

# WAP Corner: Weatherization Works Overtime!

*by Robert Adams and Allison Spector*

We received a very interesting question the other day from one of the WAP network members, Bill Beachy, Vice President for Energy Services at the Community Housing Partners Corporation in Virginia. He wanted to know whether anyone followed the voting records of Congressmen and Senators after they visited a home during a site demonstration to see if their support of the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) improved. The answer unfortunately is that's not possible because there are very few votes that ever relate directly to the WAP. Most votes relate to a bill that contains WAP issues, like appropriations and reauthorization legislation. On those few recent occasions when WAP was the purpose for the vote, the measure was normally decided by voice vote rather than role call.

But while we don't have that measuring stick, we see other evidence of strengthened support for our Program after it is learned what we do every day. During the past few months, several state and local WAP offices have orchestrated site demonstrations to educate their local and national elected officials about the outstanding work accomplished by the network. In every case, the demonstrations were a huge success and all of the invited guests were amazed by the technologies we apply and the results we have been able to achieve. Here are the highlights of these latest events:

## *INDIANA*

On Wednesday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, **Congressman Pete Visclosky** (D-IN), Minority Ranking Member on the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, visited the residence of an elderly homeowner in Griffith, Indiana to learn about the WAP services. The event was organized by the local subgrantee, Northwest Indiana Community Action (NWICA), who serves Jasper, Lake, Newton, and Porter counties. Congressman Visclosky witnessed a variety of real time Weatherization services including blower-door directed air sealing, dense-pack sidewall insulation, and combustion appliance inspection and repair. The Congressman was presented with a "Top Gun" award from NWICA for his role in fighting for stable funding for WAP. NiSource Corporate Services Company (NIPSCO), the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), and the Indiana Community Action Association (INCAA) were also in attendance.

## *OHIO*

One month later, on the morning of August 5th, a home in Somerset, Ohio played host to invited guests, including **Congressman Dave Hobson** (R-OH), Chairman of the House Energy and Water appropriations Subcommittee, several busy maintenance men, and reporters from the Perry County Tribune and WOUB, the local television station. These visitors had a very important mission - to witness and participate in the weatherization of a 100 year old home. The family members had worked all their lives but were now retired. Expendable income continued to decrease, as the cost of Medicare, prescription drug costs and utility bills (including ever increasing water/sewage bills) were constantly rising. To add to the family's plight, several family members had encountered catastrophic illnesses that had depleted their savings.

The help provided by the Hocking, Athens, Perry Community Action (HAPCAP) and the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) heralded a new era of warmth and safety for the family. Congressman Hobson and other invited guests were given a tour of the home and explained the various technologies being applied through Ohio's joint WAP and utility partnership. The work being performed in this home will yield tremendous savings – for this winter and dozens of winters to come.

### *MASSACHUSETTS*

On August 10, 2005, Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI), in conjunction with the state Department of Housing and Community Development, weatherized the home of a young single father suffering from a work-related disability. On hand to witness the event was **Congressman Marty Meehan** (D-MA), his staff and several invited guests. Congressman Meehan toured the home while CTI's staff demonstrated how to install a variety of residential energy efficiency improvements including boiler replacement, insulation installation, and air leak infiltration reduction. The Congressman joined the workers and helped install insulation in the home's sidewall.

Congressman Meehan has been a long-time champion of the WAP. Just recently, he offered H.R. 410 – the National Weatherization Day Resolution. During the event, the Congressman showed his ongoing support for the WAP when he stated that, "By decreasing the amount of personal income spent on home energy, this Program gives those most in need of help a chance to start on the right path to self sufficiency. What we see here is the result of a strong federal-state-local partnership working together to improve the lives of our neighbors and communities."

### *VIRGINIA*

One day later, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the Community Housing Partners Corporation (CHPC), hosted a similar demonstration at a home in Winchester, VA. The Honorable Frank Wolf (R-VA), House Appropriations Committee member, toured the home and was shown how WAP performs many of the services we provide. He then engaged in a lengthy conversation with Weatherization staff about the importance of why they should continue to perform their work on homes like the one in Virginia. The Congressman later addressed the audience at the event about the importance of the Program. "I am pleased to show my support for the Weatherization Assistance Program in this time of critical energy prices. With the additional burden of higher heating and cooling costs being carried by all families, and especially those with limited incomes, the Weatherization Assistance Program helps create greater self-sufficiency by decreasing the amount of personal income spent on home energy," explained Congressman Wolf. The event attracted the interest of both the print media and the local radio station and yielded a front-page article in *The Winchester Star* and another in the *Northern Virginia Daily*.

We congratulate and extend our gratitude to the many state and local WAP staff who gave of their time and energy to make these site demonstrations so successful. It is this kind of dedication and effort that will change the face of WAP into the Program that everybody knows about instead of Washington's best kept secret.

As you can see by these accounts, site demonstrations of the WAP really do work! Those in attendance gain a new appreciation of our efforts. And we can use those few hours of on-site

exhibition to educate important national, state, and local leaders about the many benefits of the Program. But are we successful? Will elected officials become our champions? Will any of them challenge future funding cuts? Propose increased appropriations? Or demand changes that will make the Program better? We really can't say for sure but from all indications, yes!

In the meantime, we will continue to conduct site demonstrations, distribute press releases and success stories, and use our resources to get the word out about the WAP. These recent events sent a clear message to officials - **Weatherization Works!** Let's keep the message going.....