

## Allegheny Center Alliance Church: The energy for transformation

Twenty-five years ago the future of Allegheny Center Alliance Church in Pittsburgh seemed in doubt. The church had grown rapidly in the 1950s and '60s but by the '70s and '80s it found itself challenged by a rapidly aging neighborhood and members moving to the suburbs. Although some still made the commute to church on Sundays, membership rolls dwindled to 400 and the church felt boarded up during the week.



Allegheny Center Alliance Church

ACAC's Administrative Pastor Blaine Workman. "They were able to see the problems of the neighborhood not as insurmountable barriers, but as wonderful opportu-

"Church leaders were called to listen to God for guidance, gradually accepting a new perspective," says

nities to serve and glorify God. That's when real transformation began –for both the church and the neighborhood."

What a difference a few decades can make. Located on East Ohio St., the church now has more than 1,500 members, with 2,800 diverse people attending one of its six services each weekend. And the church and the Northside transformation have landed on the front page of the *Pittsburgh Business Journal*. Indeed it's quite a story.

NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh has gotten to know the story from the inside out, so to speak. It has provided district heating service to the church's main sanctuary building since 1970 (district cooling was added later) and also serves Allegheny Center 4 where the church leases space for its children's ministry. Recently NRG connected another building on the church campus to its district heating and cooling network: Union Place, a former community center that was purchased in 2004. The five-story building will house offices, classrooms and a café.

"We did a complete HVAC renovation at Union Place," says Workman. "Chillers and an old steam boiler were



From left to right, NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh serves the white Allegheny Center 4 office building, Allegheny Center Alliance Church, and Union Place, the brick building on far right. The sandstone-façade Whiteside Building in center is also part of the church campus.

on the roof and just plain worn out. We knew we had to do something. We thoroughly evaluated the costs and other factors surrounding the decision and felt that in the long term, bringing in the steam and chilled water from NRG was going to be most cost-effective and give us the best temperature control. Plus NRG really provides great customer service. I know we are a very small customer for them, but it seems they have always appreciated us even though we don't compare to something as large as PNC Park. So bringing an additional building on to their system seemed like a good decision to make. As we look at it, in ministry we're in it for the long term, and we need to serve for the long term. So it's important we make decisions with that in mind."

The church, now one of Pittsburgh's largest, is certainly making a difference on the Northside. It actively supports Urban Impact, an outreach program that cares for Northside youth; Bistro-to-Go, a restaurant started by the church that employs neighborhood residents; Grace Period, a non-profit opened by church members to help residents manage their money; and Northside Christian Health Center, which was founded by two doctors who attend the church and serves many uninsured patients.



NRG extended its piping system to connect to an additional building on the Allegheny Center Alliance Church campus. Here an employee uses pit-wrap tape to seal ends of the pipe insulation on the chilled-water supply and return, high-pressure steam and steam-condensate piping.

One of the church's most recent community initiatives is the purchase of Rebel's Bar, a site considered a neighborhood nuisance for more than 30 years. Better things are now in store. "We feel our purchase will help bring a greater measure of peace to the community, as it will be turned into a location that provides a community service," says Workman. "One of our members was particularly excited when she heard about our plans for the building. She said that Rebel's Bar is where she first started using drugs. Now that

she's free of drugs and alcohol, she can't wait to go in with her brothers and sisters in Christ to clean out the place. That's why we do this. It's not so much about buying bars, as it is about changing lives. I have to say that NRG plays a supporting role in that. I mean this sincerely. The folks there have really paid attention to us and our needs and have been very kind and gracious to us, recognizing what we've done."

Thank you, Allegheny Center Alliance Church, for your work in our community.

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## Beyond the Meter: Dausman making customer connections

Although the hum of boilers and chillers at NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh is music to Del Dausman's ears, there's still something he likes even better: working with customers. "My new role at NRG taps my passion for energy," says Del, NRG's new Customer Service Engineer. "It brings me back to my roots and gives me the opportunity to make a tangible difference by helping customers save energy."



Del joined NRG in August and brings with him more than 25 years of experience as a building systems engineering consultant, particularly developing energy-saving programs for private and municipal clients.

Del Dausman, PE, CEM, is the Energy Center's new Customer Service Engineer.

Most recently Del held a senior leadership role in an upstate New York consulting firm, moving to Pittsburgh to be closer to family.

"It's not often that serendipity occurs in the hiring of people, but it really looks like it occurred when Del – a licensed professional engineer and certified energy manager who is familiar with building HVAC systems – moved to Pittsburgh," says Tim Merrill, General Manager, NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh. "Del's a great addition to our team. I know he will be able to share his knowledge with our customers, helping them to reduce energy consumption."

Del's wide-ranging experience also gives him the insight to identify new ways to save energy at the Energy Center's plant, evaluating options such as sustainable

fuels, chilled-water storage and combined heat and power, which would ultimately benefit customers. He even has experience with biogas, as he worked on a project for a dairy farm conglomerate and helped design a system to send biogas through standard gas mains – quite an accomplishment. But for now his immediate and most important task is getting to know customers and understanding their building systems and businesses.

“By learning our customers’ business models, we can help them be more competitive and sustainable,” says Del. “Their success is tied to our success, so the more we know about what’s important to them, the more we can help.”

Del is energized by the opportunities that lie ahead. “Many of our customers will feel the pressure to be LEED®-certified and green while meeting their other goals. We should, and can, take a leadership role in that regard. We have the assets, the intellectual capital and certainly the motivation. I’m excited about what NRG can offer in that area – and what that will mean for our customers as a result.”

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## Energy Center Prepared for G-20 Summit

It has been more than a month since the G-20 Summit was held in Pittsburgh, but we’re sure you still recall that it made its presence known. The city was the world’s focal point Sept. 24-25 as President Obama chaired the meeting of leaders from 20 countries around the world that represent 85 percent of the world’s economy.



NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh made special preparations for the summit to ensure heating and cooling service to our customers would remain secure and uninterrupted during the event. We erected an 8-ft. fence in front of our plant, hired a security officer to be on site for three days, and added numerous security cameras. (The security cameras remain in place and continue in use.) We also manned an emergency boiler at the hospital, provided meals and cots for extra employees to stay at the main plant ‘round-the-clock, and



NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh posted this banner to convey the system’s benefits to G-20 Summit visitors.

temporarily discontinued some construction work to minimize disruption and optimize area security.

Many organizations helped each other out as everyone had to adjust to some changes. In fact some PACT (the downtown Pittsburgh district energy facility) personnel parked at our plant and walked to work from here, as parking at their facility was restricted during the summit.

“Our preparations paid off,” said Rich Boyles, Plant Manager. “Everything went smoothly, and there wasn’t any disruption in service. That’s exactly how we wanted it. I thank our employees who put in the extra time and effort to get us ready. We’re proud of them and of Pittsburgh, which put its best foot forward on an international stage.”

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## From the GM

We are on a number of journeys here at NRG Energy Center Pittsburgh. We’re progressing toward a Safety Culture. We’re emphasizing a customer focus. And we’re committing to be a good neighbor in our community. Our belief is that these roads will lead us to become an even better organization.



General Manager Tim Merrill

Although we’ve always tried to be a good neighbor by contributing financially to a number of neighborhood projects, we’re pleased to now be giving of ourselves as well. As I write this, Energy Center personnel have just spent more than four hours disposing of litter and debris to help Allegheny Land Trust clean up Sycamore Island, a valuable new conservation area in the Allegheny River.

Within the past week we also erected, then dismantled and returned to storage a fence for the East Allegheny Community Council's Pumpkinfest. Several months ago, we planted 19 arborvitae shrubs and spread two loads of mulch in the East Commons Park. All of these projects involved not just use of our person-power but our equipment, and all were noted and appreciated by members of the neighboring community.

Being a good neighbor is sound business practice. But there's more to it than that. The feel-good emotions all of us had after removing all that debris from the island were undeniable.

Tim Merrill, General Manager  
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Twelve NRG employees volunteered to help clean up Sycamore Island in October. They hauled trash of all shapes and sizes, which was then taken off the island by boat for proper disposal. Covered with silver maple trees, the 14-acre island will be preserved and potentially opened for limited public access to education and recreation opportunities. For more about Sycamore Island, visit [www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org).



Tim Merrill, Energy Center GM, looks on as employees Bryan Sarti, Andy Matvey, Fran Fulkerson and Steve Wellman (not in photo) erect the perimeter fencing for the 18th annual Pumpkinfest children's festival held in October in East Park. The event drew about 1,000 children and their families for an afternoon of outside games and amusement. NRG Energy Center has supported Pumpkinfest financially for several years, and two years ago Bryan Sarti from NRG stepped in and suggested we directly lend a hand. NRG has purchased new fencing, posts and other materials and organizes crews to install and dismantle the fence each year.

## Preparing for Winter

Temperatures are dropping, and the need for steam will ramp up as we head into winter. To help your building's HVAC system use our steam as efficiently as possible, we encourage you to check out your equipment and be sure it's ready for winter. A list of recommended work to be performed on the equipment as the seasons change is available for download at <http://tinyurl.com/HeatingChecklist>.