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Congressman Space congratulates Ohio on LEADing the nation in weatherizing homes

Ohio's Community Action Agencies and weatherization providers have used funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to improve the comfort and energy efficiency of more homes than any other state. Congressman Zack Space called it a step toward reinventing America's economy.

"Community Action is a spark which is going to ignite a very important part of the new economy," he told the nearly 100 people gathered at the home of Jim and Darlene Carr just outside of Newark in Licking County.

The Carrs hosted a demonstration of weatherization techniques to celebrate the milestones the state has reached in disbursing the \$267 million it is receiving from ARRA for weatherization. Congressman Space, Ohio Department of Development Director Lisa Patt-McDaniel and National Community Action Foundation Executive Director David Bradley congratulated Ohio's weatherization providers in improving more than 10,000 homes across the state using ARRA funds.

"This is one of the biggest successes the Ohio Department of Development has the opportunity to partner in," said Patt-McDaniel. "It's not the units we have to concentrate on, it's the families living in those units and the fact that every time their energy bill comes in the mailbox it's lower."

Personnel from LEADS, the Community Action Agency serving Licking County, used a Delphos, Ohio-made Krendl machine to blow insulation into the sidewalls of the Carr's 100-year-old home. They demonstrated how the cellulose, made from recycled paper in Bucyrus, Ohio, is densely packed into wall cavities to provide a barrier from cold and wind.

The crew was made up of employees who were hired with funding from ARRA. LEADS has hired and trained 15 new crew members since receiving ARRA funds beginning April 1, 2009. Across Ohio, more than 1,300 new jobs have been created in weatherization with ARRA funds.

"It's gratifying to put a face to the jobs created by the Recovery Act," said Space, who supported the ARRA and believes it is the beginning of a new economy focused on clean energy and energy conservation.

"The last time we saw such a shift in the economy was when Henry Ford figured out how to produce vehicles that were easy to manufacture and affordable to buy," he said, noting that the shift put

millions to work building cars, creating roads and moving goods efficiently over long distances. The same sort of shift is about to happen in energy, he said.

“Not only will we see millions of Americans put to work but there is an intangible component. Eventually, the cost of energy will go down because of the spark this kind of project will create. Here in Ohio, we are positioning ourselves to be at the front of this wave of the new energy economy,” Space added.

Space and Patt-McDaniel both joined the crew of LEADS Community Action in demonstrating weatherization techniques. Wearing protective suits and hats, the two learned how to do some of the jobs that have been created by the passage of the ARRA and the work of ODOD to implement it quickly. Patt-McDaniel noted that Ohio’s HWAP program has long been recognized as a leader in the nation.

“That kind of expertise allowed us to do this and lead the nation,” she said. “I know it’s hard work. I look forward to seeing many more Ohioans have an opportunity to live in a house that is warm when it is supposed to be and cool when it is supposed to be.”

Bradley, who represents more than 1,100 Community Action Agencies across the nation, said all agencies are excited about the progress made in Ohio.

“Our members everywhere are grateful to you in Ohio for the milestone you are celebrating because it demonstrates the truth: the Recovery Act works,” he said. “Programs everywhere would benefit from studying what makes Ohio a leader. Ohioans don’t sit around and complain in tough times, they get going a little earlier and work a little harder.”

Bradley noted that HWAP has been one of the top ten ARRA-funded programs in terms of job creation. The jobs are also sustainable and pay a good wage.

“LEADS Community Action manages this crew of Ohio builders and they have put their hands and their heads to performing technically demanding work that meets strict quality and cost tests,” he said. “They’ll take home a decent pay check this week and every week for months to come. They will drive to another job tomorrow in a truck that a local dealer got from an American manufacturing facility and sold to the CAP when not too many others were buying. Everybody in this community is a little better off because the Recovery Act workforce is on the job.”

The crew also demonstrated how it uses building science and precise measurements to determine what work needs to be done and whether it has been effective. At the beginning of each weatherization job, the crew conducts a blower door test. The test depressurizes the house and shows how much improvement is needed in sealing unwanted leaks. A careful balance is required so that the house is not sealed too tight which can cause mold and poor indoor air quality. A second, identical test is conducted at the end of the work to ensure goals have been met.

The crew also replaced the Carrs’ furnace and hot water heater after safety testing determined it was necessary.

“Safety is our number one concern,” said Terry Boehm, Community Service Director for LEADS. “The first thing we do is make sure there are no carbon monoxide leaks or fire hazards with any of the combustion appliances. Nothing else happens until we are sure the residents are safe.”

Boehm also used an infrared camera to demonstrate how the crew can check its work. The camera allows the crew to see “hot spots” inside the walls and know where additional insulation is needed.

“I’m so grateful,” James Carr said. “The crew is fantastic. I have nothing but high remarks for the program.”

Weatherization is available to income-eligible homeowners and some renters who are living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line, approximately \$44,100 for a family of four. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, supported by Congressman Space, raised the eligibility guideline to 200 percent from 175 percent.

Without the change in eligibility and new additions to their household, the Carrs would not have qualified for the program. Jim Carr is on disability after having had several health problems. His wife works full-time at Licking Memorial Hospital. After raising their own five children, the Carrs have recently gained custody of three grand-nieces and a grand-nephew, ages 5 to 8.

“This is exactly the type of family the Recovery Act was designed to help,” said Phil Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies. “We are very proud of the work our network does to help Ohio families everyday.”

Since the stimulus package was enacted in March 2009, LEADS has weatherized almost 200 homes in Licking County; more than 11,000 have been completed throughout the State of Ohio.

Families in Licking County interested in weatherization should contact LEADS at 740-349-8606. Outside of Licking County, contact the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies at 614-224-8500 for information on the agency that serves your area. Residents can also visit www.leadscap.org or www.oacaa.org.

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LEADS crew member Garrett Feaster, center, shows Congressman Zack Space and Ohio Department of Development Director Lisa Patt-McDaniel how to insulate a sidewall at the home of James and Darlene Carr outside of Newark, Ohio.

Below, Congressman Zack Space and NCAF Executive Director David Bradley cut the cake in celebration of Ohio LEADing the nation in weatherizing homes with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

