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Local programs help people lower energy costs

By KAYLA BONAR staff writer 23 hrs ago



Maryann Gonzalez poses in the living room of her rural Kittitas County home warmed by a new heat pump, Wednesday. Gonzalez received assistance through HopeSource's energy assistance and weatherization programs, enabling her to lower heating costs.

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HopeSource offers several programs to help households that are overwhelmed by steep utility bills during the winter months.

The nonprofit offers educational materials, in-home energy assessments and weatherization services to help households conserve energy during the winter months when heating bills often skyrocket. It also provides energy assistance to households that meet certain requirements.

Anyone can request a free energy assessment. During this assessment, HopeSource staff members evaluate and recommend free or low-cost solutions to curb energy bills. Applicants must meet income guidelines for weatherization services.

Maryann Gonzalez received assistance through HopeSource's energy assistance and weatherization programs.

Gonzalez hates waste of any kind. While she did her best to conserve energy, HopeSource's programs took that waste-not, want-not mentality to the next level.

"I'm not only feeling (savings) in my pocketbook, but I can be warm for less amount of energy," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said she appreciated the HopeSource staff explaining the process to her and treating her house with respect while evaluating her home and following up afterward. HopeSource recommended and provided a heat pump to help lower her energy costs.

When HopeSource assesses a person's home, they send one or two staff members to discuss current energy usage and costs. From there, they determine if any additional measure can be taken to create a more energy efficient home with free or low cost changes.

HopeSource also offers financial help to households struggling with utility costs, depending on available funding and household income.

Andrew Lyons, HopeSource's weatherization-energy program manager, said that 429 households received energy assistance from October 2017 and to Jan. 22, 2018, compared to 484 during the same time period in 2016-2017.

HopeSource provided 65 in-home assessments in 2017 and completed 23 home weatherization projects in Kittitas County, he said.

Gonzalez thinks that people don't think they deserve or are eligible for assistance and that prevents them from asking for help.

"A lot of times we think 'why would they help me?'" she said. "The worst that can happen is you ask for help and are denied."

Kayla Bonar

More information

Energy assistance

The HopeSource Energy Assistance Program can help people pay for electric, gas, oil, propane, wood and wood pellets heating costs. Eligible participants can receive benefits ranging from \$25 to \$1,000. Eligibility for the program is based on available funding and household income. (Go to <http://www.hopesource.us/energy> to see a chart with income information and to request an appointment).

Call the Ellensburg HopeSource office at 509-925-1448.

Weatherization and assessments

In-home energy assessments are offered for free to help people save money on their household energy bills.

To qualify for the weatherization program, applicants must live in Kittitas County and meet certain income guidelines. Weatherization projects are selected based on when people applied, the condition of the home, eligibility/priority status and available funds.

Call the HopeSource office for more information. For those who don't qualify, HopeSource's conservation services webpage provides ideas and tips to help save money and energy at home.