



Community Action of Minneapolis
505 East Grant Street
Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55404



The Buzz
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Staying Ahead of The Curve

Community Action of Minneapolis launched a new program; *Steps Towards Affordable Energy Payments (STAEP)* designed to assist qualified participants in the city of Minneapolis reduce or eliminate their energy debt.

Energy customers with large unpaid energy bills are identified by our Energy Assistance staff as candidates for the 12-month program. And, while enrolled in the program, participants attend five workshops and two check-in sessions.

Having two metro area utility providers, CenterPoint Energy and Xcel, as partners streamlines the efficiency of the program, improves communication between all partners and eliminates service gaps.

While in the program, participants are asked to track their energy use and energy bill payments. This enables us to gauge and document lifestyle changes that lead to lowered energy use that leads to decreased energy debt.

Program participants are provided compact florescent light bulbs, freezer refrigerator thermometers, weather-stripping, and copies of the *Home Envelope*-a consumer Energy Guide provided by the Minnesota Department of Commerce Division of Energy Resources. Center Point Energy and XCEL also provide free showerheads, bike lights, and other program incentives.

The STAEP Program is another example of a Community Action of Minneapolis Energy Assistance intervention that addresses one of the by-products of poverty (energy debt) and moves people toward self-sufficiency. For more information about the STAEP Program, contact Shannon Bodke at (612) 767-1712.

Each day presents a new and different challenge for our staff at Community Action of Minneapolis. With the onset of winter, we are witnessing an increase in the number of families and individuals relying on our services. The demand for our services has grown. This growth is due to the historically high unemployment rate, a reduction in funding, an uncertainty regarding future funding for our programming, and higher demand for our services due to the growing number of people in poverty according to the latest U.S. Census report. With these challenges confronting our staff and the people we serve, we will continue to deliver our services efficiently and effectively while functioning under this cloud of uncertainty. We will continue to advocate for more funding to meet the growing programming demands, particularly during this time of growing need for families, children and the elderly living in Minneapolis.

Commissioner Michael Rothman Visits Our Weatherization Department

Where Are They Now?



A Youth's Perspective

Community Action of Minneapolis was honored to be the first Community Action Agency that Commissioner Mike Rothman, from the MN Department of Commerce, has visited. On October 4, 2011, Commissioner Rothman and Deputy Commissioner Bill Gant, visited Community Action of Minneapolis and its Weatherization Department. Their visit included a presentation on the history of Community Action of Minneapolis, a tour of a Minneapolis home that has been retrofitted through the Department of Commerce's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and, a senior customer whose home is in the process of being weatherized.



From left to right: Bill Davis, President/CEO, CA of Mpls, Commissioner Mike Rothman, State Senator Jeff Hayden and Sophia Hayden

Meet Marilyn Ochoa, a sophomore at St. Catherine University studying biochemistry with a minor in sociology, and a graduate from our Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP). In 2003, Marilyn and her family were one of the first families to enter the SSP. The family graduated in 2004 and continues to maintain their self-sufficiency. The SSP caught up with the busy college student to see how she is doing and for a quick reflection of her time in the SSP.



The Buzz: How old were you when your family participated in the Self-Sufficiency Program?

MO: I was in my early teenage years.

The Buzz: What do you remember about the program?

MO: I remember we had to learn how to manage our money and see what we really needed, not what we wanted just because other people had it.

The Buzz: Do you feel the program helped your entire family? If so, how?

MO: Yes it did because members of my entire family know money is hard to get and we can only get what we really need. And, if there is money left over you may consider getting something extra for yourself.

The Buzz: What type of skills do you feel you learned as a result of participating in the program? How do you think those skills are helping you today as a student?

MO: I learned financial skills and how to keep my bank account balanced. After getting my college financial aid check I knew I had to get a job. I understood that with this money I needed to make sure I paid my tuition first. I use my pay check wisely and know that some of the money I have left I could use to purchase important things I really need rather than things I may want (e.g. money to go out and eat dinner with my friends or see a movie).



From left to right: Peter Brickwedde, Asst. Director of Government Affairs, Commissioner Mike Rothman, Jason Klema, CA of Minneapolis Weatherization Staff and, Deputy Commissioner Bill Gant (rear).

The Buzz: What advice would you give to other families in the program to help them learn what we are trying to teach?

MO: To listen to the people that are teaching you in this program. It will help you when you enter into the real world and see just how hard it is to get a job and make money to either get things you need or want.

We wish Marilyn continued success in her studies and look forward to her graduation in 2013!

Energy Services Forecast

The Energy Assistance season began October 1, 2011. Even though a record number of people are expected to apply for assistance this winter threatened budget cuts will reduce or eliminate assistance to laid-off workers, people living on fixed incomes and families with young children. To date we have received 12,200 applications. 9,699 of these applications have been approved compared to 8,220 this time last season. The average heating assistance grant this season is \$410.00 compared to \$528.00 last season.

Stop The Violence Campaign

CA of Minneapolis joined forces with Erin Henderson of the Vikings, Denard Span of the Minnesota Twins, and Candice Wiggins and Maya Moore of the Lynx to produce the Unite for Peace message. To view the message on the Internet, enter <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxNuKtZ8gyl> in the address bar.

Visit our website at www.campls.org.

