



# **L&C YouthBuild Helping To Make Seniors' Homes Smarter**

October 5 2021 3:14 PM



GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College’s Building Futures YouthBuild is partnering with Ameren Illinois, Senior Services Plus (SSP), and the Alton Housing Authority to help local senior citizens save energy and money while making their homes more comfortable.

YouthBuild students, with the help of certified technicians, are installing smart home technology in the homes of senior citizens throughout the River Bend, now through November. The “Smart Home Blitz” campaign, made possible with financial support and energy efficiency tools provided by Ameren Illinois, kicked off Sept. 21.

“Through this tremendous collaboration and partnership between Ameren Illinois, Lewis and Clark Building Futures YouthBuild and Senior Services Plus, Inc., 200 homes in our community will receive energy efficiency and smart home products at no cost, which will not only help Seniors save money, but also enhance their quality of life,” said SSP CEO Theresa Collins.

Each home will receive the following items, unless they already have them in place:

- **Google Home Minis** – These speakers will empower users to take control of their home without the risks associated with high mobility efforts or overwhelming technology. They only need to speak their commands within a conversational distance of the speaker in order to exert significant control over the additional measures installed in the home.
- **Smart Thermostat** – As a body ages, it becomes more difficult to regulate temperature, which can lead to increased risks of illness and discomfort. Smart thermostats will not only increase users’ control over their environment, but provide additional energy cost savings as well – as much as \$130 or more per year.
- **Smart Plugs** – Paired with the Google Home Mini, smart plugs can provide users with greater control over devices without requiring any mobility on their part. By utilizing these measures, seniors will gain greater control over devices in their home without the mobility required to operate them in a traditional manner.
- **Dusk-to-Dawn Porch Light** – An LED dusk-to-dawn porch light will allow seniors to more easily see visitors, as well as potential tripping hazards outside their front door, increasing safety without requiring the user to remember to turn the light on or off to be operational. Additionally, an LED will ensure the light is both long lasting, as well as low cost, to operate.

After product purchase and installation, savings for all participating area seniors is expected to reach about \$35,000, according to Collins.

She estimates it will take 400-600 hours to complete the installations and train residents on how to use the products. YouthBuild students participated in one week of training and hands-on instruction, with SSP staff, to prepare for the huge undertaking.

“We have had many opportunities to work with SSP over the years, but this is the first project where YouthBuild students can bring both technology and hands-on maintenance training together to serve area seniors in ways that can bring lasting

financial savings” said Sabrina Davis, director of Building Futures YouthBuild at Lewis and Clark. “At the same time, the students are able to add another tool to their toolbox in terms of obtaining household maintenance experience and best practices around energy efficiency.”

"This collaboration between Community Partners and the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program provides a great avenue to serve customers, reducing seniors' energy consumption and improving comfort, while also developing the future energy efficiency workforce," said Kristol Simms, Director, Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program.

Area seniors who are interested in participating in this program should contact Senior Services Plus at (618) 465-3298, extension 118.