

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Agency gets \$5.5M for homes

Federal stimulus funds will help CAA winterize homes

By Tarryl Jackson

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The Community Action Agency in Jackson is getting \$5.5 million in federal stimulus money to help low-income families make their homes more energy efficient.

"Things are looking up for us and what we'll be able to provide in ser-

vice," said Marsha Kreucher, executive director of the Community Action Agency. "It's going to be really excellent for our community."

The latest announcement means Jackson County has officially been awarded at least \$10 million for public safety, transportation, road construction and community improvement ef-

The Community Action Agency works on about 150 homes a year at an average cost of \$3,000 a home in Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties through its weatherization program.

With the stimulus money, the agency plans to work on 800 to 1,100 homes in all three counties. The money cov-

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More information

The Community Action Agency, located at 1214 Greenwood Ave. in Jackson, is taking applications for its weatherization program from low-income residents in Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties. Contact the agency at 784-4800.

The Community Action Agency will conduct a meeting about the weatherization program and stimulus funding for potential contractors at 8:30 a.m. April 9 at St. John's United Church of Christ, 801 S. Mechanic St. Contact the agency at 784-4800 for information.

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ers contracted labor, staffing, supplies and construction, Kreucher said.

"We'll be able to put more resources in," she said.

Kreucher met with potential contractors Wednesday to talk about the agency's upcoming plans.

Half of the \$5.5 million will be used to weatherize homes in Jackson County, 33 percent will go toward homes in Lenawee County and 17 percent to homes in Hillsdale County, Kreucher said.

Eligibility is based on the size of the family and its be-

fore-tax household income, which is being raised. A family of four would have to earn \$33,000 or less a year to be eligible. Now, the maximum income level will be increased to \$44,100 for a family of four.

"It's going to make a substantial difference," Kreucher said. Hanover residents Brian and Dawn Poucher and their four children recently got their home weatherized.

Over the course of a week, the agency provided \$9,000 worth of weatherization services, including insulation and installing a new furnace, hot water heater, and new windows and doors.

"We were really impressed with it," Dawn Poucher said.

The biggest difference Poucher has seen is in her sons' room.

"Their room is so much warmer," she said. "(Before), it was so ice cold, you could see your breath."

Most of the weatherization by the agency is done during spring, summer and fall.

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Weatherization aid gets boost

From staff reports

JACKSON — Lower heating costs are on the way for hundreds of low-income residents in Lenawee, Jackson and Hillsdale counties.

Federal economic stimulus funding is pumping up a small-scale home weatherization program into a \$5.5 million project for the three-county Community Action Agency headquartered in Jackson.

"It's a fabulous deal that we are in the stimulus bill," said

Jessica Murray of CAA. "We're actually going to be able to help a lot more people."

Help with insulating and updating heating systems was limited to about 150 homes a year with the agency's \$457,000 annual budget, she said. The injection of \$5.5 million to be used within an 18-month period will put local contractors to work fixing up about 1,000 more homes, Murray said.

The spending limit is being boosted from \$3,000 per home to a maximum of \$6,500, mak-

ing it possible to do work that will have a significant impact on heating expenses, she said. Eligibility rules are also being expanded to homeowners and renters earning 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines instead of 150 percent, Murray said.

Assistance can now be given to a family of four earning \$44,100, for example, instead of drawing the line at an income of \$33,075.



Submitted photo

At left, U.S. Rep. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek, examines a home's weatherization with Jackson contractor Tim Vandenburg.

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Weatherization funds are to be divided between the three counties with Lenawee County receiving about \$1.8 million, Jackson County \$2.75 million and Hillsdale County nearly \$1 million.

Applications for the weatherization program can be made by contacting local CAA offices.

The telephone number for the Lenawee County office is 263-7861 or 1-800-438-1845. The number in Jackson is 784-4800 or 1-800-491-0004. In Hillsdale it is 437-3346 or 1-800-750-9300.

Work that can be performed includes insulating attics and walls, weather stripping and caulking, repairing windows, furnaces and testing refrigerators and water heaters. CAA also conducts energy audits and provides health and safety measures such as fire and

carbon monoxide detectors.

Local contractors are to be hired for the work and material purchased from local sources whenever possible in order to help stimulate the local economy, Murray said.

Contractors can contact local CAA offices for information on the program. An informational meeting for contractors is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. April 9 in Jackson at St. John's United Church of Christ, 801 South Mechanic St.

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