

# Mohawk Valley News

Clark Energy Center

NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2007-2008

## VEGETATION STUDIES RENEWED

The Power Authority has renewed a five-year agreement with the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) for evaluating vegetation management programs along NYPA's 1,400 circuit-miles of transmission lines across New York State.

The major lines run north-south from NYPA's large St. Lawrence-FDR hydroelectric power project in Massena, and east-west from the Niagara Power Project, the state's largest, in Lewiston, converging at the Clark Energy Center.

Lew Payne, NYPA's Clark-based transmission line right-of-way supervisor, said that "the fact that inadequate tree trimming in Ohio was a major initiating cause of the 2003 blackout, and of earlier power failures, added an urgency to the partnership we established with SUNY-ESF and several other utilities the previous year."

Payne said that initial conclusions of the ongoing research indicate that, "our balanced program of hand-cutting of trees, biological controls to promote low-growing plants and selective herbicide use is more effective and more permanent than broadbased mowing."

Over time, stimulation of low-growing shrubs tends to block sunlight from large tree seedlings,



*A crew moves into a heavily treed area along a NYPA transmission right of way.*

Payne said. Low-growth communities also enhance the display of a variety of flowering plants and fruit-bearing shrubs, and provide cover and nesting opportunities for songbirds.

*continued on back*

## Utica's Jim White: Retired—And Hard at Work

After retiring in 2004 as chief system operator at the Power Authority's Clark Energy Center, Jim White, one would think, would be ready to slow down.

Last fall a *Utica Observer-Dispatch* report indicated otherwise: "It's long hard days, but I get more out of it than I put in. It's a nice feeling to be able to help." White was speaking of his role as a volunteer with Utica's American Red Cross



*Jim White, center, helps prepare emergency meals following Hurricane Rita.*

chapter, and specifically of a Texas trip to assist those suffering from the impact of Hurricane Rita, a 175-mph storm that swept through the Gulf just a week after Katrina in the fall of 2005.

Locally, last year, White helped provide food, shelter and clothing for those flooded out of their homes along Herkimer County's West Canada Creek. "When I experienced the truly good work being done, and the positive impact I could have on other

people's lives, it became more than just something to do," he said. "Besides fighting too many local house fires, our chapter supported search efforts for a missing Waterville man. We worked with the Waterville Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary to support about 180 volunteer, police and DEC searchers. That was a privilege."

While volunteers need the right attitude above all, White said the Red Cross asks for specific training in areas of demand—CPR, for instance, defibrillator training or first aid. Sheltering, feeding and disaster assessment are his fields. "After Rita, I delivered hot meals to those stranded around Dayton, Texas. They had no resources to care for themselves."

Rita, the third most powerful Gulf Coast hurricane on record, next drew him to Beaumont, where he ran a mobile kitchen producing up to 3,600 meals twice daily.

Locally, White said the Utica chapter serves 18 townships around Utica, focused on providing immediate shelter, food and clothing after disasters strike. Volunteers help meet needs for critical and long-term care, disasters, youth services, blood services and other support functions. "Utica's chapter has more than 500 volunteers, or about 97 percent of the chapter's total work force," said White. "They need and welcome more."

"Jim White, like many of our dedicated volunteers, exemplifies our mission. We're able to do what we do every day because of people like him," said Victoria Turner, director of fund development and public relations with the chapter. "I encourage anyone interested in becoming a volunteer to contact your local American Red Cross."◆

## MVN NOTES

### We Get Letters

Interest in energy efficiency tips is rising among all ages. These letters illustrate the value of informal visits by NYPA Community Affairs Specialist Ann Cianfrocco to regional senior groups, schools and libraries.

"I would like to thank you for the informative presentation on how to lower our utility bills. Being on fixed incomes as most of our seniors are, suggestions as you so well presented were greatly appreciated. Thank you for the gift of samples you left for everyone present...you were well versed." (Aurelia Filipski, president, Village of Herkimer Seniors, Feb. 19)

"Your electricity program was very exciting! It was very neat to learn about electrical safety all around us. One of our favorite experiments was the plasma ball. Also the video was creepy but cool! The power balls were awesome! Please come again." (Mrs. K's 4th grade, Clough Elementary School, Rome)

Additional presentations have been made or are scheduled for senior centers in Stratford, Sherrill and Little Falls. Grade schoolers have witnessed the hair-raising effects of static electricity demonstrations at schools in New Hartford, and more are set through spring at schools or libraries in Oriskany and Whitesboro. ◆



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## 'Godspell' a Hit; 'Apple Tree' Next

The musical memories are vibrant, after more than 30 years: *Learn Your Lessons Well...By My Side...All Good Gifts...* and of course, *Day by Day*...“The best part was when we all sang together. We just... sounded...good.”

So summed up Utica resident Kateri Sparks, manager, system operations in NYPA's Marcy-based Transmission Business Unit, about her personal show-

All of which was about 12 miles and a world away from Sparks' job at Marcy's Clark Energy Center, overseeing operations of the Power Authority's statewide transmission network. But she's musical: “I've played the piano for years, and tried out my voice at karaoke,” she said.

Sparks was encouraged to audition for the show by Clark-based NYPA economist Dick Douglass, who's been with the Theater Guild

for a decade, with featured roles in Utica productions of *Cinderella*, *Damn Yankees* and other shows.

“People unfamiliar with the show were shocked at first,” said Douglass. “We planted scruffy-looking cast members in the audience. The curtain rose, and suddenly these ‘street people’ rose and burst into songs and speeches. They loved it.” Douglass, a Deerfield resident and co-founder of the Guild, said the high-energy, cohesive cast will return in 2008. “Utica's an active theater center,” he said, “and we've been



The long-running rock opera “Godspell” rocked into Utica last fall. NYPA's Kateri Sparks, second row, in purple, and Dick Douglass, front, in yellow, joined the chorus. Their next gig: “The Apple Tree,” Grace Church, Utica, May 2 and 3.

business breakthrough. She and a dozen others, with voices ranging from late teenage to “a certain age,” performed three sold-out presentations of *Godspell* this past October at the M. Proctor Theater Guild in Utica's Grace Church auditorium.

“It was a completely enjoyable experience,” said Sparks, “with a great cast. We truly enjoyed being together and caring for each other. Different ages or backgrounds were left at the front door. I think it showed. We've made a video, and some of us even proposed going on the road.”

That would be difficult for cast members of such varied daytime responsibilities, but the show, a light-hearted, fresh retelling of familiar scriptural passages, was a hit, drawing about 150 for each performance.

blesed to have some of the most talented management and support staff available—Peter Loftus, our director; Vera Brindici, pianist, backed by a crew on drums and guitars; and Anna Engstrom, our choreographer, who kept the somewhat chaotic dancing organized and on time.”

What next for the duo? *The Apple Tree*, three 1960s-era musical playlets earning Tony awards and most recently revived on Broadway last year with Kristin Chenoweth. It's headed for Utica's Grace Church on May 2 and 3. These days, if Sparks and Douglass can be identified by subdued humming, finger snapping and toe tapping in the corridors of NYPA's Clark Energy Center, it's understandable. ♦

## Vegetation

*continued from front*

Syracuse-based SUNY-ESF and NYPA staffs will continue to assess the long-term effectiveness of selected herbicides; develop a photographic guide to identify tall-growing trees in their early years to apply treatment; and develop a series of presentations to scientific, technical and general audiences and other utilities, as well as publications and workshops on vegetation management topics.

“It's a complex environment,” said Payne, citing a SUNY-ESF study identifying more than 300 plant species, 50 grasses, 30 tree species, 40 shrubs, 15 ferns and 160 other native plants, on just one 15-mile stretch of right-of-way north of Rome. ♦

## IVM Wins Award

NYPA's Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program has earned a first place, utility category award in a national contest by BASF, the international chemical company.

The awards were presented for 2007 vegetation management programs that follow guidelines creating and sustaining healthy habitats, including the informed use of herbicides. ♦

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If you have comments or suggestions, please contact Ann Cianfrocco, community relations specialist, at 315-792-8335, or by email at [ann.cianfrocco@nypa.gov](mailto:ann.cianfrocco@nypa.gov).

*To our readers: We occasionally receive request for tours of the Clark Energy Center. While we would like to comply, security concerns prevent us from allowing members of the public to tour our facilities. Thank you for your understanding. ♦*