Agricultural leaders and college students from across the northeastern United States came together at the 68th Cooperative Leaders Forum to enhance leadership skills and expand knowledge of issues confronting today’s cooperative enterprises. Lee Rubin, former Penn State football player and human resource consultant was the featured speaker at the Upcoming Leaders breakfast. He encouraged students to set goals and reach a little higher to achieve personal and professional success. Following breakfast Rubin presented the “Five Components of Extraordinary Teams.” He mentioned, “Teams exist because there is a challenge or opportunity too big for one person to handle alone.” He identified the components as the “glue” that moves a group of highly talented individuals to greater success. The components include a competitive spirit, agreement on common goals, communication skills, chemistry (trust/respect), and consistent performance. He demonstrated how each of us can see the same thing but interpret it differently and that in spite of our differences, complete strangers share commonalities.

Mary Nowak, Director of Government Affairs, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives provided a “Washington Update.” She noted that the President’s use of Twitter is a tool to circumvent “fake” news and that both the Executive and Legislative branches have low approval ratings. Usually the party in power looses seats during mid-term elections but it is unlikely that the Democrats would pick up all the “toss up” seats in the House and Republicans most likely would maintain the edge in the Senate. She suggested that, “In a time of disruption and polarization, if progress on a range of issues is going to be made, we need to reinforce relationships with key allies and spur grassroots engagement to enlarge our coalition.” Key positions at USDA remain unfilled with many without named nominations. The President is especially proud of the tax reform legislation that was passed and signed into law. She noted that Section 199A in the new law would most likely be amended. Immigration reform is stymied by DACA and funding for the proposed wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Regarding NAFTA, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico had worked through many of the least controversial issues through the first 6 rounds of negotiations but talks are now more difficult with the thornier issues. There is urgency to move forward as all three countries have important upcoming elections in 2018. Infrastructure investment is needed but the success of the President’s plan relies heavily on state and local funding. Congressional support for infrastructure spending is split along party lines. A working draft of the Farm Bill has been submitted to the Congressional Budget Office. As midterm elections approach it will be more difficult to bring it to the floor for a vote. A coalition of agricultural groups, nutrition advocates and conservation groups will be necessary to secure passage of the Farm Bill.
Hi! My name is Bill Banker. I am a board member of Agri-Mark, Inc. and recently was elected President of the NECC. I thank Rob Smith, retiring President, for his hard work over the last two years and express my appreciation to Ed Schoen for the decades long time support of the NECC and to Cyndy Van Lieshout, 6-year board member. Both retired from the NECC board of directors and both served as NECC President.

What a crazy winter we have had and as we gear up for a new growing season, we can only pray that it’s better than the last. Our dairy farmer cooperatives have members hanging on by the skin of their teeth with scary low milk prices and what is reported by NY FarmNet to be a very busy time. Other NECC member cooperatives also struggle to balance the supply of product sourced from their members with the customer demand. That aside, I am happy to report that the cooperative structure is alive and well, cooperatives may not be perfect but they have endured for a very long time now.

NECC strives to increase the understanding of the power of the cooperative. The Round Table discussions at the recent NECC Cooperative Leaders Forum provided opportunities to discuss issues of concern. Students attending the event learned more about our respective organizations and the contribution that agricultural and rural electric cooperatives make to the economy. And hopefully everyone returned to the board room and management group and talked about the ‘glue’ that holds teams together that leads to higher performance.

NECC has enjoyed a long-term relationship with CoBank that has allowed us to expand our Annual Meeting considerably. CoBank brings a great agenda to our regional organization and we bring additional guests to hear their messaging. A very special thanks to them for support of the conference and presentation of the banquet speaker. We are also appreciative of the Cornell University, Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management for sponsoring the Upcoming Leaders Breakfast and keynote speaker, Lee Rubin. These sponsorships, the dues paid by our members, and participation through our signature events supports the Council to honor the renewed MOU between NECC and Cornell University. Thank you for your continuing commitment to the NECC.

With regards,

Bill Banker
Great leaders inspire other great leaders. Cyndy Van Lieshout, Albion, NY served as board member of Upstate Niagara Cooperative Inc. for over 10 years and on the NECC board of directors for 6 years. She held the positions of NECC Vice President and President. During her NECC presidency the Cooperative Internship Recognition Award was formalized. Cyndy presently serves on the National Dairy Promotion and Research board of directors.

Ed Schoen provided decades of support and leadership to the NECC board of directors representing Eastern Milk Producers and more recently Dairy Farmers of America. He served as NECC President and most recently Chair of the Cornell/NECC Advisory Committee. He served as Vice Chair of the DFA Cares Foundation and in leadership positions on the NY Milk Promotion Board and as a member of the NY Milk Marketing Advisory Council. At National Milk Producers Federation he served on the immigration, environment and scholarship committees. Both Cyndy and Ed served as resource leaders at the NECC Future Cooperative Leaders Conference.

**MEET NECC DIRECTOR—TODD HATHORN**

Todd Hathorn, third-generation dairyman milks 800 cows on 1,100 acres at Hathorn Farms, LLC. He began managing the farm in 1980 and most recently introduced 3 younger partners to the business in 2013. He serves as Vice Chairman of Dairy Farmers of America, Northeast Area Council. He also serves on the board for Dairy Marketing Services and director for the Rochester Health Foundation. He previously served as second vice president of Dairylea Cooperative’s board of directors, was a member of the executive committee and compensation committee. He is a past director of the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council. Hathorn Farms LLC has been named a Dairy of Distinction by the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Program since 1980 and has been recognized by the Empire Stat Milk Quality Council with the Super Milk Award since 1998. (Source: www.dfamilk.com)
The NCFC will once again host the Political Advocacy & Leadership (PAL) Program for young producers during the Washington Conference, June 25-27. The PAL Program brings together young producers from across the country to discuss advocacy, legislative and regulatory issues pertinent to the agriculture industry.

This year’s program will feature an interactive discussion facilitated by Aimpoint Research to explore perceived benefits and barriers to young farmer participation in cooperative leadership. The session will include small group activities, interactive live polling and an engaging dialogue around how cooperative boards can begin to embrace the next generation of agricultural leaders. Following this discussion, a representative from National Journal, a leading government and policy news source in D.C., will conduct a Lobbying 101 training session on how to be an effective advocate for co-ops and agriculture.

In addition to the seminar, there will be a fun networking opportunity for participants with a Georgetown Pub & Ghost Tour on Monday, June 25, following the opening reception.

Young producers will also have the opportunity to participate in all the events offered at NCFC’s Washington Conference. They are invited to attend the Government Affairs Committee meetings, general sessions featuring leading policy makers in Washington, and networking receptions with congressional staff. Below is a full schedule of events for PAL Program participants.

### PAL Program Schedule of Events

#### Monday, June 25
- 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM  NCFC Government Affairs Committee Meetings
- 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM  Opening Reception
- 7:30 PM – 10:45 PM  Networking Event: Georgetown Pub & Ghost Tour for PAL Participants

**Guests will learn about the unsolved murder of a friend of President Kennedy that occurred near the historic C&O Canal, see the bank turned hospital where the Civil War soldier’s still trod the hallways, searching for peace, the island owned by George Mason, where his and his servant’s ghost still call out to the living, and visit the house of Mark Twain’s crazed nephew, called the House of Immortality! And of course, Georgetown boasts the famous stairs from The Exorcist. Two pub stops will take place along the way.**

#### Tuesday, June 26
- 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM  Plenary Breakfast and General Session I
- 10:45 AM – 1:15 PM  Political Advocacy Leadership Program for Young Producers, Lunch Served
- 1:30 PM – 5:30 PM  Hill Visits
- 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM  Congressional Reception

#### Wednesday, June 27
- 8:45 AM – 11:30 AM  General Session II, Breakfast Served
- 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM  Closing Luncheon
- 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM  Optional Hill Visits

Please consider sending outstanding young cooperative leaders to take part in NCFC’s Washington Conference. Young producers who register for the PAL Program will receive a **reduced registration rate of $400/person**. If you have any additional questions on the PAL Program, please contact Kelsey Billings (kbillings@ncfc.org).