Belfast churches come together to build energy saving windows

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Belfast Window Dressers, comprised of over 80 volunteers from four Belfast area churches and several local community organizations, came together last week to build more than 500 low cost, high quality "interior storm windows" for area households. This was the first time in Window Dressers history that multiple churches joined together in common purpose both to help the environment by reducing CO2 emissions and to keep Maine residents warmer and more comfortable.

Founded by Richard Cadwgan and Frank Mundo, the award-winning Window Dressers program began three years ago as a community outreach project of the First Universalist Church of Rockland. Last year the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast joined the expanding effort by building about 300 window inserts for members of its congregation.

This year the UU Church is working with the Belfast United Methodist Church, St. Francis Roman Catholic Church, and St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church. Volunteers from each church and from the Maine Coastal Regional Re-entry Center, the Game Loft, Waldo County Technical Center, and BCOPE (Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education) worked 14 three-hour shifts to assemble a record 500 window inserts.

Additional volunteers provided food and drinks while others delivered completed inserts.

The Window Dressers process begins with identifying residents of drafty households who wish to be warmer each winter, but also mindful of our environment. Trained volunteers then go into each home to make exact laser measurements of all windows to be covered. Next, precision-made hard wood frames are crafted by Rockland Window Dressers using high-tech computerized saws. After cutting, the frames are painted, drilled, glued, screwed together and labeled. This year the frames designated for the Belfast Build were transported to the Belfast Boat House, the temporary construction facility provided by the City of Belfast.

During the week-long build, Belfast volunteers wrapped and taped tough clear poly-olefin plastic to both sides of the frames to create the all important insulating air space. The plastic will remain clear and lasts for up to ten years. The last step in the production process, the application of foam tape to the edges of the wrapped frames, seals windows.
against drafts. At the end of the Belfast Build, nearly fifty area homes received the new interior storm windows, which install easily and can be popped out for storage in the Spring.

Because all labor and planning is done by volunteers, the cost of these inserts is kept low. Approximately 70-percent of customers pay $15 per insert; about 30-percent pay a low income flat fee of $10 per home. Window Dressers USA, the largest producer of window inserts in Maine, offers windows at a cost to consumers that is 25-percent of the cost of comparable commercially-produced units. In return for inserts, all recipients are asked to help at the builds.

At the completion of the Belfast build, the total number of custom-made inserts made by Window Dressers since its founding surpassed the 6,000 mark. Inserts have now been installed in over 500 Maine households in over 40 Maine communities including Rockland, Belfast, Peaks Island, Liberty, Vassalboro, and Bangor. Winner of the 2013 Governor’s Environmental Excellence Award, Window Dressers is spreading rapidly across Maine and serves as a model for other states that have expressed interest in this timely and exciting movement. Cadwgan and Mundo estimate that every 250 window inserts can reduce consumption of over 23,000 gallons of fuel oil over 10 years, saving more than $81,000 for our neighbors and keeping 438 metric tons of carbon dioxide out of our atmosphere.

For more information about Window Dressers, contact Corliss Davis, 930-3562 or Frank Mundo, 356-2833.