

RENEW, partner agencies provide critical housing repair funding

By: Kevin Oklobzija July 11, 2022

Before his home underwent an overhaul, Robert Henry said coming inside on a frigid January day didn't necessarily mean he was getting out of the cold.

"When I sat in the living room I could feel the breeze," Henry said. "It felt like I was outside."



Thanks to a series of programs braided together by the Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) and PathStone, the furnace, roof, insulation and electrical wiring in Henry's house on Alden Road in Greece now are all new.

Henry is one of a growing number of area residents that wouldn't be able to make home repairs if not for a variety of grant programs, according to Elizabeth McDade, director of the RACF's Rochester ENergy Efficiency & Weatherization (RENEW) Program.

"The need is enormous," McDade said on Monday morning, when state Sen. Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester) announced on Henry's front lawn that the state would be providing \$50,000 in funding to support RENEW.

The Rochester Area Community Foundation partnered with PathStone to arrange a three-pronged rehabilitation of Henry's house, using funds from RENEW as well as NYSERDA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"A lot of times we talk about the city of Rochester and city neighborhoods," Cooney said. "We're here in the Greece. This is a Monroe County issue."

"This is the stuff that matters. This is a real resident struggling to pay heating and cooling bills, and Mr. Henry's story is like so many in Monroe County."

Established in 2015, RENEW and its partner organizations have invested \$5.8 million to provide improvements for 417 low- to moderate-income homeowners.

But the value of the repairs goes far beyond the structure. The quality of life also improves, according to McDade.

"The importance of having a safe and healthy place to live is critical," she said.