

# Pilgrim Place is CHERPing! So can you.

by Freeman Allen

**J**erry Klasik called me recently because her house was uncomfortable with the onset of cold weather and she wanted the comfort of an energy-efficient home. She is planning for a whole-house energy retrofit and wanted the latest information to get started. Jerry is on the board of the local League of Women Voters. She was curious about the Energy Champions program, and how the League could benefit from this program that awards non-profit organizations \$500 for each homeowner who has completed a whole-house retrofit and who attributes having done so to them.

The league, or any non-profit organization, can apply to be an Energy Champion and benefit from the program but this requires participating in a training session and other steps. As an alternative, Sustainable Claremont, which is an Energy Champion, will split the award 50:50 with the designated non-profit if the homeowner wants to work through Sustainable Claremont. The league has this arrangement, as will be described in more detail in their January newsletter.

Sustainable Claremont uses its share of the Energy Champions funds to promote home energy retrofits through "CHERP," the Claremont Home Energy Retrofit Program. (For more information, visit the CHERP web site at ClaremontEnergy.org, or call Chris Veirs, Claremont's Sustainability Coordinator, at 399-5466.

Whole-house energy retrofits include improvements in attic and wall insulation, repairing ductwork, sealing air leaks, and often smaller and improved (hydronic) heating and cooling systems adequate to meet the needs of a more energy efficient home. Retrofitted homes are more comfortable, quieter, and healthier, and have lowered energy bills. Many homes in Claremont that have had retrofits have a "This House is CHERPing" sign on display.

It's also possible to use local sunlight as an alternate energy source, as with rooftop solar water heaters, or photoelectric panels to generate electricity. That way it is often possible for a home to become "energy neutral," or even to generate excess power that can be sold to the utility or used to charge an electric vehicle (of course, it makes the best economic sense to reduce energy usage first).

More than 100 Claremont homes have solar electric installations, usually with a capacity of 1-4 KW. They can be highly cost-effective. One local rental property owner

## demystifying sustainability

has had 6 residential solar units installed and operating since 2006. They were originally calculated to pay themselves off in 7 years. From monthly meter readings taken since then, a further year seems likely. Heat as well as sun determine the production, Edison's rates and charges have gone up, and one unit was damaged enough to reduce production. Considerable savings were, however, immediate. The 6 units have produced a total of nearly 150,000 KWH of electricity since their 2006 installation, and so have avoided the production of more than one quarter million pounds of greenhouse gas produced by non-solar electricity production methods.

The Church of the Brethren in La Verne found it made both economic and environmental sense to generate their own electric power so they recently installed rooftop solar panels that generate about 48 KW.

In the United States, buildings are responsible for about half of both the energy used and carbon dioxide emissions—about as much as for industry and transportation combined. Carbon dioxide is the principal cause of global warming. Decreasing U.S. dependence on fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, is vitally important for both economic and environmental reasons. The only practical way to reduce the ever-more-evident problems caused by global warming is to reduce our carbon footprint, and energy retrofits are a very effective way to do so. If all the homes in the U.S. were made 20 percent more energy efficient it would be as effective as taking half the cars off the roads.

The U.S. Department of Energy, the state of California, and Los Angeles County are all determined to encourage retrofits. Rebates of up to \$8000 are available for homeowners. In addition, Los Angeles County has established

the previously mentioned Energy Champions program.

This year Sustainable Claremont awarded Pilgrim Place its Sustainable Neighborhood Award for achievements in energy and water conservation and for home-grown vegetables and fruit production using compost prepared on campus. They have also completed 10 retrofits, and have 15 underway. Now they are working to make the entire 32-acre campus an energy-efficient, solar powered model for the thousands of retirement communities throughout the nation.

With over a hundred homes and buildings to work on, contractors will be able to offer reduced construction costs. Rebates, Energy Champions awards, more comfortable living, reduced energy consumption and lower bills—all are powerful incentives. So are the benefits to the environment and the economy. We anticipate their example will be recognized at the national level. They have already helped Claremont exceed all other cities in the region in the number of retrofits.

Rebates are based on the improvements in energy efficiency estimated with mathematical models that are often not as accurate as desired, but these estimates can be compared with actual reductions by examining homeowner's energy bills. A team of students in the Pomona College Environmental Analysis Program will be looking at such data and determining the accuracy of the models for varied types of houses with a range of different retrofits. Such model validation will benefit the homeowner and the national home energy retrofit program—and what a wonderful real-world educational experience that will be for students in the Environmental Analysis Program.

Homeowner associations could benefit from a project similar to that of Pilgrim Place. Why shouldn't they too reap the benefits? And many of us, as individual homeowners, could save energy and money too. There will never be a better time than now while rebates and other incentives are still particularly attractive. So why not see if a retrofit is right for you?

*Demystifying Sustainability is a project of Sustainable Claremont (sustainableclaremont.org)*

## Water meeting with city council tomorrow at Hughes Center

A special meeting of the city council will be held tomorrow, January 5, to discuss ways to address water rate increases in the city of Claremont being proposed by Golden State Water Company.

The public is invited to join the discussion as city council prepares to take an official vote that night on taking control of the water system. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Hughes Center. The full agenda is available at city hall or on the city's website, [www.ci.claremont.ca.us](http://www.ci.claremont.ca.us).

## Get fit for the new year at community classes

Claremont resident and instructor Carole Cross is offering Jazzercise classes to Claremont residents looking to find a creative way to shed a few pounds.

Held at the Hughes Center on Monday, Wednesday,

## our town

and Saturday, Jazzercise classes incorporate a unique blend of fitness and jazz dance for every age level. Each 60-minute class incorporates a warm-up, high-energy aerobic routine, muscle-toning and cool-down stretch.

Classes are held Mondays and Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. as well as at 6:15 p.m. on Saturdays. For more information contact Ms. Cross at 702-3041.

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Additional adult fitness classes at the Hughes Center include Country Western line dancing for \$8 on Mondays from 7 to 8:30 p.m.; flow yoga for \$15 on Wednesdays from 6 to 7 p.m.; Zumba for \$10 on Mondays from 6 to 7 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 10 a.m. Drop-ins are welcome for all classes. For information, visit [www.ci.claremont.ca.us](http://www.ci.claremont.ca.us) or call 399-5490.



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