connect farmers with the latest research and best practices; our specialists help growers face the challenges of climate change. This year we hosted a variety of events on agroforestry – a climate smart farming method that integrates trees and shrubs into traditional agricultural systems.

Meet Colin



20 years ago, Colin - a farmer and owner of Wrights Farm in Gardiner - started looking for opportunities to diversify his business. A longtime homebrewer, Colin decided to try something new - growing barley and rye for beer. In 2011, he

connected with CCE Ulster's agriculture specialists. Since then, our staff have been a trusted source of information for Colin, helping him choose grain variety, identify disease, and connect with other growers.

Farmers like Colin are grappling with the impact of socio-economic shifts and climate change. In the Hudson Valley we are seeing an increase in pest and disease pressure; apples are becoming especially difficult to grow.

Meanwhile, economic changes have presented further challenges to our farmers. Colin has successfully met the moment with his widely popular brewery, the Gardiner Brewing Company. Today, he sells delicious craft beer made from grains and hops grown on Wrights Farm.

"I had an issue this year with mummy kernels on our Excelsior Gold malting barley. [The CCE Ulster agriculture team] came out to look at it and was able to tell me the problem. It's really helpful to have someone I can just call up - it's a great hub of information."

- Colin

Climate and Emergency Preparedness

The Hudson Valley's climate is changing faster than national and global averages. We are seeing an increase in volatile weather patterns, specifically flooding and extreme heat. To help our community prepare for worsening climate change, CCE Ulster collaborates with the state and county government to provide lawmakers with the tools they need to implement effective policy. This effort is a combination of research, demonstration, and educational outreach projects.

Our experts work closely with municipalities to develop policy that not only helps address extreme weather but also opens up those local governments to funding opportunities from New York State. This work is critical and can only be done on a local level. **CCE Ulster acts as Ulster County's boots on the ground for climate resilience and emergency preparedness.** This year, our work resulted in a heat emergency plan and comprehensive emergency preparedness plan for the Town of Hurley and new disaster preparedness webpages and printed materials for Town of Ulster and for Ulster County.





Meet Kristen

As a member of the Town of Hurley's Conservation Advisory Committee, Kristen wondered how to address climate change at the community level.

Through the Partners for Climate Action Local Champions Pilot Program, Kristen met CCE Ulster staff. We helped her navigate climate resilience policies and create a strategy to reduce the town's greenhouse gas emissions. This led to the Town receiving a Bronze Certification from the NYS Climate Smart Communities program and becoming eligible for NYS funding opportunities.

Today, Hurley is an Emergency Response District with an official heat emergency plan and a neighbor-to-neighbor community support strategy to protect people during extreme heat events.



Kristen (far left) and the Town of Hurley Conservation Advisory Committee.

"We could not have accomplished this without the scientific expertise and logistical guidance [CCE Ulster] provided... CCE Ulster helped us realize that dream. The actions we're taking now will truly make a difference for our community." - Kristen



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To invest in our shared community, visit our website (ulster. cce.cornell.edu/donate), send a check made out to "Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County" to our office (232 Plaza Road, Kingston, NY 12401), or scan the code below.



Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County (EIN 14-6036893) is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)3 of the federal tax code. Your donation is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law pursuant to IRC § 170(c). You may wish to seek independent legal and tax advice regarding the deductibility of your gift.



Position & Activities

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

12 Months Ended 09/30/2025		
ASSETS	2025	2024
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalent	\$3,330,670.92	\$2,155,127.43
Accounts Receivable	\$184,913.22	\$279,919.13
Short Term Investments	\$524,267.58	\$16,611.22
Prepaid Expenses	\$23,520.62	\$24,106.46
Advances	\$200.00	\$200.00
Total Current Assets	\$4,063,572.34	\$2,475,964.24
Deposits	\$115,778.00	\$111,474.00
Rights-of-use Assets	\$273,034.26	\$158,002.16
Fixed Assets	\$46,517.24	\$57,825.51
Total Assets	\$4,498,901.84	\$2,803,265.91
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts Payable	\$198,085.54	\$251,811.75
Accrued Expenses	\$55,604.99	\$58,176.32
Deferred Income	\$2,417,625.65	\$995,328.19
Operating Leases Current	\$116,289.42	\$64,023.73
Total Current Liabilities	\$2,787,605.60	\$1,369,339.99
Operating Leases Non-Current	\$156,744.83	\$93,978.43
Total Liabilities	\$2,944,350.43	\$1,463,318.42
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$1,518,123.62	\$1,301,621.38
With Donor Restrictions	\$36,427.79	\$38,326.11
Total Net Assets	\$1,554,551.41	\$1,339,947.49
Total Liabilities and		

\$4,498,901.84

\$2,803,265.91

Net Assets

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

12 Months Ended 09/30/2025		
SUPPORT and REVENUES	2025	2024
Federal	\$147,870.37	\$167,829.46
New York State	\$1,381,492.87	\$1,137,010.58
Grants and Contracts	\$467,758.41	\$295,163.14
County Appropriation and Contracts	\$2,199,512.47	\$1,334,584.47
Contributions	\$22,554.43	\$8,750.62
Total Support	\$4,219,188.55	\$2,943,338.27
Revenues		
Investment Income	\$13,358.34	\$1,035.83
Program & Regional Fees	\$299,880.16	\$216,969.20
Fundraising and Events	\$64,882.35	\$71,860.28
Other Revenues	-\$2,419.38	\$4,866.73
Total Unrestricted Support and		
Revenues	\$4,594,890.02	\$3,238,070.31
EXPENSES		
EXPENSES Salaries and Benefits	\$2,908,711.29	\$2,300,469.56
	\$2,908,711.29 \$1,433,795.47	\$2,300,469.56 \$836,955.56
Salaries and Benefits		
Salaries and Benefits Program and Operating	\$1,433,795.47	
Salaries and Benefits Program and Operating Depreciation	\$1,433,795.47 \$11,308.27	\$836,955.56
Salaries and Benefits Program and Operating Depreciation Non Operating Exp (Prior Period)	\$1,433,795.47 \$11,308.27	\$836,955.56 \$4,950.00
Salaries and Benefits Program and Operating Depreciation Non Operating Exp (Prior Period)	\$1,433,795.47 \$11,308.27	\$836,955.56 \$4,950.00
Salaries and Benefits Program and Operating Depreciation Non Operating Exp (Prior Period) Transfer to Plant (Vehicle)	\$1,433,795.47 \$11,308.27 \$26,471.07	\$836,955.56 \$4,950.00 \$30,350.93

