



In the News

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Happier Holiday

**NECAC makes Christmas better.
Please see Pages 3 and 4.**

NECAC project is awarded \$6.6 million

NECAC and Rural Housing Developers have been awarded \$6.6 million to upgrade two Warren County apartment complexes.

The funding will pay for renovations at the 24-unit Donna Marie Apartments in Warrenton and the 24-unit Wright City Apartments in Wright City. The work will include new walls, flooring, electrical wiring and cabinets. It is expected to start next year and take nine to 10 months.

The project, which is called Warren Trails, is one of 24 financed with more than \$350 million in federal and state tax credits approved by the Missouri Housing Development Commission.

“We are excited about the opportunity to upgrade these two apartment complexes,” said NECAC President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Page. “NECAC could not have accomplished this project or the many others we have undertaken without the help of Rural Housing Developers or our many other development entities.”

Tax credits are used to buy, build or renovate affordable housing. Developers sell the credits to investors to raise money for their projects, which reduces developers’ debts. Investors get a dollar-for-dollar credit against their federal tax liability for a specified number of years. The amount of the credit is based upon the amount invested in affordable housing.



Chastain

Weatherization crew leader helps woman after fall

Little did Kenny Chastain know that a routine job would lead to an extraordinary act.

The alert NECAC weatherization crew leader helped an elderly Randolph County woman who suffered severe injuries in a fall at her home. Typical of his personality, Chastain downplayed his role, but he may have saved the woman’s life.

“I don’t want nothing from it,” he said. “I think people should help without asking for anything in return.”

Chastain remembers it starting as an unremarkable day. He and weatherization technician Jacob Schler arrived at a client’s house for an ordinary hot water heater installation. That’s when things took a turn. Chastain looked across the street and saw a woman’s feet protruding from the front door.

“She was hollering ‘Help,’” he recalled. “My instinct told me to go and check what was going on. I asked her what she thought was wrong. She said she thought she had a broken neck.”

The elderly woman had fallen as she came back into her house, and had been stranded on the floor unable to move for

Please see Chastain, Page 2

Young family is aided by Self-Help Housing



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Roger Abbey installs a second-floor window at his Hannibal home.

The Roger Abbey family is realizing the benefits of Self-Help Housing.

Abbey, his wife, Shyre, and their three children are fixing up their older Hannibal home through the USDA Rural Development program administered by NECAC.

New windows will lock in warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer. They’ll also be able to open them to allow fresh air inside during more moderate weather — something they haven’t been able to do before.

“It’s meant so much,” Roger said. “It really helps us build our house as a better home. Not everybody has the finances, but they all have the dream. So, with NECAC, it helps you establish what you want to do, and they just take the next step and help you.”

Husband and wife are 24 years old. He’s a truck driver and she’s a support provider. Four-year-old Kingston, one-

Please see Self-Help, Page 2

Self-Help program helps Marion County family

Continued from Page 1



Shyre and Roger Abbey read to their children, from left, Kingston, Adonaiyah and Providence.

By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

year-old Providence and three-month-old Adonaiyah keep them busy.

In addition to Marion County, Self-Help participants are being sought in Lincoln, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Shelby and Warren counties. Applicants must own their homes and meet income guidelines.

In June 2023, NECAC was awarded an additional \$365,700 over two years from USDA Rural Development to fund the program.

NECAC has been involved with Self-Help Housing since 1999. Under the original phase, participants built each other's homes. Forty-eight houses were constructed over about 10 years in Shelby, Monroe, Randolph and Montgomery counties.

In 2017, NECAC was awarded a \$159,000 USDA grant to begin Self-Help renovations at 26 owner-occupied homes in four counties. Two years later, the agency was awarded a \$365,700 USDA grant to expand to 56 homes in four other counties.

Chastain rescues woman who fell

Continued from Page 1

more than an hour.

Chastain immediately called 911 and waited with the woman until a fire truck and paramedics arrived. He credits his training from six years of working at prisons in Bowling Green and Vandalia for guiding him on how to handle the emergency.

An ambulance took the woman to a Columbia hospital. She had, indeed, broken her neck and also had spinal injuries. The woman's daughter contacted Chastain through Facebook and thanked him for his efforts.

Chastain, who has been with NECAC weatherization for more than three years, remained humble about his actions. As soon as first responders took care of the situation, he went back to work.

So, did the hot water heater get installed that day at the client's house? Well, nothing unusual.

"Yeah," Chastain said with a smile. "We did it."

Spencer Camp is Facebook champ

Spencer Camp is the runaway winner on the NECAC Facebook page for 2023.

The Sept. 21 story of his hiring as a property manager got 5,463 views. Second place was the 4,443 views of the Dec. 11 story about Marion County's "Hoodies for the Holidays." Third place went to the May 24 roundup of Community Action Month photos with 1,240 hits.



Employee Spotlight:

Windland retiring after 31 years

Sherry Windland loves nature so much that she once thought of a career as a forest ranger.

While she still loves the outdoors, Windland has enjoyed spending more than three decades behind a desk. The 62-year-old Frankford grandmother is retiring as NECAC Assistant Finance Director on Jan. 3.

Windland began at NECAC as a finance specialist on Oct. 29, 1992. In a world where switching jobs often has become the norm, Windland is proud of staying at one place.

"You've got to enjoy what you're doing and you've got to care about what you're doing," she said. "In a roundabout way, I'm helping people, and that's what the job is all about."

"It has been a pleasure working with Sherry for all these years, and I wish her a long and happy retirement," said NECAC Finance Director Vicky Pritchett. "She will be missed."

Windland joined the workforce immediately upon graduation from Bowling Green High School in 1980 and studied office systems technology at Pike-Lincoln Technical Center in Eolia. While some find accounting boring, Windland likes the challenge.

"A lot of it is the work," she said. "It's always different. It's always changing. I've met a lot of different people."

Job stress is one thing Windland won't miss. With much of its funding from govern-



Sherry Windland works from her desk at the NECAC Central Offices.

By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

ment agencies, NECAC finance staff must deal with multiple auditors and funding sources.

"You've got to be 100 percent accurate all the time," said Windland, who urges young people to be dedicated to what they're doing. "If it's not right, I'm going to dig until it's right and make sure it's corrected."

Windland has six children and eight grandchildren, with a ninth grandchild due soon after her retirement. She promises that babysitting "will not be a permanent position" because she has plans to upgrade her home and travel. And then there's that passion for nature.

"This summer, you'll either find me outdoors or in the pool," she said.

Number of utility assistance applications increases

NECAC is seeing a rise in utility assistance applications.

Five thousand applications have poured in during the first three months of the program this year, up by 250 compared with the same period last year. For all 2022-23, the agency had about 9,700 applications. Inflation and escalating costs are driving the rise.

There are two types of assistance — the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP). The federally-funded programs are distributed through the Missouri Department of Social Services.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer Marion County offered a new holiday-themed program called "Hoodies for the Holidays." Intake Assistant Crystal Bliss is shown sorting donated items.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer Lewis County Coordinator Gena Scott had her hands full with the annual Adopt-A-Child program. Businesses, organizations, community groups and individuals teamed to provide gifts for more than 100 children.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer Monroe County Coordinator Shelby DeOrnellis again participated in the Christmas is Caring program. More than 100 people received gifts and food.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer Shelby County Coordinator Lisa Blickhan sorts food as part of the Celebration of Sharing put on by local organizations. It provided 26 families with meals and 62 kids with presents.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer More than 800 St. Charles County residents received assistance from Helping Hands for the Holidays. Intake Assistant Karen Ford, left, and County Coordinator Carrie Dina joined other not-for-profit agencies in offering information about services.



By Carey Westerman, Intake Assistant The Montgomery County Christmas Club is a big undertaking. The program is sponsored by the Montgomery County Human Resource Council, which is made up of local groups. NECAC's Kathy Block is pictured organizing gifts. Dozens of families benefit.



By Nora Timmer, Housing Counselor In addition to coats, other winter apparel and hygiene items, Warren County Coordinator offered donated bread to clients as an addition to her regular food pantry.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer Ralls County Coordinator Stephanie Dunker teamed with the health department to offer free winter coats to those in need.

NECAC, the Salvation Army and area retailers teamed for bell-ringing.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
NECAC Pike County Board Members Tommy Wallace, left, and Curt Mitchell, center, were among contributors. President and CEO Dan Page and his wife, Kim, right, rang bells and got donations on Fridays during the campaign.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Randolph County Coordinator Patsy Redding makes a joyous noise.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Macon County Coordinator Terri Laughlin was an enthusiastic ringer.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Lincoln County ringers included, from left, Lori Vanzant, Thomas Westerman and Janice Allan.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Pike County Coordinator Penny Dixon wore an elf hat and sometimes rang with her dog, Cuda.



By Brent Engel, PR Officer
Housing Development's Lisa Gregory gets in on the fun.



By Deborah Smith
Public Relations Officer Brent Engel got in his usual 20-plus hours of ringing. He's pictured with his son, Adam.



Mike Bridgins,
Chairman of the Board



Dan Page,
President & CEO



NECAC is contractually required to publish the following: "This program is funded 100% at \$100 with federal funds received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division."