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Our Third Decade of Community Partnership!

VOLUME 10—ISSUE

TCB NEWS!

SUMMER-FALL 2011

Home Energy Audits Available!

Create a Baseline for Improved Efficiency

Are you trying to find ways to help improve our environment as well as your own household finances and quality of life?

Whether you are an environmentalist who is fanatical about conserving resources, a budget-conscious saver, or some combination of the two – a professional home energy audit may be a great option to consider. This low

-cost audit (thanks to a generous discount as part of TEP's commitment to reducing energy demand) is a great way to see where your home is at, and what steps you can take.

There are a variety of self-diagnostic tools available online to get started, including through the TEP website.



Above: Setup of a blower door by an employee of WellHome, one of TEP's certified contractors, to measure air pressure and find leaks in a home.

Adopt-a-Park still expanding, extends to gateways!

The successful Adopt-a-Park and Public Areas Program has continued to grow during the past year, with a net increase of 28 groups (now totaling 203 active volunteer sites!). Thank you to these dedicated volunteer groups and our partners at the City of Tucson and Pima County. This year's special focus has been on the cleanup of busy gateway roadway corridors, that are vital for transportation use by local residents and visitors alike. Already, six additional miles of gateway roadways are now adopted. Special acknowledgment to Evren Sonmez who will be celebrating her one-year anniversary with Tucson Clean & Beautiful and who is our first-ever full-time coordinator for the Adopt-a-Park & Public Areas Program. Tucson Clean & Beautiful has also begun working in collaboration with the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center on education efforts and volunteer projects to help remove buffelgrass and reduce its spread throughout our community.



Southwest Conservation Corps removing buffelgrass on Ajo Way, March 2011

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Mission Statement:

The purpose of Tucson Clean & Beautiful, Inc., a non-profit organization, is to preserve and improve our environment, conserve natural resources, and enhance the quality of life in the City of Tucson & eastern Pima County. These goals will be achieved through initiating educational & participatory programs implemented with broad-citizen, multi-culture support.

Tucson Clean & Beautiful News is the official publication of Tucson Clean & Beautiful Inc., a non-profit 501(c)3 environmental education organization.

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Your Membership Counts! TCB Programs and volunteer partnerships have an immense impact on the environment and quality of life across the Tucson/Pima County metropolitan area. These programs are strengthened by TCB membership donations from Tucson area individuals and businesses. Visit the TCB website at <http://www.tucsonaz.gov/tcb> to view an updated list of available member discounts. **Already a member? Give a gift membership to family and friends!**

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Home Energy Audits Available (continued from page 1)

However, nothing is more eye-opening to even the most avid environmentalist than having a trained professional test the many different aspects that drive your home energy efficiency, and give you a report on the ways that you can set and achieve energy efficiency goals in the short and long term.

When the team of two from WellHome arrived, they sat down with me for about 15 minutes and went over a brief home history questionnaire, including our potential goals for any efficiency improvements. Our home energy goal is to become a “net zero” electric home – that is, to directly offset all of our usage and cost for electric - perhaps even generating a slight rebate to pay for the customer charges associated with being connected to the electric grid (roughly \$8 per month, or just under \$100 each year).

The next ½ hour or so was an external home inspection and drawing of the shape of the home. Then, a blower door was set up at our front door and pressures tested at various locations throughout the home, as well as with the air conditioning on and room doors closed.

I even got to walk around the house with the Infrared camera and see a few spots where our home was gaining heat during the summer months (and, probably losing heat in winter).

I had unfinished homework which I completed during the audit: I also took the time to look more closely at our energy bill – now that our solar is in place, I have paid just over \$200 for electricity usage in the past year (and \$100 in customer charges), but over \$500 in natural gas (and about \$125 in customer charges). A word to the wise: have copies of a year of energy bills ahead of time – request these from TEP and Southwest Gas or your utility provider a couple weeks ahead just in case! I was able to research most of it online and it gave me something to do while the auditors were here, but would have been nice to just hand it to them.

A couple weeks later, I sat down with one of the inspectors to go over their report. They confirmed that the workmanship on our home’s newer double-pane windows a few years ago has held up, and that we had already done many of the things that they would have recommended to make our home more energy-efficient and meet our own goals. Over the past several years our home was already retrofitted with both solar hot water, a tankless water heater, and solar photovoltaic (electricity) panels with the help of both the Solar Store and Technicians for Sustainability.

They also recommended approximately \$1,500 worth of improvements to our home, including sealing air ducts, increasing ventilation between bedrooms and the hallway to improve air conditioning and heating efficiency, and some minor sealing of cracks for air leakage. Approximately half of this cost could be paid for with TEP rebates, tax credits and the like.

Just taking part in this process also reminded us on a number of occasions throughout this summer, to be conscious of our energy usage - some of the common things we can do on a daily basis: turning unused lights off (both for the lights’ own energy use, and the heat they generate resulting in more air conditioning usage), unplugging unneeded appliances that continue to draw electricity when off, turn the air conditioning up a degree or two, turning the hot water heater down a little, even cooking outside when it’s warm to decrease heat inside the home! Fine-tuning our home’s air flow should also decrease our home’s gas usage during the winter, which is great because I would like to offset the cost of my gas bill too! Most of all, these minor improvements are an investment that should pay for itself in decreased utilities within about 6-7 years—better than the stock market! Visit www.tep.com for information on low-cost home inspections and rebates.