

CASE STUDY

Virginia energy efficiency companies hire locally, deliver savings & comfort to families across the Commonwealth



TYLER COX

TODAY, as energy efficiency jobs are projected to grow, Virginia leads as one of the top 10 states for energy efficiency employment.

Across the U.S., about 2.2 million people work in energy efficiency related jobs, with more than 75,000 in Virginia alone. One of Virginia's energy efficiency businesses is Community Housing Partners (CHP) Energy Solutions, whose mission is to provide socially responsible housing (through design, construction, management and more) to homeowners and property owners alike. Additionally, CHP is one of 18 federal Weatherization Assistance Program providers in the Commonwealth. Leveraging their experience in weatherization, CHP also works in partnerships with Virginia's gas and electric utilities like Washington Gas and Dominion Energy to help bring much

needed energy efficiency upgrades and weatherization fixes to low-income families.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY JOBS BRING COMFORT TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Grandview Apartments, located in Falls Church, Virginia, is a multifamily housing community built in 1966, spanning 19 buildings with 266 units. They are the most affordable apartments in the county and a place to call home for many low-income families who would have trouble affording the region's high rents. Through partnerships with Dominion Energy Virginia and Washington Gas, CHP Energy Solutions has made efficiency upgrades possible for residents at Grandview Apartments. "The work at this property might consume an entire year's worth of federal weatherization funds that an individual weatherization provider might receive," says Chase Counts, Director of Utility Programs for CHP.



CHASE COUNTS

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“So, the introduction of utility funds makes it possible to address multifamily housing stock while maintaining our weatherization production for other single-family homes in the area.” CHP has been able to facilitate everything from installing new return vent systems, air-sealing ducts, and new LED lights bulbs to detecting gas leaks and eliminating carbon monoxide hazards.

MORE FUNDING MEANS MORE LOCAL JOBS

With a crew of workers, CHP hires locally, creating jobs for Virginians. Tyler Cox, for instance, has been working with CHP for over five years. He already had a background in carpentry and construction, “so this was an easy transition. CHP sent me through a few training courses and I had to learn how to use the insulation machine—that was about it.” Energy efficiency jobs make up the largest segment in the U.S.’s clean energy sector, accounting for three out of every four clean energy jobs. Energy efficiency jobs are also about building community and creating careers that are a source of pride. “I like my job,” Tyler says. “Being a homeowner myself, I know a low utility bill is wonderful. It’s less money out of the pocket.”

RESIDENTS FEEL THE BENEFITS OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Lower monthly energy costs are welcomed by Grandview residents, who used to struggle to pay higher energy bills before the efficiency upgrades. Tenants note that with lower bills, they’ve been able to afford necessities like groceries and soap as well as save more money for their families. Betty Arnez, 39, who says she wants to save up for her own house someday, lives in her apartment with her two kids. Her energy bills were as high as \$200 before the upgrades – the average is \$124 for Virginians – but now she says she can, “buy food, more fruits, milk or Cheerios, when before I had to limit it more to cover the energy bill.”

Energy efficiency is essential when it comes to ensuring people can live healthier, more comfortable lives. This is true for both the residents who benefit and the people it employs. Chase Counts sees the potential for more investments like the one at Grandview Apartments to occur – if utility programs and federal programs expand to meet these needs. “We’ve identified just in our service area more than 90 multifamily properties that likely qualify based on income-eligibility requirements that we will not be able to tackle at current funding levels with our utility partners. So we’re hoping that these programs continue. We’ve identified lots of eligible properties and we want to keep doing this work.” With a definite and identified need for low-income multifamily homes to undergo continued upgrades and weatherization fixes, more partnerships and greater funding would enable companies, workers, and social enterprises like CHP to provide the work required to ensure affordability and comfort to the people who need it the most.

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DEREK UNDERWOOD



EVAN BOWMAN