



LIFE

Low-Income Forum on Energy
George E. Pataki, Governor

LIFE 2001-2002 Regional Conferences

Conference Report: Buffalo

The LIFE 2001 Fall Regional Conference for the Buffalo area was held on October 15, 2001 at the Classics V Conference Center in Amherst. Forty-two individuals representing twenty-eight organizations attended the event which was hosted locally by National Fuel Gas Corporation.

Representatives of the Public Service Commission and the Community Power Network of NYS presented an overview of statewide energy and low-income information. NYSERDA also provided a presentation on its programs.

A regional perspective on the energy needs of low-income Western New Yorkers was offered by a panel which included representatives of the Erie County Dept. of Social Services HEAP Program, Village of Hamburg's municipal utility, the Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo's Weatherization Program, and Agway Energy Services.

Work Group Findings

Representatives from NYSERDA and the Community Power Network of NYS facilitated the work groups. National Fuel Gas and the Public Service Commission provided recorders for the workgroups. Each group considered three themes:

- The role of community-based organizations and local government in the changing energy market
- The changing relationship between low-income energy customers and their energy vendors
- The way that resources for low-income households are changing due to the changing energy market

The work group discussions at this regional conference identified several issues that have become common themes at LIFE conferences: the need for consumer education, impact of increasing energy costs, and challenges in accessing resource programs-particularly emergency HEAP. The Buffalo Regional also revealed several unique issues:

- Concern about the impact that the five-year time limit for Welfare Reform will have on the ability of low-income households to access the emergency HEAP program;
- The need for unit pricing to allow households to make meaningful comparisons; and
- The need for solutions which better address the energy needs of renters.

Conference Evaluation Results

Each conferee was asked to complete a conference evaluation. Twenty-three participants completed evaluations with the following results:

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Conferees rated this at 3.48 out of 5.0.*

2. Please rate the quality of the speakers overall. *Conferees rated this at 3.83 out of 5.0.*
3. Please rate the quality of the other aspects of LIFE.

Materials	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.65 out of 5.0</i>
Conference Facilities	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.00 out of 5.0</i>
Food	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.91 out of 5.0</i>
Parking	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.35 out of 5.0</i>
Conference Staff	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.09 out of 5.0</i>

Participation By Sector

Sector	Number Attending	Percent of Total
Utility	13	30.95%
State Government	3	7.14%
Local Government (6 Dept. of Social Services, 3 Office for Aging, 3 Other Local Government)	12	28.57%
Community Action/Weatherization	3	7.14%
Community-Based Organizations	7	16.67%
ESCO	1	2.38%
Other	2	4.76%
Legislature	1	2.38%

Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting

Agway Energy Products	Niagara Frontier Center for Independent Living
American Red Cross	Niagara Mohawk
Catholic Charities	NYS Dept. of Public Service
Catholic Charities of Livingston County	NYSEG
Chautauqua County Office for Aging	NYSERDA
Community Power Network of NYS	Orleans Community Action
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County	Rebuild Buffalo/Niagara
Erie County Dept. of Social Services	Rochester Gas and Electric
Genesee Co. Office for Aging	Sen. Mary Lou Rath
Holy Cross Head Start	Senior Services HEAP
Livingston County Dept. of Social Services	Steuben County Rural Ministry
National Fuel Gas	Town of Aurora
Neighborhood Housing Services of S. Buffalo, Inc.	University at Buffalo
Niagara Co. Dept. of Social Services	Village of Hamburg