

# CDEA News

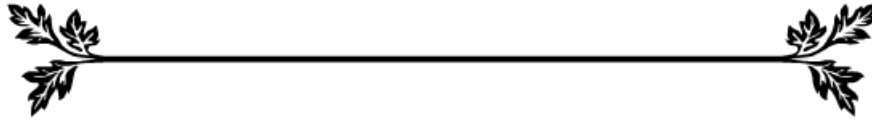


NEW YORK STATE  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION, INC.

March 2021

## Cover Photo

Spring is coming with that warm sun. Photo by Judy Littrell, Education & Outreach Coordinator/ Senior Environmental Analyst, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee.



## A Letter from the CDEA President

Well it has been 2 years for me! Can you believe it. I have had 2 years as the president and 2 years as Vice President for you! I am not sure where all the time went! It is bittersweet for sure. It has been great! I have enjoyed working with everyone and trying to lead Districts forward even while under some extreme circumstances. Covid made alot of things different, not all of them bad but not all good, interesting for sure! Thank you so much to all whom have helped me serve the NYSCDEA. My staff and board at Franklin County are amazing! Kristin, Chris Allycia and Donna you are the best! The CDEA board, Dustin, Kristin W., Dean, Caitlin, Scott, Aaron, Shawn, Erin, Ann Marie, Amber, Raeanne, and Kristin B these people are the best! They take the time to serve Districts, it is a commitment, alot of work, but is rewarding, thank you all for your commitment. Past Presidents Steve, Nichelle, Jim, Amanda, PJ to mention a few, I know I am missing some, thank you! You guys are amazing and defiantly people who know what is going on, have important insight and are always there to offer up a bit of advice.

Some of the Highlights while I served:

- Assistance with programs, policies and plans
- Interactions with State representatives and staff
- Information on National Associations
- Development of some additional communication trails/plans
- Access to shared policies
- Providing information to Districts and to the State
- Meetings, lots of meetings
- Having a chance to express concerns
- Giving access and information to the north country
- Streamlining meetings and plans
- Bylaw updates

The most rewarding and interesting part of my time as president is the opportunity to meet so many people! It was an amazing opportunity to talk and work with so many district staff, district board members, legislators, state committee staff, environmental professionals, consultants, environmental volunteers, elected officials and so many more. I have made many lifelong friendships and that I really appreciate! I have learned more about many across the state that have a say, need a say and want to be involved. Another thing I have learned is that you are President of the NYSCDEA you are always there. I called on many past Presidents often. I am sure Dustin will do the same! Something else I learned is that once are at a District you are part of a close-knit group and that group sticks together. Maybe sorta dysfunctional at times but awesome! I would not have it any other way. Thank you so much to everyone who supported me over these years! I am always here and will still be happy to help! But wait, I am not going too far! I have shifted over to Treasurer so you cannot get rid of me that easy. There is no way I can fill Kristin Whites shoes nor am I going to even try but I will give it my best until someone is interested in the position. I know Kristin will always be there to help and get us through it. I am looking forward to this adventure! Thank you all!

Chastity Miller Past President- NYSCDEA, current Treasurer



## A Sincere Farewell to Rob DeClue and Best Wishes in Retirement!

After 41 years at the Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District as the District Planner, Rob DeClue will join his wife, Carol, in full retirement to enjoy time together at their home and small farm.

Rob's four-decade career at the District is far reaching and can be summed up by his leading principle; "My legacy is on the land." As a grazing specialist and agronomist, Rob has helped many farmers optimize their grazing systems statewide. Rob spent many years as a specialist with GLCI and Graze NY to extend his grazing expertise to farmers outside of Chenango County. In 2000, Rob collaborated with NRCS staff to write a book entitled, "Prescribed Grazing and Feeding Management for Lactating Dairy Cows." Hundreds of books have been distributed over the years and several grazing videos were produced featuring Rob's

work. In addition to creating low cost and low maintenance watering systems for grazing cattle, Rob played a major role in pioneering high tensile fencing specifications and has spent countless hours helping NRCS refine their standards.

Rob is known to many of us for his thorough and exhaustive work ethic, depth of knowledge, and for how generous he is with time to anyone interested in learning. He is a natural educator with a gift for artful articulation! We will all miss Rob's kind-heartedness and we hope to continue to build from the foundation he has paved.



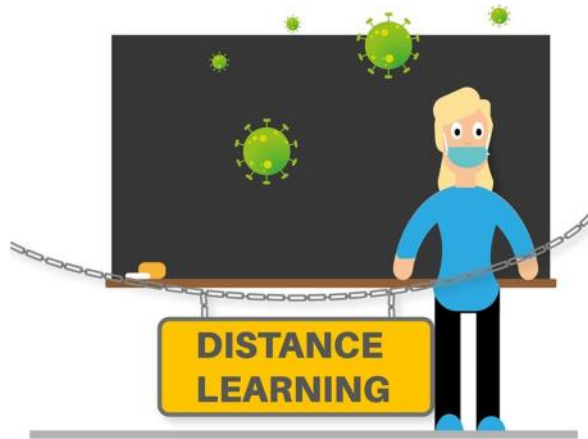
*Rob presenting at a pasture walk.  
Photo courtesy of Troy Bishopp.*



*Lance Lockwood, District Manager, presenting a 40-year plaque to Rob DeClue and James Jenne, District Director.*

# \*\*\* REMINDER \*\*\*

***TO ALL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES***  
Frank Bratt Scholarship  
Application Deadline – June 1, 2021



The Frank Bratt Scholarship deadline is June 1, 2021. Although in person events aren't being held, you can still take online classes or trainings that can be reimbursed to you or the district.

The scholarship can be used for:

- college courses (credit and non-credit)
- online training sessions
- educational workshops
- conservation related seminars



An application form can be obtained from the CDEA website at [www.nyscdea.com](http://www.nyscdea.com). Please be advised completed application should be emailed or mailed to Scott Collins at Niagara County SWCD, 4487 Lake Avenue, Lockport, NY 14094. If you have any questions on this program, contact Scott Collins, Division I Representative at (716) 434-4949 ext. 6258, or e-mail: [scott.collins@ny.nacdnet.net](mailto:scott.collins@ny.nacdnet.net)



# Announcing the recipients of the 2021 CDEA Awards

**Division II Merit Award**  
**Aliana Roberage**



**Division III Merit Award**  
**Alexis Lyndaker**



**Division IV Merit Award**  
**Jennifer Kelly**



**Division V Merit Award**  
**Maren Alexander**





# **Announcing the recipients of the 2021 CDEA Awards**

**Special Project Award  
Urban Ag Fresh Connections**



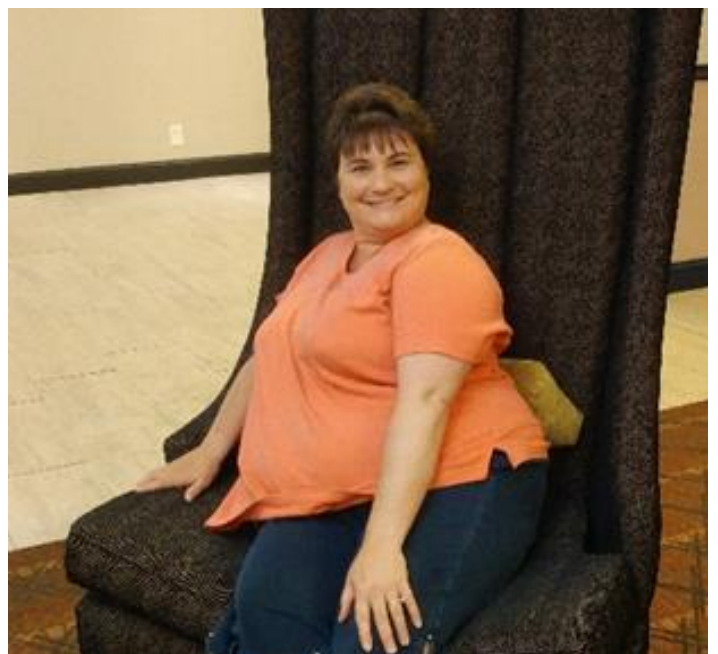
**Partner Appreciation Award  
Greg Albrecht**



**District Director Award  
John Wright**



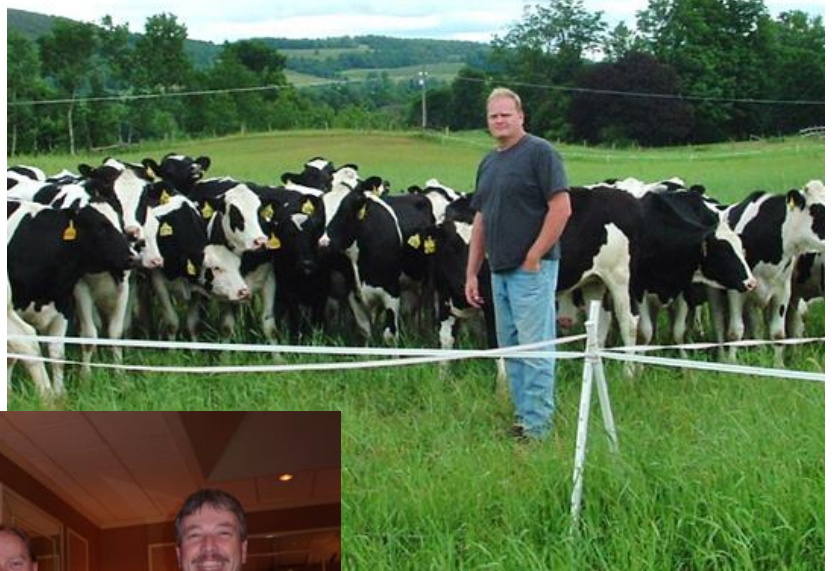
**Presidents Award  
Kristin White**





# Announcing the recipients of the 2021 CDEA Awards

**Willard F. Croney Distinguished Service Award  
Steve Lorraine**





# CDEA Water Quality Symposium Virtual Happy Hour





# CDEA Water Quality Symposium Virtual Happy Hour



## CDEA News needs YOUR news!

Email your stories, photos, save the dates,  
and fun moments  
to [caitlinstewart@frontier.com](mailto:caitlinstewart@frontier.com)

Special columns!  
Cover Photo  
CDEA Wine and Pint Glass Tour  
Where in New York is Ronny Raindrop?

Visit [www.nyscdea.com](http://www.nyscdea.com) for newsletter back issues



## 2020 Conservation Farm of the Year – Abbott Farms

Eric Renfer, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Abbott Farms in Baldwinsville, NY, has been awarded the 2020 Conservation Farm of the Year. As a fifth-generation family farm, the Abbott's have been recognized for their innovative and proactive approach to conservation, stewardship, and community involvement. Over the years, the farm has had to adapt to changing times; at times operating as a dairy farm, then transitioning to crop farming, and currently a diverse mixture of a farm market and bakery, cidery/winery, community supported agriculture, event center, and a "u-pick" operation. Education and entertainment are key to the farm



as well, with petting areas for animals and multiple public events held at the farm during the year, all within a setting focused on family fun. Reaching out into the community, the farm has donated food to food banks and other charitable organizations, and even participate in local government.

The farm has been a participant in the state's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program since 2005 receiving technical assistance on practices such as a rotational grazing system for beef cattle, a pesticide mixing facility, and a petroleum secondary containment project, to name a few. On their own, they have taken a comprehensive approach to pest management on their crops, reduced water usage by installing a drip irrigation system on the berries and implemented recycling and

composting practices where appropriate.

We congratulate Abbott Farms for this achievement and wish them continued success in the future!

## Meet the Newcomers!

Introducing the newest  
Soil and Water Conservation District employees

**Chris Travis**  
Conservation District Technician  
Ontario County Soil and Water  
Conservation District

1. How long have you been working for your Soil and Water Conservation District?

*I was hired January 6<sup>th</sup> 2020, so a little more than a year.*

2. Who inspired you to pursue the career you have today?

*My grandmother who was the first generation of our family who left the farm, she filled my head with images of farm life.*

*And, of course, Aldo Leopold – Sand County Almanac*

3. What are your hobbies?

*Hiking, camping, gardening, reading, writing, travel, tree climbing, plant identification, mushroom hunting.*

4. What's on your bucket list?

*What's not on my bucket list? Which is to say, everything.*

5. Pineapple pizza: super gross or supersize my pie?



*Acceptable with ham, or maybe anchovies, otherwise get it out of here.*

6. What is the best advice you give to other new District employees?

*Just doggy paddle at first, you'll get the hang of it. It may seem like information overload, but break jobs, new skills, education requirements, implementation, and technical assistance into small bite-size pieces, and eventually things will fall into place. Oh, and being a jack of all trades isn't a bad thing in our line of work.*

7. How would you describe your job to a group of 5-year-olds?

**Emelyn Bell**  
**Conservation District Technician**  
**Wyoming County Soil & Water**  
**Conservation District**

1. How long have you been working for your Soil and Water Conservation District?

*I have worked seasonally as an intern for Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District during the summer of 2019 and 2020. I officially started as a full-time conservation technician in November of 2020. So, just about a year in total time with the district!*

2. Who inspired you to pursue the career you have today?

*Working with both of my grandparents on their respective farms is where my love of nature, agriculture and respect for the*

*I protect the water we drink to keep us all safe, happy and healthy.*

8. What's the most epic thing you're working on right now at work?

*Not my project, but I am assisting on a public fishing access riparian swale / floodplain establishment which will most certainly be epic in size, scope, not to mention cubic yards of fill. The project will dovetail with a significant riparian buffer establishment. I can't wait to get my boots wet.*

9. Coffee or tea?

*Tea first thing in the morning, coffee the rest of the day.*

10. Share a humorous or memorable moment you have experienced while working at your District.

*Jumping into snow drifts that came up to my chest while marking ash trees along the county ROW's, quite the initiation, but now I know to wear my long-johns, and to bring an extra pair of socks (or two)!!*

*land began. My high school biology teacher further challenged me by answering every one of my questions with another question. He encouraged me to dive deeper into areas that interested me and so my love of science and the environment led me to the career path I am on today.*

3. What are your hobbies?

*In my spare time I enjoy reading, painting, hiking with my Border Collies (Ellie & Roy), water skiing, and kayaking.*

4. What's on your bucket list?

*My bucket list includes visiting as many national parks as I can, traveling to Ireland, training my own canine good citizen service dog, and having my own hobby farm someday.*

5. Pineapple pizza: super gross or supersize my pie?

*I'm not the biggest fan of pineapple on my pizza- but I'll take sweet peppers and pepperoni all day!*



6. *What is the best advice you give to other new District employees?*

The best advice I have for other new technicians is to be patient and ask as many questions as you can from senior technicians. It takes time to learn about all the different programs and processes from start to finish, so don't expect to understand everything all at once!

7. *How would you describe your job to a group of 5-year-olds?*

*My job is to teach and help all different kinds of people with projects that protect the land, water, and the wildlife that depend on it. I do this by working with people to keep the water clean, the soil in its place, and bad plants from growing where it shouldn't.*

8. *What's the most epic thing you're working on right now at work?*

*The most epic thing I am working on right now is restarting my districts Water Quality Monitoring Program. Limnology, or the study of freshwater has always been my passion and area of interest. In my opinion, our freshwater resources are more valuable than ever, and deserve our attention and efforts!*

9. *Coffee or tea?*

*Both! I have a cup of coffee first thing in the morning and tea in the afternoon and evening.*

10. *Share a humorous or memorable moment you have experienced while working at your District.*

*Over the summer district staff and myself spent an entire morning cutting down about half an acre of Japanese Knotweed by hand. It wasn't until we had finished and were ready to take a lunch break that I realized my cellphone had fallen out of my pocket (insert panic here). My amazing co-workers proceeded to help me look through the thickets of cut Knotweed, hungry and tired might I add for a needle in a haystack chance of finding my phone. Just as we were about to call it quits, we found it about 2 feet away from our truck in tall grass thanks to the "Find My iPhone App". I bought a fanny pack with zippered pockets later that week.*

## **Wise Words from our District Family**

*Interviewing experienced District employees  
who share some words of wisdom*

**Robert Doscher, District Manager**  
**Westchester County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
**28 years**

Q. *How long have you been working at your SWCD? If you have worked for more than one District, please let us know the counties, positions, and years worked.*

*I've worked at the Westchester County Soil and Water Conservation District and Department of Planning since February 1993.*

Q. *What have you accomplished over the years with your District that you are most proud of?*

*The initiation and continuation of a long and varied list of natural resources restoration and green infrastructure projects collectively called Westchester County's "Aquatic Restoration Program."*

Q. *Why have you continued to work at your Soil and Water Conservation District?*

*From an environmental professional's standpoint, Westchester County is a great location affording plenty of opportunities because of its position at*



*the western end of Long Island Sound and southern end of the Hudson River, where the river is widest and part of the Hudson River Estuary, as well as its varied river systems, such as the Croton River and Bronx River. I also have had the freedom to craft, evolve and refine the district's work program over the years.*

Q. How have you seen District programs, or their focuses, change over the years?

*Our district has grown considerably over the past three decades in terms of the breadth and depth of its activities, projects and programs. This growth is largely attributable to increases in the amount of state and federal funding received by the district.*

Q. What words of wisdom do you have for a newly hired District employee?

*Using your expertise, think about new and better ways of doing things to reflect changes in your county's and the state's needs. If you think you have a good idea, bring it to your supervisor as a suggestion and don't give up.*

Q. When did you first learn or hear about Soil and Water Conservation Districts?

*When I first started my career in environmental science and ecology, I worked for a couple of municipalities in Connecticut. One of these used the environmental review services of a conservation district.*

Q. What made you decide to apply for a job with your District?

*At the time I applied, I was working for a private consulting firm. However, I knew I wanted to someday work for a government agency or other entity involved in natural resources conservation. As luck would have it, the district's office was two blocks from the consulting firm's office so the physical transition was easy.*

Q. Did your education prepare you for your job as a District employee?

*My undergraduate education was in plant and soil science as well as journalism and my graduate education was in environmental science. Two of those degrees prepared me for work with a soil*

*and water conservation district for obvious reasons. The third, in journalism, also helped significantly due to the amount of writing and research required for my position with the district.*

Q. Please share with us a memorable conservation moment while working for your District.

*Two years after we restored a highly degraded and largely non-functioning freshwater wetland, I re-visited the site and saw a pair of wood ducks swimming in an area of open water in the vibrant wetland.*

Q. What is your most epic memory from a Water Quality Symposium?

*Unfortunately, I haven't attended a water quality symposium.*

Q. Please share with us a humorous moment from your time at your District.

*I met my wife two days before I started working at the district. Before I started, it was my intention to work at the district no more than three years and then get a job with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. My wife and I started dating and, before I knew it, we married, bought a house and had children. Now, more than 28 years later, retirement from the district is on the horizon. I suppose we all need to adapt to changing situations. The U.S. EPA, for example, took a back seat in short order.*

Q. If you were snowed in at your District office for a week with no hope of evacuating, who would you want to be snowed in with and what would be your top 3 survival items?

*I work in the county's main office building in a city that's about an hour from my home. I've come close to not being able to get home due to snow. But, fortunately, I've not been forced to spend the night in the county office building for weather related reasons. It's sometimes taken me four hours to get home due to weather, but I've always made it (knock on wood). I'd rather not contemplate being stuck in our office building for a week.*

Q. Do you have a hidden talent?

*I love gardening and landscaping, but that's more of a hobby than talent.*

Q. Tell us about what you will miss when you retire.

*Certainly not the long commute to and from the office. But I will miss helping to make the natural environment a bit better in a small part of the world. Hopefully, I'll continue to do that to some extent after I've retired from the county.*

Q. Any concluding remarks?

*Soil and water conservation districts throughout*

*the state and the primary state agency supporting them, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets-Soil and Water Conservation Committee, have done and are doing a lot of great things for state residents and others but their work is often unrecognized or underappreciated by the general public. But it's those great things that make working for a district personally and professionally fulfilling...most of the time.*

## Where in New York is **Ronny Raindrop?**

CDEA News is proud to present **Where in New York is Ronny Raindrop?** By evaporation or precipitation, by sublimation or freezing, Ronny thrills crowds all across New York State. Submit your photos of Ronny with a brief description of what he's doing and where he is.





# Annual NYS CDEA Fish On Challenge

The NYSCDEA is sponsoring a fishing challenge to all anglers out there.



## Official Rules and Regulations

Participation Fee is \$10.00 per person and each participant will receive a pocket tape measure with the NYSCDEA logo on it. Registration is available for NYSCDEA members only and is between March 1, 2021 – May 31, 2021.

Register for the Fish On Challenge at <https://forms.gle/9Hhdj36oWyRTH8Yq5>  
**Yes...**you need to be registered prior to submittal of any fish. All entries need to be submitted between March 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022. There are six categories and prizes in each!

<b>Categories:</b>	Smallmouth Bass	Largemouth Bass	Northern Pike
	Brook Trout	Rainbow Trout	Jokers Wild (Unique Fish)

## General Rules

- You are not eligible to enter a fish if you caught it while fishing in a tournament.
- Entries are limited to those caught from NY waters only (including boundary waters).
- Entries will be scored based on length except for the *Jokers Wild* category, which will be judged by NYSCDEA on uniqueness of species, size and location of catch. Participant will have to specify why they think the fish is unique and why it should win.

Winners of all categories will be announced at the 2022 WQS Banquet.

For each entry, the participant is required to submit the following information to [Fishcdea@gmail.com](mailto:Fishcdea@gmail.com):

- 1.Name
- 2.Date caught
- 3.Location (waterbody) ...*don't give up your secret spot, so saying farm pond is OK!*
- 4.Species
- 5.Length
- 6.Picture of fish with the NYSCDEA tape measure or you in it.
- 7.If entering the *Jokers Wild* category you must include why the fish is unique and why it should win the category.

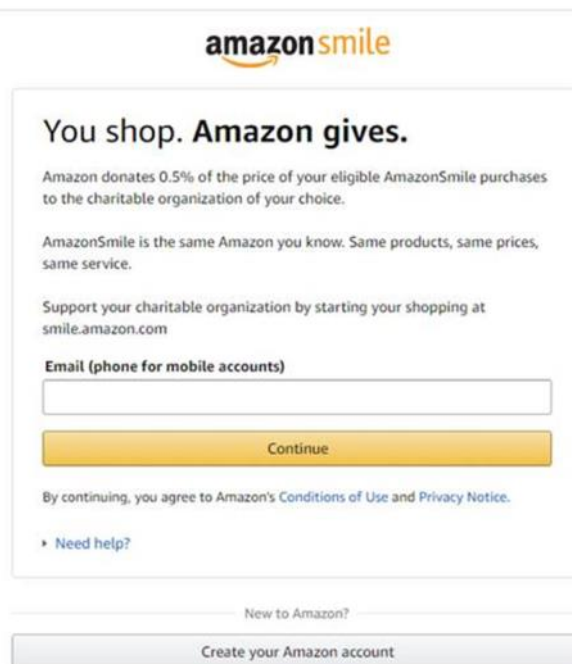
Register for the Fish On Challenge at <https://forms.gle/9Hhdj36oWyRTH8Yq5>

This is for fun only, so be honest and fair! If you have any questions, comments or if you are interested in registering, contact Maren Alexander at: [Fishcdea@gmail.com](mailto:Fishcdea@gmail.com). Tell us more about your fishing adventures and check out CDEA Fish On Challenge on Facebook!

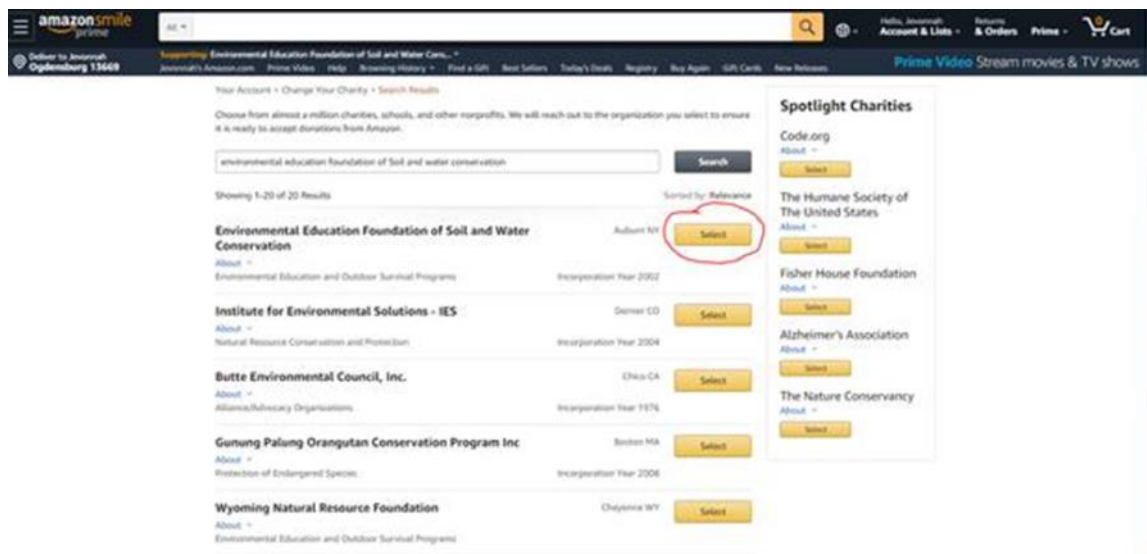
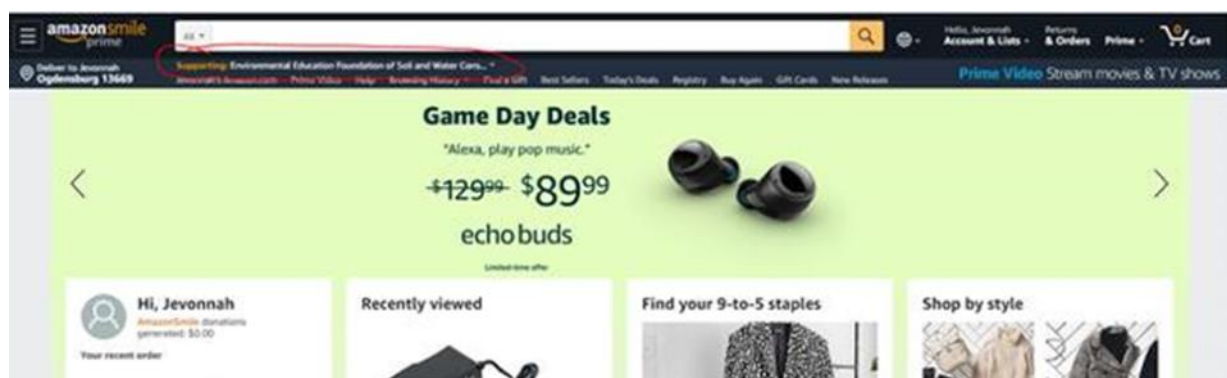
# Support the NYS Envirothon with Amazon Smile

## Chastity Miller, President, NYS Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.

Did you know you can use AMAZON Smile to help the NYS Envirothon! Please use Amazon Smile to give back to the Environmental Education Foundation for the State Envirothon and the National Envirothon in 2023! Here is the link for amazon smile along with some screenshots of what it should look like. Once you have selected them, it works exactly the same as the regular amazon site. Just note that if you go to the regular amazon.com site or use the app the charity will not get any donations, you have to use the smile.amazon.com site. If you forget to go to the smile site and already have stuff in your cart (in app or on regular amazon site), you can still go to the smile site and login and the items in your cart will show up on that site too, I did it just to try! Go to: <https://smile.amazon.com> & Sign in with your amazon account. This account has already done it, so it shows that their supporting the EEF already, but if you haven't yet you should automatically be prompted to pick a charity. Then you just search for "Environmental Education Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation" and hit select. REMEMBER- note that if you go to the regular amazon.com site or use the app the charity will not get any donations; you have to use the smile.amazon.com site. Thank you so much! We need all the help we can get.



The screenshot shows the Amazon Smile login interface. At the top is the "amazon smile" logo. Below it is the heading "You shop. Amazon gives." followed by a description: "Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice." It states that AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know and that you can support a charitable organization by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com. There is a text input field for "Email (phone for mobile accounts)" and a yellow "Continue" button. Below the button is a link for "Need help?". At the bottom, there is a "New to Amazon?" section with a "Create your Amazon account" button.





# **New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.**



## **Executive Committee Members**

Dustin Lewis, President

Caitlin Stewart, Vice President

Joann Burke , Secretary

Chastity Miller, Treasurer

Dean Moore, Member at Large

## **Division Representatives**

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Aaron Buchta, Division II

Raeanne Dulanski, Division III

Shawn Murphy, Division IV

Kristin Ballou, Division V

Amber Luke, Division VI

Erin Sommerville, Division VII

Ann Marie Calabro, Division VIII