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HAMDEN — Thanks to the collaboration of public and private agencies, residents who live in three Hamden Housing Authority properties are now saving on their energy bills.

The Housing Authority and its partner in the venture, New Opportunities Inc., held an open house Monday to celebrate the weatherization work in 190 units; 110 units at Hamden Village on Clifford Street, 40 units at Centerville Village on Worth Avenue and 40 units at Mount Carmel Village on Woodruff Street.

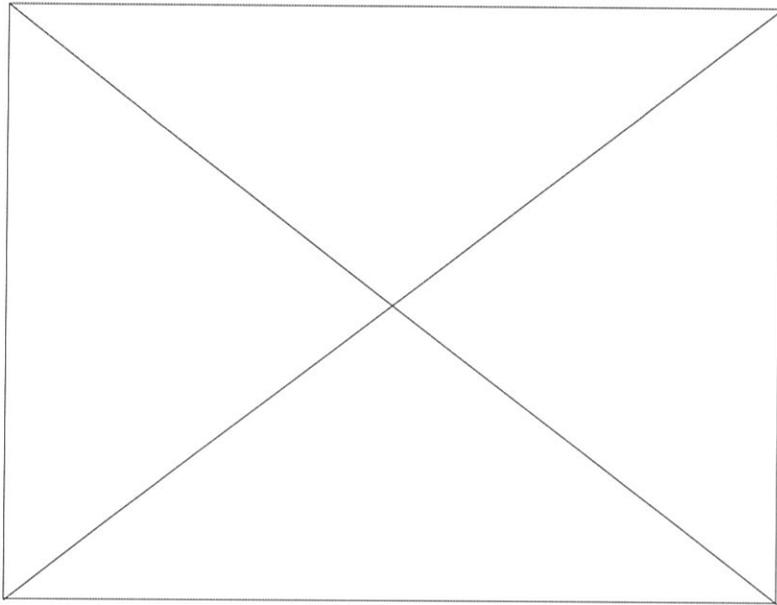
The work included the installation of ductless heat pumps and new windows.

“It was quite a thrill to get this work done for our residents,” Housing Authority Director Hazelann Cook said.

James H. Gatling, president and CEO of New Opportunities Inc. of Waterbury, said that his agency is one of five community action agencies in the state that have participated in weatherization projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“To be here to celebrate the completion of our effort is fantastic,” he said.





Gatling said that the project had to overcome several administrative and technical hurdles before the work could be done. For example, a safety overflow switch had to be developed for the heat pumps so that water wouldn't spill into apartments. The switch had to be approved by the state building inspector.

The Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund contributed about \$120,000 to the program, enabling the state to receive \$700,000 in stimulus money for the project for the 190 units.

The project created jobs for contractors and administrative jobs for New Opportunities, he said.

Claudette Beaulieu, deputy commissioner of the state Department of Social Services, said her agency "had a big challenge" when it learned it was receiving \$64.3 million in federal stimulus money, a much larger amount than for its regular weatherization program.

By March 2012, more than 10,000 housing units will be weatherized. DSS worked with United Illuminating and Connecticut Light & Power to figure out solutions. "I know this is going to pay off in the long run with long-term savings," Beaulieu said.

"Every item here was installed or manufactured here in Connecticut," said Chris Ehlert of UI.

The project began in November 2010. Companies that worked on the project or supplied equipment were Star Supply of New Haven, Mercury Windows of Windsor, Thomaston Comfort Control, Patriot Air Conditioning and Heating of Norwalk, Gems Sensors and Controls of Plainville and New England Energy Conservation Services of Woodbridge. Diversified Technologies of Hamden provided engineering services.

Audrey Turner, a retired nurse who lives in Centerville Village, said she likes the new unit in her apartment because she needs to have continuous air conditioning due to a medical condition.

"I was concerned about the utility bill until the August bill arrived. It was only \$50," Turner said.

Mayor Scott D. Jackson and state Reps. Larry Butler, D-Waterbury, Roland J. Lemar, D-New Haven, Al Adinolfi, R-Cheshire, and House Majority Leader J. Brendan Sharkey, D-Hamden, also spoke to how the project has created jobs, will save residents money and will reduce the need for the dependence on fossil fuels.

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