

# Partnerships allow needed weatherization of homes



## Nailing it down Pat Beaty and Dave Murnen

*Copyright (c) 2021 Aberdeen Daily World, Edition 3/13/2021*

Promoting safe, healthy and sustainable housing opportunities through partnerships is the mission of NeighborWorks of Grays Harbor County. When people live in a safe, comfortable home, it impacts many other aspects of their lives.

Studies have shown that with a warm, weatherized, rehabbed home, children miss fewer days of school, parents miss fewer days of work, and health concerns are often improved. It's hard to sleep well in a home that is freezing cold or breathe well in a house full of mold, smoke or nasty floor covers. However, for many homeowners, making changes are well outside their budget.

In response to this, Wells Fargo partnered with our parent-chartering organization, NeighborWorks America, creating grant opportunities that address many needed causes. In this case, it was the "Safe and Sound – Strengthening Rural Homeownership through Housing Rehabilitation or Replacement Grant Program." This year NeighborWorks of Grays Harbor County was included as one of several grant recipients in four areas of the rural United States. This money helped four Grays Harbor homeowners make life-altering changes to their homes.

We found a way to stretch that grant money by partnering with Coastal Community Action Program's Weatherization Program on three of their "No-Go" projects that likely wouldn't have happened otherwise. The fourth project was our own homeowner client.

### **Partnering with CCAP**

"That money from NWA/ Wells Fargo was just a godsend," said Vince Smith, weatherization coordinator of Coastal Community Action Program.

"I had several projects that I wanted to do — people who were really in need — but the restrictions on the money I had available for weatherization, prohibited me from doing them," Vince said. However, when NeighborWorks called about the Safe and Sound Grant and together with the CCAP weatherization money, each project became a "Go!" Safe and Sound funds literally changed the lives of several harborites.

One of the projects enabled an older man in Montesano to get heat back in his home.

A note from the recipient expresses his appreciation: "The high efficiency furnace that was installed will be a life saver. With the weatherizing of my home, it is airtight and always stays warm," he said. "Winters in my home have in the past been trying and expensive."

In addition to the new furnace, the project included plumbing and electrical repairs, as well as air sealing and installing weather stripping and door sweeps, insulating the attic, walls and floor, and even replacing a broken window.

"He had no source of heat," Vince said, "but we would have had to walk away from him, leaving him with no source of heat if it wasn't for the Safe and Sound money from NWA/ Wells Fargo!"

The second grateful recipient was a woman and her grown son living together in Aberdeen.

On the coldest day of the year, the woman contacted Vince at CCAP letting him know that the furnace in her home broke and that even with a borrowed space heater from a friend, the temperature only reached 55 degrees in the one room they attempted to heat.

When Vince let us know of the situation, we were able to use more of the Safe and Sound funds to install a new HVAC system and leverage weatherization of the whole house.

“And now they are able to live and enjoy their whole home,” Vince said.

A disabled man in Ocean Shores received essentially a new house as we joined together several funding sources.

The 924-square-foot house required new plumbing, new electrical, a new roof, and even new drywall and sub floor, in addition to the weatherization and insulation.

“This project is still in progress, but it’s going to be amazing when it’s done,” Vince said, “And with that new 50-year roof, it will be around for a long, long time,” For Vince, seeing vulnerable people in difficult housing situations is quite personal.

“This has been very near and dear to my heart. I know that these people don’t have anyone to help them,” he said, adding that he was horrified to learn that his mother, who died three years ago, had lived in a home out of the area where the ceiling was falling in on her.

“And I had no idea,” he said.

“That is why this has been a pet project for me. When people call with an emergency, I don’t want to give up on them. I try to figure out if there is anything that I can do for them; and me being able to help these three because of this program, is huge. I know the effect on their lives,” he said.

### **An additional project**

In addition to the three projects we partnered on with CCAP, we at Neighbor-Works Grays Harbor also undertook a fourth Safe and Sound Project. One of our disabled homeownerclients needed help to address some of his health and safety issues and in doing so also helped his very low, fixed-income budget.

First we gave him a no-cost ductless heat pump, from a partnership grant with GHPUD. This cut his energy bill in half. Next, the obsolete electrical panel and lighting were replaced. We fixed trip hazards on an unfinished porch, repaired plumbing and installed new fixtures in a bathroom and replaced unhealthy flooring throughout the house that were creating chronic breathing issues. When we were done, there was a much safer, healthier home for our much happier homeowner As we said earlier, the reason we at Neighbor-Works and CCAP are in this business is that home matters to people’s lives.

Vince Smith at CCAP agrees: “Over the years we’ve had multiple clients say that they are more likely to have friends and family visit them once their home has been improved. Some say that before the rehab their children wouldn’t bring friends home.”

As we’ve all learned in these times, connections with friends and family is important, as is being comfortable and safe in our homes.

We are so grateful to NeighborWorks America and Wells Fargo for their thoughtful, generous support.

*Dave Murnen and Pat Beaty are construction specialists at NeighborWorks of Grays Harbor County, where Murnen is executive director. This is a nonprofit organization committed to creating safe and affordable housing opportunities for all residents of Grays Harbor County. For questions about the ductless heat pump program or home repair, housing counseling for renters and landlords, homebuyer education and buying, call 360-533-7828, listen to the extension picks that will best help you and leave a callback name and number. Due to Covid-19, our office is not currently open for a visit, but we will call you back.*