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## Missouri man journeys from homelessness to hope

Earlier this year, Chris King spent his nights sleeping in a homeless shelter. After being laid off from the two part-time jobs that would work around his full-time school schedule, his life changed dramatically. Without the income, he couldn't keep a roof over his head, and the strain on his family ended up causing his girlfriend and three children to leave. Finding any work seemed impossible, so Chris had to quit school and travel to Kansas City, Mo., where he thought finding work might be easier.



Chris King smiles in the hallway at OACAC, a community action agency that hired him to do weatherization work after he spent some hard times unemployed and living in a homeless shelter. | Photo courtesy OACAC

"I didn't realize how bad it was, even in Kansas City, for someone trying to find a job even in fast food," he says. "Everybody was downsizing or not accepting applications, and — before I knew it — I was in a homeless shelter."

While living in the shelter, Chris spent his days at career centers, but no one could offer him a job. Then, child support payments for the three children he was now separated from started mounting.

"I was too proud and upset to even call my family and tell them my situation," he says. "Being homeless is an experience I don't want again, but it let me see another point of view in life."

Chris says he met others who were in his situation because of the economy, and the resilience that filled many of those people caught on with him. He says he learned a life lesson that you have to look on the bright side of everything and work hard because success is always just right around the corner. With his newfound confidence, Chris built

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### ABOUT THE BLOG

These personal success stories give us a glimpse of how, together, we are building America's new energy economy — by improving efficiency, by building sustainable businesses that create new jobs, and by dusting off age-old skills and using them in new ways to generate clean energy.

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up the courage to call his mother in April after having lived at the shelter for two weeks.

“Needless to say, she wasn’t very happy,” he says. “She had me come down to Springfield (Mo.) to live with her so I could look for a job and save money to go finish school.”

Chris spent several more weeks working whatever part-time jobs he could find in Springfield — jobs that offered only about four hours work each day. Then Chris met Todd Steinmann, weatherization director at Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation, an agency that received \$7 million in stimulus funding from the U.S. Department of Energy. The agency plans to weatherize about 1,500 homes during the next three years, Todd says, meaning they’ve needed to hire 15 new employees, including Chris.

Now, as a weatherization installer with the agency, helping American families improve the energy efficiency of their homes, Chris has a steady job sealing up drafty windows, insulating homes and helping install efficient appliances. He’s also been able to get caught up on sending money to his children, something he says he’s quite proud of being able to do. Chris finally has reliable transportation and is moving into his own place again soon.

“Making a transition into this job was easier than I ever thought it could be,” Chris says. “To know that I have to be at work in the mornings is awesome.”

*With its money from the Recovery Act, OACAC will be able to weatherize three times more homes this year than usual. Todd says the agency could actually weatherize 40 percent more homes than its original estimates after performance goals and other requirements are met.*

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