



Local guidance for energy cost savings

Case Study

Customer:

Mirna Handelman

Location:

Peekskill, NY

Industry:

Single-Family Residential

Approved For:

- EmPower Program
- Weatherization Measures

Background

When Mirna Handelman purchased her single-family home in Peekskill, NY a few years ago, she quickly realized necessary home improvements were not quite in her budget. While attending a community event, Mirna learned about New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) programs designed to help residents cover the costs of energy efficiency upgrades in their homes.

Through the Community Energy Engagement program, Mirna could access the support she needed to start making informed decisions on what approach would work best for her and her financial situation. Through the program, Community Energy Advisors (CEA) were available to connect her to the right resources and networks that fit Mirna's needs.

Benefits of a Community Energy Advisor

CEAs work directly with homeowners to discuss financing options for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and products. They act as a guide through the process of identifying and implementing a clean energy project and connect homeowners with the right contractors.

After exchanging contact information at the community event, a CEA from Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County reached out to follow-up and offer assistance. NYSERDA's EmPower New York program, which provides no-cost energy efficiency solutions to income-eligible New Yorkers, was determined to be a good fit. However, as an Asset-Limited-Income-Constrained household, she was temporarily over the income threshold to be eligible for the program due to working extra overtime.

“Where there used to be a draft, I can’t feel it anymore. It stays much warmer upstairs. I keep my thermostat at 66° now. I used to have to turn it up when it got really cold.”

- Mirna Handelman

After a few months, Mirna’s income returned to normal and she then met the eligibility criteria. Knowing now that help was available, she contacted the CEA to start another application. Once her eligibility was confirmed, the CEA helped her gather the information required to submit a new application for EmPower New York. When Mirna was officially approved, she was assigned a contractor through CLEAResult Consulting to begin work right away.

Efficiency Upgrades

Mirna made the common mistake of thinking it was just about replacing windows, which is why working with a CEA was helpful to show her she needed to consider the entire building envelope. For example, Mirna’s 10-year-old daughter consistently complained about being cold in her second-story bedroom. That was a big motivator to explain to Mirna how not only replacing the windows but installing insulation in the attic and basement would significantly contribute to improving comfort levels throughout the home.

She reported feeling a difference right away. As it started getting colder in October, the drafts she had felt around the house the previous year were gone, her daughter was more comfortable in her room, and she didn’t have to stress over the thermostat.

Mirna’s energy improvements included installation of high-efficiency lighting, attic and wall insulation, replacement of the old, inefficient refrigerator, water-saving showerheads, and tips on how to save energy — all at no cost to her.

Going Forward

Mirna’s story continues to unfold. Now that she has personally experienced the benefits of energy efficiency upgrades, she is considering replacing her roof in order to install solar panels. In addition, she discussed increasing the insulation throughout, upgrading additional windows, and converting the oil furnace to an air source heat pump.

While many might look at energy efficiency programs in terms of dollars and kilowatts saved, for Mirna, it’s so much more, it was life changing. This inspired Mirna to share her experience with others in similar situations to help spread awareness about how to access the assistance they need.

“The Community Energy Engagement and EmPower programs have helped me understand what’s possible. You can really feel the difference and I feel more capable of doing these projects having gone through the program.”

Learn about resources and funding available in your community for energy projects.

Visit: nyserdera.ny.gov/ceep

Call: **1-866-NYSERDA**

