

## LIFE's On a Mission

The **LIFE Steering Committee** recently expanded its Mission Statement to further encourage the exchange of ideas and collaboration among programs and resources, as well as to provide a forum for policy makers to learn about low-income energy issues. The resulting Mission Statement will guide the **LIFE Steering Committee** as it continues its proactive, responsive and progressive dialogue on issues effecting low-income energy consumers.

### LIFE's Mission Statement

- To maintain a forum that attracts a diverse range of parties whose efforts will have an impact on the ability of low-income customers to meet their energy needs.
- To seek to identify and address the full range of low-income energy issues.
- To broaden participation and encourage involvement of all stakeholders in the energy forum.
- To encourage linkages through the forum to strengthen the understanding of and support for the energy needs of low-income New Yorkers.
- To encourage an interactive exchange of information and collaboration among the programs and resources that help the State's low-income households.
- To provide a venue for policy makers to hear of emerging issues from those at the front end of program delivery, identification of best practices, and networking opportunities for those in the low-income energy field.

The **LIFE Steering Committee** encourages you to assist us in fulfilling our LIFE Mission Statement by actively participating in our LIFE initiatives.

Pamela Carter,  
Chairperson LIFE Steering Committee

## 2007 LIFE Regional Meetings

Mark your calendar today for the 2007 LIFE Regional Meetings. This year's theme is *Saving Energy, Saving Dollars*.

For more information about the upcoming LIFE Regional Meetings see LIFE News article *LIFE Travels to You in May* on page 2 and visit [www.lifenynews.org](http://www.lifenynews.org) to register.

- May 1** .....Western New York  
Batavia
- May 2** .....North Country  
Watertown
- May 3** .....Central/Southern Tier  
Johnson City
- May 9** .....Capital Region  
Queensbury
- May 10** .....Hudson Valley  
Kingston
- May 15** .....New York City

## LIFE Travels to You in May

By Mary Thompson Grassi, NYSERDA

With too much to do, too little time to do it and limited resources, you may wonder why you should attend one of the 2007 LIFE Regional Meetings. What value will I get from spending a day away from the office, knowing that there will be stacks of work waiting for me when I get back? What would compel me to attend this year's meeting? Our answer: we will show you how to better meet the needs of the consumers you serve.

This year's meeting focus is **Saving Energy, Saving Dollars**. We have designed our workshops to provide you with up-to-date practical information that you will be able to use with the consumers you serve, as well as information and program updates that you can add to your "tool box" of resources.

In addition, attending the LIFE Regional Meetings empowers you to be part of the dialogue that helps shape New York's future low-income energy programs. Over the years, public policy initiatives and programs have been realized because of suggestions made at LIFE Regional Meetings.

Each of the 2007 Regional Meetings will begin with **An Update of Cumulative Results of Past Regional Meetings**. We want you to see the impact your suggestions have had throughout the State. The **Energy Literacy** workshop will provide you with facts on current topics that are in the news. You may be surprised at what is fact and what is fiction. Other workshops include practical information about weatherization programs, details on under-used benefit programs and best practices of a local program in your region. And, in response to your requests to provide "more time to network and exchange valuable ideas with the new people you meet at the Regional Meeting," we are also providing you with training on **How to Get the Most from Networking**.

We promise that your Regional Meeting will be a full day of opportunity to learn ways to better address the needs of the consumers you serve by helping them to **Save Energy and Save Dollars**. This day with LIFE is well worth the investment of your time!

For more information about the 2007 LIFE Regional Meetings, visit [www.lifenynews.org](http://www.lifenynews.org) or call Mary Thompson Grassi at 212-971-5342 ext 3007.

## Oil Dealers Provide Help to Low-Income Customers

By Peggie Neville, NYSERDA



For many of us in New York State, higher heating bills can mean eating out a little less often or forgoing that upgraded computer system that we've had our eyes on. For others, including many elderly and disabled people on fixed incomes who are already making tough choices with their limited resources every day, higher fuel costs can spell disaster. Some have had to choose between food, medicine and heat.

Over the past 26 years, the federal government's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (known in New York at HEAP) has awarded grants to states. New York receives more HEAP funding than any other state. In fact, last year alone New York distributed over \$256 million in HEAP benefit funding.

In New York State, HEAP is the largest program targeted at making energy more affordable to its neediest households. The majority of HEAP funds are issued as cash benefits to the supplier of the HEAP

households' primary source of heat, whether it be natural gas, electricity, heating oil, propane, wood or coal.

On the heating oil side, HEAP dollars purchase nearly \$60 million of heating oil annually on behalf of households in New York State. For many years, there was no negotiated discounted pricing or bid process to provide lower cost fuel to eligible households, so HEAP dollars paid full retail price. To address this problem, a few years ago the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) teamed up to put in place a successful program that helps improve the oil-buying power of HEAP dollars. With the cooperation of heating oil dealers, the program is now up-and-running in 39 counties throughout the State, with the rest of the State coming onboard for the 2007-2008 season. Already, more than 300 oil dealers participate, with more signing on to help.

It's estimated that the program has produced savings averaging 13 cents per gallon for HEAP households. When the program becomes available in all areas of the State, HEAP heating oil buying power will be increased by approximately \$6 million a year.

Consistent with NYSERDA's energy efficiency mission, the *Clean & Tune Project* was developed. Input from the oil suppliers revealed that many HEAP households do not regularly maintain their heating systems. This deferred maintenance can result in some of the most inefficient, unsafe systems operating in the homes of our most vulnerable citizens. In addition, public energy assistance dollars are invested in heating systems that are not operating as efficiently as possible, burning more fuel than necessary. The *Clean & Tune Project* was formed to further stretch the energy assistance dollars and to provide a meaningful incentive for companies to participate in the HEAP oil buying program.

## NYSERDA's Clean & Tune Project Serves HEAP Recipients Well

By Art Godin, GodinGreen, LLC

Most homeowners cringe at the thought of furnace maintenance and repairs. Hidden in the basement, furnaces are usually forgotten. Repairs are expensive, but ignoring problems can be extremely hazardous.

When Marie of Sardinia, NY, heard her furnace making unfamiliar noises, she knew it was time to get someone to look at it. But, how could she afford this expense? Living alone on a fixed income, she had little money to spare for repair work. In the past, her mechanic husband, and then a retired friend, performed needed repairs on her 30-year-old boiler. Now, neither was around. "I was beginning to get a little panicky," Marie said. Then, at what seemed to be just the right time, her long-time oil dealer gave her a call, told her about the NYSERDA *Clean & Tune Project* (see LIFE News article, page 2, *Oil Dealers Provide Help to Low-income Customers*) and asked if she would be interested in a free furnace service.

Marie was delighted with the work done by Crabb Oil's technician. "He did more cleaning than had ever been done before!" Marie exclaimed. Because of the regular attention it had received over the years, her boiler was still in good shape.

Kristine of Sterling, NY, did not know how badly her oil furnace needed to be serviced, but she knew it

Under the *Clean and Tune Project*, eligible HEAP customers of participating oil vendors may receive a free heating system clean and tune service and minor repair work that may be needed to keep the system operating in a safe and efficient manner. NYSERDA partners with participating oil vendors to identify and select customers for this service from their customer base. Vendors are required to prioritize this service to those customers who will receive the greatest benefit based on the vendor's knowledge of and familiarity with their customer's heating system, history of service and HEAP eligibility.

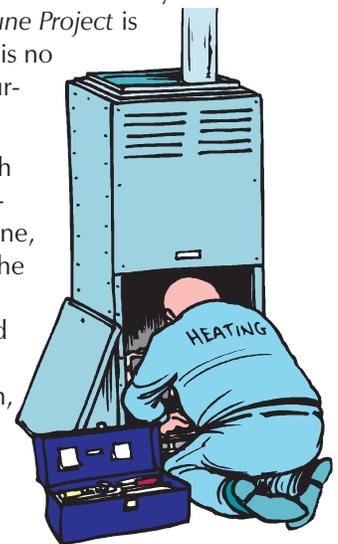
This Project has affected the everyday lives of HEAP clients receiving the benefits by not only increasing the energy efficiency of their heating systems, but also addressing potential health and safety issues.

For more information on these efforts, contact the OTDA HEAP Bureau at 518-473-0332.

was important to find out. With her two children suffering from severe allergies, Kristine changed HEPA filters several times each season but she had not been able to afford a tune-up for several years. When E&V Energy called to offer the free clean and tune work, she didn't need to be asked twice.

After servicing Kristine's furnace, the technician explained that it had been burning with a very smoky flame, causing a build-up of soot that might eventually have clogged the system and caused a very serious health risk. "The *Clean & Tune Project* is absolutely great. My family is no longer at risk from a dirty furnace," said Kristine.

In addition to creating much good will among HEAP customers like Marie and Kristine, oil dealers participating in the *Clean & Tune Project* have improved the efficiency and economy of many heating systems in need of attention, and have prevented more than one accident that was just waiting to happen.



## WRAP Liaison Assists Seniors with Weatherization

By Eileen Griffin, New York State Office for the Aging

Peter Hamchuk has been a front line worker for the Schoharie County Office for the Aging for six years. For most of the past four years, he has been their Weatherization Referral and Packaging (WRAP) liaison. Peter assists income-qualified seniors connect with services to weatherize their homes. These weatherization repairs could include fixing a roof, fixing windows or making other repairs that improve the energy efficiency and safety of the home. “Packaging” involves trying to leverage a combination of government and private resources to be able to perform the work. Some contractors offer donated labor or supplies for the job.

Peter spent his childhood growing up in Long Island, but after completing high school, he moved to the Schoharie County area to live and care for his grandparents. Peter’s great respect for the elderly emerged from his close relationship with his grandparents and has since evolved into a professional passion. He began working in the carpentry and construction field. He eventually went to work for the Schoharie Community Action Program and served as the Director for Weatherization and Energy Services. He worked there for 22 years. This gave Peter an excellent background for the job he is doing today.

We asked Peter to share insight into the service he provides to seniors who request his help.

### What do you do as a WRAP liaison?

I assess the senior’s home, determine his/her eligibility for the WRAP program, find out what other programs are available to assist and connect with his/her family to determine to what extent they can help. In a typical year, I help approximately 1,200 individuals with information/referrals or direct case assistance provided in their homes. I make about 375 home visits a year.

Several steps are involved in completing the work of WRAP. I first decide if the problem is a health and safety issue. Then, I determine if the need fits the WRAP program’s guidelines. If so, I make sure the senior is income-eligible. Next, I make a home visit to assess the full extent of the need. I determine the approximate cost of the repair and then try to find monetary contributions (i.e. churches, non-profits etc.) and donated labor. Sometimes, I even do some of the work myself. If a contractor is needed, I screen the company carefully to make sure they perform quality work. I make it my business to know the company’s reputation, its waiting list time, as well as the right contact person. I maintain a list of quality con-

tractors that employ workers that can be trusted when being sent into a senior’s home. Then, I introduce the contractor to the senior-in-need. When the job is completed, I go to the home to inspect the work and to make sure the senior is satisfied.

### What are some of the challenges of the job?

The most common challenge of this job is locating enough funding to serve all of the seniors who are in need. There are seniors who are not income-eligible but still have little ability to pay for all of the repairs they need. I have to be very creative to find all available resources. Another challenge can be finding a general contractor who has good skills and a good heart. I like contractors to treat these clients as if they were their own grandparents! We need to remember that our clients have many issues, such as problems with their health, finances, family and their homes, so patience is essential when dealing with seniors.

### What do you like about being a “front line worker”?

As a front line worker, I enjoy being able to reach out to others in the community and help them with weatherization needs. By working in this position, I have gained knowledge about county, state, and local agencies’ resources that I can share with others. During my visit to my clients in their homes, I will sometimes see their despair transform to a hug and a smile. This makes my job a labor of love rather than just a job.

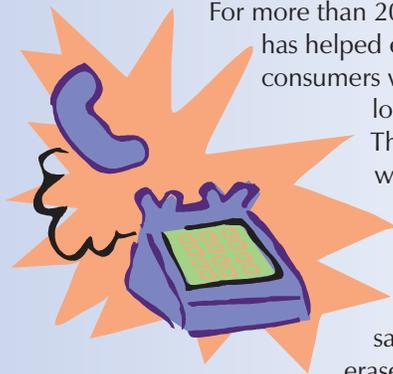
### What advice do you have for someone who may be considering a job in the WRAP field?

I would tell everyone who knows carpentry, electrical or heating that they have a good start because they are not at the mercy of a contractor. The more you know about construction yourself, the better it is. Get to know the other agencies that assist people with grants and loans. I recommend never walking away without exhausting all avenues of resources. Last, know that your job empowers you to help those who truly need it. This makes the rewards of the job priceless.

For more information about WRAP contact Tim Kovarik at [tim.kovarik@ofa.state.ny.us](mailto:tim.kovarik@ofa.state.ny.us) or Eileen Griffin at [eileen.griffin@ofa.state.ny.us](mailto:eileen.griffin@ofa.state.ny.us)

# Lifeline and Link Up Help to Pay the Phone Bills

By Patrice O'Connor, New York State Department of Public Service



For more than 20 years, New York has helped eligible low-income consumers with their monthly local telephone bills. The Lifeline program, which is applicable to a customer's local telephone charges for either a flat rate service or a message (per call) service, erases the Federal subscriber line charge (about \$6.50 per month).

Generally, a Lifeline customer is charged \$1.00 a month for message service and \$2.00 a month for a flat rate service, which includes a usage charge and allows for unlimited local calls.

Eligibility for the Lifeline program is based on a customer's enrollment in or income-eligibility for the following government assistance programs: Food Stamps, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Family Assistance, Medicaid, Safety Net Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veteran's Disability Pension or Veteran's Surviving Spouse Pension.

**Consumers can apply for Lifeline by either contacting their local telephone company or their local Social Services Office.**

Since 1994, Lifeline-eligible customers of Verizon have been automatically enrolled under a cooperative agreement with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Verizon does a computer match between eligible clients in the OTDA database and Verizon's own customer database. Customers who are matched, and who are not currently receiving Lifeline service, are sent a letter informing them that they will automatically be enrolled in Lifeline. Lifeline eligibility is reviewed annually by the telephone companies by using the automatic enrollment process (Verizon only) or by sending a recertification letter to Lifeline customers with a request for proof of enrollment in an eligible government program.

Another helpful program, Link Up, provides assistance for the installation of new telephone service. This program covers most of the cost of installing local phone service to a home but does not cover the costs of wiring inside the home beyond the first wire and jack. Customers who qualify for Lifeline also qualify for Link Up.

For more information, please go to [www.lifeline.gov](http://www.lifeline.gov)

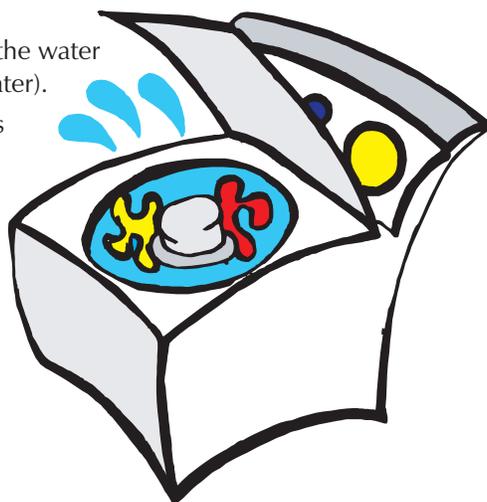
## Energy Tips

### Did You Know?

- 90% of the energy used for washing clothes is for heating the water.
- ENERGY STAR clothes washers use 50% less water than standard models, saving about 8,000 gallons a year per household.
- They also use 37% less energy, saving you up to \$80 a year (depending on the water temperature setting and whether it's an electric or natural gas hot water heater).
- In addition, ENERGY STAR clothes washers extract more water from clothes during the spin cycle. This reduces the drying time and saves energy.

### Laundry Energy Saving Tips

- Only wash and dry full loads.
- Always rinse in cold water.
- Hang your laundry outdoors to dry.
- Remove the lint from your dryer screen.
- Make sure the clothes dryer exhaust is not blocked.



# NLIEC Launches the Journal of Energy Assistance

By David Fox, National Low Income Energy Consortium

This year opened with the launching of the National Low Income Energy Consortium's (NLIEC) new, quarterly journal intended to increase the knowledge base for the energy assistance community. NLIEC's *Journal of Energy Assistance* publishes research and evidence based articles, case studies and examples of best practices in the field.

"For many years, stakeholders have said they would like to have a convenient, reliable resource for relevant and accurate research and other information on energy assistance issues," said Cindy Datig, chair of the National Low Income Energy Consortium. We hope it will become a valuable -- and valued -- tool for anyone interested in helping to set the agenda for low-income energy policy at the federal, state and local levels."

NLIEC is perhaps best known for holding the largest and most diverse low-income energy conference in

North America. Its mission is to bring together organizations and individuals from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors for the common purpose of increasing awareness of and eliminating residential energy hardships and crises faced by low-income consumers.

In keeping with that mission, the Journal features educational materials and peer-reviewed research relevant to energy assistance and energy affordability, adds to the growing literature base of the energy assistance community, provides information regarding events and developments important to the provision of affordable energy for low-income households and offers a forum for the debate and discussion of energy assistance issues.

The Journal is available online at <http://www.energyassistancejournal.org>

## LIFE Steering Committee

- New York State Department of Public Service
- Association for Energy Affordability
- Cattaraugus Community Action
- Central Hudson Electric & Gas Corporation
- Community Energy Services, Inc.
- Community Power Network of New York State
- Consolidated Edison Company of New York
- Dutchess County Community Action Agency, Inc.
- KeySpan Energy Delivery
- LIPA/REAP
- National Fuel Gas Distribution Company
- National Grid
- New York State Consumer Protection Board
- New York State Department of State Division of Community Services
- New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- New York State Electric & Gas Corporation
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
- New York State Office for the Aging
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
- New York State Weatherization Directors' Association
- Public Utility Law Project
- Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.
- Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation

## Please share and forward this newsletter to colleagues.

If you know someone who you would like us to add to the LIFE News mailing list, or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please send an e-mail to Chris Coll at [czc@nysenda.org](mailto:czc@nysenda.org)

To submit an article to be considered for inclusion in a future issue of LIFE News, please contact LIFE Steering Committee Member, Elizabeth Katz, at 518-486-7282 or by e-mail at [elizabeth\\_katz@dps.state.ny.us](mailto:elizabeth_katz@dps.state.ny.us)

LIFE c/o NYSERDA 17 Columbia Circle, Albany, NY 12203-6399

Toll Free: 866-697-3732

For more information: [www.lifenynews.org](http://www.lifenynews.org)