

Madison Area Mechanical and Sheet Metal Contractors Association: 31st annual 'Heat's On' a huge success

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60 veterans had their furnaces cleaned and repaired during this year's event

MADISON, WI – **Madison Area Mechanical and Sheet Metal Contractors Association (MSC)** and **Steamfitters Local 601** had nearly 50 members service 60 homes of veterans at the **31st Annual Heat's On** event on Saturday, October 13, 2018. During the event, two furnaces were found leaking carbon monoxide into their homes. **1901, Inc.** is replacing one of the furnaces with a complimentary furnace from **Temperature Systems Inc.** **All Comfort Services** will be replacing the other one with a donated **Lennox** furnace. All of the labor and supplies for the furnace checks were completely complimentary to the veteran homeowners.

"I'm the fortunate recipient of the service of the Heat's On Program," explained **United States Army** veteran **David Kirk**. "I didn't even know a program like this existed so, like all good things in my life, I have my wife to thank for turning me on to something like this. I just feel really fortunate to live in a community that has programs like this that give back, to not only to Veterans, but to all people. It sounds like this is just done on a volunteer basis, and it's just an incredible display of generosity and kindness to the people who live in Dane County."

The three-decades old event, Heat's On, has checked and serviced over 2,500 homes in Dane County since its inception in 1987. The event originated when two elderly individuals froze to death when the temperatures dropped because their furnace was not working properly. The association and local union originated the program to assist the poor and elderly to stay warm throughout the winter. In 2015, Heat's On began checking furnaces for veterans.

Kirk continued, "It means a lot. I think that many other veterans can empathize with the feeling of coming home. It's a lifelong process and little things like this make us feel like your community is in touch with you and cares about you. Generosity and kindness just have an incredible ripple effect throughout the community, and it's just an excellent thing to provide for anybody."

During this year's event, six local contractors, 1901, Inc., All Comfort Services, **Bassett Mechanical, Commercial Air, General Heating and Air Conditioning,** and **Total Mechanical,** provided trucks for the technicians to use to service the furnaces. **Design Air, First Supply, Gustave A. Larson, Industrial Controls, Johnstone Supply,** and Temperature Systems Inc. are the supply houses that donated the materials used to repair any broken furnaces. Temperature Systems Inc., First Supply, and **Johnson Control** each donated furnaces if any needed to be replaced.

"Year after year, our member contractors and supply houses step up without question," explained MSC Executive Director **Julie Walsh.** "When the Fall comes around and we start talking about Heat's On, everyone asks how they can help. The generosity of donating the service trucks and the supplies, coupled with the open hearts of all of our service technicians makes this my favorite day of the year. Heat's On continues to grow even after 31 years, and we cannot wait for next year's event."

The service technicians volunteered their Saturday morning to service the veterans' furnaces. Many of the technicians have participated in Heat's On year-after-year.

General Heating and Air Conditioning's Service Supervisor **Louis Lasecki** has participated in Heat's On for the last 12 years, "It's always kind of been a tradition with our company. When I started, I was younger so I looked up to the older techs and (participating in Heat's On) is what they did every year. It (is always) a fun event. We work for a contractor, but the local union is all the people that work for different contractors in the Dane County area. You can see other people that you

work with, and other companies with other techs that we don't normally see. It's kind of a fun time cause we all get together and help out the community."

One of the perks for the service technicians during Heat's On is sitting down and hearing stories from our veterans. It gives them a new appreciate for all that the homeowners have done for our country.

"I've gained great respect for the Armed Forces, for the people that have served, the (fellow technician) that's with me today helping, he's a Marine veteran as well, Angelo Reynolds, and being able to just be around these people," 1901, Inc.'s Service Technician **Noah Strand** explained how Heat's On has impacted him. "I've gained a great respect for who they are. They're normal people just like everybody else, but they have given so much more than we can ever imagine. I (have) a great level of appreciation for their service to the country and to us."

Many of the service technicians who volunteer for Heat's On are also veterans themselves. **Angelo Reynolds** is a veteran of the Marines and was with Strand when they found a furnace during the 2017 Heat's On event that was leaking carbon monoxide and poisoning the World War II veteran.

"Last year, I was with Angelo, and we went into an old veteran's place," explained Strand. "I believe he was a World War II veteran, and we found that his heat exchanger was bad. His furnace was emitting carbon monoxide directly into his house. We found out that a week (before the furnace check), the veteran had been hospitalized. He was found unconscious in his house by his friend due to carbon monoxide poisoning. We were able to catch that, lock his furnace up. It was like two days later, we were there, totally for free, and we installed a brand new furnace for him. It's up and running, a high efficiency furnace. He's safe and having a good life today because of that. We're so grateful for that. It's nothing that I did, or anybody else did. Any one of these techs would have found that and that's what this is all about."

For the veteran homeowners, the annual Heat's On is a program that not only gives them comfort and the peace of mind this winter, in some cases, it is lifesaving.

Madison Area Mechanical and Sheet Metal Contractors Association is starting to collect information from veterans who would like their furnaces checked as part of the **32nd Annual Heat's On** event scheduled for Saturday, October 19, 2019. Veterans interested in a free furnace check next Fall can contact the **Dane County**



Veterans Service Office at 608-266-4158.