

2017 AEA Leadership Awards

Posted by David Hepinstall on Thursday, December 28, 2017

We are proud to announce the winners of AEA's 2017 Leadership Awards, presented in December to members of the downstate New York Weatherization community for their extraordinary service.

Weatherization Director of the Year: Dan Rieber

Innovator of the Year: Adam Romano

Agency of the Year: HANAC, Inc.

Dan Rieber has a long history of service to Weatherization. In addition to his many years of dedicated service to his community as Weatherization Director at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, Dan has been a tireless advocate for WAP in New York State, in Washington, and nationally.

- At the state level, he works with his colleagues to identify, and works to address, procedural barriers to successful program implementation.
- In Washington, he has joined AEA and others around the country to testify in Congress to ensure that our elected officials know the nature and the value of Weatherization to the communities they represent, and to call for continuation of federal funding and support for WAP.
- He has regularly attended meetings of the National Association of State and Community Service Programs (NASCSPP), a key ally offering program support and training resources for Weatherization, where the voices of urban, multifamily WAP subgrantees need to be heard.
- A longstanding AEA board member and officer, Dan provides advice, oversight and support for this association, which advocates and serves all downstate Weatherization subgrantees and the low-income communities they serve.

Adam Romano has worked in AEA's training department for 9 years, and as our Training Director for about half that time. From the outset he demonstrated deep technical knowledge of HVAC, a wide curiosity, and a strong work ethic.

- Adam built training mock-ups, trained contractors, and delivered hands-on training for installers and green job seekers.
- Soon he was developing curriculum and taking on more extensive technical support roles for the various committees of BPI, and of the Department of Energy, and the National Labs who mandated universal, portable credentials to ensure consistent quality of Weatherization outcomes nationally.
- In 2012, Adam traveled with another AEA trainer to Ireland to learn about the materials and skills needed to implement Passive House retrofits and new construction projects. Adam recognized the potential to improve the way we weatherize properties to make them even healthier and more efficient, providing additional value and savings to low-income residents – even when not pursuing the Passive House certification. When we began offering our passive house tradesperson course in New York, many of our crew members took it to improve their air sealing techniques.

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- Under Adam’s leadership, Weatherization staff have rich professional development offerings that fully meet the requirements of DOE and the State of New York for high quality, IREC-accredited home energy professional certification courses and testing.
 - Adam also works with El Niang on our mentoring services to subgrantees. He provides frequent webinars on technical topics for WAP staff.
 - And he consults on high performance new construction projects for AEA member agencies such as HANAC that are pursuing Passive House certification for their buildings.
- We salute Adam for his work to keep Weatherization staff and projects “tuned up” and high-functioning, and to bring new levels of building performance to all residential energy efficiency projects.

HANAC, Inc. is making a name for its ability to “aspire higher.”

Between the federal and state requirements, WAP is not an easy program to implement. You are paid for production and are expected to nail your goals each year with little leeway for error. It is easy to say just conforming to the rules is all you can expect to do.

And yet Weatherization agencies that want to provide quality service to their communities can’t afford to settle for “good enough.” Because the climate is changing, our knowledge is changing, and the technology is changing. Weatherization has always been an innovator, and that is part of why it exists today.

Innovation requires not only dedicated and capable Weatherization staff, but vision and leadership in other program areas of the organization and at the highest corporate levels. And that is why HANAC is receiving this year’s Weatherization Agency of the Year award.

- HANAC’s priority on serving the aging low-income population with affordable, accessible housing in its Queens service territory is consistent with the goals of Weatherization but also extends beyond WAP into its development work.
- HANAC has been dedicated to pursuing high performance goals to make each of its affordable new construction projects as efficient and healthy as possible for residents, often teaming with AEA as its NYSERDA partner to qualify for incentives and to earn the Energy Star certification and meet Enterprise Green Communities criteria.
- HANAC’s development team was determined to build the Corona Senior Residence which will open its doors in 2018 to the Passive House Standard, but NYSERDA had not yet adapted its requirements to accommodate the types of specifications and testing protocols required. So HANAC and AEA applied to NYSERDA for the project to serve as a pilot passive house project in its Multifamily Program.
- Along the way, both HPD and School Construction Authority, responsible for the day care facility on the ground floor, also had to move out of their “comfort zones” to see how the advanced features of the building would affect the calculations underlying their specs.
- Getting ahead of the curve is not easy. Initially, contractors submitted high bids that reflected their uncertainty about their own costs to meet the standard. Value engineering and a rebid finally brought the prices into line. The designer was able to identify qualified products and found a contractor willing to accept the training and mentoring that would enable it to build a successful project. Now, the 68-unit project is on target for a spring or early summer opening.

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For its vision and the strength of its commitment to provide healthy, energy efficient, and affordable senior housing, HANAC is AEA's 2017 Agency of the Year.

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