



TALK POWER

Department of Energy Asks for United's Help

U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu recently unveiled a new tool to help educate consumers on how to make their homes more energy efficient, a tool the Department of Energy asked United Cooperative Services to pilot test in the counties it serves adjacent to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The Home Energy Score is touted to help homeowners make cost-effective decisions about home energy improvements. The tool

complements United's existing home energy audit program by providing:

- A Home Energy Score between 1 and 10.
- An estimate of the dollar savings by making recommended energy efficient home retrofits.
- A customized list of recommendations, with an estimated payback period for a particular upgrade.

DOE said it will launch the Home Energy Score this fall through a pilot program in select regions across the country before making the voluntary program available everywhere. United's current energy innovation program, which includes conservation and efficiency efforts for its members, can seamlessly integrate the Home Energy Score later this year.

"United conducts 1,500-2,000 free home energy analyses for its members each year to help them understand how energy is being used and to make recommendations on how it can be managed more efficiently," said

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Counting Our Blessings ONE by ONE

Annual Morgan Mill Thanksgiving Event Stirs Up Holiday Sharing, Fellowship

An annual Morgan Mill Thanksgiving event has grown to become a model for what this annual holiday represents—showing that thoughtfulness can reach well beyond the boundaries of this quaint little community’s very big heart.

It’s become nearly as traditional as the turkey itself and this past Thanksgiving the close-knit community of Morgan Mill, Texas, once again hosted a record crowd of locals, visitors from neighboring communities, city and county officials and a contingent of U.S. Army soldiers from Fort Hood to a feast that was as delicious as it was filling.

In a genuine demonstration of commitment to community, the event—which has drawn folks from all walks of life for more than a decade—is representative of what the Thanksgiving holiday stands for, while also providing a learning opportunity for the students at the Morgan Mill School. On Friday, November 19, 2010, more than 900 folks enjoyed some fellowship and the opportunity to give each other, strangers and friends alike, appreciation for simply taking

the time to share a few hours over a traditional Thanksgiving meal.

“Our event really boils down to the fact that it’s the American thing to do,” said Dean Edwards (shown in the photo above), superintendent of Morgan Mill School, a Texas Education Agency-rated Exemplary district serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade, where the event was hosted.

As a locally owned electric cooperative and one of the sponsors, United Cooperative Services was well represented at the event by employees, board member Tommy Cantrell and numerous members.

“We have a longstanding commitment to be involved and to invest in our local communities and this annual event is one that I’m proud to be a part of both as a representative of United Cooperative Services and as a member of the Morgan Mill community,” said Cantrell. “It’s a terrific way to teach the students responsibility and community commitment. They take great pride in their efforts and their school through this event and it’s a great venue for us to show appreciation to the soldiers,” he added.

A major component of the Morgan Mill event is that the soldiers from Fort Hood were given a chance, if only for a few hours, to experience

an atmosphere of family, camaraderie and a generous helping of thanks and praise from the folks in this little nook of the Texas Hill Country. Mingling with the locals over some turkey and dressing preceded some good old-fashioned fun with



United Director Tommy Cantrell and Senior Vice President of System Engineering/Operations Quentin Howard visit with one Fort Hood servicewoman during Morgan Mill’s annual Thanksgiving feast.



PUTTING THEIR SPIN ON THANKSGIVING—U.S. Army soldiers burn off some post Thanksgiving calories by treating some Morgan Mill kids to a full throttle ride on a Morgan Mill School merry-go-round.

the students on the playground later. It was obvious that the brave men and women of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)—called the 13th ESC—enjoyed a sense of ease on this Friday afternoon in November. The 13th ESC “deploys, provides command and control of assigned, attached and operational control units, and plans and provides sustainment, distribution, and health service support for full spectrum operations.”

“It was an honor to have the chance to personally thank the soldiers for their efforts and sacrifices,” said United Field Service Representative Ronnie Denning, who attended the feast. “And, really, it was nice to simply enjoy their company and conversation.”

The event serves as an educational tool for the students, as well, who work diligently in the preceding weeks to ensure the event continues to be successful, but also to share in the spirit of the event’s goodwill.

“Not everything learned comes out of a text book,” explained Edwards. “Through this effort, the students learn about community involvement, telephone and e-mail eti-

quette in inviting local dignitaries, and teamwork,” he added.

Thankfully, it is a mission and a lesson Morgan Mill has held close enough and long

enough to call it a community tradition—and with it, another lasting tribute to the season and the spirit of sharing the bounty of our blessings.



United Field Service Representative Ronnie Denning, right, greets a Fort Hood soldier.

Worth the I

ENERGY INNOVATION



► Insulation and air infiltration retrofits close gaps in energy losses.

—By ED NUNEZ—

Homeowners have become more in tune with the philosophy of energy efficiency (essentially, wasting less) and they continue to search for economical ways to make energy savings investments—especially those that appear to offer a quicker return on such an investment. Following the record cold spell North Texans endured at the beginning of 2010, many homeowners are in the process of preparing for the winter months again; taking steps to use less energy, thus having a lower electric bill.

United's Energy Innovation team is frequently asked by homeowners which type of insulation is needed and what R-value would be most beneficial. According to United's Energy Conservation Coordinator Seth Rosser, retrofitting attic insulation along with eliminating unwanted wasteful air infiltration are some of the most cost-effective improvements a homeowner can make, and such an improvement can significantly lower monthly power bills. Insulation and infiltration products are widely available to homeowners, but learning how they work to save energy is as important as making the investment in them.

Investment

For example, many consumers believe insulation acts strictly as a one-way barrier against temperature extremes outside the home. Actually, all insulation breathes, no matter how much is installed. Insulation provides a thermal membrane that resists heat flow, meaning that the thicker the barrier is, generally referred to as R-value, the more resistance it provides to heat transfer, or the naturally occurring phenomenon where heat seeks cold. In essence, insulation helps separate the two opposing temperature differences—keeping heating or cooling in a home at more stable levels.

When deciding whether or not your home could use an insulation retrofit, it is important to determine what insulation R-value currently exists in your home. If an attic has less than R-30, adding insulation should be considered. Typically, an attic has inadequate insulation if it has less than 8 inches cellulose, 12 inches of blown fiberglass or 10 inches of rock wool. United recommends an attic insulation level of R-38 to optimize energy efficiency. The higher the “R” value, the more effective the insulation will be. And, it is important to note that home insulation should always be purchased based on its R-value, not thickness or weight.

Older homes that do not have insulation in the walls can be more challenging in insulation retrofits, but such a task can be accomplished by drilling holes in the drywall at the top of wall cavities and filling stud spaces with non-hardening foam insulation or blown cellulose.

There are also methods to improve the R-value for raised floors in homes that have pier and beam flooring. For example,

by adding only 6 inches of fiberglass batting to the underside of a floor, a homeowner can improve flooring insulation to a R-19 value, thus addressing the potential for critical energy losses at that exposure. Similarly, stopping air infiltration into a home envelope can be a relatively easy fix through the simple job of caulking or foaming to close cracks or gaps. Electrical outlets, window frames and door jams are some areas that are susceptible to air



infiltration. Taking a few minutes to apply caulking to these areas will help reduce the energy demand needed to keep a home comfortable, and the simple improvement will enhance a home's energy efficiency for many years.

To further complement its Energy Innovation portfolio, United now offers a Blower Door Energy Analysis, which precisely measures the percentage of energy loss in a home or building, or the overall integrity of a building's energy envelope. The diagnostic tool, which consists of a computer

software program that is linked to a calibrated fan, measures the airflow rate that is entering or exiting a home or building through wall plugs, light switches, air vents and other devices that are open to air infiltration. Due to the additional manpower, complexity and resources necessary to conduct the sophisticated analysis, members are charged a nominal \$75 fee—substantially less than the average \$300 commercial cost for such an analysis. But even though United cannot offer the service free of charge, the blower door analysis is an opportunity for members to see firsthand where a portion of their annual energy loss occurs.

City of Burleson Accepts Energy Efficiency Grant



► **United ENERGYSMARTS grant to help city control energy use.**

Through United Cooperative Services' EnergySmarts Grant and Rebate Program, the electric co-op is helping the city of Burleson manage its energy use more effectively. Patsy Dumas, secretary of United's Board of Directors, last month presented a \$4,260 grant and rebate to the Burleson City Council for energy efficient upgrades at the Burleson City Service Center.

"As a member-owned electric cooperative, we are focused on helping our members manage their energy use and our grants and rebates are the shot in the arm needed to help members like the city of Burleson offset some of the costs of implementing energy efficiency measures," said Dumas.

Burleson has replaced many light fixtures at the city service center in an effort to control energy consumption and ultimately reduce costs to the city. By utilizing new, highly efficient fixtures, the service center is estimated to reduce kilowatt-hours consumed by more than 72,000 over the course of one year, according to Johnson Controls, which advised the city on energy-saving measures.

"The city is honored to receive this grant and rebate from United Cooperative Services," Deputy City Manager Paul Cain said. "The city has worked diligently to manage our energy costs and be more efficient energy consumers—all with the goal of saving taxpayers money. This grant confirms we are on the right track. The city appreciates United Cooperative Services partnering with us to benefit both citizens of Burleson and members of the cooperative."

PROACTIVE MEASURE



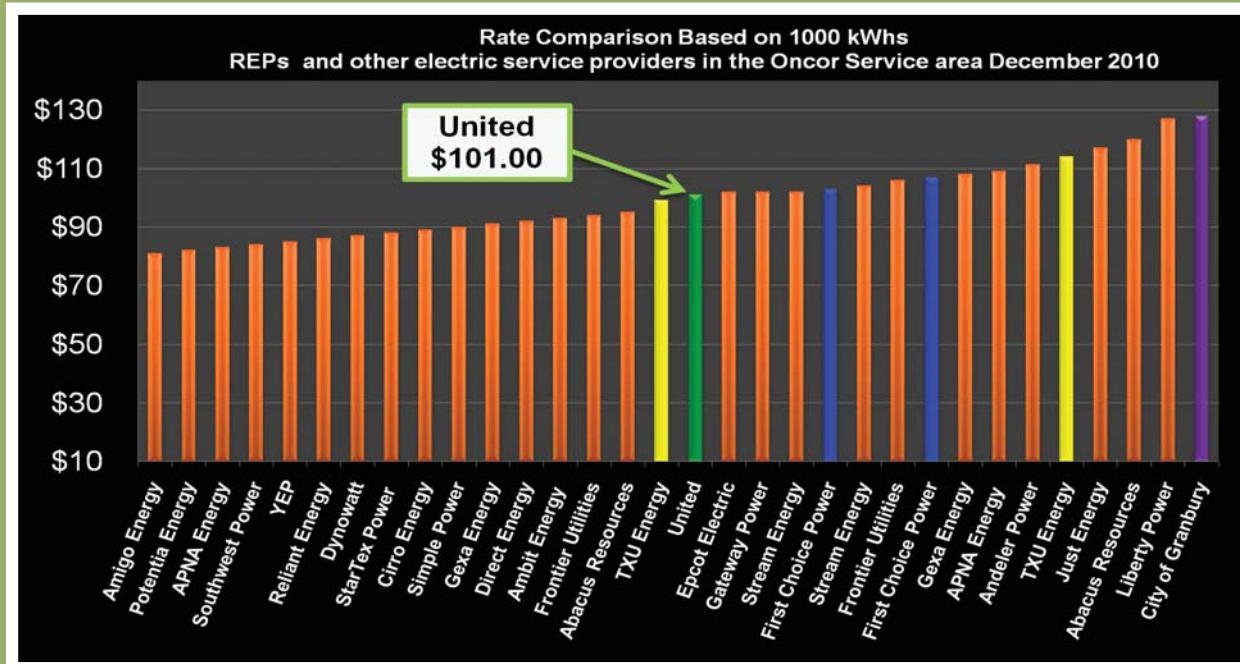
Photo courtesy of Luke Harris

Burleson Councilman Mike Powell and Environmental Programs Specialist Bianca Chafin, from left, accept an EnergySmarts Grant from United Board Secretary Patsy Dumas and Senior VP of Communications & PR Marty Haught.

United's EnergySmarts grants were implemented in 2008 as a means of helping the cooperative's membership offset the rising cost of energy in Texas and the nation. Numerous low-income residential members, independent school districts and commercial and industrial members have been able to implement energy-saving measures with the electric cooperative's grant and rebate program.

"United is committed to Burleson and all of the valued members in the communities we serve in working together to manage energy use today and for future generations," said Dumas.

RATE WATCH



The rate comparisons shown above represent a portion of all rates offered in the North Texas utility market for the month of **DECEMBER 2010** and do not include new participants that have posted only temporary or introductory rates. Even though they are often lower than the average among all deregulated retail providers, those introductory rates are often short-lived retail enticements—and historically, they still track higher than United’s rates. A complete comparison of rates offered in Texas’ electric retail market may be obtained at www.powertochoose.org.

United Energy Innovation Program Braces National Endeavor

ENERGY LEADERS

United CEO Ray Beavers (third from left) and Home Energy Score pilot participants from across the nation are recognized by U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu (far right) in Washington, D.C.



HOME ENERGY SCORE

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United CEO Ray Beavers. “The Home Energy Score will dovetail into our existing program and hopefully provide

greater clarity with regards to how our members can target certain areas of their home to improve efficiency,” he said.

United will roll out the added component to its energy innovation program

in late 2011 with the goal of providing Home Energy Score ratings to at least 250 homes.

“Achieving energy-saving goals requires a partnership between the utility industry and consumers,” said Beavers. “The first step in that partnership is to understand that a more educated consumer group can make proper decisions, which is why we began our information effort five years ago. A more informed consumer understands how to invest wisely in energy efficiency and we understand that it’s our role, as an electric distribution cooperative, to educate our co-op members.”

POWER TALK
Ray Beavers, CEO

The primary goal of a cooperative should be to stay in tune with the needs of the membership—to meet those needs appropriately, and in a manner that conforms with the goals of the organization. Yet, there are times when some of us “old timers” may impede progress in meeting the needs of the younger generation.

To prove my point, as the CEO of United, I have remained adamant that we should not let technology interfere with our desire to provide personal service to the membership. For instance, when you call today you will talk to a live person located right here in your neck of the woods, not some foreign country. Most of our members like that, but we have received some complaints with some of our more tech savvy members who want to do everything by computer, rather than spend time talking to someone.

My staff, most of whom represent a younger generation, think we need to do something to fill this need. So, with the

United providing more assistance and information in “green technologies.” In respect to that desire, we are already working to develop databases on as many of the newer technologies as possible—primarily by installing solar, wind, geothermal and passive solar resources at United facilities. Our focus in those projects will be to acquire real test data on the capabilities of those generation resources and then make that data available to the membership, as well as to provide working labs that will allow members to see how these technologies work and perform.

We will continue to communicate to you important issues that will need your consideration and possible action as we address future industry challenges—all having a direct effect on your cooperative and your cost of electric power.

And, as always, we will listen to the membership through our quarterly surveys and our contacts with members to determine what else we can do to be the cooperative you can trust and appreciate.



A New Year and New Challenges

planned installation of a new telephone system that replaces the nearly obsolete platform we’ve patched and updated for so many years, we will try something new.

When you call United in the near future, you will get a recorded voice asking you if you want to talk to a member service representative, or if you would rather use the menu of services via an interface between the new phone system and our computer network. If a live voice is what you want, you simply push a number and you will be immediately connected with a personal member services representative. If not, you will use the interactive voice response (IVR) system. We hope everyone will be comfortable with the new system, but we’ll go back to our old way of doing things if the new arrangement is not well-received. I just want you to know we are not abandoning—now or ever—our personal service approach in working with you.

We will continue to put even more effort in our communications program, which will include expanding our interest in getting around our service area to meet our members in community meetings so that we can discuss in greater detail what is going on in the electric utility industry, and more importantly what is happening in your cooperative.

We are also hearing more wishes from our members about

Yes, this is a new year with new challenges. But to me, that’s what makes our jobs rewarding—even more so when we know everything we have done has made it better for you, the member. Happy New Year!!!

