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Saturday, February 14, 2009

## Investments in efficiency Green House Project pays off for area landlords and tenants

Feb 12, 2009  
By Amy Nordrum

The Green House Project is well under way as landlords and tenants make efficiency improvements in local rentals with help from the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) and Ohio University's Office of Sustainability.

Nineteen landlords have enrolled in the program since it started in May, and three properties recently received reimbursement for efficiency improvements completed as the final step in a project that includes free professional energy audits, education and personalized feedback for both tenants and landlords. The remaining units are still working through the process and will make improvements and receive reimbursement soon.

The Green House Project aims to improve the energy efficiency of off-campus student rental units in Athens. Landlords apply to have their properties audited and receive a 50 percent rebate of up to \$500 for efficiency improvements made within six months of the audit, as well as free compact-fluorescent light bulbs and a low-flow showerhead. Student tenants are educated about conservation measures they can take to lower utility bills and reduce wear on the home's energy systems. Participating units also benefit from promotions through the Office of Sustainability.

"We're into making houses more efficient so that they're more rentable," said landlord Joel Laufman, who recently completed the program for the first of his 22 Athens properties.

Laufman enrolled in the program hoping to reduce air leakage from the windows in his North Lancaster property. Based on COAD's energy audit, Laufman added a foot of attic insulation and replaced seven windows in the unit. The total investment of about \$2,000 was softened by the \$500 Green House Project rebate.

Laufman said he appreciates that his environmental mindfulness is being met with some relief on the bottom line.

"I am concerned about these issues. But in business you have to make a profit," he explained, adding that he plans to continue registering units one by one until the program ends.

Green House Project renovations were a selling point to second-year medical student David Zaghool.

"I look at rent and average cost of electricity and heat," Zaghool said. "Those are the first two things I look at when I look for an apartment," he said.

According to Green House Project Coordinator Molly Shea, lowering tenant utility bills is one of the primary benefits of the project.

"Students are definitely concerned about utility costs. The students I've talked to as part of the Green House Project have been excited to learn about things

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they can do to reduce these costs," said Shea, who frequently makes recommendations for further improvements during a personal consultation included in the project.

For second-year medical student Nora Burns, the cost savings are equaled by the environmental peace of mind.

Burns' one-bedroom cottage on Columbia Avenue was recently outfitted with dense pack cellulose insulation as a result of landlord Michael Keys' participation in the Green House Project. Burns said she couldn't be more pleased.

"It's saving money and it makes you feel good to know that you're using your energy efficiently."

The Green House Project serves a number of related goals, which include offsetting Ohio University's carbon footprint as mandated by the Presidents Climate Commitment; reducing Athens' greenhouse gas emissions as directed by the Cool Cities Initiative; and heightening awareness among Ohio University students and their landlords of the relationship between energy use, utility costs and climate change.

The project was made possible through a \$50,000 grant from the Sugar Bush Foundation, a supporting organization of The Ohio University Foundation that seeks to foster sustainable development in Appalachian Ohio. Funds are expected to enable at least 40 units to undergo audits and receive rebates for improvements. The project will be accepting a second round of applications after all currently enrolled units have received reimbursements.

For more information about the Green House Project contact [greenhouseproject@ohio.edu](mailto:greenhouseproject@ohio.edu) or visit the Office of Sustainability's Web site at [www.ohio.edu/sustainability](http://www.ohio.edu/sustainability).

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#### **Related Links**

The Green House Project Web

site: <https://www.ohio.edu/sustainability/greenhouseproject.htm>

Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (following this link will take you away from Ohio University's Web site): <http://www.coadinc.org/>

*Published:* Feb 12, 2009 11:11 AM

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