



The Action

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From Client to Credentialed: The Michele Trawick Story

A former janitor and client of a community action agency has worked her way to national certification in the federally mandated tracking program the agency uses. Michele Trawick, who works at Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council, is one of only three people in Arkansas nationally certified to train people at agencies like hers in Results-Oriented Management and Accountability.

ROMA - required of agencies that receive Community Services Block Grant Funding for programs that support low-income people - is a tool that helps track the agencies' efficiency and effectiveness. Or, as CSCDC director Mark Whitmer described it, "We have to show what we did with the money."

Reprint of front-page article by Wanda Freeman in the Times Record in Fort Smith Nov. 22.

Trawick, who was already working as office manager and ROMA coordinator at CSCDC, said she was recruited to become a national ROMA trainer by Terry Bearden, ROMA trainer with the Arkansas Community Action Agencies Association in Little Rock. "Any time we talked on the phone, I talked ROMA, and she'd say, 'You know, you'd really be a good trainer,'" Trawick recalled. Bearden agreed that Trawick's existing ROMA fluency was a factor. "I was seeking to develop a broader network of trainers, and I had the opportunity to serve as her mentor," Bearden said.

To earn certification, Trawick had to take an eight-module online course as well as a week of classroom training and then conduct a one-day training class using four of the eight

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Trawick, with certificate she received at ceremony, and C-SCDC's Executive Director Mark Whitmer.

Weatherization Celebrated as Energy Efficiency Leader; Partner Pulaski Tech Shows Off ARRA-Funded Center Mayor Hays, Representative Snyder Praise the Program, Saying It's 'Important' to Arkansas and to the World Client says \$2,700 of Improvements Changed His Life CADC, C-SCDC to Receive Funds to Do Even More Work

It had become colder, and the wind cut into heavy coats under the big tent on the grounds of the Pulaski Technical College in North Little Rock Oct. 29 at the 11th annual Weatherization Day celebration, reminding the more than 200 celebrants of the importance of the Weatherization Assistance Program, which has helped thousands of Arkansans of low and moderate income have more energy-efficient, safe, and healthy homes.

The program is funded by the federal Department of Energy (DOE), administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services' Office of Community Services (OCS), and operated primarily by the community action agencies. Since it began in 1976, it has injected more than \$115 million into communities throughout the state to improve nearly 70,000 homes, affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands, including many elderly, disabled, children and a growing number of working families. The agencies are receiving \$48 million over three years in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to improve more than 5,500 more homes, in addition to those improved through its regular program and another operated in collaboration with the utilities.

The Weatherization Day event included Pulaski Tech's opening of a Weatherization Training Center. Speakers at a news conference before the ribboncutting and tour of the center were: Dan Bakke, Pulaski Tech president; North Little Rock Mayor Patrick Hays; U. S. Representative Vic Snyder of Little Rock; Thomas Green, assistant director of OCS; Rose Adams, executive director of the Arkansas Community Action Agencies Association (ACAAA); Dwayne Stuart, customer service manager of Entergy Arkansas; Richard Leger, manager of conservation improvement programs of CenterPoint Energy; Victor Dulaney of Lexa, client of Mid-Delta Community Services in Helena; and Roger Smith, director of the center.

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OCS's Green



Pulaski Tech's Bakke



Mayor Hays



Larry Cogburn of Central Arkansas Development Council in Benton, left, receives \$2,500 check from CenterPoint Energy's Leger to help advance weatherization, and ACAA's Rose Adams shows Representative Snyder an energy-saving light bulb.



six categories: community and economic development; education; health; individual employment supports; tax relief; and system needs, under which it called for "a common client data base" to improve "efficient and effective provisions" of opportunities, services and support for those of low and moderate income. It stressed that more people, children and adults, need to be given more access to the basic necessities that sustain them and help them advance: education, child care, affordable housing, transportation, health and dental care and that "the disproportionate tax burden" on those of low and moderate income should be reduced. It said small businesses need more loans and technical assistance, that there needs to be a "center for health literacy" and a state earned income tax credit. It included as "benchmark goals" the increase in the median income, the reduction of infant mortality, and the reduction in the percentage of college freshmen who need remedial assistance.

Huddleston said in a news release that more than one in five Arkansans, including more than one in four children, lives in poverty and that poverty "hurts" all Arkansans, citing a study that said "child poverty costs the economy \$6.2 billion a year." He warned that "continuing the status quo in policies and programs will ensure that we continue to be one of the poorest states in the nation." The report concluded that the task force believes "reducing poverty must be an economic imperative for the state, if we are to make major strides in our ability to compete in the global economy and meet the needs of our citizens."

Adams said the recommendations were "a good first start in addressing the pervasive poverty that has stunted Arkansas development for decades" and hopes they'll be "viewed in their entirety." She said it will take "a coordinated, committed effort to make progress against poverty" and that "we in community action stand ready to work with legislators, state and local officials, community partners, and others to implement the recommendations."

Al West, executive director of the Office of Human Concern in Rogers and ACAA president, said in a letter to executive directors in late December that "we need to work locally to educate the new state legislators about the need to do more to reduce poverty and get a dialogue going with the governor and the legislators to gain their support for our work to help fellow Arkansans during this challenging time."

Training Centers Will Advance Weatherization

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OCS granted Pulaski Tech and Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) in Bentonville more than \$1 million each in ARRA funds to establish the centers. They're designed by Elliott Management Consultants (EMC) in Bozeman, Mont., and are thought to be the most highly advanced in the country. DOE said its funding of the centers was part of a national training and technical assistance program that will include "online tools, a national training platform, certification and accreditation, evaluation, quality assurance, and peer mentoring." The centers, it added, will help a wide range of workers "maintain a high degree of quality" and will "significantly expand access to training that will provide the ever expanding energy efficiency industry with more workers."

Gov. Mike Beebe agreed at a news conference announcing the grants to Pulaski Tech and NWACC, saying the centers would advance economic development and environmental protection. "We will soon have hundreds of Arkansans better prepared to pursue new opportunities in expanding career fields that embrace energy-efficiency innovations," he said. (Among the more than 600 expected to receive training, besides weatherization workers, will be builders, inspectors, instructors, code officials, utility personnel, consultants, heating, ventilation and airconditioning technicians, and associate degree candidates for related technical

programs.) Bakke said the center will help "promote economic growth by increasing the employability of our students with the lofty goal of doing so in an environmentally sustainable way." Dr. Becky Peneitz, president of NWACC, said the skills acquired will be "of substantial benefit to all of Northwest Arkansas" and that the school will become "the life house" for green-job training.

Doris Wright, the state weatherization manager, told attendees at the annual weatherization conference that the program has become "front and center in the world" and that the centers will help them achieve the highest standard of professionalism and credentialing "and assure that we remain the leader in residential energy conservation. She said it was "an exciting time" for the program and that "we want you all to get on board the train because it's not slowing down and we need to be leading." Pulaski Tech's Smith assured the conferees, "When you send your people to us, you'll know you're getting the best training available in Arkansas and the United States." Smith said in December that the center will begin training in January, teaching the basics and health and safety and "mingling in our auditor, inspector, and crew chief classes." Rick Mayes of NWACC said the school was completing hiring staff and would probably have a grand opening in February.

Governor Beebe, in his Weatherization Day proclamation, praised the program, which has become highly technical and effective, for helping Arkansans save income to have more for "other basic necessities, including food, clothing, medicine, housing, transportation,



Entergy's Stuart



Client Dulaney



Pulaski Tech's Smith



CRDC's Gunn with KATV-TV's Barry Brandt after touting weatherization on the station.

David Knight, 29, is the new executive director of the Pine-Bluff Jefferson County Economic Opportunities Commission, succeeding Iry Rice. He was born in Iowa and raised in Mississippi; has a bachelor of science in social work degree from the University of Mississippi; has worked for youth development and family crisis prevention agencies and a community action agency in Paintsville, Ky. A nationally credentialed trainer in Results-Oriented Management and Accountability, he acknowledged the severe poverty in the region, stressed he's "outcome-driven," and said he wants to develop additional funding and resources to "change lives, change communities."

child care, education and training.” He said the program “contributes to economic, social and environmental progress by creating jobs, generating the purchase of goods and services, improving housing stock, stabilizing neighborhoods, reducing homelessness, and lowering carbon emissions and fire dangers.” He stressed its “proven effectiveness and recognized potential to do more” and urged Arkansans “to work together to support and strengthen” it because it “has done so much for so many in our state, for the betterment of all.”

ACAAA and OCS worked with Pulaski Tech in coordinating and promoting the Weatherization Day event, which has been celebrated the last 10 years at the homes of clients; at MacArthur Park in Little Rock as part of an Energyfest; and at the downtown River Market Pavilion. William Green of ACAA and Kenny Gunn of Crowley’s Ridge Development Council (CRDC) in Jonesboro touted the event on KATV-TV’s Good Morning Arkansas, during which Gunn shared tips with the thousands of viewers about how they can conserve home energy, and other television stations, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and the Arkansas News Bureau reported on it. Attendees included representatives of U. S. Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor of Little Rock; Public Service Commission member Colette Honorable; utility executives, including Rich Davis of Arkansas Western Gas and Robin Arnold of Oklahoma Gas and Electric; and a woman who told OCS’s Candy Roman, co-coordinator of the event, that she’d come to find out how to get training to get a job.

OCS’s Green said before the news conference that the centers “are really going to

strengthen weatherization” because they will help workers become “skilled on a level that’s standard throughout the nation” and will help them become certified. “The program is upgrading and improving and wants to be of one accord nationally,” he said. (OCS had a state trainer, Larry Palmer, who retired recently; a successor is to be hired and is expected to work with the agencies and the centers and others to coordinate training for weatherization workers.) Weatherization directors Loyd Collins of Universal Housing Development Corporation in Russellville and Taft Wilson of Southwest Arkansas Development Council in Texarkana said they appreciated not having to go out of state anymore for such training and that it will help them gain certification. Mark Whitmer, former weatherization director who is now executive director of Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council (C-SCDC) in Fort Smith said, “The word is certified; we have to have certified staff and contractors; that’s the key.”

At the news conference, Bakke said the center reflects “what we do at Pulaski Tech” – prepare people for “better-paying jobs that will move the state forward.” It will “have an impact on our economy and environment” and will help “cut back on our demand for energy.” Mayor Hays referred to the country’s “dependency on foreign oil” and said “when a lot of folks do a little, a lot happens.” He presented John Suskie, the school’s board chairman, with a Weatherization Training Center Day proclamation, saying the center will help the state and country become “a lot wiser (about) and friendlier to the environment” and “a whole lot more smart about energy conservation.” Representative

Snyder, who attended a Weatherization Day event at a client’s house in 2004, praised Bakke and the faculty and staff for “great, great work” and said the center will be a “remarkable part of Arkansas productivity.” He talked about how he recycles at home – he and his wife, the Rev. Betsy Singleton, recently had triplets – and said “this battle over energy is a challenge for this country and the world; the choices” made “about what we conserve, what we use, what we buy, how we make our living” is “why this weatherization program, dealing with one household at a time, is so important for this country and this world.”

Green, introduced by Mary Ann Shope, Pulaski Tech’s vice president for economic development, noted how cold it was, which he said “helps us to be cognizant of so many folks who don’t have the opportunity to get any warmth without our program.” He noted that ARRA funds had helped the program improve many more homes and implement “many more measures we normally wouldn’t have been able to do,” enabling even more energy conservation and savings. He said the center will help weatherization workers maintain their skills and will produce a green-job work force “that remains for years to come.” He called EMC’s Duke Elliott “a good person who’s helping us achieve this dream” and said “we’ve made a good choice in a partner” who’ll help “make this thing sustainable.” ACAA’s Adams said the state was “very, very fortunate” to have received ARRA funds; to have utility partners in a PSC-approved related weatherization program that’s helping many more; and to have all the other resources that go to helping many more Arkansans. She thanked the men



Attendees enter center; from left, state weatherization manager Wright; Adrian Correa, Robert Dixon, and Joe Hall explain the highly technical training to be done.



Equipment to be used to train in attic insulation, including duct and hatch sealing, from left: an infrared camera, detecting wall insulation; SWADC’s Wilson, left and Buddy Foster, right, and UHDC’s Collins; OCS’s Roman, co-coordinator of the event, near governor’s proclamation; and CAPCA’s Phylliss Fry and Archie Musselman.

and women "who have boots on the ground," whose work is sometimes unpleasant and even dangerous, who've withstood the additional expectations, regulations, paperwork, and scrutiny that have come with the funds, adding, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." The center, she said, "offers the opportunity for continuing skills development as jobs evolve in the new, green sector. Just think of all the job potential that's out there" that will help us "become a better, greener economy" and how "we can be leaders in that, by sustaining the kind of training the college is looking at."

Stuart of Entergy, which provided free energy-saving light bulbs, said the utility "knows the importance of energy conservation and weatherization," noting that 20 percent of its more than 3 million customers in four states are poor and spend 40 percent of their income on energy. Weatherization "is extremely important and makes a big difference in their lives," he said, adding that "we totally support the center." He presented to Bakke a \$1,000 check "to go toward new weatherization programs." CenterPoint's Leger said he was glad to be a part of "highlighting the importance of weatherization" and noted that the company, with other utilities, the PSC, and community action agencies had provided opportunities to help customers "reduce their energy costs and lower their carbon footprint." He presented a \$2,500 check to Larry Cogburn of the Central Arkansas Development Council (CADC) in Benton "to help deserving families get the needed repair completed so weatherization work can be done." Cogburn thanked him and said "We will put this to good use."

Dulaney said he was "a proud recipient" of weatherization and that the \$2,700 in improvements made on his 15-year-old mobile home – the replacing of doors and windows and coating of the roof – had reduced his light bill from \$275 to \$105. "When they replaced all the windows on one side of the house," the 54-year-old father of four said his seven-year-old son, coming off the school bus, "froze" and exclaimed: "I wasn't expecting this!", which is exactly the way I felt. . . I'm looking forward to being a whole lot warmer this winter, and I do thank y'all so much. . . It gave me life back; it

made me want to keep my house clean, keep the house looking nicer." Pulaski Tech's Smith thanked all who helped establish the center, which is in a building formerly occupied by an automotive collision repair shop. "We take pride in what we've pulled together."

Inside the 4,700-square-foot building, past a classroom where Smith told attendees about the training to be done, there are sites – or "modules" – in a large space with little wooden house-like structures that have appliances, equipment, tools and other material as part of the wide array of hands-on and other instruction that will be provided, all based on a curriculum approved by the DOE. In front of a glass-faced "pressure house," Adrian Corraera of Pulaski Tech used an Ipad to manipulate the inside environment. Much of the space was filling with smoke. "We over-tightened this house," he told a semicircle of attendees in front of him, "this thing is really cooking," he said, stressing that the smoke "coming into the living area is poison, the CO (carbon monoxide) you hear so much about, the kind of stuff you don't want in your home. As weatherization professionals, our number one priority is to do no harm; we teach these folks how to do no harm."

At another "house," Pulaski Tech's Robert Dixon said it had been insulated, correctly and incorrectly, to help trainees recognize the difference, and showed how to work an infrared camera, which "can help you see insulation values without having to knock a hole in the wall." The sites included "diagnostic cabins" where trainees will receive "house-as-a-system" hands-on training in how to operate a blower door, a fan-like machine that helps detect air infiltration, and correct insulation leaks and problems, and a

combustion safety lab, where they'll test three kinds of furnaces, water heaters, and space heaters. At other sites, they'll learn about insulating attics, repairing or replacing heating and cooling systems, health and safety practices, duct work in a mobile home, and the latest software that drives the vital, computer-driven energy audit that determines the most cost-effective, energy-efficient measures to be taken.

While the schools in late December completed preparations to begin training, the agencies kept weatherizing, sometimes in severe cold, increasing the number of houses improved with ARRA funds to more than 3,100, as of late December, more than half the 5,500 they're to improve by March, 2012. Betty Forrest of the Southeast Arkansas Community Action Corporation in Warren said in early January that the agency had improved 214 houses with the funds and would improve 301 by July. "It takes hard work, determination, and a stiff upper lip," she said with a laugh, alluding to the pressure she and other weatherization directors have been under to improve as many as they can as fast as they can. She maintained, however, that "it's all worth it because so many people really need it" – she spoke of an old woman who'd stuffed paper around her doors to try to stay warm.

CADC and C-SCDC prepared to expand weatherization even more after it was announced earlier that they were to receive \$2.3 million in additional ARRA funds to make more improvements on homes. The funds – C-SCDC was to receive \$313,000 – will enable them "to install new, high-efficiency, ENERGY STAR-qualified items, including air conditioning systems, clothes washers, and water heaters," according to a news release issued by the state's congressional delegation in late August. C-SCDC's Debbie Biggs said the agency sought the funds "for things we think will truly benefit the clients" that the agency hadn't been able to afford. The additional improvements, including Marathon water heaters, "will increase energy efficiency in the homes to 90-95 percent," she said, adding that "it's more than wonderful to be able to do more to help our clients."



SEACAC's Forrest



C-SCDC's Biggs



Mayor Hays, with Bakke, presenting proclamation to Pulaski Tech's Suskie; the traditional Weatherization Day cake, among other food prepared by the school's culinary students; and, from left, OCS's Adrienne Gardner, Subrena McCoy, and Sumita Goel.