COMMISSIONER: CELEBRATE NY HARVEST FOR NY KIDS WEEK

School and Community Celebration to Take Place October 2-10, 2004

ALBANY, NY -- (10/01/2004; 1200)(EIS) -- Commissioner Nathan L. Rudgers today encouraged schools across the State to celebrate New York Harvest for New York Kids Week (NYHNYK), which runs October 2-10. This annual celebration encourages nutritious food choices among children, while promoting and supporting New York's harvest.

"New York State produces a wide variety of nutritious, fresh products," the Commissioner said. "New Yorkers should be excited and proud of our bountiful harvest and I encourage everyone to help us promote our agricultural industry by participating in a New York Harvest for New York Kids Week celebration in a school or community near you. In doing so, we will share with our children the importance of eating right, instill good habits regarding healthy food choices and support local farmers."

New York Harvest for New York Kids Week provides the opportunity for cafeterias to offer New York farm products on school menus and for classrooms to teach the importance of local agriculture and good nutrition.

Governor Pataki signed the New York State Farm-to-School Bill in February 2002, to help promote good nutrition in schools and increase the use of New York farm products in schools and educational institutions. In addition to NYHNYK Week, discretionary allowances for the institutional purchasing of local farm products has increased and the State has been instrumental in obtaining funds for local produce from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Program. The DoD allocated $3.2 million to New York State in both 2003 and 2004 for New York schools to purchase fresh New York products through this program.

Last year, a pilot program was launched in New York City with the assistance of the DoD Fresh program. New York City schools chose to source solely New York State apples using DoD Fresh dollars. This program was extremely successful in 2003 and is expanded to the areas of Syracuse and Binghamton this year and will include carrots, pears and potatoes.

Initiated seven years ago by the New York State Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy, the NYHNYK Week celebration has grown with the support of the Farm-to-School Committee. The goal of the Committee is to expand the offering of fresh New York products on school menus beyond the one week in October. The Committee is comprised of members from New York State School Food Service Association, NY Farms!, Cornell's Farm-to-School Program, New York Farm Bureau, the State Education Department, and the State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

During the week of October 2-10, activities celebrating NYHNYK Week will be held across the state. For additional information on NYHNYK Week or how to find locally grown farm products near you, contact the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets at 1-800-554-4501 or visit the Department website at www.agmkt.state.ny.us. Examples of celebrations that will be held this year are attached.

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New York Harvest for New York Kids Week 2004 Scheduled Events

Chautauqua County -- Forestville Central Schools are celebrating NYHNYK Week with a roast pork dinner. Community members will help peel and slice locally grown apples for apple crisp, and local apple farmers will deliver apples to the elementary and high schools for lunches that week. Contact: Karen Kozlowski 716- 965-2711

Columbia County -- Ichabod Crane Central Schools have invited a local apple farmer to highlight agricultural products, and quiz students on apple trivia questions, and have apple treats to sample. Contact: Karen Roberts Mort, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County, 518 -828-3346

Columbia County -- Taconic Hills Central School cafeteria lines will be decorated in a farm and apple theme. Workers will be dressed as farmers and local apples and pears will be free with any cafeteria purchase. Columbia County Cooperative Extension will also bring a local fruit farmer and a nutritionist to visit with K-6 students during lunch. Contact: Catherine Drumm 518-325-0310

Genesee County -- LeRoy Central Schools is partnering with a Cornell Cooperative Extension Nutrition Educator to present "Roots and Shoots" program to kindergarten classes prior to lunchtime on Tuesday, October 5th. Contact: Laurie Locke 585-768-5509

New York City -- The Cookshop Program of New York City has produced a New York Harvest Activity Kit that includes 11 school-based community activities including: making applesauce in the classroom, writing a letter to a farmer, tasting New York farm market products and visiting a local grocery store to find New York produce. The kits will be distributed to all participating CookShop Classrooms in New York City. Contact: Hadley Friedman 212-894-8094 x 1571

New York City -- Days of Taste sponsored by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food, the James Beard Foundation and Spoons Across America will sponsor the 10th

annual Days of Taste in 50 New York City fourth and fifth grade elementary school classes. Days of Taste is a guided exploration of taste from farm to classroom to table. Trips to farmers' markets and visits with farmers are part of the program. Contact: Julia Jordan 718-260-5345

New York City -- Harvest Festival at the Block Institute with a live petting zoo, pumpkin decorating contest, agriculture booths, hands-on cow milking demonstration, an exhibit from the school's gardens, a New York themed lunch, class-made New York shaped cookies, and presentation of the school's grown vegetable pasta sauce. Contact: Todd Adelman 718-946-9700 x217

Niagara County -- Cooperative Extension celebrates at the North Tonawanda Farmers' Market and the Niagara Wheatfield Central Schools, offering puzzles and coloring books on New York agriculture. Hula hoop and jump roping contests, and other physical activities as well as fruit and vegetable samplings will be included. Contact: Carolyn Richel, Cornell

Cooperative Extension of Niagara County, 716-278-8131

Niagara County -- Wilson Central Schools will promote New York milk, and produce at lunch and will encourage families to visit farmers' markets. The celebration features homemade New York caramel apples, decorating of New York munchkin pumpkins and a nutrition lesson complete with taste testing of New York products. Contact: Donna Kurial 716-751-7341

Steuben County -- Corning-Painted Post Area School District celebrates with a gourmet menu designed and prepared by a professional chef using local products. The high schools will display "Careers in Agriculture" posters by Cornell Cooperative Extension and locally grown and processed food items will be featured daily in the cafeteria. Contact: Chris Wallace 607-654-2720

Tompkins County -- Tompkins County Cooperative Extension hosts a Fall Harvest Festival Friday, October 8th at the P&C Supermarket, Hancock Street, Ithaca. Sampling of local foods, harvest-themed activities like pumpkin painting, seed mosaics and butter making will be featured. Contact: Debbie Teeter 607-272-2292

Washington County -- Hudson Falls Central Schools celebrates with local products on the cafeteria menu, a Harvest Celebration at the Kindergarten Center and school-wide featuring New York State food stations and additional information on New York agriculture. Contact: Jane Pepin 518-747-2121

Wyoming County -- 4-H and Cooperative Extension is offering four hands on learning stations for kindergarten classrooms throughout the county where the students can learn about apples, vegetables and dairy products, as well as see a short puppet show. Contact: Nancy Maguire, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County, 585-786-2251

Yates County -- Penn Yan Central Schools will feature local products on its cafeteria menu and local farmer will visit during the school's Open House with samplings of New York products. Contact: Dana Burton 315-536-6781