St. Charles energy audits are result of partnership

LaRonda Griffin and her five children are reducing energy costs and saving money through a public-private partnership. NECAC, the City of St. Charles and Ameren Missouri have teamed up to provide energy audits and weatherization repairs at 70 St. Charles Housing Authority units.

Griffin, a 40-year-old single mother, and her children – Xavier, 15; Zakira, 14; Urias, 12; Jeremiah, 9; and two-month-old Victoria – receives assistance at her 1960s-era home near Blanchette Park on the north side of St. Charles.

An energy audit performed by NECAC showed some duct work was disconnected from Griffin’s furnace. It is being upgraded so that heat is properly directed to the living area of the home instead of the attic.

“It was just as warm inside the attic as the living room,” said NECAC Weatherization Program Director Joe Findley. “When it’s 40 degree outside, that should not be the case. She was losing 20 percent of her heat to the attic.”

NECAC is also caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doors to help reduce additional air leaks. Griffin is grateful. “I’m happy to have this this type of program,” she said. “We have

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SkillUp helps Shelby County woman turn her life around

Kayla Shrader sees a lot more positives in life these days. The 27-year-old Shelby County woman says she and her family are better off because of NECAC’s SkillUp program.

“It’s helped me tremendously,” she said. “It has helped me get clothes for work and it’s helped my family out and my kids out.”

SkillUp is a voluntary program aimed at providing food stamp recipients 16 and older a chance to gain skills, training or experience that can improve their ability to find a job or decrease dependency on public assistance.

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very limited income. It’s great to have assistance, and when you have this type of help they let you see exactly what is wrong and fix the problem.”

The City of St. Charles is providing $52,000 to cover the cost of the audits. A $50,000 grant of shareholder dollars from Ameren will pay for the first round of upgrades, with an additional $50,000 to be provided in early 2020 to complete the project.

“The St. Charles Housing Authority is thankful for the partnership formed during the weatherization project this year,” said Mary Clements, the housing authority’s executive director. “Because of our partnering agencies — the City of St. Charles, NECAC and Ameren — our units will be much warmer and allow more comfort to the families that reside in them.”

Clements said she hopes the program “will decrease the energy cost of the families and allow them to have more money available to them for other necessities such as food, clothing and transportation.”

NECAC regularly works with utilities and other public and private partners on programs designed to improve clients’ lives.

**504 loan recipients can be part of Self-Help Housing**

Homeowners who apply for a 504 Housing Repair Loan through NECAC can now enjoy additional renovations as part of the Self-Help Housing program.

NECAC is taking applications for the USDA 504 program in Lewis, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph and Shelby counties.

“Grants of up to $7,500 through the 504 program are also available. Applicants must be 62 or older without the ability to repay a repair loan. If the property is sold in less than three years, the grant must be repaid by the participant. Loan and grant combinations are possible. Qualifying participants of 504 can also join the NECAC Self-Help Housing Home Rehabilitation program.”

In 2017, NECAC was awarded an initial $159,000 USDA Rural Development grant under the Self-Help program to finance renovation work at 26 owner-occupied homes in Marion, Monroe, Pike and Ralls counties. Earlier this year, the agency was awarded an additional $365,700 USDA grant to expand the program for work at 56 homes in Lincoln, Montgomery, Shelby and Warren counties.

Under the program, NECAC supervisors work with participants to provide one-on-one instruction on the skills they need to do the renovation work. Supplies are purchased by the program.

**SkillUp program helps family get back on track**

SkillUP can help participants get jobs that lead to self-sufficiency. NECAC offers job search, training education, and supportive services to participants, and works with public and private sector partners to assist clients.

Also, the agency can offer assistance with transportation, rent, utilities, mortgage and work-related expenses. Shadrer is a housekeeper at a Shelby nursing home. She and her husband, Bradley, have two sons, four-year-old Kolton and two-year-old Gunner.

“Kayla came to the SkillUp program under-employed and feeling down on her luck,” recalls NECAC Shelby County Service Coordinator Lisa Blickhan. “She has been beat down most of her life after having little encouragement. After the death of her grandmother, she felt desperate and at the end of her rope. SkillUp has given Kayla a brighter future for her children. Across its 12 counties, NECAC has enrolled 174 participants, with 86 finding employment.
Board Members are recognized

During the November board meeting, NECAC President and CEO Don Patrick and new Chairman of the Board Fred Vahle recognized the following with certificates for their years of service.

Josh Wilson, Marion County
Dean Larkin, Montgomery County
Lorna Miles, Randolph County
Richard Veinot, Warren County

WIC contract renewed

NECAC’s contract to provide Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program services in Warren and St. Charles counties has been renewed.

The agreement with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services calls for NECAC to provide $273,463 of WIC services for fiscal 2019, which began Oct. 1 and runs through Sept. 30, 2020. The agency expects to serve 16,121 clients during the year.

WIC is a supplemental USDA program that provides free nutritious foods and nutrition education to pregnant, breast-feeding and postpartum women and teens, infants and children up to age five. Participants must meet WIC income guidelines and be determined by a health professional to be at nutritional risk.

NECAC was also approved for the sixth straight year as a Breastfeeding Friendly WIC Clinic and awarded $13,000 for staff support. NECAC was one of more than 40 local WIC contracting agencies that received the designation.

The WIC program is overseen by NECAC Deputy Director for Community Health Programs Brenda Fuqua and Director Claudia Timbrook, a Registered Nurse and a Family Nurse Practitioner. Also on the staff are Registered Dietician Nutritionist Jackie Brown and Clerks Gina Stockman and Ashley Beaird.

WIC clinics are offered at NECAC Service Centers in Warrenton and O’Fallon.

Suchland earns national honor

NECAC’s Kayla Suchland has earned a national certification.

She’s been named a Nationally Certified Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Implementer following an intensive five-month course sponsored by the Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers.

ROMA is a Congressionally-approved management and accountability process to measure the performance and success of agencies such as NECAC that receive federal funding for client self-sufficiency programs. Suchland, a NECAC Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) assistant, will use the new training in planning new contracts, tracking program outcomes and determining client needs.

“It’s a great accomplishment,” she said. “It will be a good tool to use to help the agency in the future.”

Suchland, of Curryville, is a 2014 graduate of Buchanan High School in Troy. She joined NECAC in 2017 and recently earned an associate’s degree in human services from St. Charles Community College.

Montgomery offers homeless kits

NECAC and the Montgomery County Progressors 4-H Club have teamed up to provide 20 personal assistance kits to the homeless.

The 4-H Club donated the kits, which are being distributed at the NECAC Service Center in Montgomery City.

“We have homeless, definitely,” said NECAC Montgomery County Service Coordinator Patsy Cox. “The last person we assisted was sleeping in an abandoned building here in town without water or heat.”

Cox said she sees two or three people a week who are homeless or on the verge of it. Some are from Montgomery County and others are just passing through. Cox has encountered people who live in tents at parks and those who use their cars as shelter. She said local schools have identified at least 17 families that don’t have a permanent address.

“We try to help any way we can,” Cox said. “That’s what the kits are for. They have items that can help tide people over until they’re able to find a place or to get a job.”

The kits contain socks, bandages, antibiotic ointment, toothbrushes, toothpaste, bottled water, shampoo, conditioner, lip balm, tissue, packaged food, hand warmers, lotion and sanitizer. There’s also a note designed to encourage recipients and give them hope.

Cox and other NECAC County Service Coordinators will participate in Missouri’s annual Point in Time count of the homeless in late January.
NECAC is contractually required to publish the following: “This program is funded with $100 in federal funds received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Community Services Block Grant, as provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division. The funds received from the Family Support Division are all federally funded.”

Fred Vahle, Chairman of the Board
Don Patrick, President & CEO

Return Service Requested

By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

Food boxes aid Pike County families
NECAC distributed 30 Thanksgiving holiday meal boxes to needy Pike County families in partnership with Meridian Waste and Save A Lot food stores. Pictured, from left, are NECAC County Services Programs Director Linda Fritz, NECAC Pike County Service Coordinator Chandra Roberts, Meridian General Manager Roger E. Smith, Meridian Community Affairs Manager Natalie Denando and Save A Lot Manager Larry Hensiek. Recipient families were referred to NECAC by local churches.

Lewis has Adopt-A-Child
NECAC Lewis County Service Coordinator Judy Eaton looks over gifts Dec. 20 as part of the Adopt-A-Child for Christmas campaign. Eaton has overseen the program for more than 25 years. Area businesses, civic groups and volunteers made sure the holiday was brighter for 250 families and children in Lewis County. Gifts, as well as hams, were distributed at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Canton. Eaton and other volunteers also distribute food at the Lewis County Pantry.

Marion County Toys for Tots helped
NECAC Marion County Service Coordinator Gwen Koch sorts contributions for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program Dec. 20 in Hannibal. Items were distributed to hundreds of children. Also helping were NECAC Ralls County Service Coordinator LeAndra Bridgeman, Marion County Intake Assistant Cassandra Lorenson and Ralls County NECAC Volunteer Michelle James.

Good News in Shelby
NECAC Shelby County Service Coordinator Lisa Blickhan helps unload a truck from the Good News of Christmas campaign Dec. 19 in Shelbina. The campaign is sponsored by The Quincy Herald-Whig newspaper and benefited residents of Shelby County and other locations.

Happy New Year!!!