

WA Weatherization Programs: Jobs Up, Power Bills Down

Local News

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Washington State - Federal Recovery Act funds are doing double duty around the state of Washington, in weatherization programs that are putting people to work as they lower utility bills for homes and businesses. The money is being used to train local contractors for energy-efficiency work, and to buy down the costs for people who would otherwise have a hard time affording the services.

The Community Energy Challenge (CEC) in Whatcom County has added another service; low-interest weatherization loans for home and business owners, also with federal dollars. Program Manager Shawn Collins says the project is only a few months old, and is already paying off.

"Total, since we started this program, we've created 13 full-time jobs, the equivalent of 13 full-time jobs, and have been saving homeowners roughly 15 percent of their total energy bills, of the projects we've completed."

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) runs the energy-efficiency program in that area, both for homeowners and renters. When her landlord dragged his feet on making repairs, SNAP client Shasta Fasolo says she applied for energy assistance to help with high power bills - and decided weatherization was a smarter alternative.

"A monthly utility bill in the cold weather was roughly \$180 to \$200. And my first utility bill after they put in the windows, the new door, they sealed a lot of the cracks and holes in the house - it dropped by at least one-third."

In total, the 30 community action agencies around the state have received \$59 million in Recovery Act funds for weatherization programs. The goal is to cut energy bills for more than 7,000 homes, while keeping and growing local jobs.