

Investing in our Neighbors Improving Lives Strengthening Communities

Autumn 2020

Local Families Benefit from Weatherization Services

Due to the high cost of repairing or replacing old or worn out heating and air systems, many economically challenged households struggle with high utility bills and dangerous health issues, feeling as if there are no other options. Thankfully, however, for families such as Tara's, there are local programs, such as SENCA Weatherization, that provides assistance to qualifying households. SENCA Weatherization serves the seven county service area of Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson and Sarpy.

"Our furnace and air conditioner had both stopped working. It was summer and we were suffering from heat exhaustion. Consequently, between my son and I, we visited the emergency room on three different occasions as a result of excessive heat" shares Tara.

After applying, and being approved for the program in the summer of 2019, SENCA Weatherization worked with local HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) contractors to replace the worn out, nonfunctioning units with new energy efficient ones. As a result, not only does Tara's family benefit from having access to reliable heating and air conditioning when needed, but the family of four is benefitting from a reduction in energy related costs.

"We no longer have to use quilts to cover up the windows to keep out the cold" remarks a grateful Tara. "The new air conditioner and furnace saves us money because they are energy-efficient. We couldn't have been able to afford to replace them ourselves. We are tremendously grateful that SENCA stepped in and saved the day."

National Weatherization Day Celebrated October 30th

SENCA Weatherization enables low-income families, whether owning their home or renting, to reduce energy costs by making their homes more energy efficient. When a household meets the income requirements and is approved for weatherization services, the home will be evaluated to identify the most effective energy and dollar saving improvements which can be made.

Potential improvements may include: insulation to the attic, walls and/or floors; replacement of broken glass in primary windows; installation or adjustment of door weather-stripping, thresholds and/or door sweeps; in addition to an efficiency inspection on natural gas, propane and fuel oil furnaces, boilers. Hot water heater repair and/or replacement is also available. After improvements are completed households generally experience an increase in

The goals of the Weatherization Program are to save energy, reduce heating and cooling costs and to ensure the health and safety of economically challenged households, like Tara's, who utilize the program. A typical home receiving weatherization services, which may include insulation, caulking, repair or replacement of a furnace and/or water heater, experiences an average 18.7% reduction in heating costs with additional savings achieved in cooling costs. This conservation of energy reduces Nebraska's dependence on imported energy, a major contribution to the self-sufficiency of low-income households, thereby allowing them to stretch available income.



Tara's family was one of 39 households that received Weatherization services and energy conservation education during SENCA's 2019 fiscal year. The investment of funds into those 39 homes has the potential of creating long-term direct energy savings of about \$518,120 and approximately \$6,786 in annual reduction of utility costs. An additional \$243,488 in non-energy related savings may also be realized over the long-term.

"Thank you SENCA from the bottom of my heart. I am forever grateful for your assistance in helping us have a house that is livable, clean and comfortable," Tara concludes.

comfort, reduced drafts, more even temperatures throughout the home and a reduction in heating and cooling costs. To receive free weatherization services the combined household income must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level, which is revised annually. In 2020 a family of four could earn up to \$52,400 and qualify for assistance.



Households with persons receiving either ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are automatically eligible for free weatherization services.

To learn more about Weatherization or additional housing programs please contact: Gin Christiansen, Housing Director at 402-862-2411, 110 or visit www.senca.org and click on Weatherization under Community Economic Development