

Co-op Power Quarterly Report – through April 2016

Social Marketing & Outreach Campaign for Energy Conservation

Abstract

Co-op Power was hired to conduct an energy conservation social marketing and outreach campaign for the towns of Shelburne, Buckland, Montague, and Greenfield. Most residents of Franklin County were reached through stories in the *Recorder*, *Shelburne Independent* and *Montague Reporter* along with radio spots on WHAI 98.3 FM (“the Valley’s best variety”), WPVQ 95.3 PM (“Bear Country”), and WIZZ 1520 AM (“great music memories”). 700 members of the Landlord’s Business Association were reached and another 484 landlords received a letter in the mail. A door knocking campaign reached 1,272 homes directly, with 136 people reporting they planned to call to schedule a home energy assessment for their homes and properties.

Summary:

	exposure	interest	implementation
90 Posters each seen by 20 people in libraries, senior centers, bulletin boards around town	1800	unknown	not tracked*
Other Postcards handed out	100	unknown	not tracked*
Recorder	11,700	unknown	not tracked*
Montague Reporter	2,000	unknown	not tracked*
Shelburne Independent	2,000	unknown	not tracked*
WIZZ 1520 AM (“great music memories”)	unknown	unknown	not tracked*
WPVQ 95.3 PM (“Bear Country”)	unknown	unknown	not tracked*
WHAI 98.3 FM (“the Valley’s best variety”)	unknown	unknown	not tracked*
Social Media (3 websites, face book, email)	unknown	125	not tracked*
Door Knocking/Postcard	1272	136	141
Landlord Letters	484	unknown	not tracked*
LBA Newsletter	700	unknown	not tracked*
Landlord Meeting	20	unknown	not tracked*
Landlord Phone Followup	194	39	34
Winsert Workshops	see below media/posters	23	20
TOTALS		323	195

**We were not able to track these implementation numbers because the committee wanted to send leads generated by this campaign to Home Performance Contractors and the general Mass Save number. Individual HPCs were unable to track where their leads came from and, because there are far fewer people signing up for audits this spring vs last spring, comparing overall numbers did not give an indication of program results. Mass Save/CET were also unable to track incoming calls generated by our campaign.*

We were able to document 323 people who became interested in energy conservation and 195 who decided to take action as direct program results.

I. Summary of work completed during March and April of 2016:

Implementation of the campaign hit full speed in March and April, and all tasks were completed by April 30th with a result that many more people in Shelburne, Montague, Greenfield, and Shelburne, as well as in Franklin County more generally, learned about energy conservation and the Mass Save program.

Co-op Power marketing director Erik Hoffner finalized the design and printing of the campaign's poster and canvassing materials with feedback from the committee and had them printed. Posters were hung in all public places in Shelburne, Buckland, Montague, and Greenfield, like libraries, senior centers, town halls, and bulletin boards during the first week of March.

Meanwhile, data tracking systems were created including a trackable link via www.bitly.com so that all messaging going out electronically that resulted in click-thrus to the Mass Save page for choosing a Home Performance Contractor (HPC) could be counted. The link www.bit.ly/savings2016 was used in emails, Facebook posts, PSAs, and tweets throughout the campaign. Since the project committee declined to set up a dedicated Co-op Power email address or phone line to take calls and share information during the campaign, the Mass Save phone number and individual phone numbers of HPCs serving Franklin County were provided instead. Each HPC was contacted and asked if they would be willing to report any increase in home energy assessments in the four towns and/or the county in general. Each HPC offered to do so, and the staffers identified as the most able to track this information at their respective companies agreed to talk again at the end of the campaign.

A postcard version and display ad version of the campaign poster were then created by the designer for use in canvassing and in newspapers/social media/websites, respectively. The graphic was used in multiple posts that were shared via the Co-op Power Facebook page (and which the project committee was invited to share) and it also appeared on the Buckland and Greenfield town website homepages, after coordination with those towns' webmasters (Shelburne is still pending as of April 30, while Montague's web team proved unresponsive). FRCOG also agreed to post the graphic and information about the weatherization programs to its home page.

We then began to educate the editors of the *Recorder* about the campaign and Mass Save, and to discuss an ad-buy and editorial support for events being planned. This culminated in a long meeting at

the paper's office in Greenfield when information, contacts, quotes, and sources were shared. Then a favorable rate on a weeklong ad buy in the daily paper was negotiated with its advertising team.

Later, a 30-second PSA was created by the team that tied home energy efficiency to Spring Cleaning, and favorable rates on weeklong runs were negotiated with three Franklin-centric radio stations: WHAI 98.3 FM ("the Valley's best variety"), WPVQ 95.3 PM ("Bear Country"), and WIZZ 1520 AM ("great music memories"). These represented a diversity of formats that could therefore reach varied audiences, with oldies, country music, and Top 40 attracting a variety of listeners. The PSAs ran 3 times daily on these stations during morning, noon, and drive times, and they shared the Mass Save phone number and the trackable website link.

Based on the popularity of the first "winsert" workshop hosted in February at the Shelburne Senior Center, the committee requested that more be scheduled, so another was arranged in Montague at the main Carnegie Library. However, that building was later determined to have an indoor air problem, so the venue was switched to the town's small branch library in Millers Falls, which is only open on weekdays. It certainly needed our help, as its back room where the children's area is has 4 very leaky single pane windows. So an experienced carpenter and winsert workshop leader was contracted to lead the program, and it happened on a cold and rainy day in early April. Owing to the location and time/day, attendance was smaller than in Shelburne, but the building is now warmer and tighter, and much good promo via posters created for hanging at the busy Carnegie Library and two branch libraries, and via a press release which ran in the *Montague Reporter*, resulting in people learning about the campaign and about this cheap and effective way to improve leaky windows, even if they couldn't attend the workshop.

The three main focuses

The campaign focused attention on three particular populations in the 4 towns – landlords/renters, low income people, and seniors – some of these had some overlap, particularly renters/low income/seniors, but social messaging and programming were targeted at each one in multiple ways so that the overall message was heard.

Seniors

After the success of the February winsert workshop, the campaign shifted focus to reaching seniors in print and during the canvass in Shelburne and Buckland. Canvassers were prepped with information about how seniors who are also low income can be served by Community Action's weatherization and fuel assistance programs, and anyone self-identifying as being in this group were given a Community Action brochure about those programs.

Meanwhile, the campaign's coordinator conducted research to find people who have already made good use of Mass Save to profile in print. Once a good pair of candidates was identified (Barbara and Jerry Marcel of Buckland), a newspaper was approached about a possible column submission on how seniors can and do use Mass Save to increase the comfort of their homes and to save energy and money. A 800 word feature article then appeared in the Independent (which covers Shelburne,

Buckland, and Ashfield principally) on April 15 by Erik Hoffner under the title “Seniors Lead the Way on Energy Efficiency.” The Marcells’ smart usage of Mass Save and their other renewable/efficient home systems were profiled and general information was shared about why they took these actions, what they looked like, and how others can do the same. The Mass Save phone number and trackable web link were also shared, as well as info about Community Action’s programs.

Low Income

In reaching out directly to low income people about the campaign, the coordinator learned of Ariel Elan, who has used both Community Action and Mass Save to improve the comfort and efficiency of her old Montague farmhouse. A conversation led to an interview for the Recorder’s Going Green online pages, in which Elan shared her experiences navigating the systems to replace knob and tube wiring, getting air sealing and insulation work, and more (“Free Programs Save Money and Energy for Low Income Montague Resident”). This article was shared on Co-op Power’s Facebook and Twitter pages, and in the April 2016 monthly email to 2,000 recipients in Franklin and Hampshire County.

The winstert education effort in Montague was aimed at low income folks. Montague's poverty rate is almost 20%, so sharing this low-cost, effective weatherization technique at the library will have ripple effects.

Most of the direct outreach to low income folks, though, was done via the canvassing effort. Anyone identifying as being in that income bracket was given a brochure for Community Action’s weatherization and fuel assistance programs. See below for more information on the canvass.

Landlord and Tenant Outreach

A little more than one third of Montague’s housing units are rentals, and Montague contains some of the most affordable housing in the area. Greenfield has a high percentage of rental housing units, and some outreach was done for landlords and rentals between 2011-2014, funded by an EPA Climate Showcase Communities Grant, but this work was the last phase of the large project and could not be brought to completion because the grant ended. So it was decided that Greenfield and Montague would be where the main focus of the rental market outreach would happen.

Because the landlord communities of Greenfield and Montague proved difficult to assemble for a focus group, and that despite multiple attempts and working alongside the Landlord Business Association, a modified plan of calling the LBA leadership team individually and interviewing them about the campaign messaging was adopted. Much good feedback resulted and allowed for the further refinement of the campaign’s message.

A contractor was hired and he contacted Assessors offices in both towns to receive addresses of landlords with rental properties. This was simple in Greenfield but Montague does not keep such records, and so it took much longer to educate the Montague Assessors about the campaign and convince them to spend a little time pulling records for us. In the end we received as complete a list as

they could provide, with many duplicate names and addresses (landlords typically own more than one property in a community, and Montague proved that to a great degree).

Then the contractor worked with the campaign coordinator on a one page letter to landlords that summarized Mass Save and why landlords should take advantage of it. They started off like this:

Would you like to:

- Prevent property damage from ice dams & risky tenant behaviors like the use of space heaters?
- Increase the value of your property?
- Lower your turnover rate & decrease vacancies?
- Make your rentals more desirable & comfortable places to live?
- Save money on utility costs in common areas?

Each letter was tailored to Greenfield or Montague property owners, shared the Mass Save general phone number and multi-unit program as well as the phone numbers of HPCs working in Franklin. The letters were signed by the contractor on behalf of himself and the Montague or Greenfield Energy Committee (see copies of both letters included in this report).

101 letters were sent to Greenfield landlords (after weeding out many duplicate addresses from the list the Greenfield Assessor's office sent), and 383 were sent to Montague (328 owners of properties with 4 units or less, plus 55 with more than 4 units). Each letter also contained a note at the bottom inviting the recipient to a dinner discussion at Terrazza Restaurant at the Greenfield Country Club on April 21st. Both the letter and the event invitation were printed in the March/April edition of the Landlord Business Association newsletter mailed to its 700 members in Franklin County.

The conversations with the *Recorder* culminated in an April 13 feature about the hows and whys of landlords doing energy efficiency work on their rental properties, and which also previewed the April 21 event helpfully (though not accurately: the program's noted time was wrong and so the paper agreed to run a subsequent news brief the following week that shared the correct time and reiterated the program information). The campaign coordinator connected the reporter with landlords to interview and supplied quotes from them and background information about the Mass Save program and the goal of the overall campaign. It appeared at the top of the front page of the B section of the paper and some people who came to the April 21 event said they learned of it in the paper.

At that April 21 event, presentations by three individuals - Mark Abramson, a realtor and landlord in Greenfield, James Martineau, a landlord and VP of the Landlord Business Association, and Mark Skinder, a Mass Save home energy assessor - educated the 20 people in attendance about the benefits and uses of Mass Save for rental properties. Several enthusiastic comments praising the program were shared verbally afterward, and all the presenters were pleased about having helped a number of their colleagues.

We then placed follow up phone calls to landlords receiving the letter. Through extensive research, we were able to secure phone numbers for 40% of the landlords receiving the letter.

Canvassing plan

A canvassing coordinator with lots of experience was hired to supervise a team of 3 canvassers for door-to-door outreach in Shelburne and Buckland. The coordinator worked with him to develop canvassing materials and scripts, and then they led a training at the Co-op Power office and on the street so the team could practice their pitch, learn the basics of canvassing, and get familiar with the Mass Save and Community Action weatherization programs.

The canvassing coordinator worked with Town Hall staffers to get canvassing permissions and the addresses of all residents, and then created walk sheets and logistical plans for knocking on every possible door in each community. 1,500 copies of the postcard distributed in doorways and in people's hands after conversations.

II. Results

Landlord outreach: 484 letters were sent to rental property owners in Greenfield and Montague, and it was reprinted in Landlord Business Association newsletter sent to 700 members. We obtained phone numbers for 40% of the Landlords. The follow up calls resulted in 39 conversations (15 from the Greenfield list plus 24 from Montague) and 154 phone messages (48 Greenfield and 106 Montague). The remainder of the numbers were either disconnected or went unanswered with no place to leave a message. 7% of the landlords receiving a letter expressed real interest in the program and stated they were likely to participate.

One of the unexpected results from conversations was that some of individuals who were really keen on participating reported having tenants who were reluctant, or even hostile, to having an auditor come into the apartment, despite the program likely having more direct financial benefit to them than to the landlords. Some of these landlords asked for some kind of handout to slip under the doors of their rentals to better explain the programs' benefits to them as renters (money saved on heat/utilities and the like).

So while the *Recorder* article certainly reached non-LBA members and renters alike, and the April 21st program was appreciated by those in attendance, quotes recorded from among the 39 conversations resulting from follow-up phone calls were among the most interesting results and feedback, here's a selection:

1. Montague landlord with many units

"I would love to get involved in the Mass Save program. I have many low-income renters but I've never had an energy assessment. Thank you for the info. Now that I have a clearer picture of what Mass Save does I will call."

2. Montague, elderly landlady w/ 4 or less units

"Yes, I received the Mass Save letter. The problem is, that I have electric heat in my building. I thought because of that I didn't qualify. I'm so glad you informed me that I can get so much help, I was misinformed. Now that I have more information, I'll call them."

3. Montague landlord with 5+units

"I've been waiting for this call. I have multiple units. The issue is, every time I call Mass Save, I can't get through. It is a constant busy signal." (Contractor apologized and gave him the multi-family number, property owner said he'll call again next week)

4. Montague property owner

"I'm really interested in an energy assessment. What do they do, come in and check air leaks? That's really cool, I didn't realize I could get one every two years or so. That's great news! What's the number?"

5. Montague property owner

" My son-in-law just bought a condo, can he get an audit? I've had one done to my home. We really benefitted from it. That's great news that he can call too and get help. His house leaks like a sieve."

6. Montague landlord

"I have renters on disability and called Community Action, but they never got back to me. I was disappointed so I gave up. Your call was helpful, it reminded me to try again."

7. Old, 19th century home owner with oil heat

"We just had an audit done this year. I'm aware of all the program's benefits. I'll call again in about another year and a half for another audit for sure."

8. Greenfield landlord

"They came and replaced light bulbs. That's it. We have an old home, something was wrong so they couldn't finish. Maybe it was asbestos? I didn't realize I could get an assessment every two years, so I will definitely call back."

9. Wife of a rental property owner

"I will tell my husband about this when he gets home and I will make him do it, and that is that!"

10. Landlord who has 2 apartments in Greenfield

"I will call Co-op Power for an audit, they did it years ago so I'm comfortable with them."

11. Montague 5+ unit landlord

"The auditor only gave me a fluorescent light bulb and one programmable thermostat. I had to buy all new thermostats for all ten units. I didn't know they could have done all of them at no cost. I will call back. I'm glad you called. Now that I know more, I'll know what to say."

12. Landlord with unfriendly tenants

" I have a really hard time getting my tenants to open their doors for energy assessments or anything else for that matter. How can I make them understand this is something that will help everybody, not just me? It seems like most people just don't care and that's so sad."

13. Property owner who had an audit 3 yrs ago

" I had an electrician sign off something about knob and tube wiring but I got lazy and sat on it. I didn't realize I could do this every two and a half years or so maybe it's time I called Mass Save or one of those guys to have them help me."

14. A landlord with 4 units

"I have an old building with knob and tube wiring, I was afraid to touch it. My building has been sitting like that for a very long time. It's nice to know Mass Save can work with me to figure out an answer. I will definitely call this week!"

15. 4- unit owner

"I didn't realize Mass Save folks could do audits on every one of my apartments I'm my building. I was unsure about the whole thing. I'm really glad you called."

16. Landlord with 3 tenants

"I have three tenants above me in my building using space heaters. Can they (the auditors) help me tighten up my ship? I need help."

17. 4-unit owner

"I'm relieved to know there's help out there for me. I didn't know about this Mass Save program. I will call for an assessment. Hopefully I can get help with air sealing my units."

18. Landlord with 2 units

"I had an audit last year but nobody followed up afterwards. I should call Mass Save, I'm really interested in two mini splits and insulating."

Low income and seniors: Results of outreach to these two groups were challenging to track separately. The winsert programs and articles in the *Shelburne Independent* focusing on seniors and in the *Recorder* about low-income folks certainly had an impact, but we're unable to measure it. Seniors and low income folks were reached by the campaign via the canvassing effort, the radio PSAs, and by the landlord outreach.

Home Energy Assessment results: We weren't able to track the number of home energy assessments produced by the program, but it is clear a large number of people reported to us that they intended to schedule an assessment.

Having a dedicated phone number and email address would have produced trackable results, but the committee was concerned about showing a preference for any one company providing that service. In an attempt to collect some meaningful data, we contacted all of the Home Performance contractors, CET and Mass Save in advance to ask them to let us know if our program resulted in customers calling them to sign up for a home energy assessment. CET and MassSave declined. The HPC's agreed to monitor results.

At the end of April, we asked the HPC's for their findings. All are experiencing a dramatic down turn in assessment requests this year. American Installations' Wesley Couture, reported half as many energy assessments between 1/1 and 4/29 as the same period last year. While chalking it up to the extremely warm winter, he went on to say of the campaign, "Thanks for including us as I'm sure some of these leads did come from your outreach." Co-op Power's energy efficiency program staff reported the same situation. They also said, "We haven't ever had the number of landlords signing up. Thanks for helping landlords to find a way to participate."

Social Media and Web: The electronic side of the campaign proved the most challenging. Multiple posts on Co-op Power's Facebook page resulted in few shares and likes, and the Tweets did about the same. There were 125 clicks on the trackable link to Mass Save since 2/22/16:

FEB 22

Massachusetts Home Performance Contractors | Energy Audit Contractors

<http://www.masssave.com/residential/home-energy-assessments/about-home-energy-assessments/working-with-a-contractor>

bit.ly/savings2016

COPY

SHARE

EDIT

125 

Canvass results: This program was very successful. Over the course of March and April, the canvassing team knocked on every door in Shelburne Falls and Buckland that was accessible. Hundreds of conversations were had with homeowners and renters to spread the word about the Mass Save energy efficiency program. **141 residents committed to calling for an energy assessment.** The team was committed and responsive. The success of the program is due in large part to their fastidiousness and professionalism.

The team began in Shelburne Falls where they were able to visit 582 homes in the town, and found a positive response. This was helped by the fact that all of our canvassers were familiar with residents in the town. In some cases, they were the first people to inform the townspeople of the Mass Save program, but in most cases there was some degree of knowledge. Of the two towns, Shelburne has a higher amount of rental units and also a higher number of landlords that control the utilities. Some of the tenants said they would pass the information on to their landlord.

In Buckland the team visited 690 homes and found a higher level of experience with the Mass Save program. 52 Buckland residents had taken advantage of the program within the last two years and they encountered others whom had done it further back in time. Of those in the latter category many said that they would do it again or at least consider doing so. Overall the response was a little less favorable (53 "yeses" compared to 88 in Shelburne), but that may be due to the larger number of recent users of the program. Another note is that there were more homes that the canvassers found inaccessible due to gated driveways, dogs, or inaccessible dirt driveways.

The canvassing operation was a success. It achieved the goal of reaching out to every possible home in the two towns. Here's the town by town result:

Glossary of Terms:

Not Home – Owner or tenant was not home. Outreach card was left in visible location.

Business – Address was a business, not a home.

Landlord – Landlord is in control of utilities.

Within 2 Years – Owner or tenant had an energy assessment within last two years and thus was not

eligible.

No Soliciting – Owner posted a no soliciting sign

Inaccessible – Canvassers were unable to reach location

WAP – Contact was eligible for Weatherization Assistance Program from Community Action and was given separate flier.

Shelburne Falls		
Result	# of Occurrence	Percentage
Not Home	278	48%
Business	23	4%
Landlord	5	1%
Within 2 Years	30	5%
Vacant	22	4%
Not Interested/No	54	9%
No Soliciting	7	1%
Inaccessible	6	1%
WAP	1	>1%
Yes	88	15%
Maybe	68	12%
Total	582	100%
Buckland		
Result	# of Occurrence	Percentage
Not Home	356	52%
Business	14	2%
Landlord	6	1%
Within 2 Years	52	9%
Vacant	18	3%
Not Interested/No	69	12%
No Soliciting	13	2%
Inaccessible	41	7%
WAP	0	0%
Yes	53	9%
Maybe	68	12%
Total	690	100%

Total of Both Towns		
Result	# of Occurrence	Percentage
Not Home	634	50%
Business	37	3%
Landlord	11	1%
Within 2 Years	82	6%
Vacant	40	3%
Not Interested/No	123	10%
No Soliciting	20	2%
Inaccessible	47	4%
WAP	1	>1%
Yes	141	11%
Maybe	136	11%
Total	1273	100%

III. Invoice for tasks completed