

EHC's Energy Education Program Provides Relief to Planet, Pockets for Households in San Diego, National City

Results show that 150 households reduced energy use 25 percent

December 10, 2012 – San Diego, Calif. – Today the [Environmental Health Coalition](#) (EHC), a San Diego non-profit empowering communities to combat environmental injustice, proved that in-home energy education can drastically reduce energy use in low-income communities. These results are part of EHC's six-month energy efficiency education project, which put EHC staff into households to help families save energy and reduce utility bills.

As part of their [Healthy Kids Campaign](#), with funding from National City's Community Development Block Grant Program and the California Center for Sustainable Energy, EHC conducted multiple educational visits to 158 homes in San Diego and National City to teach families how to be more energy efficient. Of the households that had complete energy bill information, 81% reduced their energy use after the in-home visits, resulting in an average of 26 percent in energy savings or 119 kilowatt-hours per house each month.

"If all of San Diego County achieved this reduction, the monthly savings would reduce the need for three of the county's medium-sized peaker plants for 18 months" said EHC Community Organizer Silvia León, who conducted the free personalized home visits. "Small changes to our daily habits have huge impacts on our health and the environment, meaning fewer power plants, cleaner air and less children with asthma. This gives me hope for our future."

León visited each home multiple times to teach families how to read and comprehend their energy meters and bills, provide customized room-by-room energy savings action plans and track energy and gas consumption.

One resident participating in the program, Jerry Guzman, saw drastic reductions in his energy and gas use as a result of visits with León. Living in a four-bedroom house with his family, prior to the education program they were using about 977 kilowatt-hours of energy a month. After going through EHC's program, they reduced their energy use by 36 percent.

"Prior to EHC working with my family, we had no idea about the easy ways to save energy," Guzman said. "Now I know how to read my energy bill and can better track my family's energy usage."

Results like the Guzman family saw were common among most families that León visited. León says that saving money motivated families as well as the

desire to reduce demand of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions – helping to combat climate change and air pollution often seen in their communities.

"EHC uses a peer-to-peer education model to empower families in disadvantaged communities to understand the connection between their energy use and the pollution coming from dirty power plants," said León. "By showing them simple techniques and providing low-tech tools like CFL bulbs and smart power-strips, of the families reduced their energy and gas use and lowered their bills without upfront costs."

León said that these ongoing financial savings allow the families to spend money on other important items such as school supplies. In addition to financial rewards, the major takeaway from EHC's community work is that the energy savings last because the families make a commitment to apply their new habits over the long term as they understand their role in protecting the health of their neighborhoods and the planet.

Understanding the lasting impression this work had on San Diego families, EHC proposed the in-home education model be used across the state in low-income households. They took the results of the program to the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to advocate for this and other energy efficiency program ideas to be adopted as part of statewide policy to reduce energy use in California. The PUC agreed and [recently recommended a number of EHC's Home Energy Efficiency program ideas to be used throughout the state](#). For more information about Environmental Health Coalition's Healthy Kids Campaign or Energy Education Program, please visit www.environmentalhealth.org.

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