

WHERE TOURISM MEETS COMMUNITY

A NEW MODEL FOR LOCAL ENGAGEMENT



BACKGROUND

WHERE TOURISM MEETS COMMUNITY

Join us as we Celebrate Cayuga County!



THIS IS
OUR CAYUGA
#OURCAYUGA



Join us for a Luncheon

MAY 7, 2025

11:00 am-2:00 pm

\$20.00

Emerson Park Pavillion
6879 E Lake Rd Auburn, NY



TOUR
CAYUGA
in the FINGER LAKES

To RSVP Click on QR Code
Please Respond by April 15



In May 7, 2025, the Cayuga County Office of Tourism hosted its first-ever Where Tourism Meets Community event. The idea was inspired by the Destinations International Advocacy Summit and findings from a resident sentiment study conducted by the Tourism Office.. Residents expressed strong support for tourism and a desire to learn more and get involved. The message was clear: tourism's story needs to be shared locally; with the people it touches most. While the Tourism Office has long advocated for the industry's value, this was its first time formally inviting the broader public to engage through a structured, celebratory event. Invitations went to elected officials, tourism partners, board members, regional professionals, local and regional chambers of commerce, residents, and the general public. This inclusive approach supported the goal of making tourism more visible and accessible.

GOALS

The event aimed to highlight the strength of Cayuga County's tourism industry, showcase collaboration among regional tourism professionals, and promote alignment across key county agencies. It also served as a celebration of local tourism partners, encouraging greater engagement with the Tourism Office and reinforcing the value of working together to advance the county's visitor economy.



SPEAKERS & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The program featured respected leaders and meaningful discussion. The session emphasized how these groups support both residents and businesses in shaping the county's identity.

- Erin Katzker, Chair of the Tourism Board, served as Master of Ceremonies
- Corey Fram, Director of Tourism for 1000 Islands and former NYSTIA Chair, delivered the New York State of Tourism
- Nur Asir, founder of Think Place and leader of the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan outreach, presented the Cayuga County State of Tourism

A panel discussion on place branding and agency roles included the Cayuga County IDA, Chamber of Commerce, Planning Department, and Tourism Office

RESULTS

The event drew nearly 90 attendees, surpassing the original goal of 60. Notably, Tim Smith, Vice President of Communications for Destinations International, attended the event, demonstrating the growing influence of Cayuga County within the broader tourism industry. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting the value of the information shared and the clarity it brought to inter-agency collaboration. Additionally, printed materials such as the annual report, poster series, magazine, and brochures were in high demand, with most items taken by attendees and shared further within the community.

LESSONS LEARNED

While the event was a success, a few areas for improvement emerged. Elected official attendance was limited, suggesting a need for more direct outreach supported by this case study. Combining the event with the annual Tourism Excellence Awards could boost impact, and adding Auburn's City Manager to the panel would bring a municipal perspective. Attendees also requested updates on the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan to ensure transparency

CONCLUSION

The inaugural Where Tourism Meets Community event opened new lines of communication between the Tourism Office and the public. It demonstrated agency coordination, celebrated local efforts, and sparked momentum for future engagement. With small adjustments, this event can become a signature moment in Cayuga County's annual tourism calendar—and a replicable model for destinations statewide.

