

Weatherization Program Helps Low Income & Elderly

Improve Home Energy Efficiency

By Judie Holcomb-Pack

Weather. We all talk about it, but there isn't much we can do about it. Now, however, thanks to a program sponsored by the Department of Energy and Natural Resources, there is help for low income, elderly, or disabled residents to save energy, lower their utility bills, and improve energy efficiency, whether the weather is unseasonably hot or cold.

The Weatherization Assistance Program began in 1976 to help residents improve energy efficiency in their homes. For the last four years, the program has been administered by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council serving residents of Forsyth, Davidson, Guilford, Alamance, Randolph, Caswell and Rockingham counties.

The program serves low income families who are at or above 200% of the Federal poverty guidelines, the elderly, those with serious medical conditions such as COPD and asthma, families with children age five and under, and the disabled. They can be either homeowners or renters, including condos, mobile homes, and apartments. A record of a year of energy consumption for the home will be needed to determine the need for assistance. If the person applying for assistance is a renter, the landlord will need to approve of the submission of the application since the improvements will be made to his or her property.

The process begins with an initial phone call to 336-904-0338 and after a preliminary interview, an application is submitted online. There are many areas where the Weatherization Assistance Program can help, such as insulation in an attic, floor or windows; heating and air conditioner repairs or replacement; replacement of older appliances for more modern, energy-efficient ones; wrapping water heaters and sealing areas such as plumbing and wall tops to prevent air leakage; repair of leaky roofs and structural issues; and treatment of mold – all things that could cause utility bills to be much higher than average and affect a family's budget.

After the application is received, a priority score of need is established and an in-home assessment of energy usage and waste is done by an energy auditor. After an improvement plan is established, local contractors are secured to do the repair work.

As Reginald McCaskill, director of the PTRC Weatherization Program commented, "It is rewarding to me to be able to help someone who may not



have heat or air, and to help them save money."

McCaskill also noted that PTRC has partnered with Duke Energy to assist their clients' needs, such as weatherization upgrades, heating and cooling replacements, appliance replacement, and safety upgrades. Clients must be a Duke Energy customer to receive assistance from the Duke Energy Helping Home Fund.



Beverly Terry, a staff member of PTRC Weatherization Assistance Program, hears from many satisfied clients, such as **The Reverend Benjamin F. Humphrey, Jr.**, who said, "The weatherization program did a fantastic job! My utility bill has decreased and that is certainly notable. The workmanship was high quality work and was done quickly."

The US Department of Energy has documented that homes receiving weatherization assistance saved an average of \$215 per year on energy bills, and that is savings that can be counted on year after year.



Veronica Rousseau, another client, said, "I was definitely satisfied with the weatherization program. The auditor was available to answer questions and was in contact throughout the entire process. The crew that worked on my home was excellent! ... I want people to know what a wonderful program this is – you can't beat it! ... It keeps your house just like it should be. There was work completed that I couldn't afford but I really needed, like insulation and bath fans. I can't thank you enough!"

Although winter's cold weather is now behind us, in just a few short weeks it will be time to crank up the air conditioning. If you need assistance to increase your home's energy efficiency and feel you may meet the qualifications for the Weatherization Program, please call 336-904-0338 and discuss your situation with an intake coordinator.

You can't change the weather, but you may be able to change its effect on your utility bills!

For more information on the Weatherization Program, visit www.ptrc.org/weatherization.