

Investing in our Neighbors Improving Lives Strengthening Communities



Autumn 2023

SENCA Weatherization Rates an A+

When Bob and Sylvia built their new home in 2002, they were excited as to what this would mean for them, their 3 children and Sylvia's in-home daycare business. Bob was skilled in doing some of the work himself, which made the new home even more special, in addition to saving them money.

Then in February 2008 life forever changed for this family of five. "Bob was at work when he suffered a brain bleed," shares Sylvia. "He was diagnosed with high blood pressure, diabetes and had a bad cold when he suffered the stroke."

Sylvia was overwhelmed with all three children living at home, ages 21, 18 and 14. She was trying to manage her licensed daycare, file college FASFA forms, take care of the home, and be at the hospital, then rehab for Bob, as much as she could.

"That was when I first heard about SENCA programs", shares Sylvia. "The hospital provided us with information including a brochure explaining programs SENCA provides to families experiencing emergency situations. At the time, we were over income to receive help, but I kept the brochure thinking someday it might come in handy, and was so grateful I did."

Following rehab, Bob returned home to adjust to his new way of life. The stroke left Bob with vision problems, weakness in his one of his arms, and a struggle to communicate words that used to come easy for him. No longer able to work, Bob was approved for disability and social security benefits.

As a result of Sylvia's thriftiness, good business sense, benefits Bob had earned while working, and the income from Sylvia's daycare, they successfully managed to get through the next 14 years, raise their children and pay off their home. Then in 2022 Bob's health began deteriorating. He developed vascular issues that resulted in the amputation of a leg in February 2023.

In an effort to keep Bob at home and provide him with the care that he needed, Sylvia had to close her day care, which greatly impacted the couples income. Unfortunately, their home, now 20 plus years old, was in need of some energy saving repairs, including a new furnace. Thankfully, Sylvia found the brochure regarding SENCA programs that she had saved since 2008 and contacted Gin Christiansen, SENCA Weatherization Director.

"I completed the application in May 2022 and by October 2022 the much needed work to our home was completed," expresses a grateful Sylvia. "The SENCA staff, vendors, and employees doing the work were knowledgeable, professional and provided such wonderful attention to detail."

Bob and Sylvia's home received 1,482 square foot of attic insulation, energy efficient light bulbs, weather-stripping, pipe-wrap, sealing of all penetrations of duct work and in the home, a new furnace and hot water heater. To help insure the health and safety of the home, ASHRAE ventilation was installed and all of the fans vented to the exterior.



By completing these measures to Bob and Sylvia's home, SENCA provided them with a savings of approximately \$530 per year.

In conclusion, almost a full year after the work was completed, Sylvia reported that when she compares the amount of energy used each month from 2022 to 2023, they are using "so much less" than they did before SENCA weatherized their home.

"SENCA Weatherization is A+, they are wonderful," says Sylvia.

SENCA Weatherization Improves Lives

For more than 48 years SENCA's Weatherization Program has been helping low-income residents of southeast Nebraska save energy by reducing heating and cooling costs and improving the health and safety of their homes. Weatherization services typically involve the installation of attic, wall and floor insulation, sealing holes and cracks with caulking, and applying weather-stripping. In addition, all furnaces, cooking stoves, refrigerators and water heaters are inspected by trained and certified staff.

Residential energy costs often account for more than 20% of a households gross income. Individuals and families who have had their homes weatherized will experience a reduction in energy costs for an extended length of time. Improvements such as insulating the walls and attic of a home will continue to provide savings for the lifetime of the home, 30 years or more. Improving the efficiency of heating or cooling equipment, provide savings for an average 15 to 20 years.

The average investment of weatherization services to a home is \$8,250. After a home has been weatherized, energy used to heat the home is often reduced up to 25%. Additional savings in cooling the home are also experienced.

On average, the value weatherization improvements make to a home is 2.2 times greater that the cost of the improvement itself.

Program eligibility is based on household size and limited to individuals and families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.



Preference is given to persons age 60 and older, persons with disabilities, and families with children under six. Households containing a member who is receiving either Aid to Dependent Children or Supplemental Security Income are automatically eligible to receive services.

The Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy administers the federally funded Weatherization program for eight non-profit agencies statewide. Weatherization services can only be provided if the state has funds available. Funds allocated for weatherization assistance vary from year to year.

Seven of the eight statewide programs, including SENCA Weatherization, are managed by local Community Action Agencies. Each agency is responsible for establishing eligibility, performing an energy audit on the applicant's home, and scheduling the work to be completed.

To find out more about SENCA Weatherization and the SENCA Radon Testing and Mitigation program, please contact Gin Christiansen, Weatherization Director, 402-862-2411 x 110.

In addition, SENCA offers housing programs that include: Owner Occupied Rehab, Down-Payment Assistance, Rental Housing and Homebuyer Education. If interested in any of these housing programs please contact Amanda Palmerton, Housing Development Director, 402-862-2411 x 115.

To apply on-line, go to SENCA's user friendly web site, www.senca.org, click on services, then housing programs.

