

Autumn 2019

Investing in our Neighbors
Improving Lives
Strengthening Communities



For additional information on Housing Programs please contact Gin Christiansen 402-862-2411 x 110 or visit www.senca.org

Linda's Journey of Hope

When the HVAC repairman came to look at Linda's furnace, the news of having to replace the entire unit wasn't what this cancer survivor, who was once again battling brain tumors, wanted or needed to hear. Linda had been struggling to keep up with high energy costs that came with living in the older Otoe County farm house that had been built in 1905. While the home had been updated prior to Linda purchasing it in 2014, there was little if any insulation in the attic, the doors were drafty, and both the furnace and air-conditioner were in dire need of replacement.

Confronted with repair and replacement costs that she could not afford, the HVAC repairman told Linda to contact SENCA and ask about their Weatherization program. Weatherization is designed to help qualifying households, up to 200% of poverty, with energy related repairs and even the replacement of a furnace if needed. Linda wasted no time in contacting SENCA Weatherization and completing the application.

Housing Director, Gin Christiansen approved Linda's application for Weatherization assistance which met established priority guidelines. Linda was over 60 years of age; disabled and undergoing a re-occurring bout with brain tumors while in her 5th round of radiation; she was struggling with high energy burden; and now unfortunately, was dealing with a furnace that quit in the dead of winter.

While the main focus was to remove the old furnace and install a new, more energy efficient one, an inspection of the home, completed by one of SENCA's trained and certified housing inspectors, confirmed the need for other essential repairs that would make the home more energy efficient.

SENCA Weatherization Works

In a nationwide effort to create more awareness of local programs such as SENCA Weatherization and the energy saving benefits the program provides to qualifying households, October 30th is recognized as National Weatherization Day!

Weatherization enables low-income families, whether owning their own home or renting, to reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. To receive free weatherization services the combined household income must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level, which is revised annually. In 2019 a family of four could make up to \$51,500 and qualify for weatherization services. Households with persons receiving either ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are automatically eligible for free weatherization assistance services.



L to R: Linda with Josh Nincehelter, SENCA Housing staff member. Linda comments:

"Our utility bills have gone down dramatically and the air conditioning has provided a lot of comfort after my weekly chemo treatments."

Because of Linda's on-going health issues, in addition to Weatherization assistance, she also qualified for Emergency Repair and Replacement (ERR) funds that would cover the costs of adding a new energy efficient central air unit to her home. Households who receive Weatherization will realize an average 18.7% reduction in energy related costs.

Even though Linda qualified for more than \$13,000 of energy saving repairs and upgrades to her home, Josh Nincehelter, SENCA's Energy Auditor/Quality Control Inspector, saw a need to refer Linda and her life partner to SENCA's Otoe County Outreach Family Development Associate (FDA), Carol Aufenkamp. Following the initial meeting where the couple completed the required paper work, SENCA Outreach was able to assist them with funding to help ensure their water was not shut off. As a result of receiving emergency assistance the couple is required to participate in case management where they meet with Carol each month. To date the Otoe County couple has also received help with budgeting and food.

A grateful Linda shares "The assistance provided by SENCA has helped make my final years enjoyable as I can stop worrying about how to make ends meet.. "Josh, Gin, and Carol have shown kindness and support that has given me hope."



Once a household meets the income requirements and is approved for weatherization services, the home will be evaluated to identify the most effective energy and dollar saving improvements which can be made. Possible improvements may include: insulation to the attic, walls, and/or floors; replacement of broken glass in primary windows; installation or adjustment of door weather-stripping, thresholds, and/or door sweeps; in addition to an efficiency inspection on natural gas, propane and fuel oil furnaces, boilers and hot water heaters that may include repair or replacement. After weatherization improvements are completed households should notice an increase in comfort, reduced drafts, more even temperatures throughout the home, and a reduction in heating and cooling costs.