

Program brings warmth

OACAC's no-cost weatherization program has helped 46 Webster County families this year

By Sherry Nash

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To Clint and Angela Beckton and their daughter, Kaylee, of Seymour, the difference before and after their manufactured home was weatherized through the Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC) is obvious.

"I can really feel the difference," Angela said recently as the temperatures began dropping. "Our home is much warmer."

OACAC is a non-profit agency serving low-income families in southwest Missouri. Their stated mission is: "To enrich the lives of families and individuals within our communities by providing opportunities, offering assistance and empowering people to make positive change."

Funds for the weatherization program are made possible through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Transform Missouri Initiative. Both are administered through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Energy Center.

How does it work?

Here is one family's experience:

After filling out their application, OACAC determined the Beckton family met the financial guidelines to make them eligible for the weatherization program. They then scheduled an appointment to come out to the home on Sept. 19 to access the needs.

Weatherization Technician/Auditor, Bryan Hood measured the property and examined the interior and exterior of the home, focusing on doors, windows, the hot-water heater, the heating system and the airflow in the house. He checked to see what weatherization was already in place. His evaluation took about 1-1/2 hours.

"I found a window with a hole," he noted, smiling. "There sure wasn't much weatherization in that area of the house."

After setting up an air blower at their front door, he checked the air penetration and searched for drafty areas.

"Using this, we can find air leaks the home owner is unaware of," he said. "Our best tool is drilling a hole in the ceiling to see how much insulation is already in place. Our second-best tool is the blower door."

Hood determined that the ceiling insulation in the Beckton home already was rated for 41-degrees below zero. But he also found leaky ducts and air escaping around the windows and door jams. The corners on the exterior walls and center beam needed caulking, he noted.

But just because he discovered a place where air was escaping, there was no guarantee it would be repaired. Hood explained that the computer told them which repairs were allowable by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Another appointment would be set for a work crew to come to the Beckton's home to perform the weatherization for them.

The first week in October, the crew leader, Mike Barclay, and his workers, Brian Sipes, Scott Costello, Kyle Polite and Tom Smart, arrived at 11 a.m. to work on the Beckton residence. They caulked around the seams of the home, brought in two new smoke detectors, handed them 16 CFL (energy efficient) light bulbs, replaced missing storm window panes and caulked around all of the windows. After two hours, they left, promising to return the next day to finish the front window.

The next day, they were back, as promised. They finished working on the window and fixed a hole in Kaylee's room.

According to Todd Steinmann, the program's weatherization director, OACAC invested \$466.72 and 24 man hours in the project at the Beckton's home. It is expected that the work will save the Becktons about \$117 annually.

"Everything we do is cost tested," Steinmann explained, "and only what is cost effective is done. The payback (to the homeowner) happens over time."

What did the project cost the Becktons?

Nothing.

"Every little bit helps," Angela said. "We are so glad they came."

Since 2009, when the ARRA money became available to OACAC for weatherization, 2,586 homes have been weatherized.

In 2011, 46 Webster County homes have been weatherized by OACAC (as of Oct. 31).

Steinmann said the grant money for weatherization will be available until the end of March 2012. After that, he expects money will still exist through the U.S. Department of Energy, but it probably will be a greatly reduced amount.

"I want people to know that what we do is not just for the purpose of saving them money with their energy bills," he said. "It is also for their health and safety."

"When we find gas appliances, for instance, we check them to be sure they are safe and efficient. We check every gas line for leaks and then repair or replace them as needed."

For more information about eligibility requirements or to apply for weatherization for your home, contact OACAC at 417-865-7797 or check its website at www.oacac-caa.org.



CITIZEN PHOTO/Sherry Nash
Seymour's Delores Matney and her family reminisce every Christmas about the pony that mysteriously appeared on their porch on Christmas Eve of 1968.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

As told to the