

Kendra Janssen is the founder and president of Chester's Barn, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Cayuga County. Chester's Barn is dedicated to supporting animals in need, educating the public about agriculture, and promoting the profound impact of animal-assisted therapy on mental health. Over the past two years, Kendra has brought animal therapy to more than 3,000 individuals, reaching schools, nursing homes, and private residences. Through tireless fundraising, outreach, and advocacy, she has fostered greater community involvement, inspired youth interest in humanities, and advanced a more compassionate, connected business environment.

In addition to founding and serving as president of Chester's Barn, Kendra is also the co-owner of Cayuga County-based independent trucking company, KCJ Trucking LLC, established in 2020. Since 2005, she has worked full-time at Cornell University, where she held numerous student-facing roles, making a lasting impact on student engagement and campus life. Kendra also provides compliance support for two other trucking businesses, demonstrating her versatility and expertise across industries. She graduated with honors from Cayuga Community College with a degree in Accounting and went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business and Accounting from SUNY Oswego.

Kendra has also played a pivotal role at Cornell University where she has been focused on student engagement and experiential learning. She directed and managed Cornell's Dairy Management undergraduate international study programs, taking the lead on coordinating complex international travel logistics for large groups of students and faculty. Her leadership extended to securing visas for as many as 60 participants and building programming in collaboration with global institutions, including China Agricultural University. Kendra was instrumental in planning and leading educational trips to China, Italy, Greece, Columbia, New Zealand, Ireland, and England - demonstrating her deep commitment to global learning and cross-cultural exchange.

Kendra is currently collaborating with tertiary institutions in the U.K., Ireland, and New Zealand to develop a curriculum focused on mental health and well-being for agricultural students. She is helping create educational modules designed to build a resilient next generation of agricultural leaders - equipping them to recognize signs of mental distress and access the resources needed to manage it. Kendra is also a certified instructor of the "Talk Saves Lives" and "It's Real" programs - nationally recognized courses on suicide prevention and mental health. She delivers presentations across the state, with a focus on bringing these vital conversations to rural communities throughout New York State. A tireless advocate for mental health awareness, she introduced the first-ever Stress Buster BBQ at Cornell University, reaching thousands of students annually with practical tips and tools for self-care. Most recently, she piloted

'Farmer Friday' in Cayuga County – a grassroots initiative that offers farmers a space to connect over breakfast and talk openly about the realities of farm life, both good and the difficult. Kendra's dedication to mental health runs deep. She has been featured on Cornell Cooperative Extension podcasts, in news articles, radio and tv interviews, sharing her message of breaking stigma, building community, and caring for ourselves and each other.

In recognition of her exceptional work performance and her consistent contributions that go far beyond the standards defined by Cornell's Skills for Success, Kendra has received numerous awards and honors. These include the 2021 Cornell University Dyson Above and Beyond Award, the 2022 Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Research and Extension Outstanding Accomplishments in Outreach Team Award, and the 2019 Cornell University Core Value Staff Award for Teamwork. These accolades reflect Kendra's unwavering dedication to excellence, collaboration, and meaningful impact within the university and the broader community.

Janssen does not have children of her own, she is a devoted second mother to seven brothers she lovingly calls her "foster boys." When a local school reached out seeking help for a family in need of shelter, food, and clothing, Kendra didn't hesitate. She opened her home and her heart, welcoming them as family and providing the stability and care they needed. Her compassion, generosity, and unwavering support reflect her lifelong commitment to nurturing others and building stronger, more caring community.

Kendra's favorite hobbies are hiking, running 5k's, traveling, and socializing with family and friends.