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COMMUNITY CONFERENCE EXPLORES FUTURE OF FARMING

February 13, 2012 - Craryville, NY --- Farming our Future will take place on Saturday, February 25 at Taconic Hills Central School from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. This inaugural conference is geared towards all who are interested in exploring the future of farming in our community, including local and regional farmers, educators, farmers' market managers, agricultural students, providers of goods and services, and consumers. The conference engages the agriculture community to think about its work toward growing food, farms, and community in the context of a rapidly changing local, regional, and global food system. The cost to attend the conference is \$20 per person for adults and \$10 per person for students, with advance registration

Steffen Schneider, Director of Farm Operations at Hawthorne Valley Farm, will give the keynote address **Agri-culture 3.0: An Agricultural Narrative for the Future**, followed by a panel moderated by Schneider. Joining the panel discussion will be: Amy Cotler - Farm to Table Advocate and Food Writer, Bruce Davenport - fourth generation farmer at Davenport Farms, Ian Perry - 9th Grade Student and President of the HARVEST Club, Taconic Hills CSD and Ellen Poggi, now in her third growing season at Hand Hollow Farm.

The afternoon is primarily devoted to a series of workshops that participants can learn more information about specific topics. Farmers in the Hudson Valley will benefit from a variety of workshops including **Farmland Accessibility Challenges and Opportunities**, hosted by The Columbia Land Conservancy and the **Lender's Panel: Learning About Accessing Credit**, hosted by The Carrot Project, Farm Service Agency and Farm Credit East.

Revitalizing Our Communities Through Food and Agriculture will explore projects in towns like Philmont, Copake and New Lebanon along with inspiring programs from around the United States. "We will discuss current ideas from our own communities to revitalize our towns," says Karyn Novakowski, Panel Facilitator and local food advocate. "Then we will explore how to move those ideas into action through collaboration, education and community outreach."

In celebration of the "International Year of Cooperatives" as declared by a resolution by the United Nations, Rondout Valley Growers' President Bruce Davenport will lead a discussion entitled: **Sharing Resources - The Cooperative Way**. Davenport will talk about what led to this collaboration amongst farmers, how it got started and how members of this collaboration work together now.

Matching food to market takes skill. Amy Cotler Author and Food Writer will cover the many options of wholesale and direct to consumers approaches in the workshop entitled: **The Right Fit: Matching Food and Farm to Market**.



Columbia County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board has been working diligently over the past year to revise and prepare a farmland protection plan for Columbia County. The Board sought input from residents in the county to assist them in developing the vision and goals for the plan. After synthesizing the collected information, the Board has prepared a draft document containing some of the parts that will be in the plan. In the workshop entitled: **Farmland Protection Plan - Where Are We Now?** Todd Erling and Mary Anne Johnson from Hudson Valley Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation will provide an opportunity for county residents to get a first glimpse of what may be contained in the Farmland Protection Plan and provide input.

The Youth Workshop - **Building Tomorrow's Leaders** will explore the impacts of current legislation, and real life agriculture scenarios will be worked out through team activities.

The "World Café" portion of the program will provide opportunities for attendees to gather around topics of common interest, share collaborative dialogue, share knowledge and create possibilities for action.

Exhibitors and sponsorships are encouraged. Sponsors to date include: Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Hudson Valley Clean Energy, Register Star and KeyBank. Proceeds from the conference, will go toward Taconic Hill's award winning H.A.R.V.E.S.T. Club, (Healthy Agricultural Resources by Volunteers & Educators in Science & Technology) a program that engages youth in the process of growing healthy fruits, flowers and vegetables in a school based garden, and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

The full schedule along with registration information can be found online at www.farmingourfuture.org

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