

Milford B&B Goes Green With Energy Retrofit

By T.A. Crerand

MILFORD — Why spend money heating the outdoors so-to-speak of your older or drafty home when you can go green AND reduce your heating and cooling costs, in addition to being eligible for rebates and low-interest financing making it all affordable. That is just what a new owner of a B&B in Milford is doing.

Adriane Wendell, owner of the Harrington House (formerly Hattree Inn) at 208 W. Harford St. in Milford, is getting an energy retrofit. She anticipates a 48 percent energy reduction, and could be eligible for a rebate ranging from \$1,500 to as much as \$11,000 pending new legislation.

In a recent interview, she explained that the main part of the Victorian style home, circa 1840 according to research conducted by the previous owner, was later added onto. The structure is on a double lot in Milford's historic district and zoned residential. Since buying the property, she had the deteriorating front porch rebuilt, put a new roof on, and added a deck onto the rear of the spacious home.

Although the structure has five gas fireplaces, they are not the primary source of heat. There is a gas forced air system that supports the first floor, and a hot water baseboard heat system for second floor. The four guest rooms on second floor are really hard to regulate with so much air coming through the outside walls, she said.

Wendell had been using space heaters in some hard to heat areas. Drafts from walls, outlets, doors and windows, and upward cold air flow from the basement through gaps in the wide-plank floor causes a deficiency in the furnace's performance by making it run more often to maintain a set temperature.

One of Wendell's friends in Washington, D.C. had an energy audit

done and told her it resulted in a search and seal of drafty windows, which made a huge difference in energy bills.

Out of interest in comfort, savings, and general health, Wendell searched the Internet for a local company to conduct an energy audit on the Harrington House and that led her to Easy Energy, LLC, a BBB-accredited business owned and run by Robert Ross of Milford. She believed installing insulation under the first floor would make the home more comfortable but learned it would not solve the problem of cold air coming in and would not change cold air drafts on the second and third floors.

Ross, an energy efficiency expert, is a PA Home Energy Service Provider (www.pahomeenergy.com) and Energy Star Provider (www.energystar.gov). He is also a certified RESNET (Residential Energy Services Network www.resnet.us) energy rater and BPI (Building Performance Institute, Inc. www.bpi.org) certified building specialist who works in the tri-state area. "We develop the remedy," he said.

Wendell asked Ross to "look at the whole house and give me the biggest bang for my buck." She told the Pike County Dispatch, "Obviously, I can reduce electric by using more efficient light bulbs and doing some other things, but not losing air conditioning in summer and heat in winter. It [home energy retrofit] will make a huge difference."

"Efficiency presents an opportunity for me from a marketing perspective because there is a huge movement in the B&B industry about being green and more efficient. I recycle and provide kind amenities," she said, adding, "This is a much bigger deal." She expects the home to be toasty warm once work

is completed, which should be sometime the last week in December.

Project

Ross completed an energy audit on Wendell's home of nearly 5,200 square feet in November.

"We are doing a complete energy retrofit of the whole house from basement to attic and are aiming to achieve near energy star guidelines performance home numbers to the whole house efficiency including the thermal boundary and electrical for a reduction of 48 percent overall to energy usage.

"It is a cash positive scenario for the owner as are most energy retrofits."

Air leakage throughout the home was detected by depressurizing the house with a blower door test at a lower door, which tells how leaky it is. Then Ross conducted an inspection to identify leaks three ways: by hand, use of a smoke tracer and thermal image camera. His son, Anthony, works with him and created all the drawings for the project. Ross then provided a detailed report on work proposed, repairs and other adjustments needed throughout the home, and a detailed report estimating overall cost savings after improvements are made.

"This house is not getting any mechanical systems replaced but we do them and all other phases of energy within a building," explained Ross. This B&B project includes a blown cellulose insulation air barrier, insulating foundation walls, weatherizing and sealing of windows and doors, tightening and seal of the ductwork.

"Energy audit is really new in the world but it effectively changes their bills and comfort level in a home," Ross said. "Windows and heaters like seen on TV seem to be the most expensive items on the market but are least effective in resolving the problem."

"You are paying to heat the whole cubic volume of the entire home. The more you lost, the more you pay," Ross said. He hopes to reduce Wendell's bills by an actual 48.4 percent.

"There's a lot of misconceptions about insulation," said Ross. "Air-flow contributes to 41 percent of your energy bill alone. If you insulate your home and don't stop airflow, you still have 41 percent deficiency. Insulating your home does help and you should notice improvement, but the overall picture is it will be a lot smaller if you don't do both."

"Generally, we like to insulate by using blown cellulose or spray foam. Both are considered air barriers because they stop the airflow and they insulate. People notice a difference immediately as the work is being done."

Field's Service, Inc. of Easton is the professional weatherizing expert installing blown cellulose and all air sealing at the Harrington House.

Additional recommendations were made for reducing electrical



(Photo Courtesy of the Harrington House)

The Harrington House bed and breakfast, seen here during a warmer season, received a whole house energy audit and by the end of the month should be operating at 48 percent reduction in energy usage. A huge benefit will be warmer comfort in winter months and retaining cooler temperature in summer when using air conditioning.

costs such as replacing existing lights with LED lights where extended use is likely, and use of power strips for phantom power loads like entertainment systems or computers.

Ross estimates work is typically completed in five to 10 business days. To learn more about increasing energy efficiency in your home or business, contact Ross at 570-686-2834 or visit his website www.easy-energyusa.com for more details.

Health Issues

Ross explained that with air infiltration come health hazards. When cold air meets warm air in organic areas like a wood joist, it creates condensation in that area and over time condensation with organic material becomes mold. Mold spores are known to cause arthritis, asthma, allergies and inevitably increased medical bills. "From a health standpoint, in addition to comfort and savings, it's quite a combination for homeowners," he said.

Any moisture in a basement, which is not an issue in this B&B, said Ross, could lead to mold growth, health issues, and subsequently structural damage.

Financing

Low-interest financing is available for energy improvement loans through the Keystone Home Energy Loan Program providing certified contractors do all the work. Ross said homeowners could also consider refinancing their mortgage at a lower rate to pay for it. It becomes a cash-positive situation in that scenario.

If you have an air leaky or uninsulated home, Ross says, "You do have the money to pay for it. It's called your energy bill. If you knock off 50 percent of your energy bill, you allocate the difference with a loan. Usually it's a cash positive situation where you are paying less. When the loan goes away, it becomes more cash positive."

There are also some new pro-

grams; one being proposed is called Cash for Caulkers. CNN reported in early December that President Obama proposed up to \$12,000 in rebates for homeowners who get energy efficient appliances and insulate their homes. It would also stimulate the economy with jobs.

Wendell qualifies as a residential homeowner achieving efficiency for a federal rebate of \$1,500, but this is changing with proposed legislation. Ross explained if a home is audited by a certified BPI rater and work is done by certified contractors and/or subcontractors, and 20 percent savings on energy is achieved, the rebate then jumps to \$3,500, and for every 5 percent above that, is eligible for an additional \$1,500, which could amount to 50 percent of the entire project but with a cap of \$12,000. Wendell's rebate could go from \$1,500 to \$11,000 if they achieve 45 percent energy efficiency, and their goal is 48 percent.

Environmental

Another aspect is environmental, said Ross. "Reduced energy means reduced emissions. Right now this house emits the equivalent of six cars. You can buy a hybrid or the most fuel-efficient car in the world, but the bottom line is if you fix your home, you are doing three times more for the environment. When it comes to being green, you couldn't be any more green than doing this, a more efficient home."

"Environmentally speaking it's a win-win. This kind of work also creates more jobs. Political ramifications are the less emissions we use, the less energy we use, and the less oil we use. The less oil we use, the lower the price of oil goes."

B&B Owner & History

Wendell explained in an interview that she lived in Washington, D.C. for 25 years and retired from a telecommunications career in 2008, sold her house and after looking for a B&B to

run, bought the Hattree Inn in Milford in September that same year.

"I always wanted to live in a house like this," she said. She called it a second career and pre-retirement.

Wendell said that she grew up in upstate New York but traveled through Milford and spent time in the area when visiting one of her sisters in Bushkill, parents in Allentown, and in-laws in Dingmans Ferry.

The name she gave the B&B came from a little town history, she said. "Dr. and Mrs. Joe Harrington lived here and raised their family from the late 50s until they sold the house to the [Al and Jeanne] Crosbys who opened the B&B. I had a number of people in town refer to the Hattree as Doc Harrington's place when I first got here." She liked the sound of it and since it had local meaning, it stuck.

Milford is a very nice place for people to stop when traveling, she said, believing most weekend traffic comes from Philadelphia and New York. It is a slow season right now, but Wendell offers package deals like the winter lights festival, ski packages for Big Bear at nearby Masthope Mountain, and romance packages for Valentine's Day.

Wendell is a member of the Professional Association of Innkeepers International, The Pocono Mountain Vacation Bureau, The Pike County Visitors Bureau, and Pike County Chamber of Commerce. The inn is listed on the Internet's popular website www.bedandbreakfast.com where it is given outstanding reviews by guests for its charming host, newly added personal luxury amenities, business room, exquisite furnishings, friendly at-home yet private atmosphere, and, of course, gourmet breakfasts.

Visit the inn's website www.harringtonhousemilford.com for more details or call 570-296-2661 locally or toll free at 888-272-1234.



(Photo by T.A. Crerand)

Energy efficiency expert Robert Ross, seated left, owner of Easy Energy, LLC of Milford, and Harrington House B&B owner Adriane Wendell, seated right, wrap up discussion about anticipated financial savings resulting from work to prevent air leakage into the home as Casey Field, standing left, and Josh Field of Field's Service, Inc. of Easton arrived to install blown cellulose and air seal the 1840 structure.