

## WEATHERIZATION DAY 2013

### SPEAKING POINTS

- MFA has been making New Mexican's homes more comfortable and energy efficient since 2003 through its weatherization program, NM EnergySmart. Since 2003, MFA has overseen the weatherization of more than 15,000 homes.
- MFA partners with three non-profit agencies to provide weatherization services across New Mexico: Southwestern Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation in the southwest and southeast areas of the state; Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in the northeast, and Central New Mexico Housing Corporation in the central and northwest area. Central New Mexico Housing is weatherizing this home and many of their staff and crew members are with us today.
- Providing weatherization services is especially important in New Mexico, because the state has very old housing stock. Many homes were built with no insulation and have leaky doors, windows and roofs. To stay warm, families who live in these homes often have to use space heaters, which are dangerous and create enormous bills.
- Mrs. Gonzales, who has been kind enough to host us today, has struggled with some of these issues. She was sold a furnace that was too large for her house. As a result, the furnace frequently broke down, leaving her with no heat. In addition, the faulty furnace emitted dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.
- When her furnace wasn't working, Mrs. Gonzales' children helped her haul firewood to burn in her wood stove to help keep her warm. However, this home is older, has had several rooms added on, and has virtually no insulation in the attic. In addition, the weatherization crew found many

holes throughout the walls ceiling and windows. So many, in fact that the holes added up to the equivalent size of 81 basketballs!

- Needless to say, most of the heat that was generated from the wood stove escaped. As a result, Mrs. Gonzales has to wear several layers of clothing in her house and spends a huge amount of effort to try and stay warm. Her home is cold.
- But things will be different for Mrs. Gonzales this winter! Today you will see some of the work that is being done through the NM EnergySmart program. The crew will plug the holes and add insulation, which will reduce the air leakage by 87 percent. When all the work is complete, this home will have a new efficient furnace, repairs will be made to the water heater, the cracked glass in the windows will be replaced and the attic will be insulated – all at no cost to Mrs. Gonzales.
- Households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level -- which is approximately \$47,100 for a family of four -- qualify for weatherization services. The average cost of weatherizing a home is \$5,500. Homes of low-income families and households where elderly or handicapped individuals live are given priority in the program.
- When a home is selected, a weatherization crew does an energy assessment on the house and its systems. The providers then plan upgrades to the home based on the assessment, which can include furnace repair or replacement, ceiling and water heater insulation, repairing broken windows and door frames, replacing broken glass, replacing inefficient refrigerators, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and thermostat controls.
- Not only do these services save money, they allow families – especially the elderly and children – to live in a healthier, safer and more comfortable environment.
- These upgrades are especially critical for low-income households because these households pay a disproportionate amount of their income on energy

expenses. According to the Department of Energy, utility bills account for as much as 17 percent of a low-income family's gross income compared to 5 percent of a middle-income family's income.

- In Mrs. Gonzales' case, the savings she will see from her newly weatherized home will be significant. Mrs. Gonzales, who was widowed two years ago, lives on \$710 a month in Social Security income. But her gas and electric bills total an average of \$155 a month, or almost 22 percent of her income.
- This winter, Mrs. Gonzales can expect her utility bills to drop by about half, or \$75 per month. That's money that can be used for groceries, medical care and other important items.
- DOE research shows that weatherization saves a low-income family an average of 34 percent a year on utility bills. And the savings continue each year for 20 to 25 years.
- Weatherization in our state isn't as simple as caulking a window. Because of New Mexico's unique housing stock and climate – flat roofs, adobe construction and hot, dry weather – best practices for weatherization in other states do not always translate well here.
- In 2010, MFA was awarded a competitive grant to create and operate a weatherization training center and to develop best practices for New Mexico. The NM EnergySmart Training Academy, which is located at the Santa Fe Community College, opened in 2011. More than 500 students have gone through the Academy.
- Not only has the improved training doubled the energy savings in homes that are weatherized by graduates, the academy has allowed unemployed construction workers and homebuilders to learn new trade skills.
- The Training Academy also extends beyond the classroom with its mobile training unit, which takes students directly into the field. The rig is fully equipped with everything necessary to weatherize even the most

challenging New Mexico home.

- Historically, the NM EnergySmart program has received about \$5 million a year in state, federal funding and utility company funding, which we used to weatherize about 1,200 homes each year.
- In 2009 through 2012, MFA received \$26 million in additional funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The stimulus funds not only allowed us to weatherize more than 3,500 additional homes, but we developed new weatherization systems, techniques and provided staff with additional training.
- Now that the ARRA money has been spent, funding for the NM EnergySmart program is in jeopardy. New Mexico's federal funding for the program has been cut by 35 percent since 2011. And, the State of New Mexico has not provided funding for the program since 2009.
- But the need is great. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, approximately 295,582 New Mexico households qualify for the NM EnergySmart program. However, just more than 15,000 or 5 percent, of eligible homes have been weatherized.
- This year, MFA has \$3.5 million in weatherization funding from the Department of Energy, the Low Income Home Energy Assessment Program and New Mexico Gas. We will be able to fully weatherize only 409 homes this year. Through our new collaboration with the New Mexico Gas Company, another 672 homes will receive limited efficiency measures such as low-flow showerheads and hot water insulation. This is a small fraction of families who, like Mrs. Gonzales, are in desperate need of substantial weatherization services.
- MFA will request a \$1 million appropriation during the 2014 legislative session to ensure that this important program continues. Senator Richard Martinez has sponsored this legislation in the past.