

# OACAA *briefing*

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## Customers pleased with weatherization work

"We've noticed a difference already."

Arlene and Albert Thompson\* of Cincinnati could tell their winter heating bills were going to drop almost as soon as the weatherization crew from Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency was done with its work.

Mary Sargent\* agreed.

"It's just warmer and cozier already," she said.

Both families received weatherization services from Cincy-CAA since the program's expansion due to funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

Sargent became eligible for the program when she lost her job. Her company relocated after she had worked there as a bookkeeper for nearly eight years. A single mom receiving child support on an unpredictable basis, Sargent struggled with asking for help.

"I've always taken care of myself," she said. "It was very hard, first of all, to ask for help, but to receive it was even harder."

Sargent went on unemployment in June 2008 and also started receiving food stamps and help from local churches. Her house is more than 50 years old and constructed from cinder blocks. Her level billing for electric heat has been \$256 each

month.

The weatherization work included blown insulation, weather stripping around doors, crack sealing, replacement of a dryer vent and a new water heater, which is Sargent's favorite part of the process.

"I think I'm feeling differences now," she said just a few weeks after completion. "I'm not using the heat as much."

Sargent was also impressed with the quality of the work and the professionalism of the Cincy-CAA crew.

"My dad – a retired engineer – was here with them and was just so impressed with them," she said. "They did a very thorough job and they really cared."

Sargent wasn't home during the weatherization because she landed a new job just before the work began. She took a large paycut but is working only two miles from home as a bookkeeper in a job she knows had a lot of applicants.

"I love landscaping and nature and flowers and I actually got a job at a community landscaper," she said gratefully. "I don't complain about my job."

The Thompson's were also impressed with the Cincy-CAA weatherization crew who replaced their furnace and water heater, fixed broken windows, replaced the dryer vent and added insulation.

"They were just absolutely wonderful," Arlene said. "We have noticed a difference already. It can't help but make a difference in our bills."

The Thompsons had been paying more than \$300 a month for gas and electric. Their initial home energy audit – the beginning of any weatherization job – also found their refrigerator was inefficient. Weatherization crews were able to direct the Thompsons to a companion program that replaced that appliance as well.

The couple, childhood friends, married 14 years ago after having separate lives with other spouses. Now, both 79, they live in a four-room house sustaining themselves on Social Security.

"We do okay, but there are things that come up with the house that we just can't afford to do," Arlene said. "We were just going to be grateful for anything they would do."

Both the Thompsons and Sargent gladly share their experiences. Sargent has already counseled a neighbor who recently lost her job to look into having her home weatherized.

"I definitely will share it with anybody I can help," she said.

*\*Client names have been changed in this story.*