

NY Farm Bureau celebrates opening of regional office

By **HEATHER SWANSON**
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AUBURN — The New York Farm Bureau celebrated the grand opening of its new regional office Monday.

Speaking to an audience that included local and state Farm Bureau representatives, as well as officials from Albany, NYFB Director of Member Relations Fred Perrin called the event “another milestone in Farm Bureau history,” adding that 2011 will mark the bureau’s 100th anniversary.

The first regional Farm Bureau office was opened in 1994 to service Yates, Seneca, Ontario and Wayne counties in Seneca Falls.

“Today is the beginning of the next step,” Perrin said.

The new office will serve an 11-county area — Ontario, Yates, Wayne, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, Lewis and Jefferson counties.

Central NYFB Office Committee Chairman John Sorbello noted the opening was especially exciting considering its “humble beginnings” in Seneca Falls.

Assemblyman Bill Magee, D-111 of Oneida, chairman of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, attended the opening.

He pointed out that the state Farm Bureau is the only agency that advocates for agriculture in Albany in an effort to keep the industry viable in New York, noting that the regional office will help farmers “carry their voice” in state government.

Executive Director Jeff Kirby said that while the push for more regional offices may have taken some time, over 30 of the state’s counties are members of a regional office.

“It’s members who have stepped forward and said ‘We want to do more,’” he said.

The 11-county office in Auburn is the largest regional office, according

to NYFB President Dean Norton. He urged those present to encourage neighboring counties that may not have a regional office to consider its benefits.

Speaking after the ribbon-cutting, Magee commented, “It’s a great thing that they’ve got going here in the central New York area. It’s a good thing to have, and it sounds like it’s working well.”

“We’ve talked about this office for some time,” said Eric Behling, who is District 6 director. “I think the time is right as far as consolidating resources.”

He said that while New York’s farmers are now fewer in number than they once were, they are nonetheless producing more food.

One of the key tasks of the office will be to keep the public informed about agriculture issues.

“It’s better to get a local perspective, and that’s what this is about,” Behling said.

District 5 Director Darrell Griff agreed, adding the benefits of a centralized office include the exchange of information and ideas.

The regional office is a way “to make sure that everybody’s represented well,” said Behling.

The Central NYFB office is at 7413 County House Road, north of the city of Auburn, in the Soil and Water Committee offices and will be staffed by two full-time employees and one part-timer.

Seneca BioEnergy gets \$750,000 grant

By **DAVID L. SHAW**
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ROMULUS — Seneca BioEnergy has been awarded a \$750,000 Restore New York grant for infrastructure improvements to its renovated warehouses at the former Seneca Army Depot.

The grant will be added to a \$1.5 million Restore New York grant to New York State Electric & Gas Corp. for electrical upgrades.

“These two grants are positive news as our company moves forward on development of a green energy complex,” said Seneca BioEnergy CEO Michael Coia of Lodi.

Coia said Seneca BioEnergy reached agreement last week with Seneca Falls Savings Bank to provide the upfront funding of the infrastructure improvements, with reimbursement from the Restore program as work is verified as complete.

The Restore grant will be used to:

- Boost the water capacity to support the manufacturing operations of

Seneca BioEnergy and Top Quality Hay Processors, a tenant operation at the depot warehouse site.

The increase in water supply also will maintain the fire suppression sprinkler system in the occupied parts of the two buildings.

- Improve shipping and receiving for loading and unloading of agricultural materials, including truck scales and a weigh station, and for shipment of products.

- Continue renovations to the warehouses with lighting and structural upgrades to support manufacturing, installation of employee offices and bathrooms, installation of truck delivery doors and completion of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

“Seneca BioEnergy seeks to support both energy and agriculture in ways that would serve and protect our environment in the future,” Coia said in a statement issued Monday.

“We plan to use agricultural crops to create renewable energy and

other products in environmentally friendly ways and to reduce our dependence on foreign oil.”

When manufacturing begins, Seneca BioEnergy will produce soybean and canola oil, agricultural meal, grape seed oil, biodiesel and biomass, vineyard waste management and manufactured oils.

The company recently

completed a pilot project of processing grape waste pomace into grape seed oil.

It has started another pilot project to produce soybean oil and soybean meal, refining the soy oil into biodiesel for sale as a local biofuel.

Top Quality Hay Processors has begun its innovative indoor hay drying operation.

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