

Weatherization works in Ohio

As the cold weather approaches, most families across the country are turning up their thermostats to combat dropping temperatures. For low-income families, however, cranking up the heat is not always an option. These families pay 14.4 percent or more of their annual incomes for energy compared with only 3.3 percent for other families. Unable to pay big balances or hefty reconnection fees, some families are considering how they will survive this winter without heat.

Ohio's Community Action Agencies can help with the Home Weatherization Assistance Program. This program, highlighted during National Energy Awareness Month in October, provides permanent solutions to reduce the energy burden on low-income families by installing cost-effective, energy-efficient materials and services.

"Families that have received weatherization save an average of 35 percent on their home energy bills," said Philip E. Cole, Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies. "The cost savings makes a big difference for these families."

Since the inception of the program in 1976, more than 6.4 million homes have been weatherized across the nation. The program recently has received increased funding and attention thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. To date in Ohio, 18,477 homes have been weatherized. Across Ohio, a total of 1,309 new jobs have been created in weatherization with stimulus funds.

"In addition to making homes safer and more comfortable, this program is good for our environment and our economy," Cole said.

Weatherization technicians use computerized energy audits and advanced diagnostic technologies, such as blower doors and duct blasters, to determine the most cost-effective measures for each home. They also assess related health and safety conditions. Professional technicians check furnaces and appliances for carbon monoxide. Clients also receive energy efficient light bulbs and tips to reduce the energy usage further.

Weatherization work makes a difference every day for low-income families in Ohio. To qualify for weatherization, families and individuals must be living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line. For a family of four, the household income may not exceed \$44,100. Many agencies will celebrate Weatherization Day on October 30. To find an weatherization celebration or Community Action Agency near you, visit www.oacaa.org or call 614-224-8500

###