

# Comfort + affordability + sustainability

The EcoLiving Winterization Challenge adds up to a big win—helping people, building community, supporting the environment

EcoLiving Events Ltd. is celebrating a 10-year milestone in 2012. The not-for-profit, volunteer-driven group offers events that help Albertans reduce their environmental impact, including the EcoLiving Winterization Challenge held last November.

Forty-two volunteers joined EcoLiving at the Bowness Community Centre to learn or improve winterization skills, then practised their techniques on the homes of nine Bowness seniors. The volunteers replaced furnace filters, installed CO detectors and smoke alarms, added gaskets behind electrical plates, insulated hot water tanks and pipes, and installed weather stripping on doors and plastic film on windows. The work will make the seniors more comfortable in their homes, lower their utility costs and reduce their usage of natural resources and in turn greenhouse gas emissions.

Seniors were thrilled with the improvements to their homes—they were amazed to be supported by the volunteers and sponsors, and to be gifted all of the work and supplies. There were new friendships formed between the seniors and volunteers. Several of the volunteers either live or work in Bowness and indicated they wanted to stay in touch with the seniors. Seniors were so appreciative they offered volunteers homemade gifts like knitted socks or peanut brittle.

Volunteers were very pleased with their morning efforts. Everyone returned to the community centre after working on the homes with big smiles on their faces. It was a pleasure for all to get to know the seniors a little and to help make them more comfortable. All of the volunteers indicated they want to be involved

with the initiative again next year.

EcoLiving Events would like to thank everyone who helped support the event: Totem Building Supplies (Bowness Store) which donated most of the winterization supplies, Alderman Dale Hodges, Chinmaya Mission Calgary, Servus Credit Union, Carol and Peter

Tracey, and the Bowness Community Association. Thank you to all the volunteers—the community is a better place because of your efforts.

The Winterization Challenge is one of the most rewarding events that EcoLiving Events hosts. There are also workshops available for those who'd like to learn more about EcoLiving winterization techniques. Find details at [www.ecoliveingevents.ca](http://www.ecoliveingevents.ca). The group also engages in initiatives like Earth Hour and Earth Day by hosting or supporting events, and offers EcoLiving Tours of various sustainable building technologies and alternative energy installations, providing participants with opportunities to ask lots of questions. EcoLiving hosts a Solar Stampede Breakfast to share information about solar and other technologies (and eat delicious pancakes and sausages cooked by the sun), a speaker series with local, national and

international speakers, and a fair that showcases environmentally friendly products and services alongside its acclaimed Winterization Challenge and workshops.

Funders are starting to take note of these important programs. The organization recently received a Shell "Fuelling Change" grant for \$50,000, based on Canadians' votes for organizations most deserving of this funding. The money will help further all of EcoLiving's valuable projects.

If you would like to get involved in the



"I had a fabulous group of people winterize my home. They were all very polite and terrific workers. My house now feels warmer and I really appreciate everyone's efforts."

—Irene, a very active volunteer in Bowness



"Not much today is free so it's great to see seniors getting this kind of support. I appreciate it and I am sure so do the other seniors. The work that was completed was excellent. I always wanted to do some of these projects myself and now I don't have to worry as they are done. I also made some new friends."

—Jack, a Bowness resident for 45 years



Mira and Sue from the Servus team

"This project is a fantastic idea. When we first got involved last year, we were looking for a way to participate as a group to give back to the community. We were happy to be back this year and especially enjoyed gathering afterwards to hear of all the teams' accomplishments. It was heartwarming to know that some of the teams helped seniors who often volunteer in the community. It is great to be able to give something back to them. Many others have indicated they want to be involved next year including other branches of Servus."

—Mira Manager, Servus Credit Union



Chris, Roy and Karen from the Totem team

"The event was an excellent way to involve our staff in supporting the local community that, after all, supports us. I think it's important that people use their energy consumption more efficiently because it saves them money on heating costs. We've supported similar programs before, but the Winterization Challenge involves helping more people improve their homes. We were happy to participate and will suggest other stores get involved next year."

—Chris Parsons, Totem Building Supplies

EcoLiving Winterization Challenge or any other EcoLiving events please e-mail [info@ecoliveingevents.ca](mailto:info@ecoliveingevents.ca).

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