

## **Hoosick Falls CHS Students Discuss Alternative Energy on WAMC**

Interest in alternative energy and renewable resources is stronger than ever. Almost everyone is incensed at the rising cost of gasoline and home heating fuels, even though the Northeast was generally spared the worst winter weather. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita disrupted vast portions of fuel delivery systems throughout the nation. And NYS gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer declared environmental concerns to have the highest priority of his campaign. So - *Is it time for the United States to adopt an aggressive alternative energy policy?*

This issue was the topic of Hoosick Falls Central High School's recent Student Town Meeting recorded on Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at the WAMC Performing Arts Studio/Linda Norris Auditorium. The program is part of WAMC's Youth Media Project: Student Town Meetings. Moderated by WAMC's President Alan Chartock, the panel for this program included Nancy Nysten, Associate Director of the Center for Ecological Technologies in Pittsfield, MA; Jeff Peterson, Program Manager for Energy Resources Research & Development with New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA); and Larry Brown, founder of Sun Mountain Solar Company in the Hudson Valley. The discussion was taped for broadcast on WAMC's afternoon program, *The Speakers' Corner*, in April.

Students began the discussion by explaining how the nineteenth century industrial revolution created a dependency on fossil fuels for the United States and Europe, one that we have yet to break or address effectively in this country. There was general agreement among all panelists with Nancy Nysten that our nation tends to be a crisis-oriented society. Given this tendency, she called the rising fuel prices to be possibly the greatest impetus to actually implementing a change from fossil fuels to alternative energy. One of the students, Nick, pointed out that Americans would find no quick relief to rising gas prices, since we have reached the peak in oil production.

Nicole, another student, asked how schools, the media and the public can promote the use of alternative fuels and energy. Jeff Peterson reminded the students that the workplace has many new opportunities for jobs and professions, and that students have many decisions to make regarding the roles they wish to play in the present and near future. Nysten said that studying technology and the trade-offs involved in using one form of energy over another can and should be done in the schools. Larry Brown cited more exposure in the media would bring about an awareness of alternative sources. Jason, a student panelist, emphasized that getting the word out to classmates and the community, through efforts such as the Student Town Meeting, was significant. Nick strongly encouraged schools to emphasize energy issues in science, technology and social studies courses as well as in their day to day policies and operations.

Brown further explained that the average person could take action every day by making their energy consumption more efficient. Many home appliances remain on after they've seemingly been turned off, creating "phantom loads" on electricity supplies, a draw that can be avoided by simply using a power strip. But as Nicole said - Americans enjoy a certain level of comfort and convenience. "We may need a shock to this country...I personally think this past hurricane season would have woken us up" a bit more. Surprisingly, most of the students identified a national alternative energy policy as a defining issue in their choices for Congressional office.

This is the second time social studies teacher Jennifer McDonald has involved her government classes in WAMC's Youth Media Project. Last semester, her students discussed employment practices of retail superstores in a Student Town Meeting that aired on the station in January. McDonald believes that offering her students an opportunity to participate in this project "expands their horizons beyond their classroom and local community."

WAMC Youth Media Project: Student Town Meetings are made possible through support from the Educational Foundation of America, the Howard & Bush Foundation, Carl E. Touhey, and Jack and Connie Hume. Urban and rural public education high school educators interested in participating in the project during the 2006-07 school year, or in WAMC's Teacher Institute June 26 - 29, should contact WAMC Education Director Maryanne Malecki at (518) 465-5233 ext. 135, or visit the Web site, [www.wamestudenttownmeetings.org](http://www.wamestudenttownmeetings.org). Audio versions of all previously recorded programs are available online as well.