

# Weatherization can save money for Bucks families

Eric Asaris

Eileen Albillar of the Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC) has reached out to low-income families to help them tackle their high heating costs through a free weatherization program.

According to Albillar, families can spend as much as 50 percent of their income to heat their home.

"And that's too much," she said. The U.S. Department of Energy received additional funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which resulted in more money for BCOC's program. With this funding, BCOC expects to weatherize 600 Bucks County homes by March 2012.

"We really need to get more families enrolled in the program now," said Albillar. "It's been around since the 1970s but many people have not heard of it. Now with the stimulus money we can help out a lot more families."

BCOC is looking to assist 220 more families in the county before ARRA funding ends next year.

"This time next year we don't know how the weatherization program will be funded, so if families

want to apply then time is of the essence," said Albillar.

To be eligible for the program, a family or individual must reside in Bucks and has to be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level for the last 12 months. For an individual it would mean making \$21,780 or less per year, while a four-person household must make \$44,700 or less per year.

Another eligibility factor is whether the home meets building codes and if contractors would be able to weatherize the property without worsening other existing problems in the home.

"For example, if there is a mold issue or water issues we can't seal and tighten that building as that would exacerbate those issues," said Albillar.

The program is not only for homeowners but also for renters who pay all or part of the utility bills for their residence.

Once the BCOC approves an application for assistance, a trained energy consultant will go out to the eligible home (including mobile homes) to perform an assessment.

"They look at the whole building as an envelope," said Albillar. "They find out if there are leaks or places

where air is escaping and cold air is coming in. They also take a look at the heating system to see if it's efficient."

The consultant will then determine the best energy-saving measures for the home, such as sealing gaps, installing insulation and replacing the heating system. BCOC typically uses local contractors for the work.

After the contractors have finished, an energy auditor then comes to the home to make a final inspection.

Albillar said the whole process can typically take several months.

"Families should be thinking now about next winter even though this one is barely over," said Albillar. "They should be thinking of the savings they can get for next year."

BCOC, which has offices in Quakertown, Doylestown and

Bristol, is a nonprofit community action agency for the county, providing anti-poverty services such as food programs, emergency assistance for utilities and housing, and an economic self-sufficiency program.

For information, call 215-529-1663 or 866-375-3280. Their weatherization and home energy conservation office is located at 347 New St., Quakertown.

## Basin commission extends comment period

The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) announced March 2 that the period for submitting written comments on the proposed natural gas development rulemaking will be extended an additional 30 days through the close of business April 15. The comment period was to have ended March 16.

"The commissioners announced the extension at their March 2 public business meeting held in West Trenton in response to numerous requests," DRBC Executive Director Carol R. Collier said. "This will provide additional time for the

public and government officials to study the proposed regulations and offer written technical comments."

The vote approving the 30-day extension was four (Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and the federal government) to one (Pennsylvania).

The commissioners also instructed DRBC staff to immediately begin sorting and processing the approximately 2,500 comments received to date.

Written comments will be accepted by electronic and paper submission

The purpose of the proposed regulations is to protect the water resources of the Delaware River Basin during the construction and operation of natural gas development projects. The draft regulations establish requirements to prevent, reduce, or mitigate depletion and degradation of surface and groundwater resources and to promote sound practices of watershed management.

The text of the proposed regulations, can be found at drbc.net.

Contact the commission at 609-883-9500 x205.

## Cast a vote to help Bucks siblings win song contest

Newtown Elementary students Nadia and Gavin Zikria are finalists in the Children's Advil "Relieve My Fever" contest.

Contestants had to submit a one minute video singing Advil's rendition of the classic song "Fever." The Zikrias are one of 15 finalists across the United States competing for the grand prize of \$15,000 in funds towards their education.

Judges will determine 75 percent of the score based on performance, creativity and enthusiasm. The other 25 percent will come from online voting.

Vote for Nadia, 7, and Gavin, 5, through March 20 at [RelieveMyFever.com](http://RelieveMyFever.com). Click on their video, "So Long Fever," and enter an e-mail address to vote (e-mail will be used for contest voting only). One vote is allowed per day.

As part of the contest, Children's Advil is donating \$1 for every vote cast - up to \$50,000 - to the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.



Gavin and Nadia Zikria are finalists in the Children's Advil "Relieve My Fever" contest.

## Tamanend Avenue closes for rail crossing work

SEPTA will close Tamenend Avenue between Spring Lake Drive and Matthews Avenue in New Britain Township next week to replace a rail crossing.

During construction beginning March 21, Tamenend Avenue

will be detoured over Upper State Road, Bristol Road and Route 202. Local access will be maintained up to the construction zone.

Tamenend Avenue will be closed 24 hours a day through March 25.



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