

Vietnam Veteran Beats the Heat, Thanks to MEA Funds Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Until this summer, the only ways David Hale and his 13-year-old daughter Destiny could escape the heat were to duck into air-conditioned stores or take dips in a pool. During June, July and August, they virtually never stopped sweating in their doublewide manufactured home in Deep Run Park in ElkrIDGE. The culprits were a 27-year-old heat pump that Mr. Hale describes as being “on its last legs” and major insulation leaks. Fans didn’t help much. “When it’s hot, fans just blow hot air,” said Mr. Hale.

Thanks to a \$4,480 weatherization assistance provided through Community Action Council of Howard County (CAC) this spring, the 65-year-old Vietnam veteran can sit in his favorite chair and feel cool air blow all around him, even when the outdoor temperature hits triple digits. “It’s very comfortable in my home now,” said Mr. Hale.

Using a \$36,500 grant from the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA), every nook and cranny in Mr. Hale’s home was sealed with caulk and his attic was insulated. In addition, the duct work under his home, which had been leaking uncontrollably, was sealed and a cover was placed around it. Other energy-saving features of the project included installing a hot-water heater blanket and low-flow shower heads and aerators.

The grant was part of MEA’s EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities Low- to Moderate-Income Grant Program and was funded through the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF). SEIF funds come from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The SEIF fund statute requires that half of all energy efficiency funds be used for low- to moderate- income Marylanders.

Mr. Hale’s only income is a \$1,700 monthly Social Security disability benefit so the electricity savings he has experienced since the weatherization project was completed - from \$500 to under \$300 a month – is as welcome as a cool breeze in the summer.

The father of three (he has two adult sons) was a mechanic for 22 years. That career came to an abrupt halt when a scissors jack broke while he was performing an oil change, causing a van to fall on his back and damage four nerves at the bottom of his spine. He had an operation to sever his damaged nerves so he could walk. Still, the length of time Mr. Hale can walk, stand and sit at one time have been limited since the accident. In addition, the injury also causes the right side of his body to go numb about every other day. He has to find the right way to move to get his feeling back.

Mr. Hale has braved other problems as well. He served three of his six years in the Army fighting in the Vietnam War, where shrapnel embedded in his body without him knowing it until

years later. Doctors have told him it would cause too much pain and harm to his health to remove it.

He also had a bout with spiral meningitis in the mid-1970s.

But, thanks to his weatherization project, the summer heat's off. And, the improvements to Mr. Hale's home should help him weather the cold too. "I don't know what it's going to be like this winter, but I imagine it will be nice and warm," he said. He is very grateful that indoor temperature extremes are a thing of the past.

Kathleen True, Weatherization Program Support for CAC remarked, "The Weatherization Assistance Program does more than save energy and green our environment, it makes a difference in the lives of the recipients. I remember speaking with Mr. Hale and hearing about how cold his home was in the winter and his concern for his daughter having a warm place to sleep. I thought, 'this is a man who really needs help and, without the MEA grant, he probably will not get it.' The greatest satisfaction I get from my work is the conversations I have with grateful clients *after* they have received weatherization services."