

## Transcript for Rhonda

**Rhonda is from Chicago and grew up in Englewood. She has three children, now adults, and has lived in her home in Auburn Gresham for 21 years. Rhonda is a home daycare provider, and loves helping people whenever she can – she says it’s one of her favorite things to do. Rhonda also loves being a homeowner and having a space that is all her own.**

“I been here 21 years and it’s great. Yeah it’s my first home—comfortable, it’s comfortable. I got it insulated when I first moved in.”

**Rhonda has been incredibly resourceful in managing her home over the twenty years she’s lived in it. She was proactive when she first moved into her home by working with the Community and Economic Development Association, otherwise known as CEDA, to get a home assessment and install insulation. On average, households can save up to 15% on heating and cooling costs by insulating their house and sealing gaps and cracks where air comes in.**

“When I moved in, it was like kind of drafty so with me being a new homeowner, I guess CEDA found out about it and asked me if I needed insulation. I told them I didn’t know. They said they were going to send someone out to check everything out and they did. They said yes I needed it. So when they did it, it was free. So they did the attic, the walls. What they did was put a hole in the top of the wall and blew it in. When they sent me the paperwork, I knew it was drafty but I just thought I needed to turn up the heat and that’s what I did. But when they sent the paperwork and then the guy came out and was explaining it to me, that’s what I really needed. When he went around to check everything and felt the walls —sometimes the walls would be cold in the wintertime. And basically that’s how they know that you need insulation.”

**Because she operates a daycare out of her home, Rhonda pays special attention to the mandates and programs that keep her house safe for the children she cares for.**

“ We have to do it once a year where we put this test around the furnace to test the oxygen in the home. We have to do it once a year around January, you know the winter months, to test the flow of the heat and make sure it’s not affecting anyone in the home. We have to send this test off and then it takes about a week or two to get the results back and they’ll let you know if your furnace needs fixing, or if anything is leaking from your furnace. So I’m glad of that program—well it’s mandatory now that we do it.”

**In addition to insulation and other upgrades that made her home energy efficient, healthy, and safe for children, Rhonda has renovated her house over time to really make it her own.**

“Well I've started on the renovations already. I did my basement. I remodeled the basement. I did the bathroom. And my next one is the kitchen. I had walls torn down, rebuilt, floors redone. Just all new. Like I said, I've been here 21 years so everything was getting old and when I moved in, I didn't know how long stuff had been here. Everything was old and outdated. So I just modernized.”

**Throughout the years in her home, Rhonda has gotten very acquainted with how her heating system works. She's developed effective strategies for her furnace so that she can keep her heating bills as low as possible, while still staying comfortable in her home.**

“I learned with the heating that when it starts getting in between weather like we're in now, don't turn the furnace on and off because that will raise the bill higher by turning it on and off. Around springtime between that 40 degree and 60 degree, then up to 70 and back down. You know it goes up then goes back down, turn it off depending on the weather. Until the weather gets steady, just turn the furnace down so it'll automatically go off on its own. Then when you do need the heat, just turn it back up and it won't affect your bill. I learned that part.”

**Before she had her windows replaced, Rhonda used to put plastic over them in the winter to keep out the cold air. She also discovered ways to manage paying her bills, especially in the winter when natural gas can get really expensive.**

“Years ago, when I first moved in, I learned that you know, your utilities come out once a month and you can just start stocking up your freezer at the beginning of the month, week by week by week, and you'll get by. So I can focus on just paying my bills and the food is already here.”

## Video 4

**The different strategies Rhonda has used echo some of the research done by Dr. Diana Hernandez on energy insecurity. Energy insecurity means that a household struggles to meet their basic energy needs. When a family faces this challenge, it can impact not just their finances but also their behaviors and how they respond to the challenge. Rhonda's tactics for energy conservation using her furnace thermostat, as well as her system for ensuring there was enough food in the house when the bills are high, are both examples of a behavioral strategy to cope with energy demands.**

**Rhonda's experiences are very common and are crucial to understanding the wide range of challenges people face when it comes to their home energy use. Energy insecurity isn't just about the cost, it's also about the home itself and the ways people respond to their situation. More research is needed to continue studying the broad scope of energy affordability and energy insecurity, and more policy and investment are needed to support proactive homeowners like Rhonda, as well as protect households who are facing this challenge.**

**Resources:**

[https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/seal\\_insulate/methodology](https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/seal_insulate/methodology)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953616304658>