Neighbors Warming Neighbors (NWN)
Dunbarton, NH

The Action: give a brief description of the project.
Walk-through energy audits of residential buildings, a detailed written audit report with thermal images, owner/tenant energy-saving level repairs and referral to incentive programs as needed. It can include installation of pipe and water heater insulation, caulking, and assistance in preparing incentive program applications.

When was the project completed & how long did it take from start to finish?
The project is ongoing. It began in late 2013 with 6 audits conducted during the last heating season and 5 residents’ requests so far for the coming heating season.

What elements made this project a success?
Willing community spirit; resources such as ButtonUp NH workshops & videos, and a checklist guide from University of Maine to maintain organization on the home visit (to avoid missing issues); and a thermal image camera greatly improved quality and communication of results.

What were the main challenges?
Publicizing the program to residents and inducing them to participate. Many people do not understand the savings possible in performing actions to lower their energy costs.

List the key players and their roles.
Members of the Dunbarton Energy Committee perform walk-thru audits, prepare reports and assist in installation of simple measures. (caulking, pipe insulation & water heater blanket) and assist in incentives applications. Local residents and organizations have donated money and merchants provided weatherization materials at reduced cost.

Roughly, what was the final cost and how was it funded?
A 2013 grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund - grassrootsfund.org - paid for the thermal camera ($995). Groups in town and members donated $600 for weatherization materials. No Town funding was used.

What were the results of this action after it was completed?
(Financial savings, energy savings or environmental benefits?)
We estimate a 10% to 30% energy cost savings depending on the home’s needs and which actions the homeowner decides to proceed with.

Any advice for other communities interested in undertaking a similar energy action?
NWN walk-through auditor education is critical to avoid giving advice which could cause damage or degradation to the structure. Recommend that the homeowner contact qualified contractors for more extensive action. Secure landlord permission and make separate reports for tenant and landlord actions. Review results off-site before giving homeowner too much information to avoid having to backtrack later.