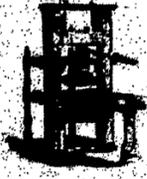


Enterprise



Guiderland Public Library
2228 WESTERN AVE
GUILDERLAND NY 12084-9701
12084-9701
CARRI LOT - R-002
Albany County - 1st

NO. 23 • THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2008

For 124 years Albany County's independent newspaper



Christmas Karrels: Despite cold temperatures and high winds on Monday, Brian Karrel and his 3-year-old son, Logan, made the most of Sunday's snowfall, sledding at the winter recreational area of Guiderland's Tawasentha Park.

The Enterprise — Michael Koff

Report clears New Visions

In fatal accident, why was seat belt undone?

By Melissa Hale-Spencer

Nearly two years after a mentally retarded woman died following a car accident, the state's oversight agency found "the circumstances of this death ... did not suggest any deficiencies in the care provided."

Mabel Speanburg, a 60-year-old mentally retarded woman who lived in a New Visions group home, died on Nov. 8, 2006, two days after suffering an accident in a New Visions van. She was on her way from the New Visions day facility on Krumkill Road to a group home on Rapp Road in Guiderland.

"It remains undetermined as to how Ms. Speanburg's seatbelt became unfastened," according to an Aug. 25, 2008 letter sent by René L. Paluba, an investigator with the state's Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, to Andrew F. McKenzie, executive director of New Visions.

McKenzie did not return calls from *The Enterprise* this week.

"It is our understanding that, following this misfortune, Van Safety Assessments were implemented for inclusion in consumer's Individual Plans of Protective Oversight," the letter goes (Continued on Page 8)

IFCO settles for \$21M

By Saranac Hale Spencer
GUILDERLAND — Two years after a nationwide raid, Houston-based IFCO has agreed to a \$20.7 million settlement, the largest of its kind to date.

If the company fully complies with the terms of the settlement, the United States Attorney for New York's Northern District won't pursue corporate criminal charges against IFCO.

In early 2005, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement got a tip that workers at the IFCO site in Guiderland's Northeastern Industrial Park were tearing up their W-2 forms, which prompted an investigation that led to the April 2006 raid. Federal and state officers searched more than 40 IFCO sites in 26 states and arrested several management-level employees and apprehended 1,182 employees who were working illegally.

"We were at work; it was a nationwide raid; all the factories

were raided...They took me to an immigration center. I don't know the area, so I don't know where it was," said a man from Honduras who had worked at the Guiderland site when he spoke to *The Enterprise* soon after the raid. "We were treated well; no one resisted and everyone was treated good...We don't know how long we have to wait but we have to wait until the factory lets us back."

Most of the workers were probably deported, Mike Hachtman, IFCO Systems North America's senior vice president, told *The Enterprise* this week. The company now employs about 4,000 people in North America, he said, most of who work on pallets. IFCO reconditions wooden pallets and distributes them to manufacturers and retailers — it claims 11-percent of the market share in the United States.

(Continued on Page 9)

"We clearly don't want to see that happen again."

Setting an example for the nation?

R'ville wants to draft wind-power law that will promote community ownership

By Zach Simeone
RENSSELAERVILLE — In the wake of failed attempts by Shell WindEnergy to line the crest of the Helderbergs with mammoth wind turbines, the town passed a wind-power moratorium, and has begun assembling a wind-power committee.

At its Dec. 15 meeting, the town board appointed Rensselaerville resident Noel Abbott as the head of a team that will help the town draft wind-power regulations before its moratorium expires in May.

As head of the committee, Abbott is responsible for seeking out candidates for the wind-power team and recommending them to the town board. Abbott does not have the power to appoint those candidates to the committee, however.

"The town board has to appoint them," said Supervisor

Jost Nickelsberg. "[Abbott] is the driver, so he'll get the committee moving and coming up with solutions. The hope is that we can put up something we would own, something that would be a win for the town."

The six-month moratorium was approved at a Nov. 13 meeting, and filed with the New York Department of State on Dec. 3.

Abbott has a background as an organizational development consultant. While working at United Research in the 1970s and '80s, he did strategic planning, team building, conflict resolution, and executive coaching for Fortune 500 companies, he said.

"I did solo projects, and I also worked as a member of a team," Abbott said this week. United Research has since merged with The Mac Group to form Gemini Consulting.

Abbott also teaches yoga at the studio on his property.

Passionate about wind

In November, Abbott submitted a proposal to the town board, in which he volunteered to chair a wind-power committee, should the board choose to create one.

"I'm passionate about wind power, but I avoid the term 'alternative energy,'" Abbott told *The Enterprise*. "The term 'alternative energy' was coined by the oil and gas companies to basically marginalize what really should be mainstream energy, and has been suppressed for some time. There's a structure there that's almost invisible," he said.

His passion for renewable energy, Abbott said, has to do with freedom and civilization. "Right now, there is a handful of global organizations that (Continued on Page 11)

