

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT | CELEBRATING THREE DECADES OF ENERGY SAVERS INC.

The Power of Weatherization

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For 32 years, Renton-based Energy Savers Inc. (ESI) has offered weatherization services across the Seattle metro area, helping residents conserve energy and lower their bills.



For ESI, weatherization isn't just a business. It's a calling. The company provides weatherization services for 350–450 low-income households in single-family, multifamily, and mobile homes across Washington and Alaska every year.

Curious about ESI and the ins and outs of the weatherization industry, I had a conversation with founder and owner Rodrick L. Williams about how he got into the field and built his

business. It's an epic tale that took Williams from Alaska to the Pacific Northwest.

Anchorage to Seattle

In 1978, as the U.S. was hurtling towards recession, Williams was looking for a new career. He decided to enter the federal Weatherization Program under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and was the second person hired by the municipality of Anchorage to weatherize low-income households.

Williams' ample carpentry experience from working with his homebuilder father led to a quick promotion to energy auditor and eventually program manager for all of Anchorage. In 1982, he left that position to go into business for himself, founding Energy Specialists of Alaska.

Two years later, his new company received a contract from the Alaska Community Development Corporation to weatherize homes in rural



villages. While the work was good, there wasn't enough of it. Extreme weather meant having only seven to eight months of work a year.

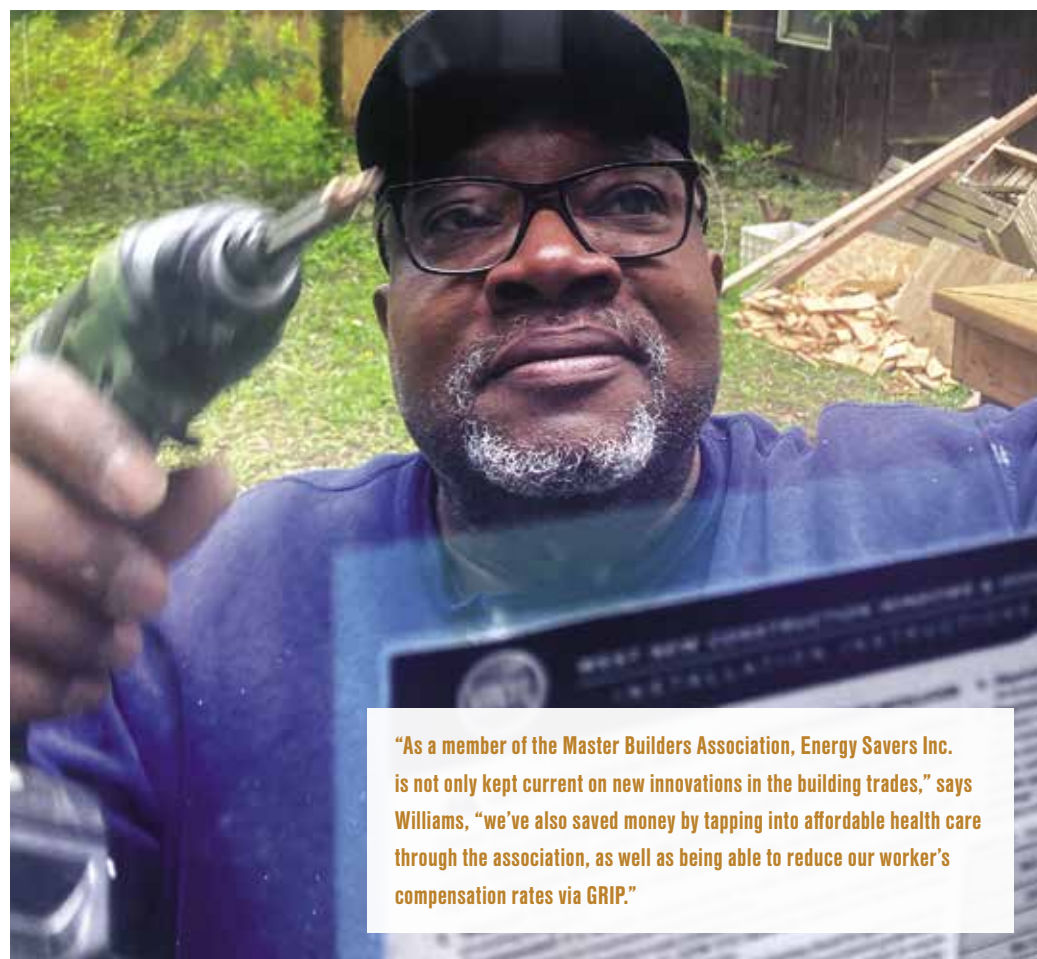
"It was challenging maintaining a household with two young daughters," Williams told me. But that was soon to change.

As the plane was landing in Seattle, I looked down and saw so many homes that could benefit from weatherization services.

ROD WILLIAMS

"In late 1987, I flew to an energy conference in the lower 48. As the plane was landing in Seattle, I looked down and saw so many homes that could benefit from weatherization services."

After some research, Williams approached four agencies and a local utility company offering incentive programs. King County Housing Authority offered him a job if he relocated



"As a member of the Master Builders Association, Energy Savers Inc. is not only kept current on new innovations in the building trades," says Williams, "we've also saved money by tapping into affordable health care through the association, as well as being able to reduce our worker's compensation rates via GRIP."

to Washington. Excited for the opportunity, he flew back home and told his family they were moving to Seattle.

By 1989, the county was so satisfied with Williams' performance that they made his company their top contractor. After years of travel between Seattle and Alaska, Williams decided to split the company in 2006. Energy Specialists of Alaska would continue to work

exclusively in Alaska, while his new company, Energy Savers Inc., would serve Washington.

Weatherization Saves Money and Lives

Weatherization is inseparable from the health and affordability of a home and its occupants. "Higher utility prices," ESI Project Manager Adam Wilson explained, "can be more than a financial burden. When clients can't pay these bills, they end

up not using heating systems or watching their utilities shut off.

"Shutdown utilities, poor insulation, and lack of air sealing," he continued, "can result in poor air quality and moisture issues, including mold-related health problems. Over time that can cause the building to deteriorate, leading to more financial hardships and more potential health risks."

Currently, Energy Savers operates two three-person crews in Seattle and outlying areas, each typically completing about two jobs per week. Wilson laid out the process. "During the initial phone consultation, we discuss the clients' concerns and goals before scheduling a walk-through to visually inspect the home. Next, we discuss our findings with the clients and give them their options."

The best way to figure out what a home needs is an energy audit. It gives a wide range of information to help identify where leaks are and how much leakage there is. An audit will also identify and prioritize measures based on comfort, health, and energy savings.

Wilson pointed out that as we experience more severe weather patterns due to climate change, there will be a greater need to build tighter homes, tighten up existing homes, and upgrade mechanical systems.

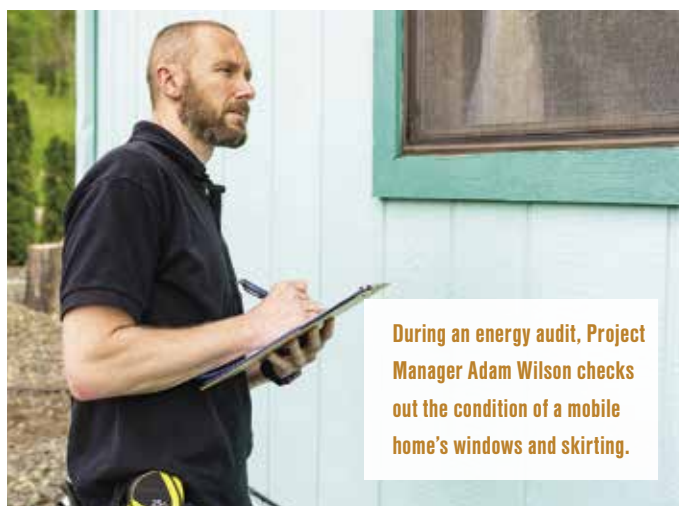
Thankfully, technology is quickly advancing. "Over the last 40 years," Williams told me, "we've



Crewmembers Raymar Street and Rufino Churrasco use a truck-mounted blowing machine to install high-density wall insulation.

PHOTO: ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

Energy Savers strives to make employees part of the family and treat clients and their homes with respect and dignity.



During an energy audit, Project Manager Adam Wilson checks out the condition of a mobile home's windows and skirting.

PHOTO: ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

After wrapping up a weatherization job in Sultan, crewmember Sheldon Rouzan washes off at a portable handwashing station.

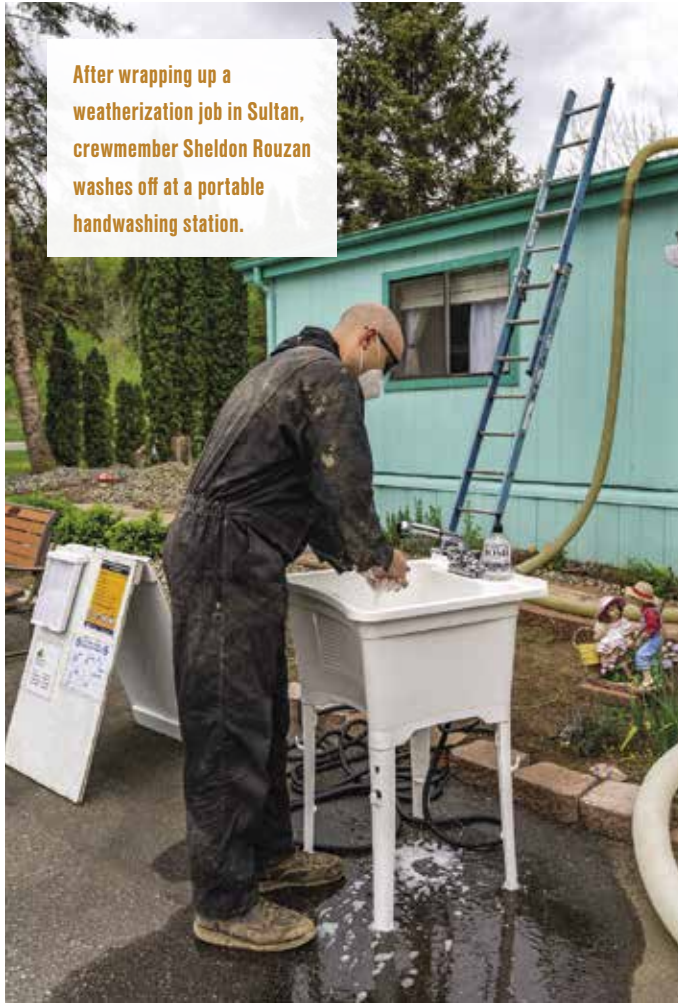


PHOTO: ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

The U.S. Department of Energy has recognized Energy Savers as one of the best weatherization companies in the nation.



grown faster technologically than any other part of the industry, from blower door technology that measures air flow leakage to infrared cameras that can pinpoint gaps and leakage in a building's envelope."

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered many businesses. But it was no match for Energy Savers. "Weatherization," Williams told me, "is already one of the safest industries in the country." ESI developed several additional strategies for safely working in client's homes, including Tyvek suits, gloves, and the best N-95 masks available.

The Future of Weatherization

Looking beyond the pandemic, where does Williams see the weatherization industry going?

"What I see on the horizon is the term 'weatherization' being associated with trades like carpentry, electrical, and plumbing. It needs apprenticeship programs and trade schools." Currently, he adds, it's hard to market and find people to work in the industry despite good pay and benefits because it doesn't have the same status as the trades.

In his four-decade career, there is one moment that Williams is especially proud of. In the late

aughts, the U.S. Department of Energy recognized Energy Savers as one of the best weatherization companies in the nation. Williams was one of five people chosen to speak about his field in Washington, D.C. He spoke in front of an audience of experts and peers with one of his daughters, Janae, who managed his companies.

"When they stood up and gave me a standing ovation, I was emotionally touched and I was so proud to have my daughter sitting beside me." Sadly, Janae has since passed away. "I know that she would have gracefully carried Energy Savers' legacy well into the future."

Over the years, Williams has embraced being a family-run business. Today, Regena Williams, Rod's other daughter, works as ESI's business manager. But even beyond family ownership and day-to-day management, Energy Savers strives to make employees part of the family and treat clients and their homes with respect and dignity.

"To this day," Williams said proudly, "we still have clients from decades ago that send us Christmas cards thanking us for making their home more comfortable, warmer, and less expensive to heat." 🏠