

“What Makes Weatherization Work”

2004 Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

By Elizabeth Hedstrom

During the opening of the 2004 Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference in Virginia Beach, attendees heard from Mr. Billy Weitzenfeld, Director of the Association of Energy Conservation Professionals (AECP). AECP is a membership-based, non-profit energy education and advocacy organization located in Virginia. Mr. Weitzenfeld's experience in the WAP extends over twenty years, including time as a crew worker, estimator, crew foreman, program manager, and now as director of AECP. During his tenure with the Program, he has provided many WAP showcase events and skill trainings; conducted significant legislative work; and served as an invaluable partner for the WAP network at the state and local levels. Below are some excerpts from Mr. Weitzenfeld's inspirational keynote address provided on October 19th to the more than 250 WAP staff in attendance at this year's Regional conference.

“I am honored to be here and to be in a room filled with people who make such an important and positive difference in people's lives. The work you do increases in importance every year, particularly in light of current reports from the Energy Information Administration that predicts increases in the cost of fuel across the board – 15% in the cost of natural gas, 30% in the cost of oil, and 20% in the cost of propane. The energy burden of low-income families has just increased. . . .”

“One of the roles I play in my job is to serve as a bridge between Weatherization and other energy efforts – renewable energy, green building, and environmental groups. I like to promote Weatherization as not just an energy saving program...but also a green building and environmental program. Did you know that the technology and applications that you have helped to pioneer and that you use every day in your weatherization work is the same technology that is driving the green building movement in America? Weatherization technology measures – including blower door directed air sealing, duct diagnostics and repair, pressure testing, advanced insulation techniques, and indoor air quality measures – are defining the criterion for Energy Star homes and Earth Craft Homes. These technology measures are also defining the national standards for the U.S. Green Building Council and are providing guidance for energy efficient building across the country.”

“So, all of you are providing important and necessary leadership in green building techniques, criteria, and applications. But with leadership comes responsibility. The responsibility that we share in Weatherization is to stay at the top of our game – to continue to embrace new technology, pioneer new measures, and continue to take risks. You do not grow and improve without taking some risks – all with this in mind –to make homes we serve as energy efficient as possible, to maximize every opportunity for improved efficiency, and to continue to set the example and pave the way for the rest of our industry. The bottom line is this – the great work that you are doing is having an impact beyond the home that you are weatherizing.”

“How do we stay on top of our game? Training, training, and more training. Historically, training has always been a fundamental component of Weatherization. As we all know, training

is a shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of the state office to support, help implement, and help fund all necessary training. It is the responsibility of program managers and staff to ensure that your crews are properly trained, that you are taking advantage of training opportunities, and that the outcome of that training is being monitored. It is the responsibility of the crew worker to take training seriously, to learn it, and to practice it. It is the responsibility of the trainers to be good educators and understand the importance of the work you do. And, obviously, it is the responsibility of federal agencies to continue to provide training funds and to encourage the development of statewide training and training centers. Teamwork and shared responsibility are what make Weatherization work... .”

“Your crews and your program are not just part of your local community and not just a part of your state program, but you are also a member of the largest, oldest, most comprehensive, most effective residential energy efficiency program in America. [The WAP fields] a national energy efficiency workforce that includes almost 1000 programs nationwide... .”

“A weatherized home, on average, reduces carbon dioxide emissions by one metric ton per home...Carbon dioxide is the leading greenhouse gas responsible for global warming. Global warming is not a hoax, nor is it a joke...According to the United Nations and our own National Academy of Science, global warming is a climate phenomenon that threatens our very existence. So, the work you are doing in reducing carbon dioxide emissions is helping to save the world – and certainly protecting it for your children, their children, and generations to come... .”

“No other program or effort in America is reducing the burning of fossil fuels on a daily basis like the Weatherization Assistance Program. You are not just saving lives through your work in diagnosing and correcting carbon monoxide problems, but you are also saving lives by making our air cleaner... Weatherization is like a national rescue squad saving lives in every town, city, and county in America... .”

“Here is the icing on the cake – everyone benefits from the Program...Remember – the bottom line – the great work you are doing is having an impact beyond the homes being weatherized...When I see an electric bill or a fuel bill pre-and-post Weatherization and I see a significant drop after Weatherization, I am thinking two things. First, the money saved is a wonderful direct benefit to the client. Second, there is a power plant or chimney in the neighborhood that is now emitting that much less pollution into the atmosphere... .”

“The work in the field is the hallmark of this effort, and the crews are the heart and soul of this program...we know that an effective crew is the result of a strong support system – a team comprised of the U.S. Department of Energy, the state office, and local program managers. When you are blowing that sidewall, working on that heating system, sealing that bypass, or blowing that trailer bottom – make sure to do it right. Remember that it is a solitary effort out in some hollow in some rural county that is saving a life in some other community at some other time in the future. The quality of work that we do is what determines the success of this program. That is the responsibility we have and it is the burden of leadership that we bear.”

“AECF produced a video several years ago – [The Virginia Weatherization Story](#). The video began with a quote from Confucius, a Chinese philosopher who lived more than 2500 years ago. Confucius said, “The strength of a nation is determined by the integrity of its homes.”

...Confucius hit the nail on the head. Safe and affordable housing – homes with integrity – a roof over everyone’s head – that is what makes a community strong economically, socially, culturally, and spiritually. Strong communities make a strong nation. There is no effort, no program, and no group that is doing more to strengthen our communities, neighborhoods, towns, and cities than the Weatherization Assistance Program. ... The cumulative impact of the work you are doing is making the world a far better place for us, for our children, for their children, and for generations to come. I am proud of you. I am proud to be here. Keep up the great work, and have a great week. God bless you, and thank you very much.”

NASCSP would like to extend a special thank you to Billy Weitzenfeld and AECP for their tireless efforts on behalf of the WAP and everyone who serves the Program. The WAP is stronger and more effective with people like Billy providing leadership and setting the bar ever higher for all of us. And remember – Weatherization Works! - both for you and because of you.