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## Farming of a Different Kind in Madison County

On April 21, 2017, I had the opportunity to attend the Symposium on Energy for the 21st Century, an event held annually for the last 13 years. It was my first and I was there because several of my colleagues had recommended it to me. The event typically draws several hundred attendees. While I didn't count them, I am certain that was true this year as well. Many respected experts in the field of renewable energy shared the latest research and policy news. Topics included everything from financing options for wind and solar and the impact on job creation to considerations for Cyber Security.

After a full program, we were offered the opportunity to take one of six tours; Onondaga Composting Facility, Onondaga Lake Cleanup, Syracuse University Smart Grid Laboratory, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, SUNY ESF Wood Chip to Ethanol Process, or the Fenner Windfarm and ARE (Agricultural Renewable Energy) Park. I have often been mesmerized by the Wind Generators so I chose that one.

Until you have had a chance to be up close with a turbine blade, it is hard to conceptualize just how large the wind generator is (328 feet in height). A blade is on display at the FREE (Fenner Renewable Energy Education) Center. The windfarm is quiet and the generators are elegant and graceful in their process of producing electricity. In fact, 7,800 homes benefit from the operation of these 20 turbines.

The ARE Park was also quiet, no energy wasted on sound in converting sunlight to electricity. Utilizing an array of 210 3x5 panels, this 50 kW photovoltaic system sits on the southern facing slope of the west side landfill. The array

was a 2014 project. These panels have now been joined by a literal 'bank' of flexible solar panels that hug the ground on the bank of the hill.

If you are looking for more evidence to support the business case for renewable energy, Johnson Brothers Lumber, a Madison County occupant, recognized the potential of building in the ARE Business Park. Thanks to the assistance of NYSERDA and Madison County programs, a ribbon cutting took place on June 3rd, 2016 for a \$1.7M facility housing five drying kilns. Free heat was not a small factor in the decision to locate there. And Johnson Brothers was able to secure a NYSERDA grant covering 25% of the project cost.

The tour was interesting and educational. Given by an enthusiastic Russ Cary, farm land owner and former Town Supervisor who is clearly proud of the accomplishments of the Madison County team's efforts. While there are still challenges to be worked out with solar and wind (like effective means of power storage for better reliability from these renewable sources), Madison County is taking a leadership role in helping meet the NYS Clean Energy Standard goals, 50% of the State's electricity by 2030. And thank you Dr. Rhea Jezer, President-Energy 21, LTD., for pulling together an important and informative program.

On some nice summer day, go take a tour. It will give you an appreciation for the potential of renewable energy resources that are supported and encouraged by programs in New York State.

For more information on these programs go to:

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/renewable>

<https://www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/WhitePaperREVMarch2016.pdf>

<http://www.thefreecenter.org/>

<https://www.madisoncounty.ny.gov/solid-waste/johnson-brothers-lumber-co>