

Kicking out the cold and cutting the heating bills



Every winter, Susan Konstanty's Cape Cod-style home in Gasport felt chilly,

and she couldn't understand why. She and her family live about 20 miles from Niagara Falls, so winter storms can be fierce. Even with the thermostat set at 68 degrees, the 1,500-sq. ft. home felt drafty, making her family uncomfortable.

Susan turned to the EmPower New York program,

which offers no-cost energy efficiency services to income-eligible New Yorkers.

EmPower sent a contractor to visit her home last February. **Before he even**

stepped out of his truck, the contractor spotted a main cause of the house's chill: Icicles dangled from the roof, pointing to inadequate insulation. A review of Susan's heating and electric bills told its own story: **She was paying far too much to heat her home.**

The contractor recommended insulation for the home's roof and basement, along with caulking cracks and gaps to reduce drafts. **Today, Susan's house is cozy and efficient,** so much so that she sets the thermostat at 65 degrees—and feels warmer than she did when it was set three degrees higher.

Turn over for more



On a tight budget. Susan Konstanty's household budget is challenging because she and her husband decided she would stay at home through their children's important developmental years. They live in Gasport, NY, a hamlet of 1,200 people near the Erie Canal, where many homes date to the early 19th century. Her Cape Cod-style home was built when home heating was inexpensive.

Winters feel especially cold. Living in the Buffalo-area snow belt means that winters are cold, and lake-effect flurries can produce plenty of snow in just a short amount of time. Susan Konstanty's home lacked adequate insulation at key areas such as the exterior basement door and the roof. Aside from these obvious shortfalls, Susan didn't realize that some of the things she did every day for her family were wasteful.

A whole-house approach. Susan worked with a contractor who specializes in home energy inspections, energy upgrades and energy education. The contractor is accredited by the Building Performance Institute (BPI), and takes a big-picture approach to saving energy. After the assessment, Susan's contractor specified energy-saving work including insulation, which was installed by his company a couple of weeks later. Just as important, he showed Susan that she could save money by switching to compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulbs, using cold water for laundry, having her family take showers instead of daily baths, and other measures that would not affect her family's comfort.

Cozy house, steady bills; knowledge is power.

Susan now sets her thermostat at 65 degrees during the day and 61 degrees at night, without impacting her family's comfort level. Her home's fuel consumption is lower as a result, although



her bills have held steady, with the savings offset by rising fuel prices. Her electricity expense has likewise been reduced. "Without EmPower," she said, "our fuel and electricity bills would definitely be much higher." EmPower's quality assurance team

took the steps necessary to ensure the work was done well and will have lasting impact. Finally, as an educator, Susan respects the value of information she learned from her contractor. "Knowledge truly is power," she says, "and the insight I gained has improved my family's lives."

Situation

- Chilly house, even with thermostat set at 68 degrees
- Wasteful daily routines

Solutions

- Attic and basement insulation
- Education about ways to save energy

Benefits

- Significant reduction in energy costs
- Warmer, cozier home

My husband and I can't get over how cozy our home is after these improvements! Plus, our fuel consumption has been drastically reduced. The EmPower program creates a better life for people struggling to pay their bills, and it improves the environment, too, because we're using less energy.

—Susan Konstanty, Gasport, NY

► Opportunity's knocking!

Call 1-800-263-0960 or visit nyserdera.ny.gov/empower

About EmPower New York

NYSERDA's EmPower New York program offers no-cost energy efficiency services to low-income (i.e., HEAP-eligible) homeowners and renters. These services include electric reduction and home performance measures. On-site energy education offers customers additional strategies for managing their energy costs. The services are provided by contractors accredited by the Building Performance Institute (BPI).