

YouthBuild Boston is energy friendly in Hyde Park



Carol Cornelison from the City's Department of Neighborhood Development speaks to some of the 180 volunteers from Bank of America, YouthBuild Boston, 500 Women & Youth Build, and the City of Boston, at the DND building in Hyde Park. The Hyde Park location served as headquarters throughout the day as volunteers weatherized more than 600 windows.

Dana Forsythe 13.DEC.07

Seventeen residences around Hyde Park benefited from free weatherization as part of the city-wide annual Neighborhood Housewarming last Friday. The event, implementing volunteers from YouthBuild Boston, Bank of America, 500 Women & Youth Build and the City of Boston, set out to weatherize 600 windows in 80 homes around the city.

Gathering at the Department of Neighborhood Development at 26 Central St. in Hyde Park at 8 a.m., 170 volunteers set out to their projects locally as well as to houses in Roxbury and Dorchester.

For many New England residents - especially seniors - winter means the burden of high-energy costs and sometimes making sacrifices in order to keep the heat on. The work done will yield an average savings of 10-12% on the homeowners' energy bills. "We always have a great turnout," said Gillian Tate, Hyde Park resident and YouthBuild Boston's Assistant to the Executive Director. "A lot of our volunteers are repeats, usually there's a wait list."

Tate led a group of volunteers as they worked on 14 area homes and weatherized 90 windows. Volunteers weatherized windows by taping clear vinyl film behind existing windows to create an insular barrier. They then shrunk the covering tight and wrinkle-free by using a blow dryer.

"We get a lot of calls and comments afterwards about how nice our volunteers were each year," Tate said. "It was the same this year, everyone had a good time."

In Dorchester, homeowner Janet Bailey received brand new energy saving windows throughout her house. KeySpan/National Grid provided a \$5,000 grant to cover all new

windows and supplies for the event. "It is exciting to have partners like these that pull together to hit the streets and make people's lives a little easier at this tough time of year. It is also a great experience for our trainees whenever they can apply their skills, and provide a real service directly to their neighbors," said Ken Smith, YouthBuild Boston's Executive Director. "One of the biggest problems is hot air leaking out of the home during the winter," Smith said. "[The weatherization] will certainly reduce the heating costs for folks, absolutely."

A lot of people have lived in the same house for 20 or 30 years," said Garrett Butler-Hall, Youth Build Boston's director of development. "And a lot of them haven't made updates to their homes in terms of conserving energy."

"This is one our favorite events," said Smith. "It's done all in one big rush over town." Smith described the Department of Neighborhood Development in Hyde Park as the 'heart of the operation' where staff fielded calls from volunteers who had finished early and wanted to do more houses or needed directions to the homes.

"There is an important exchange there," said Smith of the work YouthBuild does. "One of the great things is that [the people who receive assistance] get to see young people caring for them. It's also very important the young people take on that leadership role, and have that human contact."

Butler-Hall added that Youth Build's work in the neighborhood is a part of their all around goal of keeping youth engaged and educating them, whether it be helping them build their employment skills or earning their G.E.D.

As part of the annual event, The Bank of America Charitable Foundation also presented a \$75,000 grant to YouthBuild Boston to help the organization continue to improve opportunities for Boston's youths. A portion of the grant focuses on increasing environmentally responsible practices within Ebb's construction projects and training programs. "Bank of America is a big part of Youth Build Boston. We benefit in so many ways from their relationship. And now with this grant they are helping to drive our green building and training initiative. This grant will help us build green homes as well as send our graduates into the workforce already familiar with the green building, which is the future of their industry," said Smith.

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