

OACAA *briefing*

News from Ohio's Poverty Fighting Network • Summer Conference 2009

Weatherization offers homeowners a boost

ARRA money will be used to stimulate individual households

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) has been designed to stimulate America's languishing economy through many efforts including the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP). However, HWAP programs administered by Ohio's Community Action Agencies have been stimulating individual household economies for decades.

HWAP providers are designated by the federal Department of Energy and funded through the Ohio Department of Development statewide. Of the 57 HWAP providers in Ohio, 43 are operated by Community Action Agencies who are also members of OACAA.

The Whole Home Weatherization process is designed to help steer people toward self-sufficiency. Cindy Smith's* household in Newark, Ohio is just one recent example.

Ms. Smith's situation is a common one. A single mother of two boys, she lives in a home that is more than 100 years old. She holds a job at a local retail store and was already on the Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP) when her house was weatherized. Ms. Smith has faced the cost burden of heating bills of \$400 or more each month during the winter, while also dealing with frozen pipes every year for the last three years.

The size and age of her home made it an ideal location for training new weatherization crews hired as a result of the funding agencies are receiving from ARRA. In May 2009, the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) brought ten trainees to Newark to thoroughly weatherize the home. This process included:

► A detailed consultation with the homeowner regarding

problem areas.

► Blower door tests to determine infiltration levels and problem areas.

► Sealing of cracks from the attic to the basement.

► Blowing densely packed insulation into all exterior wall cavities.

► Blowing approximately 18 inches of insulation into the attic.

► Minor repairs to correct infiltration issues.

As they worked in Ms. Smith's home, the crew made recommendations for other upgrades or repairs. This is a typical part of the process and includes furnace repairs, electrical upgrades and introducing or redirecting ventilation. These tasks are usually accomplished by leveraging community development funds and skills available through other Community Action programs or with strategic CAA partners.

BY THE NUMBERS

- \$267 million in stimulus (ARRA) money will be coming to Ohio's HWAP programs

- \$6,500 can be spent on each home under the ARRA funding

- Clients' income can be up to 200% of the federal poverty line under ARRA

- Approximately 32,000 homes will be weatherized under ARRA

- 170 new jobs were created as of June 1 with more to come

In all cases, the health and safety of the homeowner along with significant cost savings are the top priorities.

For instance, Ms. Smith's completed weatherization will make a huge difference in her budget and her ability to live comfortably in her home. Her two young boys will now be able to sleep in their upstairs bedrooms because a consistent temperature can be maintained; and lower utility bills will help with the family's bottom line budget.

"Just going through and sealing all the holes is going to make a big difference," she said.

She was also glad to lend her home for a training exercise.

"I knew there was a lot of work to be done. I knew they would learn a lot from the house."

** Client names have been changed.*



Ray Feikert, HWAP Supervisor with Kno-Ho-Co Ashland Community Action, holds a flag which will measure the 18 inches of insulation that will be blown into Ms. Smith's attic.



Garrett Feaster, in training for LEADS, seals a crack in the attic. Cracks like this were sealed from the attic down to the basement to stop infiltration and seal Ms. Smith's home.

Visit the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies online at www.oacaa.org.

Laid off workers find new career in weatherization

They are painters, electricians and construction workers. Laid off after years of service or fresh out of school, they are equally eager to work. They are new members of weatherization crews at Community Action Agencies (CAAs) throughout Ohio now trained to provide new skilled services.

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), better known as the "stimulus package," will bring approximately \$267 million to Home Weatherization Programs in Ohio. Those funds will enable CAAs to significantly increase the number of people they can help. That additional help, however, requires matching available workers to specific jobs.

Stepping up to the challenge is the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) which has operated the Ohio Weatherization Training Center in Athens since 1989. In response to the rapidly increasing demand for training weatherization crew members, COAD has opened hub sites throughout the state in Fremont, Akron, Newark and Dayton. To conduct Basic Weatherization Tactics training at these hubs, COAD staff borrow classroom space from the local CAAs and use their clientele to select field locations



COAD Trainer Joe Ryan demonstrates technique for blowing insulation into an exterior wall. Hands on experience working at a client's home is an essential part of the Basic Weatherization Tactics class.

for homes to weatherize.

The week-long training begins with two days in a classroom where everything

from R-factors (insulation's resistance to infiltration) to health and safety is discussed. That is followed by two days onsite weatherizing an actual client's home. The week ends with a day back in the classroom to review what has been learned and administer a post-test.

COAD Trainer Joe Ryan said the increased demand has doubled the workload for instructors. However, the new employees are glad to be in the class.

"These guys seem real dedicated to learning this stuff," he said.

The trainees working on Cindy Smith's house in Newark included several men who found themselves unemployed mid-career. Some were out of work for only a few months, one was laid off for a year and a half. Their need for work, however, was met by the demand for skilled workers.

Ray Feikert, HWAP Supervisor with Kno-Ho-Co Ashland Community Action, attended the training with three of his newest crew members. He said the labor market changed dramatically allowing HWAP to hire more highly skilled workers than ever before.

"Historically, weatherization would train people in these trades and the commercial sector would steal them," he said. "Now, it's the other way around."

HWAP Resources

A variety of information continues to be posted to www.oacaa.org. Additional information is also available from the following:

Training through COAD, visit www.coadinc.org or call 740-594-8499.

Prevailing wage guide from the Department of Labor: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/recovery/AAM207.pdf>.

Ohio Department of Development's draft plan for distributing ARRA funds: <http://www.development.ohio.gov/cdd/ocs/hwap.htm>.

A CAPLAW summary of how the ARRA impacts Community Action clients: <http://www.caplaw.org/documents/CAPLAW-StimulusSummaries-forClientsofCAAs.pdf>.

The Department of Energy: <http://www.energy.gov/energyefficiency/weatherization.htm>.

Overview of the entire stimulus package: www.recovery.gov.

Agencies celebrate Community Action Month

May was Community Action Month in Ohio. Agencies around the state celebrated with a variety of events designed to call attention to their work and raise funds. Governor Ted Strickland issued a proclamation declaring Community Action Month throughout the state.



Above left, the Muskingum Economic Opportunity Action Group, Inc. (MEOAG) hosted its annual golf outing to raise funds for the Emory O. (Pete) Myers Memorial Scholarship. Above right, guests walk the blue carpet at Community Action Partnership of Greater Dayton's second annual Blue Moon Affair. The "blue tie" event hosted more than 200 people and raised funds for the Youth Empowerment Center in Dayton.