

Feedback from Previous 3 Year NY State Courage & Renewal Program “Reconnecting with Purpose”

The following feedback was compiled from these former participants:

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Aaron Ristow	American Farmland Trust	Jamillah El Bey	Gardener, Health and Wellness Educator
Adrienne Traub	Seven Valleys Health Coalition	Janet van Zoeren	Lake Ontario Fruit, CCE
Alice Varon	Certified Naturally Grown	JASON EDWARD HEITMAN	Green Jeans Market Farm
Amanda Henning	CCE Niagara	Jawhara Taitt	N/a
Amara Dunn	NYS Integrated Pest Management Program	Jeanne W Lawless	Cornell University Department of Public and Ecosystem Health
Anu Rangarajan	Cornell Small Farms Program	Jen Regan	CCE-Niagara
Ariana Taylor-Stanley	Here We Are Farm / National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Kartharhy G.	Regenerative Ag & Runanomics, K'allam'p USA & ECU
Barb Neal	CCE Tioga	Kate Cowie-Haskell	Farm Commons
Bari Zeiger	National Young Farmers Coalition, Greater Catskills Young Farmers, Northeast SARE, Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute, CCE Sullivan, Frost Valley YMCA	Kate Miller-Corcoran	Rural Health Network of SCNY
Ben Crockett	Berkshire Agricultural Ventures	Katelyn Walley-Stoll	Cornell University, Cooperative Extension, Southwest New York Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program
Beth Leipler	Providence Farm Collective Corp.	Katie Nuber	EquiCenter
Bethany Wallis	Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York Inc.	Katie Pfohl	mass-ave project
Beverly Abplanalp	Catharpin Farm Circle of Friends	Kimerly Cornish	Co-facilitator
Bree Bacon	Niagara Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	Laura McDermott	CCE ENYCHP
Caitlin Tucker	CCE Cornell Vegetable Program	Liz Alexander	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chemung County
Chris Kaplan-Walbrecht	Garden of Eve Organic Farm & market	Lucy Spence	Refugee and Immigrant Self Empowerment Syracuse Refugee Agriculture Program
Christian Aponte	Grow NYC	Marcia Eames-Sheavly	Co-facilitator
Cimbria Badenhausen	First Circle	Margaret Dunn-Carver	New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Claudia Navas	Farm School NYC	Mary Godnick	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Essex County, Adirondack Harvest
Crystal Stewart Courtens	Cornell Cooperative Extension	Mary McClelland	Granny Smith Lane Podcast
Dana Havas	CCE Cortland Co	MaryJo Lane	MJ Creative Gardens, CCE
DeVonne Jackson	Positive Obsession	Maya Marie	KCC Urban Farm

Diana Albarran Sollohub	Sollohub Family Farm	Meliq August	STEAM URBAN & Urban Agriculture Cooperative
Elias Martinez	Kubed Root	Melissa MacKinnon	Schenectady Urban Farms
Elizabeth Higgins	Cornell Cooperative Extension Eastern NY Commercial Hort Team	Michael Nelson	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cattaraugus
Elizabeth Winn	Phillies bridge farm project/ Kingston farmers market	Mildred Alvarado	Cornell Small Farms Program
Erica Frenay	Cornell Small Farms Program	Nina Saeli	Cornell Small Farms Program/Farm Ops
Erin Summerlee	Rural Health Network of South Central NY	Patrice Lockert Anthony	Black Label Consulting and Coaching
Glen Robertson	Challenge Workforce Solutions	Petra Page-Mann	Fruition Seeds
Heather Wodehouse	Phillies Bridge Farm Project	Raju Rajan	ReWild Long Island
Héctor Gerardo	SEAmarron Farmstead, LLC	Rich Taber	CCE Chenango
Himaneer Gupta	Empire State College and Squash Villa Farm	Richard Woodbridge	Agricultural Business Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
INSHIK LEE	Landowner, Educator	Ruth Knight	Organic Consultant Inc
Jacob Gigler-Caro	Salt City Harvest Farm	Theresa McMahon	Farm Net Consultant
Jacqueline Roytman	SNAP to Grow Urban Farm		

1. “The most important takeaway of “Reconnecting with Purpose” was to realize that I have colleagues, in Cornell Extension and generally affiliated with the NY food industry, who are willing and interested to be vulnerable and to support each other in such a open manner to strive toward a better world. It is easy to get bogged down in day to day drama and tasks, and to forget that there are other people struggling with similar goals and challenges who are able and willing to be there for each other.”
2. “I had lost some of my confidence in my ability to make an effective and lasting change in my community and my nation. This retreat allowed me to see that not only is it possible, but, that I can do it easier than I thought.”
3. “Reconnecting with Purpose has reminded why I am so passionate about sustainable food systems and how excited I am to dive head first further into the field for my own benefit and the benefit of the individuals I work to support.”
4. “I still feel so held and kept from the program. The level of care displayed was deeply internalized. The excitement of “Reconnecting with Purpose” has already cleared/ redirected my mind in immeasurable ways from listening and connecting with each participant.”
5. “This is a really important program for helping our food system stay sustainable because so many educators and farmers are just so burned out and it’s because of more than all the work we got to do. A lot of times it’s because we have forgotten to keep the things that give us life in our lives and work.”

6. "The program provided an opportunity to practice listening skills, to talk with people outside of their immediate professional circle, to learn how to discuss interpersonal topics in a professional manner – all of these are so important to a successful work life and even more important to a successful leader."
7. "I'm passionate about the work I do and the folks I get to work with, but "Reconnecting with Purpose" has really supported my journey in taking a look at myself outside of productivity and external expectations."
8. "The Reconnecting with Purpose program gave me incredible insight into the passion and strength of individuals in the food systems field. It also inspired me to become a productive member of this community to support and advocate for local food producers."
9. "I feel less alone with many of the burdens I feel in my job and I feel as if I have the tools to help alleviate some of those burdens."
10. "Allowing time (and instruction!) to listen and be listened to was honestly profound. It was also great to have time allotted for introspection and encouragement to explore both the issues and beauty of what we experience and who we are."
11. "The space for reflection allowed me to take a good long look at myself and learn some new things. I feel very connected with where I am at this moment and where I want to go and that is hard to do in the everyday grind of life."
12. "I feel the greatest benefit is that I know, better, how to balance not only my work and life, but also my emotional health and wellbeing in regards to my work. I am less afraid to bring to the table more of who I am to what I do – I know it is a muscle that will take practice (and thankfully we had regular practice during the project). I am willing to let my programs become less about ticking boxes and more about making differences in people's lives (yes evaluation is still an important factor to measure how my work impacts others – but I recognize that there is more to be considered than qualitative data in our work)."
13. "It has inspired me to take on new and exciting roles that I admittedly have butterflies about taking on, but believe that not only is this work important but that I have a responsibility and opportunity to help guide this work."
14. "I really appreciated the comradery and relationship building with others in my field or similar fields, who have similar perspective to me and who I would not have come into contact with or gotten to know otherwise. I also really appreciated the safe environment and ability to share things I am usually uncomfortable talking about, especially in a "work" setting."
15. "It's truly bewildering how in the midst of a pandemic and virtual everything that I've still managed to connect deeply with so many wonderful individuals that share similar passions and hopes for their work. It's been an honor to learn about others' journeys and projects. This project has really added perspective to my work and influenced the expectations I set on myself."

16. "Reconnecting with Purpose" is a missing link in our world and in our professions, one that we definitely need to nurture and pay attention to."
17. "I have experienced an impasse in building my community of supporters. The workshop helped me realize that I was being too transactional in my assessment of who to include in my community. During the workshop I discovered that by putting aside transactional criteria and focusing on commonality of needs and aspirations I was able to help and be helped by others that I previously would not have thought to initiate a dialog with."
18. "The biggest takeaway has been realizing the need and desire to meld my social life with my professional life more intimately in order to fully manifest my true potential."
19. "The workshop helped me recognize the value of accepting and sharing help. It helped me understand how to honor the privacy and dignity of others when exploring inner thoughts and feelings."
20. "The Retreat was a safe community for me to release what I have been holding deep within the depths of your mind and a space to be open to receive the offerings and wisdom of other likeminded and compassionate community members."
21. "More so now than before I'm working towards just being. I'm passionate about the work I do and the folks I get to work with, but "Reconnecting with Purpose" has supported my journey in taking a look at myself outside of productivity and external expectations."
22. "Unlike other programs designed for networking and community building, Reconnecting with Purpose (RwP) open the space to honesty and trust at the individual and professional level. I have experienced that it is through this mechanism that we can relearn how to listen and regenerate empathy while slowing down in/our effort to be reactive in providing advice or trying to change the mind of others. Also, open and thoughtful questions create a sense of leaning on each other rather than feeling the burden, and these emotional, design thinking experiences help me improve my cultural competence talks."
23. "The program has given me permission to say yes to things that benefit myself as a whole person, not just the compartments I had been functioning in. In doing so it has also opened me to see things again and truly take time to appreciate the wonder and beauty around me."
24. "This educational program directly benefited my quality of life. I learned a great deal about myself and how I can bring more of my whole-self to my food system development work. It helped me manage burnout and also identify areas of my work that I want to further pursue."
25. "I have a better sense of what is important to me in my work. It's not just the type of work that I want to do, but the kind of environment where I want to work in and the people I want to be surrounded by."
26. The relationships created that helped me to reflect inwardly and outwardly and how they have affected my leadership. I used to think that my thoughts on food access and farming viability were outlandish and that there

weren't many people who were interested in thinking outside the box about connecting farmers and consumers, clearly untrue. It's like we each had a spark and we're lighting up NY and the Northeast with our ideas and connection and love of land and our fellow humans who use it. Knowing that I would be connecting monthly with my PLC carried me through some times when I had to be brave and offer a sense of having a support system.

27. The most impactful portions of this work would have to be the community support and engagement that is created, as well as having time and space to reflect in the present upon personal experiences with similar pathed individuals. It was extremely powerful to have come into such a diverse group, not knowing anyone or their stories, but now having connections and stories to tell about this community.
28. The most important benefit was giving humans the time and space to connect deeper by learning to ask the right questions to ourselves and others that foster our own intuition as the best guidance.
29. The best part of Reconnecting with Purpose was the spaciousness in which we were able to be and share about what we were holding onto, plus the moments of creativity and reflection. I also really appreciated connecting with people from a range of ages, geographical backgrounds, and work settings/titles- though all centered around food systems or farming. I feel the we are strengthening an interconnected web. The alumni are Interconnecting with Purpose.
30. The most significant benefit of the RCWP retreat was building the skill of deep inquiry that fostered inner wisdom among and between participants. It provided a container for building trust in oneself to be vulnerable while generously holding space for others to do the same. It was such a gift to step out of the hustle and bustle to reflect, recalibrate, and nourish my body with fresh air, joyful movement, and delicious food!
31. I developed a deeper connection and understanding of myself and how my skills and abilities can benefit others, how to LISTEN and support anyone, beautiful network of peers, support in blending professional and personal components of the self in order to show up authentically for others/community, life long communication and friendship skills.