



**Cornell University**  
**Cooperative Extension**  
**Schoharie County**

173 South Grand Street  
Cobleskill, New York 12043  
t. 518.234.4303  
t. 518.296.8310  
f. 518.234.4305

**For Immediate release**  
**Contact David Cox, Ag Program Leader at (518) 234-4303**

The Central New York Agricultural Council (CNYAC) announces the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rural Issues: Community Leadership Conference, “*Agriculture IS Economic Development*” to be held April 6, 2011 at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown, NY. This conference will focus on agriculture as an economic driving force in rural communities and demonstrate how municipalities can best position their planning and policy making activities to stimulate agricultural development. The workshops will provide local officials innovative tools and a framework to implement agricultural economic development projects. Courses may qualify for approval by local governments for fulfilling requirements for Training of Municipal Planning and Zoning Officials (Chapter 662, Laws of 2006). CNYAC is a consortium of agricultural professionals, economic developers and county planners dedicated to increasing agricultural viability and awareness in this region. CNYAC encompasses eight counties, including Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery, Otsego, Oneida, and Schoharie. These counties network to find common ground and collaborate on regional agricultural development projects.

Conference keynote speaker Shanna Ratner of Yellow Wood Associates will speak about Rural Community Economic Development and Ag is Economic Development while additional breakout sessions will discuss the Municipality’s Role – Bringing it all Together, Innovative Ideas for Saving Local Governments and Supporting Agribusiness, Balancing Rural Preservation and Smart Growth, Municipal Guidance for Natural Gas Drilling, and Trends and Opportunities in Agriculture and What You Can Do.

Conference registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and will conclude at 4:15 p.m. with a silent auction gift basket drawing. A local products breakfast, lunch and mid-day refreshments will be provided. Conference registration is \$35 per person

*Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities*

(registration deadline is March 25<sup>th</sup>). Please contact David Cox (CNYAC) at Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County (518) 234-4303 or 296-8310, or email [schoharie@cornell.edu](mailto:schoharie@cornell.edu) to receive a conference brochure or go to [cnyac.weebly.com](http://cnyac.weebly.com) to download the registration form. Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County provides equal program and employment opportunities.

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