Ben Roosa  
Science of Natural and Environmental Systems, ’14

CALS NYS Internship Program 2013  
Cornell Cooperative Extension Chenango County

Personal Information

Academic and Professional Interests: Ecology, Education/outreach  
Internship Goals: To contribute positively to the CCE mission and make a positive impact on the community while forging meaningful connections and personal insights.

Host Profile

CCE Chenango is one of fifty-seven county-based organizations affiliated with Cornell University that works to apply Cornell research to positively impact communities throughout the state. CCE Chenango’s primary areas of focus include dairy farming, crop farming, gardening, nutrition, horticulture, and 4-H.

Internship Responsibilities

My official title at CCE was Invasive Species Outreach and Education Intern. However, in light of the urgent threat of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) which was found just outside the county about a month before the internship began, my role focused almost exclusively on this invasive pest that kills all native ash trees. In order to raise awareness about EAB and provide responses to the problem, I wrote a press release for local papers, created an informational video, created a brochure of resources and contacts, and met with local government officials to discuss options and precautions for municipalities.

Community Demographics

The Demographic data of Chenango County and the City of Norwich show a declining, homogenously white population with a low income distribution and variable age statistics, as can be seen in the graphs to the left. At first look this appears a little discouraging as it might be difficult for a young professional to break into such a small, homogenous community. However, the decreasing median age within the city offers hope that young professionals are managing to successfully enter the community.

Community Engagement

The community has a number of great aspects. Some of the highlights include fantastic and plentiful natural capital—from fields to forests to rivers, a vibrant arts/music culture punctuated by numerous festivals and concerts, and a great small town feel that is welcoming and homey.

Youth Retention and Attraction Suggestions

Overall, I think that Norwich is a fantastic community which offers a lot of great assets to people of all ages including young professionals. I do not believe that the community should completely overhaul itself in order to attract hordes of young people as this would take away from some of its greatest qualities. That being said, youth attraction/retention has been identified as a problem and thus begs a solution. I would recommend that the city of Norwich stay true to its roots and culture as it is a really unique and great place. Instead of making drastic changes to appeal to the masses; perhaps the best method for appealing to young professionals would be to focus on maintaining, improving, and promoting its current strengths as well as shoring up the areas in which it is weakest. Specific ideas include: the creation of bike lanes to support individuals who might not have a vehicle or whom may choose not to use one; promotion of natural capital that many young people like to explore through things like the guide to the rivers of Chenango County that CCE produced; opportunity for casual learning such as an informal, community-based lecture series; improved nightlife by way of fresh alternatives such as outdoor movie showings, the lecture series already mentioned, or a young professionals meet-up at local bars; and more community-building events possibly similar to Streets Alive Ithaca which shuts down traffic in parts of downtown Ithaca and allows the community to walk, bike, rollerblade, or whatever else while enjoying each others company and various booths set up by community organizations or residents.

CCE Chenango is one of fifty-seven county-based organizations affiliated with Cornell University that works to apply Cornell research to positively impact communities throughout the state. CCE Chenango’s primary areas of focus include dairy farming, crop farming, gardening, nutrition, horticulture, and 4-H.

Internship Responsibilities

My official title at CCE was Invasive Species Outreach and Education Intern. However, in light of the urgent threat of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) which was found just outside the county about a month before the internship began, my role focused almost exclusively on this invasive pest that kills all native ash trees. In order to raise awareness about EAB and provide responses to the problem, I wrote a press release for local papers, created an informational video, created a brochure of resources and contacts, and met with local government officials to discuss options and precautions for municipalities.

Community Demographics

The Demographic data of Chenango County and the City of Norwich show a declining, homogenously white population with a low income distribution and variable age statistics, as can be seen in the graphs to the left. At first look this appears a little discouraging as it might be difficult for a young professional to break into such a small, homogenous community. However, the decreasing median age within the city offers hope that young professionals are managing to successfully enter the community.

Community Engagement

The community has a number of great aspects. Some of the highlights include fantastic and plentiful natural capital—from fields to forests to rivers, a vibrant arts/music culture punctuated by numerous festivals and concerts, and a great small town feel that is welcoming and homey.

Youth Retention and Attraction Suggestions

Overall, I think that Norwich is a fantastic community which offers a lot of great assets to people of all ages including young professionals. I do not believe that the community should completely overhaul itself in order to attract hordes of young people as this would take away from some of its greatest qualities. That being said, youth attraction/retention has been identified as a problem and thus begs a solution. I would recommend that the city of Norwich stay true to its roots and culture as it is a really unique and great place. Instead of making drastic changes to appeal to the masses; perhaps the best method for appealing to young professionals would be to focus on maintaining, improving, and promoting its current strengths as well as shoring up the areas in which it is weakest. Specific ideas include: the creation of bike lanes to support individuals who might not have a vehicle or whom may choose not to use one; promotion of natural capital that many young people like to explore through things like the guide to the rivers of Chenango County that CCE produced; opportunity for casual learning such as an informal, community-based lecture series; improved nightlife by way of fresh alternatives such as outdoor movie showings, the lecture series already mentioned, or a young professionals meet-up at local bars; and more community-building events possibly similar to Streets Alive Ithaca which shuts down traffic in parts of downtown Ithaca and allows the community to walk, bike, rollerblade, or whatever else while enjoying each others company and various booths set up by community organizations or residents.

Emerald Ash Borer Video (above) and Brochure (right).