

The Community Energy Challenge

The Community Energy Challenge (CEC) is a Greater Franklin County volunteer-based winterization initiative. A simple, low-cost strategy of interior storm window panels keeps heat inside homes during the harsh winter months and encourages homeowners to make positive changes in their energy consumption. Homeowners participate in workshops when possible and become more proactive in their homes and lives.



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The Community Energy Challenge (CEC): The CEC was launched in 2009 in response to the growing concern for the rising fuel prices, struggling economy, and the tough decisions households were facing on an on-going basis. The focus has been to build custom-made interior window panels to save money and energy for the entire community, but to also be inclusive of all, encouraging strengths and not weaknesses. The CEC format is about *assisting* people, not doing things for them. Volunteers take the time to let folks engage in meaningful activities that directly affect their lives. Emphasis is placed on training and full participation. Yes, it takes more time, but the rewards are amazing! Not only do participants know how to care and repair the window panels but end up teaching others and feeling better about themselves. Residents are safer and warmer in their homes and community buildings tighter and more efficient, and the savings can be used for other necessary expenses.

The results to date:

- Since the program's inception, more than 1,225 volunteers have served over 18,900 hours building and installing 2,851 interior storm window panels for 500 households and 25 public buildings for an estimated energy savings now of more than \$82,000** annually. This number grows exponentially as panels we are currently building are installed and another season is realized on panels already built and installed.
- In 2017-18 we were proud to partner with and train Maine Campus Compact AmeriCorps members to complete 41 panels for 9 households which are included in the total above.
- Both volunteer and householder engagement are crucial to the success of this program. In a typical year, 3 key volunteers contribute over 600 hours (@ \$24.21 = \$14,526) and drive over 3,600 miles (@.50 mile = \$1,818) for a total in-kind value of \$16,344. In window panel workshops for a season, additional volunteers contribute an average of 688 hours to equal a total in-kind value of \$16,656 bringing the total in-kind value for all volunteers, with mileage, to on average, \$47,526.

The process: Panels are measured, built, and installed with homeowners and trained volunteers working together. By appointment, trained evaluators visit homes to assist residents in determining the most appropriate location for the window panels, usually in the "comfort areas" of the home such as the living room and kitchen. After windows are measured, they are built in a community workshop. These hands-on workshops are held in the fall on Saturdays from 9-1. Trained volunteers and homeowners help build the panels for themselves and one another. All enjoy a potluck lunch. Materials are provided. Anyone is welcome, and householders are strongly encouraged to participate, whatever skill-level or ability. Upon completion of the order, an appointment is scheduled, and panels are installed in home by homeowners and trained volunteers. Individuals who qualify for LIHEAP receive up to 6 free panels. Those who can pay a reasonable fee of \$1.50 linear/foot.

More than decade of the CEC impact has been made possible by the generous support of United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS), the Maine Community Foundation (MCF), Maine Campus Compact, and the Onion Foundation.

*There is minimal duplication of volunteers

**Based on average cost of 1 gallon of oil/per sq. foot x total sq. feet

(\$2.50 (average cost of gallon of oil) x 15 sq. feet (average window) x an average of 300 panels built in a year x total number of years of the project to date.)