

WAP Corner: Another WAP Challenge – Get Involved with the Public Information Campaign!

by Robert Scott

The Weatherization network has faced so many challenges with the huge expansion of the program afforded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that very few want to take the time to focus on October being Energy Awareness Month and Weatherization Day on October 30th. The network has largely turned around the perceived slow start of the ARRA WAP and weatherized nearly 32,000 homes in June 2010, the highest monthly total in the history of the program. This exceeds the seemingly improbable target of 30,000 units that DOE and the Obama Administration challenged the network to gear up for last winter as a goal for the late spring of 2010. WAP also ranked 8th in jobs created and retained for ARRA projects in the 2nd quarter of 2010.

These are indeed noteworthy accomplishments which should set the stage to hush the critics of WAP who were so vocal last year at this time. But like it or not, the negative message has not been overcome. Recent references to WAP in both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* still mention the slow start up. The media tends to focus on the more negative stories, and even once the problems are overcome rarely highlight success stories.

After years of relative obscurity, WAP was front and center as a key program in the Recovery Act, and as such, has experienced increased political scrutiny. Critics of the Recovery Act have also been hostile towards WAP. With significant November 2010 elections looming, the political future of WAP is far from assured. Very few are optimistic about projections for domestic discretionary programs, including WAP.

While there may be factors that influence the future of WAP that are not in control of the

WAP network, there are still some things that we can do, mainly:

- Maintain the current levels of production so that the original ARRA projected goals can be met;
- Maintain and increase the number of jobs in the WAP workforce;
- Do quality work with the best potential energy savings and with full accountability and compliance with DOE and State rules; and lastly,
- **Tell the story that Weatherization Works!**

With all the great work the WAP network does day in and day out, it is very deflating to still see negative press about our efforts. In my 25+ years of working in WAP, I don't think I have ever met anyone in the network who wasn't very proud of the work they do. Everyone I talk to in the network always has a story to tell about what they do – and that story is never about themselves or any personal gain but always about a family they helped, a challenging problem they overcame, or an interesting field technique.

Perhaps more than ever, the Weatherization story needs to be told now. The story needs to be told year round, as much as possible, to as many people as possible. A great time to start will be Weatherization Day 2010. For several years now, Weatherization Day has served as a focal point to coordinate national efforts to create a positive message about WAP to the media, policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public. Successful tactics have included Weatherization Day Governors' Proclamations, press releases, energy fairs, and site demonstrations. These strategies can all lead to greater networking and leveraging opportunities, enhanced relationships with elected officials and potential partners, and a reinforcement of team building and morale with state and local WAP staff.

Site demonstrations are particularly effective in showing what WAP is all about. A well planned site demonstration on a house where WAP diagnostics and installation techniques can be shown is perhaps the most effective way of showing someone outside the WAP network what weatherization is. Everyone who has conducted site demonstrations soon realizes that attendees have a very oversimplified view of what we do when weatherizing a home. Attendees almost always leave with a whole new appreciation of the program and its effectiveness. The most frequently heard comments seem to be “I had no idea you did all this” and “How can I get this done on my house?”

The WAPTAC website (www.waptac.org) has extensive information about site demonstrations and other Public Information Campaign (PIC) strategies. NASCSP will be sending out CDs to the WAP network on

implementing strategies for the PIC and Weatherization Day. In addition, we are developing materials and strategies for the PIC utilizing social networking and New Media, an enormous opportunity for the WAP network to create its own message through the internet, potentially reaching more people than we would ever be able to through conventional news media.

Now is the time to start thinking about Energy Awareness Month, Weatherization Day, and your role in the Public Information Campaign. At this very critical time for WAP, a widespread and resolute effort by the Weatherization network to show and tell the story that Weatherization Works would provide a much needed boost to positively influence the perception of the program. Please consider getting involved and send your stories, templates and ideas to us at rscott@nascsp.org or rstewart@nascsp.org!

NASCSP Goes to Boot Camp

by Rebecca Stewart, with special thanks to Andy Stone

The New York State Weatherization Directors' Association (NYSWDA) has been a leader in New York State training and technical assistance for twenty-five years. They provide materials and equipment procurement services for their network of weatherization agencies as well as a collective voice for public policy input and regulatory compliance. With the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the need for more trained workers led to the creation of a Boot Camp training.

In August of 2010, my colleague Jenae Bjelland and I were privileged to attend the Boot Camp in East Syracuse, New York, and get out of the office and into some work boots. The intensive 4-day training is an introduction to building science principles, hands-on air sealing and dense pack and loose fill cellulose insulation installation. Using state-of-the-art realistic wall, ceiling and attic props, trainees learn the

techniques needed to effectively weatherize clients' homes. During this course, we were introduced to both the New York Division of Housing and Community Renewal and BPI standards and regulations on Health and Safety, Lead Safe work practices and safe and proper use of tools and equipment. We also became (relatively) proficient on the set up of blower doors and now understand basic use of an infrared camera during air sealing operations.

The 3,800 square foot East Syracuse Training Center offers classroom space for up to 36 individuals with a full complement of audio visual equipment and hands on props which further enhance the adult students learning experience. The facility includes a heating laboratory with an inventory of thirteen oil and gas fired hydronic and forced air systems representing all major types of heating