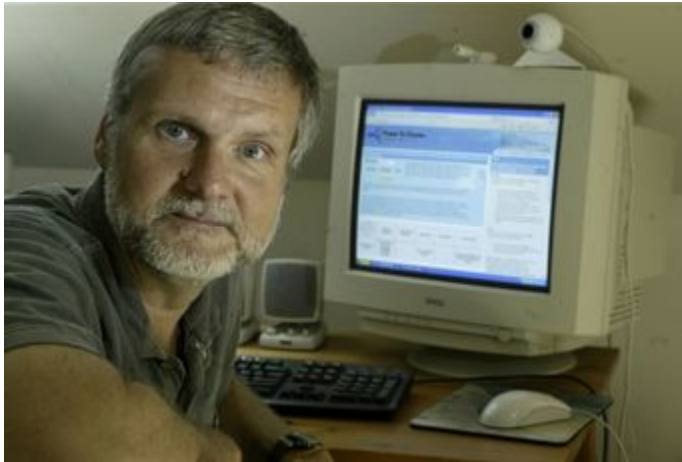


## Group pushes renewable energy

Sustainable Warwick asks consumers to switch sources



The Central Hudson Web site allows consumers to choose renewable energy sources. Bob McGrath, spokesman for Sustainable Warwick, shows the page on Tuesday.

By [John Sullivan](#)

Times Herald-Record

July 02, 2008

Warwick — Residents sick of our nation's dependence on coal, natural gas and other fossil fuels can take the advice of Sustainable Warwick to help stop it.

The citizens group spearheading the sustainability movement in Warwick is conducting an aggressive campaign to get their town's residents to switch their energy suppliers to renewable energy. "It takes literally two minutes to do this, and it wipes out your reliance on coal-generated energy," said Bob McGrath, head of the group.

ConEdison, for example, provides Orange & Rockland customers two options that would cut their use of power generated from coal, gas, oil and nuclear energy. One plan, a mixture of hydro and wind power, would cost only one cent per kilowatt more than the standard Orange & Rockland plan. Another all-wind power plan would cost about two cents more than the standard rate, according to the utility's Web site.

That's about \$10 to \$15 more per month on the electricity bill for the average home, McGrath said. The consumer would help hasten the day when almost all of the energy produced for our power grid would come from renewable sources, he said.

The rationale for switching has never been greater, as gas prices have gone over \$4 a gallon and utility rates hit the stratosphere. Orange & Rockland, which supplies power to most of Orange County, raised its standard kilowatt per hour rate from 12 cents to 16 cents in July, a historic high for the utility.

The world's top climatologists predict that humanity has less than 10 years to start reducing carbon emissions, if it is to succeed in hitting a 90-percent reduction by 2050. A failure to reach that goal might result in massive weather-related damage to our world, the experts say.

For years, New York has allowed every utility customer the option to shop for energy suppliers. The number of suppliers that now buy renewable energy credits produced from sources such as wind and hydro power has gradually increased, as the cost for coal, natural gas, oil and nuclear power increase, said energy experts.

"There's no question that we're getting closer to having more renewable energy," said Kyle Rabin, director of Network for New Energy Choices in Manhattan. But there are obstacles, Rabin said, including huge federal subsidies for fossil fuels, such as oil, and far less support for renewable energy.

Sustainable Warwick has even gone so far as to take laptops to public events to help residents make the switch online, McGrath said. "I tell people who want to do something for the environment that this is a no-brainer; and it has a big immediate impact on the environment," he said.

### ***Making the switch***

- To switch to a renewable energy source, Orange & Rockland Utility customers can go to [www.conedsolutions.com](http://www.conedsolutions.com) or call 1-888-320-8991.
- Central Hudson customers looking to switch to a green energy supplier can go to [www.centralhudson.com/energy\\_choice/index.htm](http://www.centralhudson.com/energy_choice/index.htm)

## Warwick leads in recycling



Reusable bags are the order of the day at the Warwick ShopRite. Here Madeline Stockman help customer Stacie Lynch pack groceries. Times Herald-Record/DOMINICK FIORILLE

By [John Sullivan](#)

Times Herald-Record

June 30, 2008

Warwick — In the race for sustainability, Warwick might have it in the bag.

In the past year alone, the town has become one of the first in Orange County to propose powering its Town Hall with solar panels, the first to hold a townwide meeting on global warming, and the first to seriously begin initiating campaigns to fight climate change on a communitywide level.

Now, residents of the 33,000-member community can count themselves as one of the most aggressive in the battle to cut down the use of plastic shopping bags.

Officials from ShopRite's New Jersey headquarters said last week that the Warwick store on Route 94 sells more reusable shopping bags on average than any other ShopRite in its 26-store chain in the Hudson Valley. That puts the local supermarket ahead of all other Orange, Ulster and Sullivan county ShopRites, according to Karen Maleta, chain spokeswoman.

The news came as a badge of pride for Warwick, which is increasingly taking the lead in Orange County to reduce the region's carbon footprint. This is the town that led the county in agricultural land preservation efforts in the past five years, as well as in the organic agriculture and buy-local movements.

The town will also be home to the county's first "sustainable" shopping center, as Price Chopper prepares to break ground on a 56,000-square-foot green building across from the current ShopRite.

"I'm not really surprised," said Bob McGrath of the reusable bag sale figures. "Warwick's a town that attracts a certain kind of person."

McGrath's citizens group, Sustainable Warwick, takes some of the credit for the huge surge in awareness about the greater need for reusable bags.

After the group started meeting with the supermarket six months ago, the store raised the visibility of the bags and added more receptacles for the store's 2-cent plastic-bag recycling program.

The group has also worked with the local farmers market to reduce plastic bags sold there, McGrath said.

The farmers still offer plastic bags but have begun offering biodegradable bags made of corn starch, as well, he said.

Reusable bags cut down on the use of both paper and plastic bags, both of which are harmful for the environment. And the awareness of the problem is not exclusive to Warwick.

ShopRite pays customers 2 cents for reusing plastic bags and 5 cents for reusing any other reusable bags in all its 200 stores, Maleta said.

Participants in the program, who jumped to 7 million last year from 5 million in 2006, could top 20 million this year, she said.

"Maybe Warwick is ahead of the curve," McGrath said, "but the curve is happening."

## **Becoming more energy efficient**

Warwick Advertiser

June 27, 2008

Recently, a letter from Bob McGrath of Sustainable Warwick outlined how easy it is to switch to green energy with your local utility provider, and at very little extra cost. You can also be your own “utility” by producing your own green energy.

People who have south, east or west unshaded roofs can install photovoltaic panels, producing some or all of their own electricity using net metering. Panels can also be ground or pole mounted. Panels are easily added to existing houses, have essentially no maintenance, and will last 25-30 years. New York State’s excellent incentive and tax rebate program covers around 60 percent of the cost. The payback time is on the order of 10 years (see N.Y.S. information at [www.powernaturally.org](http://www.powernaturally.org)).

A second option is solar hot water heating, which typically produces 75 percent of your annual hot water. These systems will last 20 years and can easily be installed on existing houses, if you have a sunny south-facing roof or ground area. With state and federal tax credits for solar hot water (see [www.desirusa.org](http://www.desirusa.org)), payback times vary from 6-10 years depending on your existing fuel source. There are a number of local firms that install solar hot water systems.

A third option is to use passive solar heating. Each square foot of south-facing window replaces the need for a gallon of fuel oil over the heating season. If building a new house, orienting the building with south windows (8-10 percent of floor area) is a no-cost option. For any house, you can add attached sun spaces, solar hot air collectors, or greenhouses to collect heat.

Of course, the first thing to do is become more efficient. Weatherizing (insulation, caulking and weather-stripping), installing low-flow shower heads, insulating your hot water tank and pipe and using CFL’s will always be the most cost-effective first-step approach.

If you are interested in knowing more about Sustainable Warwick and its activities, contact us at [sustainwarwick@optonline.net](mailto:sustainwarwick@optonline.net).

Bill Makofske, Warwick

## **Change for our future - go green electricity**

Warwick Advertiser

June 20, 2008

Are you concerned about carbon emissions and our use of non-renewable energy sources? Did you know you can do something right now to contribute to a solution?

In New York State, you can pick your electricity producer. O&R still delivers the electricity to your house and bills you, but you can decide what company generates the electricity that goes into the power grid in your name.

Fossil fuels and nuclear power account for about 80 percent of electricity used in New York State. For the average household that means more than six tons of carbon dioxide going into the air each year. And that's before you consider the environmental effects of mining, transporting and processing raw materials, as well as the security and disposal problems of nuclear energy.

But you can do something. You can choose an electric plan that eliminates your reliance on non-renewable and carbon-producing sources of electricity. Our group, Sustainable Warwick, has reviewed the three plans available in this region and the cheapest is called Green Energy by ConEd Solutions. Switching will cost you about one cent more per kWh, an increase that can be easily offset by conservation efforts around the house. Those of us who have switched didn't even notice the difference in our bills. But we did notice how pleased we were that our electricity no longer contributed to the country's energy problems.

Sustainable Warwick has no financial arrangement with ConEd Solutions; we are providing this information as a public service. If you would like to switch, you can do so at [www.conedsolutions.com/ces\\_enroll/?product=green](http://www.conedsolutions.com/ces_enroll/?product=green), or by calling 1-888-320-8991. Either way you will need a copy of your O&R bill. Switching at the Web site can be done in about two minutes.

If you'd like help or more information, contact us at [sustainwarwick@optonline.net](mailto:sustainwarwick@optonline.net).

Make a change for our future and switch to green electricity today.

Bob McGrath

Warwick, N.Y.

## Taking a 'First Step' Towards Sustainability

Warwick Valley Dispatch  
May 28, 2008

The environmental organization **Sustainable Warwick** held its first public meeting called "First Step: Looking at Communities in Balance" at the Senior Center in Warwick Town Hall on Mon., May 19. The center was packed with local supports. This is a big step forward for the organization: the goal of Sustainable Warwick is to help Warwick become a more environmentally sustainable town through the cooperation of local organizations and citizens.

This meeting was an opportunity for locals to share their thoughts on the achievements and goals of this movement towards sustainability, and is also a chance to take a look at what other green-minded communities across the US have been doing to reach these goals.

The first to speak was Dr. Robert McGrath, the spokesperson of Sustainable Warwick, who outlined the main question that was being asked of the audience this evening—namely, how can we become a more sustainable community? The point of this first event, he said, was to begin a public dialogue on this important topic, which will hopefully continue into the future and aid in the conception and implementation of ideas.

McGrath spoke about towns across the US and the world at large that are becoming involved in local "green" movement. Warwick, in some ways, has already become a fairly conscious town, and there are many who would like to continue in this direction—including not only individual citizens, but entire organizations. At this meeting alone, there were representatives from about fifteen local organizations.

Town Supervisor Michael Sweeton spoke about the improvements that the Town Board has made in efficiency. These include a plan to put 100 solar panels on the roof of Town Hall, which will power the entire complex and will pay back its own construction price in energy savings in about seven years, as well as expansion of Warwick's public bus system, which will decrease the burning of gasoline by allowing more people to use their cars less frequently.

Guest speaker Fred Profeta, the former mayor of Maplewood, NJ, gave a talk on the environmental improvements that have taken place in the Town of Maplewood such as green building and public transportation and pledges to reduce the town's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020, or 2015 if it can be done. Maplewood's advancements have had other unexpected benefits such as increased real estate value.

After Profeta's talk, the floor opened; all in the room were free to give their opinions and ideas. Members of many organizations rose to inform everyone of the green actions their companies were taking; individuals stood to contribute ideas or experiences, or to ask questions of the night's speakers. As Sustainable Warwick member Andy McLaughlin said during this time, "This packed room represents the collective will to face this challenge."

At one point during the meeting, Robert McGrath, who had apparently been looking out the window while listening to discussion, once again took the podium. "I see it as a good omen," he said, "that while we have been speaking, a red fox across the lawn outside." When you take into account the strong spirit of Warwick's activists and this "collective will," perhaps McGrath was right.

## Neither paper nor plastic

Warwick Advertiser

May 23, 2008

Members of **Sustainable Warwick** were at ShopRite on May 9 to encourage the use of reusable grocery bags. ShopRite provided 100 of their own bags to distribute. Sustainable Warwick also gave out information on the disadvantages of plastic bags and sold sturdy canvas bags as a fundraiser. Carole Howard and Mary Makofske show off the canvas bags supplied by Kim Bulkley, who has also supported fundraisers for local PTAs. The extravagant hat, made entirely of plastic bags, was used to get shoppers' attention and is not a recommended recycling method.



## **Tiny Maplewood, N.J. an ecological model**

By John Sullivan

Times Herald-Record

May 20, 2008

Warwick — How'd ya like to move to Maplewood, N.J.?

It's a 3-square-mile town, with 24,000 people, located about an hour's drive south of here, and just a half-hour train ride from New York City. It's got lots of parks, bike trails, and even a jitney that takes 300 people a day to its train station.

But that's not why people are talking about it these days.

Maplewood's a leader in the fight against climate change, and that makes it a model to follow during these troubled times. It's built the first LEED-certified municipal building in its state, pledged to trade in all its fire and police trucks for hybrid vehicles within five years, and begun exploring the wild idea of turning a giant municipal parking lot into a solar farm.

It's got what former Mayor and current Deputy Mayor Fred Profeta called "ingenuity," "creativity," and "capital drive." Those are the traits that give America its capacity to respond to a crisis, like the one we face in global warming.

And that's serious business.

Profeta was a guest speaker last night at a packed town hall meeting to discuss ways Warwick residents and leaders could do their part in the fight. "It's local officials who are most likely to get people to change their behavior," Profeta said.

The Orange County town has already committed to a 20 kilowatt solar array that will power all of town hall. It expanded its Dial-a-Bus to a fixed route system that costs \$2 per round trip to various Orange County towns. And it's started looking into new recycling initiatives, said Town Supervisor Michael Sweeton.

But it can still do more, said Bob McGrath, head of Sustainable Warwick. Much more.

In fact, every resident in the town can choose to get their energy from one of two 100-percent renewable sources, McGrath said. All it takes is a phone call, McGrath said.

It's how you fight global warming by still staying in town.

## Reducing plastic bag use

Warwick Advertiser > Opinion

Updated: February 8, 2008

To the editor:

Because they are made from petroleum products and pollute the environment, plastic bags are being seen as a problem that needs to be handled. San Francisco has banned them in large stores. New York City requires large stores to recycle them, and some countries tax them to discourage their use.

What can we individually do to reduce the more than 500 billion plastic bags used per year?

Most efficient is choosing an alternative. Reusable cloth bags are a good choice, as they come from a renewable and biodegradable source and can be used for years.

Many types of bags are available online or in stores, including those made in the U.S. and made of organic cotton (better, since cotton requires a lot of pesticides and oil to produce), or recycled cotton from scraps. These bags can cost as little as \$5. The even less expensive polypropylene bags available from some groceries are reusable but are not completely biodegradable. Their useful life is about two to three years. Any bag that is reused multiple times is better than using a bag only once.

- Bag tip: Reuse any plastic bags you already have by taking them when you shop, lining garbage or trash bins, pooper scooping, or for other messy disposal.
- Bag tip: Take reusable bags to all stores, not just the grocery. You won't earn a 2 cent refund, but you avoid using a new plastic bag.
- Bag tip: You don't need any bag for one or two items, or for a newspaper. And every time you say, "I don't need a bag, thank you" or "I have my own bag," you're helping someone else think about the bag issue.

Mary Makofske

Warwick

Mary Makofske is a member of **Sustainable Warwick's** Plastic Bag Committee.

The group's statement of purpose is: Recognizing the mutual dependence between Warwick and the rest of the world, their purpose is to increase public understanding of sustainability by providing information and encouraging individuals, community organizations, businesses, schools, and government to cooperate in protecting environmental quality and reducing carbon emissions.

## **A New Community Service to Help You Go Green**

Warwick Valley Dispatch

November 28, 2007

What is green? We've been hearing the word more and more in recent days. The most current usage of the word refers to humans trying to keep the damage that we do to our surrounding environment and particularly our resources—air, water, plants and animals—to a minimum. We all have an impact on our natural surroundings, and each one of us can control some aspects of that impact.

Although the "greenest" consumer action is buying nothing, sometimes you just have to. Then we can look for products that are made of recycled, non-toxic or renewable materials. Using locally produced products cuts down on trucking, saving gas and air pollution. We can also look for products that have a long life cycle like compact fluorescent bulbs that not only save energy but last for years.

### **WVT to Identify “Green” Businesses in Yellow Pages**

Soon, our local phone book can help each of us to take steps to going green. WVT Communications is helping to increase public awareness of environmentally conscious businesses in the Warwick area with the introduction of a new Green Pages section within the familiar commercial listings of the Yellow Pages directory. The new Green Pages section will showcase local businesses that offer environmentally sustainable products. The section will be in the alphabetical listings under "G" with the publication of the next edition of the Yellow Pages in June 2008. WVT will ensure that the products offered in this section are truly sustainable by requiring advertisers to sign a form assessing the item or items they are advertising, assuring that they legitimately fall into the sustainable category.

To encourage businesses to take part in this new service, WVT is offering the highly preferential advertising rate of 50% off usual advertising charges to businesses whose products qualify.

The idea for a Green Pages section has been used elsewhere in the country' and was proposed to WVT by **Sustainable Warwick**, a local community organization dedicated to encouraging more sustainable practices in the area while supporting the development of local businesses.

## Step It Up a rousing success

Warwick Advertiser  
November 8, 2007

Warwick — “In spite of the weather, our turnout was fantastic,” said Pat Gallagher, the main organizer of last week’s Step It Up, a national program to educate residents on ways to conserve energy and decrease harmful emissions into the atmosphere.



Gallagher, who owns Gallagher Solar Hot Water, said the crowd was enthusiastic and the mood was festive. Music filled the air while kids and adults learned about the effects they are having on the environment and the simple things they can do to lessen the effect.

Cloth shopping bags were available, as was advice on solar energy from Sara Hambleton of Solarias Solar, Buddy Damiani of Damiani & Sun, and Gallagher. **Sustainable Warwick** helped homeowners switch from carbon intensive energy providers to alternative energy sources.

Gallagher hopes that people look back at the day—and the powerful photo taken by Fred Buell that included approximately 120 residents—and see it as a turning point in how people look at their energy use.

“There will be enormous changes in how people will be using fuel in the future,” said Gallagher, pointing out that oil is now near \$100 a barrel. “I hope this is a turning point for many.”

Anyone wishing to buy copies of the photo may contact Giant Copy on Railroad Avenue. For more information, contact Gallagher at 845-258-0749 or check out his Web site, [www.solarthermalsolution.com](http://www.solarthermalsolution.com))

## Sustainable Living: Heat up climate-change legislation

Shawn Dell Joyce  
Times Herald-Record  
October 28, 2007

You might remember April 14, when more than 1,400 events happened all around the country by people demanding that Congress cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050. These events happened on church lawns, across bridges, on glacier peaks and even under water. What they all had in common was a desire to act now to curb climate change, and the banner of Step It Up, a national activist group founded by climate change writer Bill McKibben.

Since this great outpouring of grass-roots support for climate change legislation, virtually nothing has happened in Congress. Meanwhile, the polar ice is thinning, greenhouse gases are getting thicker and the U.S. economy is stagnant. Rather than hope and wait for our elected officials to do the right thing, Step It Up is getting proactive. Members have called for another National Day of Climate Action to be held on Saturday.

This time, Step It Up has a more detailed suggestion for Congress. The "One Sky Initiative" calls for Congress to "overcome the crisis we face and realize the immense opportunities of our time" through three main points:

- Cut carbon 80 percent by 2050. If we start now, that's a 2 percent reduction per year. It will mean transitioning from a fossil-fuel-based culture to renewable energy. Ironically, with peak oil upon us and the world's reserves dwindling, we will have to do this sooner or later anyway. Why not start now?

America's foremost climatologist, NASA scientist James Hansen, has said that the decisions we make in the next 10 years are crucial to reducing carbon emissions, and he's endorsed the "80 percent by 2050" goal as a "solution commensurate to the scale of the problem."

- Green energy needs green jobs. A 2006 study from the National Renewable Energy Lab identified shortages of skills and training as a leading barrier to renewable energy and energy efficiency growth. To scale renewable energy up to the level it needs to be to replace fossil fuels requires legions of solar technicians, wind-turbine and wind-farm designers, biomass plants and a trained work force to run them. We need to be encouraging these green industries now. Stimulate these green entrepreneurs like James Taylor at Taylor Biomass and see American ingenuity meet the challenge of municipal-scale power generation.
- No new coal! Right now, there are more than 150 coal-burning plants in some stage of development across the county. Not one of these proposed plants is outfitted with a carbon capture and sequestration device. There is no such thing as "clean coal." From its extraction in Appalachian mountaintop removal mines that destroy mountains and communities, to environmentally harmful effects of burning it for energy, coal is pollution. Let's put a moratorium on any new coal plants and use that money to buy energy-efficiency technology instead.

Step It Up set up its Web site, StepItUp2007.org, to allow people to invite their congressional representatives online to attend local events. More than 6,000 invitations were sent to the 17 presidential candidates and 533 members of Congress. According to the Web site, of the 17 presidential candidates, it took Sen. John McCain 51 invitations before he responded; Sen. John Edwards required two more than McCain, while Representative Dennis Kucinich only needed 21 before he was convinced. Although both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama received more than 300 invitations each, they have yet to respond. In spite of being asked repeatedly by constituents, only one senator and eight representatives have confirmed, none from our area.

Step It Up organizer Pat Gallagher in Warwick said, "Our leaders need to follow us. It's not a partisan or political issue. Everybody understands (the need for) clean air (for our) children and grandchildren." Gallagher is joined by Warwick village Mayor Michael Newhard and Warwick town Supervisor Michael Sweeton. Sweeton and the Warwick High School Environmental Club are inviting political officials to come to the event at the Warwick Community Center featuring an environmental film festival, solar panel and solar hot water installers, and a farm market with Cheryl Rogowski and Common Ground farm.

"Bring your electric bill to get advice in going green from **Sustainable Warwick** on the spot," said Gallagher. A historic photo will be taken at 2 p.m. of the event to be sent to all congressional representatives. "The photo will last much longer than the event," notes Gallagher, "and show that the people of Warwick want action on climate change now."

## **Change one light bulb, decrease 'carbon imprint'**

Warwick Advertiser

June 15, 2007

To the editor:

The recent decision by the U.S. Dept. of Energy to override NYS's denial of NYRI to place a 1200 megawatt electric transmission line along a corridor from Canada to Virginia is frightening! The line, placed on pylons some 120 feet high, would certainly mar property values and cause major environmental and health problems. This line is proposed by a Canadian company, to which the DOE is considering granting the right of "Eminent Domain."

However, we as a society must realize our consumption for electricity has increased. If we do not want these lines or any other future lines, then we must take responsibility to reduce our own requirements. We can do our part to decrease our carbon imprint on this fragile planet and in turn assist those groups who are fighting this proposal.

As has been printed both in the papers and other periodicals, we can do our part by first switching from ordinary incandescent light bulbs to fluorescents or CFL's -- compact fluorescent light bulbs. If we each just replace one bulb in our homes, we will make a difference. We can also switch to "green energy." Green Energy uses wind, water and solar to produce electrical power instead of fossil fuels to generate the electricity we need -- clean, safe and renewable! Call your electric company, probably for most of us O&R and indicate you would like to switch to Green Energy or you can go to their website and sign on for Green Energy. The cost will be slightly higher but you will be reducing your carbon imprint on our planet immediately. What an incredible impact we can make if we all switch. Then maybe we will not need these new lines.

There is so much we can do to reduce our own carbon imprint on this fragile planet. Please help! You will be helping yourself but more than that, you will also be ensuring a cleaner and brighter future for your children and your grandchildren. So, if we just change one , then we can reduce our electrical needs and in turn the need for these 1200 megawatt lines.

Patricia McConnell,

Pine Island

Member of **Sustainable Warwick**

## **2007 County Earth Day Event and Barn Dance in Warwick**

11AM-9PM

Saturday, 21 April 2007

The Earth Day Event is ON!

The rains and floods from last weekend have not impacted the earth day events and barn dance at the Rogowski farm this Saturday April 21. Please Join Us either at the farm from 11am-9pm or at the Warwick Middle School from 11am-5pm!!!

A 2007 County Earth Day Event is planned for Saturday, April 21 in Warwick. The Earth Day Event will take place from 11am-5pm in 2 locations: the Warwick Middle School and the Rogowski Farm in Pine Island/Warwick.

More details here

<http://www.rogowskifarm.com/>

Sponsors are Orange Environment, the Community Supported Agriculture Rogowski Farm in Pine Island, the Warwick High School Environmental Club and **Sustainable Warwick**.

Please RSVP for Earth Day (11am-5pm) at 845-294-5852. No need to RSVP for the Barn Dance, the Barn Dance is open to the first 100 attendees, no reservations required, doors open at 5PM. Please revisit this website to track our schedule of events; we should have a final schedule of events and activities very soon. Vendor space and sponsorship advertisement is still available. We are still looking for earth day volunteers. Please help out if you can!