



## LIFE 2004 Regional Meetings

Conference Report: Depew

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The LIFE 2004 Regional Meeting for the Western Region was held on April 21, 2004 at the Hearthstone Manor in Depew. Forty individuals representing twenty-five organizations attended the event. Martin Insogna, Chair of the LIFE Steering Committee and Utility Consumer Program Specialist for the New York State Department of Public Service served as Master of Ceremonies. Support for the regional meeting was provided by our local host, National Fuel Gas Company.

### Agenda

The agenda for the regional meeting included the following sessions:

**Consumer Protection Update.** This session discussed the changing consumer protection requirements: what they mean for low-income customers and common misconceptions about New York's consumer protection rules. *Speakers: Ben Wiles, Public Utility Law Project; Glenn Alveranga, New York State Dept. of Public Service and Jonathan Gruchala, National Fuel Gas Company.*

**The Changing Resource Picture.** This session explored the current public and private resource programs available for low-income energy customers and the changes occurring with those resource programs. *Speakers: Peggie Neville, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority; Bruce Bowdy, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and Thomas Van Nortwick, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.*

**Regional Profiles.** This session reviewed regional energy, housing, and poverty statistics available for this region. *Speaker: Sue Montgomery Corey, Community Power Network of New York State, Inc.*

**Housing and Energy.** This session provided a regional perspective on the link between energy and housing. It explored community-based solutions that helped low-income households address their housing and energy needs. *Speakers: Lee Butler, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, Kevin Burd, Western New York Energy Smart Communities; and Robert Martin, Genesee Valley Rural Preservation Company, Inc.*

### Best Ideas Identified At This Conference

It was great to get updated information on the information and resource programs available through NYSERDA and the Public Service Commission.

Consider outsourcing inspections to Building Performance Institute-certified contractors and allow the weatherization and System Benefits Charge programs work in communities served by Municipal Electric Utilities.

Networking and collaboration among organizations and resource programs is important. It is especially important to look for ways to bridge the gap between housing resources and energy resources.

## Significant Concerns Identified At This Conference

That the resource programs available through NYSERDA won't be there when I'm ready to access them.

What will happen to households with medical hardships and those with life support issues?

Long waiting lists for many programs mean that low-income households often have to wait months or years for service.

Geographic and provider limitations of resource programs are a problem!

That NYSERDA's takeover of utility low-income programs will reduce service in my community.

## Conference Evaluation Results

Each conferee was asked to complete a conference evaluation. Six participants completed evaluations with the following results.

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Conferees rated this at 3.33 out of 5.0.*
2. Please rate the quality of the speakers overall. *Conferees rated this at 3.0 out of 5.0.*
3. Please rate the quality of the other aspects of LIFE.

Materials	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.33 out of 5.0</i>
Conference Facilities	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.83 out of 5.0</i>
Food	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.83 out of 5.0</i>
Parking	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.33 out of 5.0</i>
Conference Staff	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.00 out of 5.0</i>

## Participation By Sector

Sector	Number Attending	Percent of Total
Utility	10	25.0%
State Government	8	20.0%
Local Government	7	17.5%
Dept. of Social Services		
5 Office for Aging		
2 Other Local Government		
Community Action/Weatherization	3	7.5%
Community-Based Organization	8	20.0%
Energy Services Company	0	0%
Faith-Based	1	2.5%
Independent Living Centers	0	0%
Statewide Non-Profit	1	2.5%
National Non-Profit	0	0%
Other	2	5.0%

## **Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting**

NYS Dept. of Public Service  
NYS Office of Temporary & Disability  
Assistance  
NYS Energy Research & Development  
Authority (NYSERDA)  
Town of Orchard Park  
Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative  
Extension  
Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E)  
Western New York Energy \$mart Communities  
Community Power Network of NYS, Inc.  
National Fuel  
NYS Div. of Housing & Community Renewal  
Genesee Valley Rural Preservation Company,  
Inc.

Niagara Mohawk a National Grid Company  
(NIMO)  
Wyoming County Office for the Aging  
Catholic Charities of Livingston County  
Community Action Org. of Erie County, Inc.  
Orleans Community Action Commission, Inc.  
Niagara County Office for the Aging  
Belmont Shelter Corp.  
Supportive Services Corp.  
Public Utility Law Project  
Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc.  
Erie County Dept. of Senior Service  
Chautauqua Home Rehab. & Improvement  
Dutchess County Dept. of Social Services  
Neighborhood Legal Services