

NYPA STAFF BRINGS “BEST CHRISTMAS EVER” TO FAMILIES

Employees at NYPA’s Blenheim-Gilboa (B-G) Power Project are capturing the true spirit of the holiday season by “adopting” needy families in the area to give them “the best Christmas ever.”

This season, for the third consecutive year, several families have been chosen for the gift-giving program through the B-G Employees Needy Children’s Fund. To date, more than 20 families have benefited from the gift drive. Organizers believe that by choosing families with several children, the program becomes a more meaningful experience shared by siblings and parents as well.



Coats, snow pants, boots, hats, gloves, mittens and more are gathered for delivery to “adopted” children.

In late September, NYPA staff worked closely with two area schools, Gilboa-Conesville Central School and Jefferson Central School, to select families for this year’s effort, according to Tracy Dufresne, facility manager in the project’s Human Resources Department and one of the fund organizers. Virtually every employee in the plant participates—130 strong. They make

cash donations, supplemented by fund-raisers throughout the year, that are used to purchase the gifts.

Once the families and children are identified by school nurses, the holiday spirit takes hold and the frenzy begins, according to Dufresne. “The employees are so generous,” Dufresne said. “They come out of the woodwork—matching dollar for dollar—right down to the friendly competition among departments as to which child’s box overflows first. But it all evens out in the end.”

Each child in the family receives his or her special Santa “wish” gift, plus several smaller fun items, and a stocking filled with candy, trinkets and “usefuls” like toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, combs, hair-ribbons and the like.

More than that, each child receives a complete set of winter outerwear, from top to bottom—

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VN NOTES

“Hearts Soared...”

Among the many families assisted at holiday time by the staff at the Blenheim-Gilboa project, one stands out in particular.

One year a single-parent family was chosen as it faced the bleakest of holiday seasons. The single mom struggled as one of her two sons, the youngest, age 6, lay in a hospital bed—in a coma—suffering from meningitis. “It was especially hard on the mother and for the older brother, too,” said the Human Resources department’s Tracy Dufresne. “The staff went all out to make it special (with clothing and gifts) and it was a particularly moving time for us.”

The very next year, with still more families chosen and all the hustle and bustle of raising money, buying gifts and wrapping toys behind them, it was time once again for IBEW journeyman mechanic Gary Moller to don his red Santa suit, round up his NYPA elves and deliver the gifts to schools.

Once the boxes brimming with gifts were left with school staff for distribution to the selected families, Santa and company visited each classroom with the usual “Ho! Ho! Ho!” and a candy and trinket for all.

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On Saturday, Dec. 10, join an expected 800-or-so visitors of all ages for pictures with Santa at B-G’s visitors center.

After 13 Years, Horton Comes Full Circle

In terms of his tenure at the Power Authority, Horace Horton could be described as traveling in circles.

His climb up the career ladder has had him shuttling between the Blenheim-Gilboa (B-G) Power Project and NYPA’s Clark Energy Center (CEC) in Marcy as he followed successive promotions. He’s become a familiar face in Central New York.



Horace Horton

Horton said he and his wife of 29 years, Jayne, are becoming “very proficient at packing and unpacking,” but that the whole experience has allowed him to make new friends while reconnecting with old ones.

Horton has returned to Blenheim-Gilboa to take the top post, as regional manager for Central New York. He replaced Steven DeCarlo, who was himself promoted to become NYPA’s senior vice president, transmission — at Clark.

Joining NYPA in 1992 at Clark as a technical training instructor, Horton was promoted to deputy chief operator for B-G in 1996. He returned to CEC in 1998 to be an operations training instructor. Then it was back to B-G in 2001 to become the maintenance resource management superintendent, and operations superintendent a year later. Last February he was promoted to general manager of transmission maintenance, back at CEC, and now it’s back to B-G.

Horton, who was born in Alabama and raised in Indiana, joined the U.S. Navy in 1972, serving for 10 years. Just before mustering out, he met Jayne and they were married on

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UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE BLENHEIM-GILBOA VISITORS CENTER

DECEMBER

1 – Jan. 2, 2006 Festival of Trees
 10 Photos With Santa

JANUARY

8, 15, 22, 29 . . . Sunday Matinee Movies

FEBRUARY

21-23 Winter Break Series

MARCH

5, 12, 19, 26 . . . World Travelogue Series

Best Christmas

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hat, gloves, scarf, jacket, snow pants and boots, plus two complete “nice” outfits, including shoes, to wear Christmas Day or any other special day of the year.

Some employees opt to “adopt” a child themselves, which usually costs about \$300 per child for all the gifts and goodies. Others make it a family affair, raising the money through their own family members and friends. And still others dig deep to see to it that each box for each child brims as much as the others before the day of delivery.

To prepare the presents for delivery, staff members will get together for a wrapping party with pizza and soda provided by Horace

Horton, regional manager for Central New York. With everything good to go, Gary Moller, IBEW journeyman mechanic at the project, will don his Santa suit, and with the warehouse crew, loads up a NYPA truck like the proverbial Santa sleigh, and heads off to the schools to deliver the goodies, with Dufresne and other NYPA “elves” in tow.

The bulging boxes will be left for the parents at the schools (NYPA staff rarely gets to meet the recipients) for opening under the Christmas tree on Christmas Day, the way it should be... a special delivery from Santa.

While the warehouse personnel unload the boxes to a secret spot at the school, Moller and Dufresne will go on to visit each classroom to distribute candies and hugs to the children.

“In return,” Dufresne says, “there are enough hugs and kisses and smiles for Santa and his ‘elves’ to last until next Christmas when the next round of families will be selected for yet another best Christmas ever.” ♦

Horton

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Valentine’s Day—an anniversary date he says there is no excuse to forget.

The two were longtime residents of Cobleskill, where they raised their three children—Rick, Andrew and Lisa—who attended the local public high school.

Horton’s love of soccer made him a fixture on the school’s soccer field where his

children played. He wasn’t a coach, he explains, but rather a volunteer whose job it was to run the ball up and down the sidelines when needed, which, he said, “afforded me the best view of the game.”

He’s also an avid player of the sport himself, as a goalie with the Clifton Park Blues, a team in an over-40 league that plays 16 games each year for “braggin’ rights” in the Capital District. ♦

Hearts Soared

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One child had been out of the classroom when Santa paid his visit; he was crushed and in tears because he had missed Santa. Could they please come back and say hello? Moller hitched up his red-velvet pants, fluffed his beard, and back they went. And who ran up to hug and greet Santa? None other than the little boy who had been so sick and in a coma the Christmas before.

Dufresne said their hearts soared. “This is what the spirit of the program is all about.” ♦



B-G Hosts Picture-Perfect Holiday Event

It could be a Currier and Ives print: From Dec. 1 through New Year’s Day, the restored 19th-century dairy barn that is B-G’s visitors center twinkles with the lights of more than 20 ever-greens, gaily dressed for the occasion. With help from many community groups, the free annual Festival of Trees draws more than 2,000 people for snacks and a host of photo opportunities—theme-dressed trees, live reindeer, Clydesdale horses and, on Dec. 10, a visit from the Big Guy himself. ♦

Valley News

Valley News is produced by the New York Power Authority to update our neighbors on activities at our Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Power Project and its visitors center, and as a community newsletter for residents of the communities throughout the Schoharie Valley.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions, please contact Steve Ramsey, NYPA’s community relations manager, at 518-287-6380, fax 518-287-6381, or steve.ramsey@nypa.gov. ♦